OMAN AND THE WORLD

THE EMERGENCE OF AN INDEPENDENT FOREIGN POLICY

JOSEPH A. KECHICHIAN

RAND

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To my daughter Angelica, who was born as this book went to press

PREFACE

In the aftermath of the War for Kuwait[1] and the dramatic fall in the price of crude oil in the world markets, the strategic importance of the Straits of Hormuz remained intact and the vital role of the Sultanate of Oman in ensuring its security unchanged. To be sure, Oman's propinquity to the Straits of Hormuz was not the only significant factor in the country's rebirth.

After the British debacle in Aden, and London's 1968 decision to "withdraw" from the Persian Gulf, both Saudi Arabia and the United States became concerned that a collapsed Oman might endanger neighboring countries. Since then, and even though Western academics and government officials seem to have reached a consensus over the short-term future of the Persian Gulf region—that its future is less threatened than it was between 1967 and 1990—for the overwhelming majority of Gulf citizens as well as officials, the area has still been beset with the hegemonic aspirations of three major regional powers. None were more threatening than the dismemberment of Iraq, especially as the potential for the establishment of an independent Kurdistan loomed on the horizon. Iran appeared poised to reap the benefits of the waning influence of the former Soviet Union in Central Asia, Turkish aspirations to rekindle Pan-Turanism notwithstanding. Ankara, for its part, was caught in a perpetual identity crisis, oscillating between the aspirations of its elite to join the European Community and its militarist tendencies to assert Turkish hegemony over the old "Silk Route." Even the collapse of the Soviet Union has had minimal effects on regional security because nascent interstate conflicts resurfaced with a vengeance. Neither the Iraqi, Iranian, or Turkish political designs comforted conservative Arab Gulf monarchies, including Oman.

In addition to these direct threats to regional security, disputes between India and Pakistan preoccupied Muscat, as tensions rose over the Kashmir question.

[1]Throughout this volume, War for Kuwait refers to the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the 1990–1991 UN-mandated effort to liberate the Shaykhdom. The term is preferred over "Gulf War" to avoid confusion with the 1980–1988 Iran-Iraq War.

Associated with this explosive situation was the arms race between New Delhi and Karachi. Muscat was more immediately concerned with the spillover effects of an Indian-Pakistani war among the large expatriate community in the Sultanate.

Although this study aimed to provide detailed analyses of relations with most countries—including the Levant and the Maghreb—much of what follows was painstakingly assembled from a variety of primary and secondary sources. The availability of these sources determined which countries were chosen for detailed discussion.

These foreign policy concerns were as important as internal matters throughout the area. Oman faced significant internal changes over the past few decades that shaped, whether by design or accident, its foreign policy objectives. A serious population explosion threatened to tax the country's resources to the limit, compelling government officials to push a two-pronged economic liberalization and investment-oriented policy. A 4 percent annual population growth rate stood as the most ominous threat facing the Sultanate. In part to meet this internal challenge, Muscat adopted new economic policies that necessitated closer cooperation with, first, its immediate neighbors, including Iran, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen and, second, with a variety of European and Asian states. Still, Oman is well poised for future challenges, as the Persian Gulf region enters the 21st century.

Generous support from RAND, using its own research funds, has facilitated the timely completion of this study.

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A number of individuals provided assistance during the period devoted to researching and drafting this study. Many asked that I honor their request for anonymity, and they have my sincere appreciation for their "silent" contributions. I should state at the outset that I did not have access to official state papers, either from His Majesty Sultan Qaboos or from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Much of what follows must therefore be reassessed once state documents are catalogued, deposited in research institutions, and made available to scholars. I did, however, enjoy unprecedented access to many individuals in the Sultanate who graciously welcomed me into their offices and homes to discuss Omani foreign policy. My interpretations, therefore, draw heavily on what senior Omani officials shared with me even if I retain a scholarly skepticism. Although accounts varied, I tried to perceive and interpret the Sultanate's foreign policy through the eyes of its practitioners. This, therefore, is a first effort to discuss the foreign policy of the Sultanate of Oman in modern times.

By Middle Eastern standards, it was a pleasure to conduct interviews in Oman. My meeting with His Majesty Sultan Qaboos went beyond anyone's expectations. His Majesty answered most of my questions openly and frankly. By doing so, he helped me better understand his own rationalizations and foreign policy imperatives, highlighting his capabilities as well as his limitations. This long conversation allowed for a philosophical appraisal of his vision for Oman and how quickly Omanis were catching up to assume their own responsibilities. Since Qaboos is a genuinely popular leader in the Sultanate, especially among middle-aged Omanis, his awareness of Omani aspirations and expectations resulted in more than popularity. Several times, he reiterated how much Omanis were doing to assume their fair share of duties, and how different the situation was from the early 1970s when he acceded to the throne. I thank His Majesty for his thoughtfulness and frankness.

It would have been impossible to research and write this book without the diligent assistance of `Abdulaziz bin Mohammed Al-Rowas. The Sultanate's Minister of Information believed in the merits of this book—following the pub-

lication of my essay in the Winter 1990–1991 issue of *American-Arab Affairs*—and assumed the role of mentor throughout the duration of my research. In a novel approach, and as a concrete sign of "Omanization" in full swing, Al-Rowas sponsored my visits directly through his office. The Minister of Information's intercessions allowed me to interview over 25 high-ranking government officials (see Appendix A for a complete list). His willingness to entertain critical questions allowed for some extremely useful exchanges. My numerous conversations with him gave me a first-rate introduction to the workings of the modern Omani government. Al-Rowas authorized his office to sponsor my four "interview" visits to the Sultanate, for which I am grateful. I hasten to add, however, that this book was not commissioned by him and that he is not responsible for its contents.

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`Ali Masoud Al-Hinai, the director of research at the Ministry and an ardent nationalist, proved exceptional too. He shared a copy of his doctoral dissertation—for which I am grateful—that proved a gold mine of details on several aspects of Omani foreign policy. Although most of my conversations were held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, many others were held in private homes, illustrating the trust that senior officials expressed in my research endeavors.

In conducting research, insights are sometimes found where least expected. Sister Aida Kenmure, a fiery Irish general practitioner at the Royal Hospital in Muscat, provided me with rare insight into how Omanis were changing. She escorted me throughout the hospital's many wards for a solid exposure to the tremendous health needs in the Sultanate and discussed with me what was being accomplished and how far Oman had come during the past two decades. In between discussions with government officials, I gained insight into the modern Oman under development by visiting a number of public facilities, ranging from hospitals to schools and the university, and I am thankful for such individuals as Sister Kenmure for their valuable insights. Similarly, `Ali Al-Maamary, an energetic American-educated administrator-cum-thinker/writer, arranged my numerous visits to the Sultan Qaboos University, where I had informal chats with dozens of young students. Their concerns and aspirations helped shape my views on Oman's future.

John E. Peterson deserves special mention as well. John probably knows more about Oman than any other living Westerner. Our numerous conversations during the past few years sharpened my own views. His much awaited study on the history of the Sultan's Armed Forces will, I am sure, break new ground. Over the years Colonel Walter J. Cooner, Jr., appointed U.S. Defense and Air Attaché to the Sultanate of Oman in 1994, engaged me in numerous sharp conversations on the Persian Gulf. Needless to say, I benefited immensely from these interactions and look forward to similar opportunities in the years ahead.

On the home front, Jonathan D. Pollack, the Corporate Research Manager (CRM) for International Policy at RAND, and my colleague Ian O. Lesser, who moved to the State Department's Policy Planning Staff in 1994, immediately recognized this project's value when I first discussed it with them in 1991. Jonathan invested RAND "seed funds" to launch the effort and Ian ensured that adequate funds were available to complete the study in a timely fashion. I thank them both for their trust in my research endeavors. Jerrold D. Green, who succeeded Jonathan as CRM, encouraged me even further by nominating me for a Presidential Award recognizing this contribution. I owe him a special debt of gratitude for the January 1995 award and for championing my research activities at RAND. Jerry's presence at RAND illustrates our commitment to solid research efforts on the Middle East.

Without Ted Karasik, my most able research assistant on this project, this book would have taken twice as long to complete. Ted drafted several sections of the book, created all of the tables, and coached other RAND personnel in making the maps. Besides his legendary help, Ted's sense of humor provided much respite in our myriad "serious" endeavors. I value his friendship and owe him special appreciation for his devotion.

Pam Thomson, Carol Richards, and Debbie Elms created the maps and Anna Harrel and Rosalie Heacock typed the many chapters. I thank them all for their assistance.

Unlike most other institutions where the researcher goes to the library, at RAND, the library comes to the researcher. Roberta Shanman and Susan Adler answered every query and researched the minutest details Ted and I asked for. They are immense assets to RAND and I thank both of them for their unfailing diligence.

Dale Eickelman, the Ralph and Richard Lazarus Professor of Anthropology and Human Relations at Dartmouth College, and David J. Dunford, the U.S. Ambassador to Oman (1992–1995), reviewed the manuscript. I am grateful for their useful comments. Additional suggestions from my RAND colleagues Jerry Green, Michael Swaine, Ashley Tellis, Mary Morris, and Bruce Nardulli proved equally helpful.

Last, but not least, I would like to thank members of RAND's publications department: Patricia Bedrosian, my most able editor, who has the enviable skill of turning ordinary prose into readable text; Miriam Polon for her intelligent proofreading; and Jean Houston, Janis Lane, and Sally Belford for handling many rounds of corrections and for formatting the book.

That an American of Armenian extraction would be interested in Oman should come as no surprise. The German traveler Engelbert Kaempfer, who stopped in Muscat in mid-July 1688 on a Dutch ship from Bandar Abbas, made the acquaintance "of a rich old Armenian merchant called Hovhanessian." According to Philip Ward, who recounts the report in his *Travels in Oman on the Track of the Early Explorers*, the Armenian, "who was paralyzed, and had the misfortune of a failed voyage from Surat to Mocha in the Yemen," invited Kaempfer "to his stone-built house, and treated [him] hospitably on the Friday and especially on the Saturday, when he was not required to fast." Although I discovered Oman much later than Hovhanessian, thanks in large part to an invitation from then Assistant Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Saif bin Hashil Al-Maskari, my introduction to the Sultanate was equally enchanting. I thank Saif for that first invitation to Oman, his introductions to several high-ranking officials throughout the GCC states, and his unwavering friendship since then.

I visited the Sultanate of Oman eight times during the past three years to research this book. During these visits, I witnessed significant changes, some of which I have described. What never changed, however, was the kindness for which Omanis are reputed. Omanis I was privileged to meet, from His Majesty Sultan Qaboos to the isolated farmer, from cosmopolitan high-ranking government officials to eager schoolchildren, from tolerant and kind clerics to savvy taxi-drivers, from generous village Shaykhs to curious expatriates, all welcomed me warmly into their homes and offices. It was a unique experience that I will remember for many years to come.

A NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION AND REFERENCES

In rendering Arabic words and names, the transliteration form adopted in this manuscript draws on the style notes of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. With the exception of the ayn (`), however, diacritical marks for long vowels and velarized consonants have been left out. I also used the common English spellings of the names of countries (Oman rather than `Uman, for example) and, when known, personal names (Mohammed or Mohamed rather than Muhammad). Readers who know Arabic will recognize the proper spelling.

In addition to the bibliography that lists scholarly sources pertinent to modern Omani affairs, each chapter contains detailed references to newspaper articles and radio broadcasts. As a general rule, with selected exceptions these have not been copied in the bibliography. Repeated references (that is, ibid., op. cit.) are self-contained within each chapter.

ACRONYMS

AMIO	Arab Military Industries Organization
ARAMCO	Arabian American Oil Company
CAFI	Council on Agriculture, Fisheries and Industry
CCASG	Cooperation Council of the Arab States of the Gulf
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
DLF	Dhufar Liberation Front
DRY	Democratic Republic of Yemen
ECO	Economic Cooperation Organization
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GIC	Gulf Investment Corporation
GOIC	Gulf Organization for Industrial Consulting
ICO	Islamic Conference Organization
KFAED	Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development
LAS	League of Arab States
OAPEC	Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries
OPEC	Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
PDO	Petroleum Development Oman
PDRY	People's Democratic Republic of Yemen
PFLO	Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman
PFLOAG	Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Arabian Gulf
PRC	People's Republic of China
SAS	Special Air Service
SCC	State Consultative Council
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
US	United States
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

Although Omani foreign policy was articulated in classic Cold War terminology when Sultan Qaboos acceded to the throne in 1970, it has adapted to the changing Middle Eastern and international environment of the 1980s (see Map 1). To be sure, the "communist" threat was dealt a significant blow on the Sultanate's southern border, but Muscat was also quick to properly assess the demise of that scourge on the world scale, identify more-immediate regional threats, and address the most crucial internal demands of a rapidly growing population. This shift was possible because Omani foreign policy was guided by an awareness of the country's internal capabilities.[1]

The looming "communist" threat checked, Omani officials sought to engage in economic cooperation with key states, including those in the former Soviet Union. Omanis sought to balance their economic and regional objectives with the Sultanate's finite resources. In a country where illiteracy remained high, where dependence on central authority remained paramount, and the relationship between ruler and ruled was imbedded in time-tested traditions, such a dramatic shift did not go unnoticed. Yet, despite this fundamental development, the Sultanate's foreign policy rested on a distinguished and long history.

A sparsely populated land, Oman once stretched over two continents and, although some Omanis may dream of restoring it to its past splendor, today the majority seek solace in the effect that prior geopolitical contests have had in etching their character. Much like modern France, which looks to the Capetian era in identifying its origins, Oman looks to the Azd dynasty (200–690 AD) and, more importantly, to the `Ibadhi migration in the late 700s to identify its own culture. Over the years, powerful tribal and clan leaders have regulated their relationships without preventing the rise of an effective central authority, to

[1]Throughout this study, references are made to significant internal developments that shaped the modern history of Oman. Key issues are briefly analyzed to clarify how Omani diplomacy emerged.

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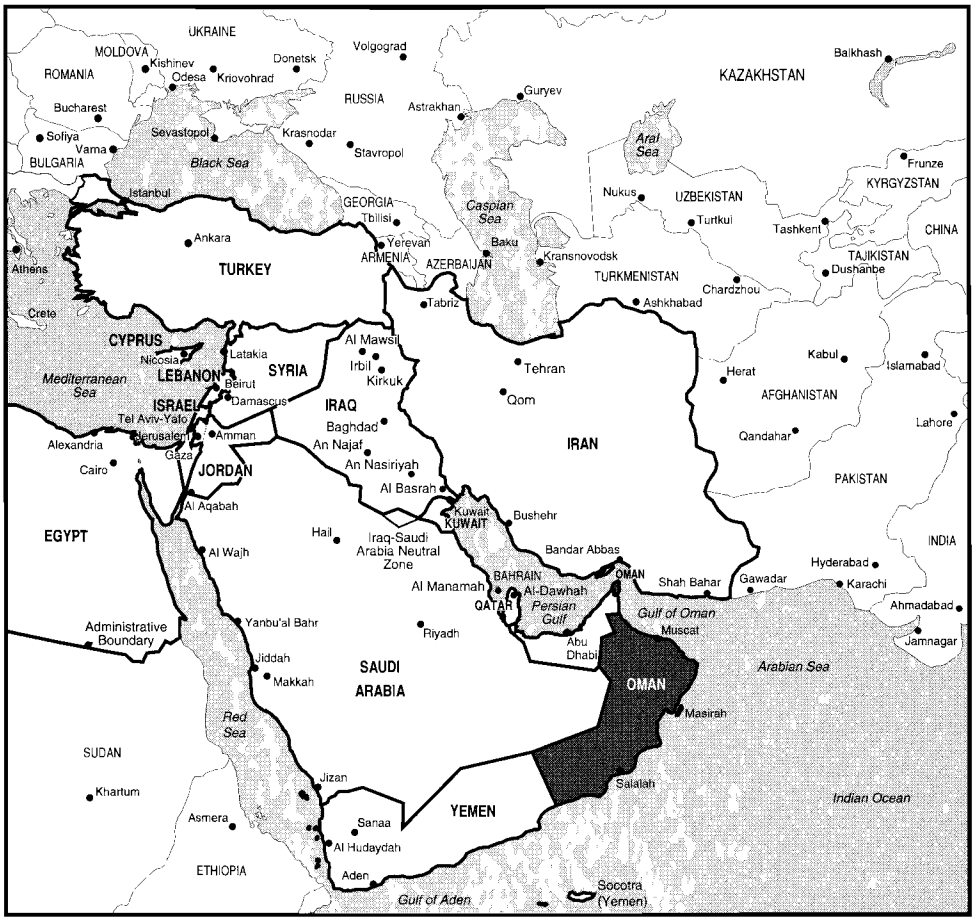

Map 1—The Middle East

govern themselves and the country according to `Ibadhi values. Indeed, these internal attributes allowed Omani rulers to rule supreme in and out of the Persian Gulf region, stretching their authority to the eastern shores of Africa and much of the coastline of modern Iran, Pakistan, and portions of India between the 8th and 19th centuries. Still, high seas did not hamper Omani advances that, early on, allowed for the development of a keen sense of diplomacy. Not only were Omanis bent on surviving, they also strove to prosper. In essence, successful diplomacy that permitted prosperity has been the pillar of Omani politics for over a thousand years. In a region of the world where independent foreign policy was rare, Muscat strove to define its long-term interests and, whenever possible, attempted to balance actions with limited capabilities. In

other words, successive Omani leaders have adopted foreign policy measures that were pragmatic and noticeably consistent.

Oman and the Persian Gulf Before 1970

Originally known as the Imamate of Oman, the Sultanate of Oman was governed between 751 and 1792 AD by elected Imams of the `Ibadhi (originally the Kharijites) sect of Islam. The present ruler, Qaboos bin Sa`id, belongs to the dynasty of the Al Bu Sa`id, which was originally founded in 1774 by Ahmad bin Sa`id (see Figure 1). The latter, having succeeded in expelling the Persians from the coast of Batinah, was elected by Omani tribal leaders as the first Imam of the dynasty of the Al Bu Sa`id and was succeeded by Sa`id bin Sultan, the second genuinely elected Imam of the dynasty (for a chronology of key developments in Omani history, see Appendix B). In 1797, Sultan bin Ahmad, who usurped the authority of his older brother, established himself as an independent ruler in the small city of Muscat, under the new title of Sayyid Sultan. Consequently, Muscat has ever since continued to be governed by the hereditary rule of the dynasty of the Al Bu Sa`id, instead of the old traditional rule of the elected Imams. When the British extended their influence in Oman in 1798, they chose to deal with the rulers of Muscat but addressed them as Sultans. In that year, London, through its quasi-government on the Indian subcontinent—the East India Company—concluded a treaty of commerce and navigation with Sayyid Sultan bin Ahmad that codified British influence in the Sultanate for the next 150 years.[2] Over the years, relations with London evolved, necessitating additional treaties, including the Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation of 20 September 1951, and the 25 July 1958 agreement that streamlined military, technical, and economic assistance to the Sultanate. It must be clarified, however, that the British government has never regarded the "protectorate regime" pertaining to the lower Gulf States—where it also exercised a great deal of influence before their independence in 1971—as being applicable to the Sultanate of Oman. Indeed, Omani independence predated the British presence in the Persian Gulf region.[3]

Oman enjoyed rekindled attention from European diplomats in the early years of the 19th century. From 1894, when Paris opened a consulate in Muscat, until 1913, when the last Anglo-French argument over rights and privileges in the

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[2]J. G. Lorimer (comp.), *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman, and Central Arabia*, Calcutta: Superintendent, Government Printing, 1915. Reprinted Farnborough Hants: Gregg International Publishers, and Shannon, Ireland: Irish Universities Press, 1970; in six volumes.

[3]The body of water that separates the Arabian Peninsula and Iran is known as the "Persian Gulf" in Western sources and "Arabian Gulf" in Arab references.

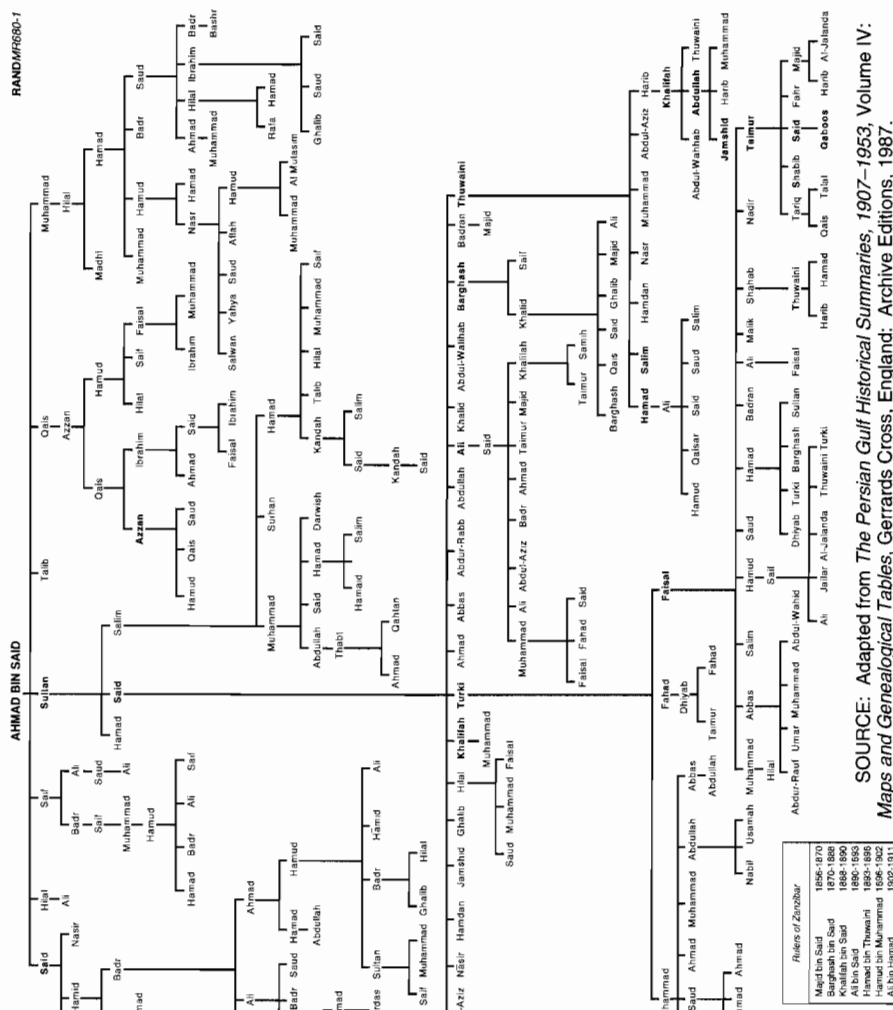

Figure 1—The Al Bu Sa`id Dynasty of Muscat and Zanzibar

Indian Ocean was settled, several diplomats wasted a good deal of time discussing what was whose in Oman. Still, apart from a few Omani "clients" of either the British or the French, the lives of most Omanis were not affected by these intrigues.

In 1888, Sultan Faysal bin Turki succeeded his father, Sultan Turki bin Sa`id. It was a short celebration, however, because by then the great days of the Omani empire were over. Except for Gawadar, a small enclave on the Makran coast that was sold to Pakistan in 1958, the empire was dissolved. The loss of Zanzibar and the prosperous East African possessions, in 1861, considerably weakened the basis of Oman's capabilities. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 further reduced Omani maritime influence in the Indian Ocean, and the increasing use of steamships made the once-powerful Omani sailing fleet almost obsolete.

These economic disasters eroded the power of the Sultans in Muscat, and in foreign affairs "they became ever more dependent on the jealous protection of the British and the government of India."[4] Internal affairs were even less orderly, as the tribes of the interior—though involved in political disputes following the civil wars of the 18th century—staged several rebellions against the Sultan in 1875, 1895, 1913, and 1915.

In October 1913, Sultan Faysal bin Turki was succeeded by his eldest son, Sayyid Taymur bin Faysal, who inherited a modest fortune. Neglected tribes in the interior raided the coast in 1915 seeking justice from the besieged ruler. In the event, the 3,000-man rebel force was defeated by 700 troops loyal to Taymur at Ruwi, but the fighting continued for another five years. A semblance of peace was finally reached between representatives of Sultan Taymur and the tribes of the interior at Seeb in September 1920.[5] Deliberately left ambiguous, the Seeb Agreement was not a truce between two sovereign states. Consequently, from 1913 until 1954, the interior was administered by a succession of elected Imams whose relationships with the Sultans in Muscat were amicable even if unorthodox. Then in 1954, the newly elected Imam, Ghalib bin `Ali, encouraged by the Al Sa`ud ruling family in Saudi Arabia, asserted sovereignty. Ghalib established a "State of Oman," issued postage stamps (although there was no postal service) and passports (that were valid only in Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia), and applied for admission into the League of Arab States (LAS). Allegedly, when the application was presented, several League officials rushed for a map to locate where this unheard-of new country might be.

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[4]W. D. Peyton, *Old Oman*, London: Stacey International, 1983, p. 9.

[5]The 1920 Treaty of Seeb remains one of the most important documents issued by Omanis to settle their differences. It stands out, even after all these years, as a model of compromise without abdicating rights. See Appendix C for the full text.

It must be emphasized that Imam Ghalib bin `Ali was well financed, whereas Sultan Sa`id bin Taymur (1932–1970), who succeeded his father in 1932, was destitute. Sultan Taymur (1913–1932), who had always been a reluctant ruler and who abdicated in favor of his eldest son, had moved to Bombay away from these intrigues. Sa`id's treasury was empty and the country had few prospects for a bright future. This severe lack of funds prevented him from doing the minimum required, although he established three Sa`idiyah schools, one each in Muscat, Mutrah, and Salalah. Whatever else can be said about Sayyid Sa`id, this much is certain: He set the country's finances in order.

After Ghalib's election as Imam, full-fledged rebellions broke out in the Jabal al-Akhdar and Dhufar regions against the Sultan's rule. Between 1955 and 1959, the civil war pitted Omanis against each other, which scarred society both physically and politically. In December 1955, the Sultan took over the administration of the areas of Central Oman formerly held by the Imam, who was forced into political exile with his dreams of independent statehood shattered. With Saudi Arabia's support, however, he returned in 1957 for another attempt to establish an independent state. By January 1959, with British military assistance, the Sultan's Armed Forces occupied the mountain strongholds where rebel leaders lived. For the first time since 1871, the Sultanate was united, and Sa`id bin Taymur ruled over all of it once again.[6]

The victory proved to be pyrrhic because in the Dhufar, local tribes refused to accept Sa`id bin Taymur's authority. A new rebellion started, one that would militarily involve several countries, including the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY), the People's Republic of China (PRC), the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and, of course, Britain. Sa`id bin Taymur opted to contain the Dhufari rebels by relying on local forces, but when some members of this group tried to assassinate him in 1966, he called in the Sultan's Armed Forces from Oman to take over the job.[7]

Oman and the Persian Gulf in 1970

On 23 July 1970, Sultan Sa`id bin Taymur was deposed by Qaboos bin Sa`id, who led a successful palace coup against his father and proclaimed himself the new Head of State. Three days later, Qaboos declared that he had dethroned his father because he "observed with mounting concern and intense indigna-

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[6]For an eyewitness account of Sultan Sa`id bin Taymur's 1955–1959 campaign in the Dhufar, see James Morris, *Sultan in Oman: Venture into the Middle East*, New York: Pantheon, 1957; see also Dale F. Eickelman, "From Theocracy to Monarchy: Authority and Legitimacy in Inner Oman, 1935–1957," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 17:1, February 1985, pp. 3–24.

[7]John E. Peterson, *Oman in the Twentieth Century: Political Foundations of an Emerging State*, London and New York: Croom Helm and Barnes and Noble, 1978, pp. 180–199.

tion [his] father's inability to govern."[8] He promised to establish a modern government, explaining that his aim was to form an efficient and just government, and then to launch development projects and welfare measures, including the building of schools and hospitals, as well as establishing friendly relations with neighboring states. In a subsequent speech, Qaboos expressed his desire to "make friends with all states that offered their friendship and even with those which were at present unfriendly." On 29 July, the British government formally recognized Qaboos bin Sa`id as the Sultan of Muscat and Oman.

On 9 August 1970, Qaboos announced that his country would henceforth be known as the "Sultanate of Oman," instead of the old name. This early decision, glossed over by the turbulence of the moment, was Qaboos' first attempt to achieve political integration for what was then a divided nation. Within days, he appointed his uncle Tariq bin Taymur Prime Minister and asked him to form a government. On 15 August, Sayyid Tariq formed the first cabinet in modern Omani history, comprising four Omani ministers for the portfolios of Justice, Health, Education, and Interior. The Sultan reserved for himself the portfolio of Foreign Affairs. Defense remained, as in the past, under the control of a British officer, holding the title of Secretary of Defense. On 3 January 1972, however, Sayyid Tariq resigned his post. Announcing the resignation of his uncle, Qaboos stated that the functions of the Prime Minister would henceforth be assumed by his own office. With this decision, the Sultan exercised full control over the administration of Oman.

In the period when Tariq was Prime Minister, the Sultanate's foreign policy direction was firmly anchored, in large part, on the country's national character. On 6 October 1971, for example, Oman became a member of the League of Arab States. The following day, it was admitted to the United Nations.[9] Tariq was tireless in making the case for his country. When the League met in Cairo on 11 September 1971, it first decided to defer its decisions on Oman's application, because of the counterclaim deposited by Imam Ghalib. To break the deadlock, Tariq attended a conciliatory meeting between the government of Oman and the exiled Imam in Beirut that, unfortunately, failed. The Imam's conditions for relinquishing his claim were totally rejected by Tariq, who insisted that the League had had ample opportunities—from 1955 to 1971—to adjudicate the Imamate's claim. The energetic Prime Minister reminded League officials that

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[8]Statement by Sultan Qaboos bin Sa`id, 27 July 1970. See Appendix D for the complete text.

[9]Oman's application for membership into the LAS and the UN were made in May and June 1971, respectively, but the applications were not considered by the two organizations before October 1971. Opposition to Muscat's membership in both organizations was orchestrated by the PDRY and Imam Ghalib bin `Ali, who since 1955 had claimed the leadership of the Imamate of Oman. Interview with Ahmed bin `Abd `Al-Nabi Macki, Minister of Civil Service, Muscat, 21 September 1993. Macki was the Sultanate's first permanent representative to the United Nations.

a number of resolutions in support of the "legitimate claims of the Imam of Oman to sovereignty over Oman" were rendered invalid by later pronouncements and claims. Tariq successfully argued that the League had to reconsider its old position toward Oman because the new Sultan was, in fact, the only legitimate ruler. Accordingly, the League decided on 6 October 1971 to admit the Sultanate of Oman to its membership, in spite of the opposition of the PDRY and Imam Ghalib. Tariq had won a major political victory, as the League's action put an end to the only political recognition that the Imamate of Oman had ever received.

Parallel to this effort in Cairo, Sayyid Tariq forcefully made the Omani case in New York. The Sultanate's application to the United Nations was first made on 24 May 1971, but the "Committee on the Admission of New Members" decided on 16 August to defer examination. On 4 October 1971, the Security Council unanimously recommended that the General Assembly admit the Sultanate of Oman to membership in the organization, acting on the Committee's favorable report. On 7 October 1971, the General Assembly considered the Security Council's Resolution of 4 October, and formally voted in favor of the admission of the Sultanate of Oman. The record of voting was 117 in favor with one against—PDRY—and two abstentions—Cuba and Saudi Arabia.[10]

Oman and the Persian Gulf After 1970

Although Oman was very much outside the mainstream of Arab affairs before 1970, Sultan Qaboos was determined to rectify this state of affairs. An amnesty permitted exiles and rebels to return without fear of repercussions. The brother of the exiled Imam Ghalib was offered a ministerial post, and it was made plain that the Imam himself was free to return to Oman and would be accorded his appropriate religious dignity.[11] However, Ghalib did not accept the offer, preferring to live in Saudi Arabia.

After Oman became a member of the LAS and the UN, Qaboos embarked on an extraordinary series of visits to Saudi Arabia and neighboring Gulf Shaykhdoms. Following the visit to Riyadh, the Kingdom extended full support and diplomatic recognition, but the effort was not risk-free. Aware of the need to come to terms with his principal neighbor—one that abstained during the General Assembly vote on the Sultanate's admission to the UN—Qaboos took the initiative in establishing a necessary dialogue with Riyadh. This approach would be

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[10]Hussain Al-Baharna, *The Arabian Gulf States: Their Legal and Political Status and Their International Problems*, 2nd ed., Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1975, pp. lvii–lviii.

[11]Interview with His Highness Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud Al Bu Sa`id, Deputy Prime Minister for Cabinet Affairs, Muscat, 25 September 1993.

pursued throughout the 1970s and 1980s, but it certainly was a novel idea at the time. External contacts were widened and diplomatic relations exchanged with over 60 countries.

From his early formulations in 1970, Sultan Qaboos stated that he would follow specific foreign policy principles, which included nonintervention in the affairs of other countries, respect for international law, strengthening relations with other Arab countries, and following a nonaligned policy. As discussed throughout this study, these tenets emerged during the early 1970s when the new ruler faced internal challenges to his authority and, equally important, saw his country catapulted to the forefront of the East-West conflict in the Persian Gulf region. Oman supported the establishment of a new world economic order, then a major plank for the Group of 77,[12] but did not shy away from espousing pro-Western positions on security matters throughout the 1970s and 1980s. This was a pragmatic approach given that the East-West conflict was physically so close to the Sultanate.

It must be emphasized that Qaboos acceded to the throne amid vast turmoil throughout the Persian Gulf region. In 1971, the British announced their withdrawal from east of Suez, and the Shah of Iran accelerated his hegemonic aspirations in the area by occupying the United Arab Emirates' Abu Musa and Tunb islands. Against the preponderant Iranian display of power, conservative Arab Gulf monarchies tacitly, if not formally, acknowledged Iran's regional supremacy. Oman went so far as to seek and welcome the deployment of Iranian troops to help defeat the rebellion in the Dhufar region. These dramatic changes illustrated how isolated Gulf states were from their Arab brethren. At a time when Arab nationalism was still popular and Nasserism was not yet a taboo ideology, Arab Gulf rulers and their populations adopted policies that shifted the balance of power of the entire Arab world. In effect, the Gulf region became isolated from the rest of the Arab world and, ironically, moved closer to European and Asian powers. Muscat's unique perceptions of core Arab political affairs became more evident in the aftermath of the 1973 October War that catapulted Egypt from its heretofore weak position into that of the indispensable "partner" in the Arab-Israeli peace process. Oman supported Egypt when the latter signed a peace treaty with Israel and refused to join the Baghdad rejectionist front in breaking diplomatic relations with Cairo.[13] Still, and despite

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[12]A UN committee mandated to look at the need for novel approaches to address growing economic disparities between the "haves" and "have-nots."

[13]Muscat's policies to encourage an Arab reconciliation with Israel stood out in the Middle East. One of three Arab states (in addition to Morocco and Sudan) that did not break off relations with Egypt, the decision was partially explained by `Ibadhi tolerance toward Jews. Indeed, this tolerance preceded Qaboos. Jacob Samuel, who visited Oman in April and December 1835, recorded in his *Journal of a Missionary Tour Through the Deserts of Arabia to Baghdad,* London, 1838, that he preached to 12 Jews assembled for the Passover, "and found that about 350 Jewish families resided

these two major developments, Qaboos found a happy balance between the Shah and Sadat by winning their confidences and receiving, as well as providing them, support.

With Iran, Qaboos established a relationship based on mutually acceptable terms, whereby Teheran assisted Muscat in the Dhufar War in exchange for privileged relations for the Shah on the Arabian Peninsula. To be sure, that relationship was based on raw power and, not surprisingly, was lopsidedly unequal in Iran's favor. In acknowledging the Shah's preeminence in the area, however, Qaboos extracted both military aid and a border agreement in the strategic Straits of Hormuz.

This first foreign policy accomplishment proved to be far more successful than originally anticipated, as Oman discovered the inherent virtue of diplomacy and the game of nations. It was an unusual development in a part of the world wallowing in Byzantine disputes that were, for the most part, settled through warfare. Negotiating from a position of strength, by compromising as needed without going overboard, Qaboos ushered in a novel approach that he would follow during the next two decades. Of course, Iran aided Oman in this endeavor, as every such effort required the cooperation of two parties to achieve stated objectives. Still, the 1972 Oman-Iran border agreement was a watershed event, one that would set political foundations for the Sultanate.

Although Arab Gulf monarchies would not accelerate diplomatic contacts, Muscat was determined to duplicate this initial success, even if many questioned Qaboos' motives. By accelerating diplomatic endeavors, arguing that Oman could ill afford to alienate its powerful neighbors while dealing with a civil war at home, Qaboos illustrated what was needed to set the foundations of an effective nation-state. He moved to secure Oman's ties with Iran because Muscat wanted to adopt innovative foreign policy measures. In other words, Oman and Iran agreed to do more than regulate the flow of sea traffic through the Straits of Hormuz. The Shah perceived the need for the explicit support of an Arab Gulf ruler. He also feared that instability in Oman would spill over into Iran. In turn, Qaboos gained a unique stature: to be treated as an equal by the then most powerful ruler in the region. Because Iran took Oman seriously, so did Saudi Arabia and the smaller Shaykhdoms, and in the aftermath of the 1974 increases in the price of oil, the Omani-Iranian conduit was deemed useful enough by several Arab and non-Arab states to call on Sultan Qaboos to intercede with Iran on their behalf. Although Qaboos' good-office interventions

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in the Batinah [north of Muscat]." At the time, Muscat was the only "Islamic Government tolerating Banian [who controlled the lucrative coffee trade] temples," as cited in Philip Ward, *Travels in Oman on the Track of the Early Explorers*, Cambridge and New York, The Oleander Press, 1987, p. 14.

would be tapped more frequently in the late 1970s and 1980s, they would not have produced the same results if the foundations were not laid properly. Muscat learned to make itself useful (even indispensable in some instances), not only to promote its interests but also to avoid temporary gains at the expense of long-term benefits. Indeed, this approach was implemented precisely not to be drawn into petty disputes or major conflicts. Whenever appropriate, Oman made its displeasure known over the 1971 Iranian occupation of the UAE's Abu Musa and Tunb islands but did not "condemn" Teheran, as it always sought alternative solutions. Similarly, it criticized the Shah's overbearing approach to the region but never shut the door on communication with his government. It issued a cautionary statement after the Shah's fall in 1979 but insisted on finding common language with Ayatollah Khumayni. It lamented the long and bloody Iran-Iraq War without finding fault in either Baghdad or Teheran. Finally, it rejected the Iraqi invasion and occupation of Kuwait but refused to break diplomatic relations with the Baathi regime when Kuwait and Riyadh pressed for that option. What emerged was crystal clear: *Muscat's primary foreign policy interest was to adapt to changing circumstances, survive them, and prosper, not to fall victim to their threatening and often dangerous ramifications.* Whereas other Arab Gulf monarchies and, indeed, many Arab republics, were quick to break diplomatic relations and adopt confrontational postures, Oman pursued a different path. Its agenda was guided by a conscious decision to avoid instantaneous reactions, never to break diplomatic relations, and never to harbor confrontational intentions.[14] That is not to say that Muscat was not involved in disputes and confrontations (including military ones), but that the Sultanate's foreign policy objectives were deliberately designed to maximize interests and minimize threats on a permanent basis. This was best illustrated after the Iranian Revolution erupted in 1979 when Oman moved rapidly to limit the spillover effects of that upheaval on the Sultanate. Against the perceived threat of the revolution, Muscat played a leading role in founding the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, commonly known as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), in 1981, which positioned conservative monarchies vis-à-vis Teheran. In short, Oman never threatened Iran but constantly attempted to moderate its vituperative rhetoric.

The Emergence of an Independent Foreign Policy

During the past two decades, Omani foreign policy could have easily failed, were it not for the difficult decisions made by Muscat. When the parsimonious and ultraconservative Sa`id bin Taymur was deposed by Qaboos, "Muscat and

[14]Yusuf bin `Alawi bin `Abdallah, the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, confirmed that Muscat has never broken diplomatic relations with another state. Interview in Muscat on 16 January 1993.

Oman" was on the verge of collapse. Dhufar province was largely in the hands of rebels, whereas in the north popular unrest threatened the survival of the regime. Moreover, northern dissidents and southern rebels were increasingly galvanized into action. To be sure, a great deal was achieved in the following 25 years but the initial political and administrative confusion was deafening. In 1970, Qaboos made an astute offer of amnesty to the rebels, thus beginning a policy of reconciliation. By 1976, the danger was past.

In economic affairs, on the other hand, the government was slow to seize the initiative and equip the country with intrinsic productive capabilities. That process was postponed until the late 1980s and early 1990s, when Muscat introduced sweeping economic reforms. Qaboos may not have displayed a sharp economic acumen when he acceded to the throne, but he quickly realized that severe measures were necessary to safeguard whatever assets Oman possessed. In a way, he made a conscious choice to first restore the Sultanate's sovereignty. Given Oman's lack of abundant resources, as well as high illiteracy rates, Qaboos could not have done more to streamline the moribund economy at the outset. Still, the economy improved dramatically in the mid-1980s, when an effort was made to liberalize key investment regulations. To his credit, nevertheless, the Sultan acknowledged the need for reforms, and riding his foreign policy successes, sought to raise his country's standing in the world, to achieve internal unity, and to take a prominent lead in fostering many aspects of national life, conservation, education, the sciences, and the arts. There was little debate over his enormous foreign policy successes, which allowed Muscat to become the first country on the Arabian Peninsula to sign border agreements with all of its neighbors and fully delineate the country's geographic boundaries. In addition to the 1972 agreement with Iran, Oman finalized accords with Saudi Arabia in 1991, the Republic of Yemen in 1992, and six of the seven UAE Shaykhdoms in 1993.[15] These accords solidified ties established over a period of several years, illustrating the trend in the Sultanate's long-range foreign policy initiatives, which aimed to achieve what was possible and neglect what was chimerical.

After two decades of state-building (1970–1990), during which the Persian Gulf was ensnared in the East/West conflict, Oman entered the last decade of the 20th century identifying with its past without neglecting the intrinsic need to face future challenges. The mood in Oman was pragmatic—not to gloss over

[15]The Iranian, Saudi, and Yemeni agreements are reproduced in Appendixes E, F, and G. Because of the UAE's federation makeup and the difficulty of signing a unified agreement with Abu Dhabi over the years, the Sultanate of Oman has sought separate accords with the six Shaykhdoms whose territories lie on its border. The last of these was signed in 1993 and, unlike the three agreements reproduced in this volume, none of the six texts were made available to the author. Importantly, these six accords were deposited at the Ministry of the Interior and not, as in the case of the Iranian, Saudi, and Yemeni documents, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

thorny questions. This study deals primarily with foreign policy issues; however, understanding the Sultanate's international behavior requires identifying its domestic origins. That is inescapable because foreign and domestic policies are often intertwined. To achieve that objective, Part I of this volume briefly examines the origins of the Omani nation-state to provide the necessary background on what propelled the Sultanate into its current regional position and to identify trends in Omani diplomacy. Part II examines foreign policy in the modern era, focusing on Oman's relations with states on the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf region, Western powers, Russia, Central Asia and the Caucasus, the Far East, South Asia, and Africa.

PART I

THE ORIGINS OF OMANI DIPLOMACY

Geography has almost always played a crucial role in the making of Omani foreign policy, as Muscat competed with its immediate neighbors to exercise its influence in the Persian Gulf region.

Among other external issues that affected Omani foreign policy were its neighbors' intentions toward it. How Yemen, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Iran, and Pakistan viewed their relationships with the Sultanate affected Muscat's policies toward these states as well as others within and outside the region. If Omani decisionmakers concluded that their neighbors were nonaggressive, then a specific series of policies were developed to address bilateral and multilateral issues. If, on the other hand, they determined that any one of their neighbors harbored aggressive intentions toward them, then alternative policies were adopted, ranging from defensive measures to the formation of alliances against the perceived opponent. For Muscat, relations with other Arabian Peninsula states were of utmost importance, and historical ties color much of their current policies. In some ways this was inevitable, because relations among the tribes of Arabia were always very fluid. Equally important were the key relationships that successive Omani rulers developed with Britain. Although not an outright colonial power, London enjoyed the influence of a colonial power, shaped Oman's outlook throughout the region, and reinforced existing limitations to its own advantage. Britain's most impressive achievement was in identifying internal Omani strengths and weaknesses and channelling them to fit with its own policies.

Equally important were key internal dimensions that shaped Omani foreign policy, including the size of the population, its growth rate, the country's multiracial composition (and ensuing class divisions), ethnic and area divisions, religious differences, and literacy and health levels. Throughout its long history, the Sultanate's tribal and religious differences have given rise to a number of conflicts that scarred the country and, more important, prolonged the formation of the Omani nation. Because of the fluid nature of migration on the Peninsula, tribal differences were exploited by outside parties bent on guiding

Oman toward their own objectives. Because they were the subject of such interferences, the Omani population fell victim to its rulers' inability to unite the tribes and forge a unified nation-state. Moreover, because the size of the population was also capable of influencing a country's foreign policy, Oman was not able to maintain its hegemonic hold on Zanzibar, Bahrain, and the coastal regions of Iran and Pakistan. Similarly, Oman's limited economic capabilities influenced the way it conducted its foreign policy. For many years, the Sultanate was the recipient of foreign aid that sharply curtailed its desire to pursue a more independent foreign policy. Because Muscat faced serious political and economic problems, it could not accomplish many of its stated objectives in a timely fashion. Even though Oman was not economically independent, it crossed many hurdles and, over time, regained some political independence. In these endeavors, it relied on its religious and ideological strengths that saw it through turbulent times, as well as its key relationships with Jordan and Britain. In addition to these variables, traditional values allowed the Omani leadership to shape public opinion to its own, carefully tailored visions. With limited literacy levels and an almost nonexistent pool of information, what public opinion existed among Omanis was colored by Arab nationalist currents, certainly alien to the majority of Omanis through much of the 1950s and 1960s. By the time Qaboos took over, small changes were noticed but, because of the Dhufar rebellion, many issues were ignored. Qaboos successfully managed Omani public opinion, concentrating on what he perceived as the main ideological threat to the state and, equally important, on what kind of country the Sultanate ought to be. Undoubtedly, the Dhufar rebellion shaped Qaboos' vision of Omani foreign policy. His military capabilities, as limited as they were, dictated what he could and could not do. Despite many shortcomings, Qaboos displayed leadership qualities, galvanized his troops to fight alongside regional and international allies, and rallied his population to oppose secessionists bent on wrestling power away from the Sultan. In maintaining a determined approach, Qaboos and his government forged ahead in unifying the Omani nation and rebuilt the Sultanate. It was a majestic task requiring huge sacrifices that taxed the nation and the state. Importantly, many Omanis understood the need for sacrifice and, insofar as their support of the new ruler was concerned, stood behind him.

Chapter Two

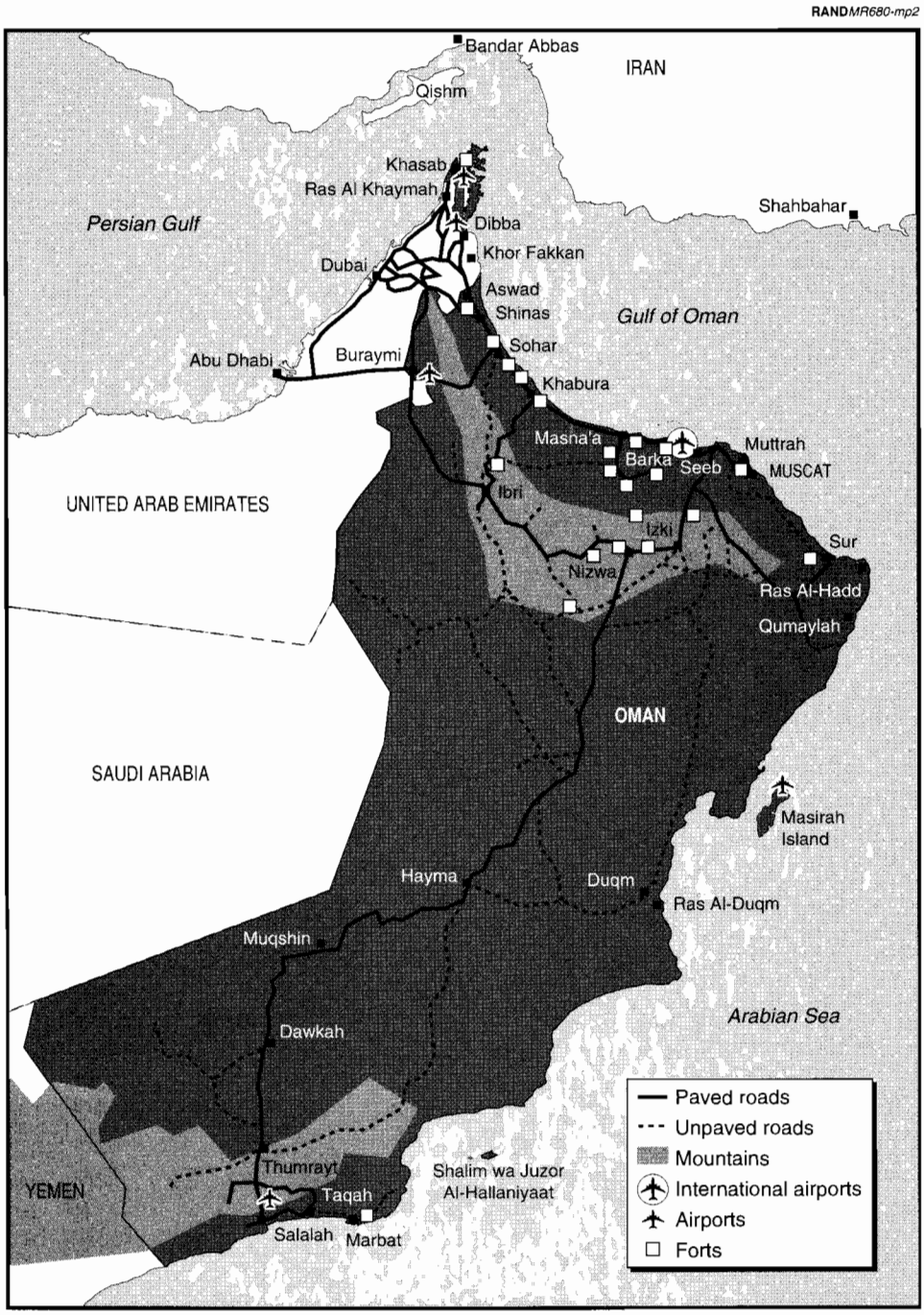
THE OMANI NATION

"Three recurrent themes, the tribal picture, the story of the Imamate and the struggle between Omanis and foreigners for control of her coastal provinces," defined the history of Oman.[1] Over the years, the Sultanate's foreign policies were consequently driven by those propositions. And, no matter how puzzling Omani behavior appeared to the outside observer, norms of constancy and continuity—imbedded in the country's tribal makeup as well as its rich historical roots—galvanized the nation into action. Nevertheless, a difficult journey shaped the physical appearance of the country and its peoples' outlook.

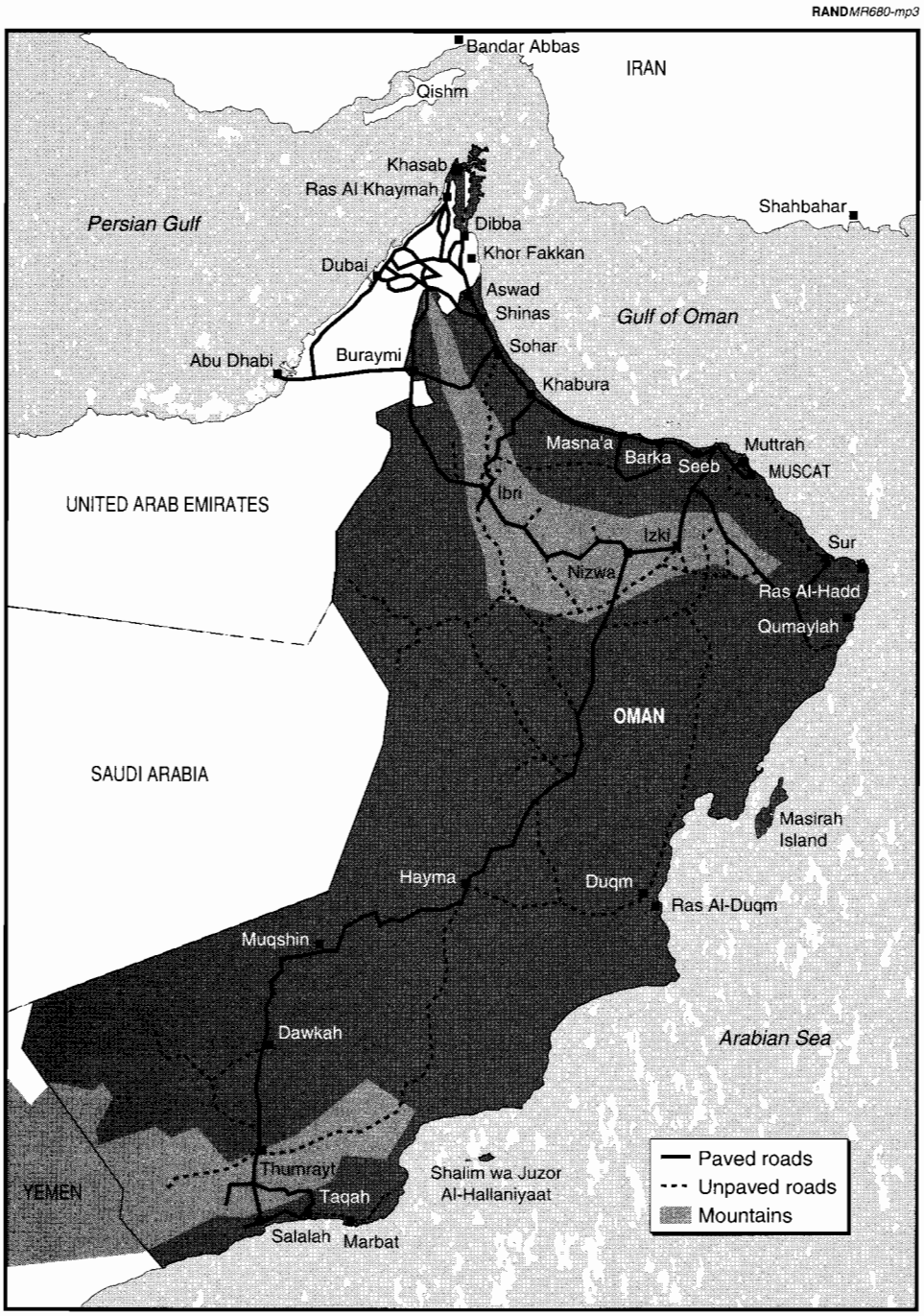
THE ORIGINS OF OMAN

The Sultanate of Oman was not always limited to its current geographical setting. Oman ranged from the Musandam Peninsula at the entrance of the Straits of Hormuz to Ja`alan, the midpoint promontory on the Indian Ocean coast between Oman and Yemen (see Maps 2 and 3). It stretched from the Hasa Province in Saudi Arabia to the Hadhramawt region of modern Yemen. The land extension of these three regions, defined by the majestic sand barrier of the Rub al-Khali (Empty Quarter), played a crucial role in the history of Oman. Indeed, the Rub al-Khali was and remains the Sultanate's most important border, as it provides natural security. Its effect on Omani rulers may be equivalent to the influence that both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans have had on successive American administrations in devising U.S. foreign policy. As rulers on the Arabian Peninsula have fought over their emerging borders throughout the twentieth century, the Rub al-Khali presented Omani rulers with some unique opportunities. Omani rulers managed their affairs far better than their counter-

[1]J. C. Wilkinson, "The Origins of the Omani State," in Derek Hopwood (ed.), *The Arabian Peninsula: Society and Politics*, London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1972, p. 67 [hereafter, Wilkinson-Origins].



Map 2—Oman—Political Map



Map 3—Oman—Roads and Mountain Ranges

parts and, as a result, the country's border disputes have been more successfully resolved.

The desert was important because it was a channel into the historic trade route of the Gulf region. Oman has been profoundly affected by its trading role. The country's desert and marine environments defined Omani character, as trade was bicoastal: Its powerful tribes maintained important trading contacts within the mainland and developed sea routes to the Indian subcontinent and beyond. Omanis were therefore particularly well equipped to deal with two cultures, and the combination of the desert mainland and the maritime legacy created a society that has survived and prospered through time. This amalgamation has defined Omani political unity and, despite Portuguese and British influences, strengthened Oman's quest for an independent foreign policy throughout the past 1200 years.[2]

Omani political unity was also facilitated by the Sultanate's central geographic setting. The mountains of the Jabal al-Akhdar are furrowed with stupendous valleys protected by an outer ring of foothills and the two arms of the Rub al-Khali that extend toward the Dhahirah and the Sharqiyah. Given their natural defensive positions, tribes living in village oases throughout this region were uniquely situated to shape Oman's destiny. When called upon to defend their territories from foreign invasions, their locations proved specially valuable. For centuries, each fortified entity was made into viable units, many prospering through caravan trade. It was only when far larger interests were defined that the people of the interior retrenched from their relative isolationism. Remarkably, they did so without abandoning their staunch individualism that was rooted in time-honored tribal allegiances.

The peoples of Oman interacted within the larger Persian empires that ruled both sides of the Gulf for the better part of the last millennium. Until the revelation of Islam, Persian rulers shaped and determined the cultural and trading environments of the entire area. The economy, both in the interior and on the coast, was determined by the strong pre-Islamic Persian influences prevalent over this vast region. During the Sasanid Empire, for example, the Batinah coast area was developed along the subterranean inlets (qanat) organization pattern, which ensured that water availability was optimized. It is a matter of record that "the permanent settlement pattern of Oman was thus largely determined in pre-Islamic times by non-Arabs and the areas under cultivation were considerably greater that they are at present."[3] The Persian

[2]Ibid., p. 69.

[3]Ibid., p. 71.

pattern dominated and, until Islam, the structure of society—and that of the village—remained fundamentally feudal.

Arab migrations into Oman started with settlements in the Ja`alan. Although they were outside the Persian settled areas, further movements to the north, into the Jawf, brought Arab settlers into direct conflict with the Persians. Legends aside, archeological evidence points to the pre-Sasanid era, probably in the second century AD, as the period when Arabs entered Oman. These first migrations were followed by others from Western Arabia. In time, Arab settlers entrenched themselves in northern Oman, whereas Persians were dominant in the Batinah region. Ports located on the coast were of primary importance to Persian tradesmen who assumed that Arab gains in the interior would wither with time. The coastal city of Sohar was Persia's main conduit with the outside world. To govern their Arab subjects, Persian rulers appointed chieftains and allowed them to exercise local control. Migrations from other regions of Arabia followed and alliances were forged with some success. Crucial migratory routes were thus developed, the most important one of which was the Buraymi route, which today sits on the border between Oman and the UAE, but which was the scene of much conflict between the Saudis and the British for the better part of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s.[4] Much of this tribal migration into Oman between 600 AD and recent times has strengthened the country's `Ibadhi creed. Proximity and the development of unique alliances, often with difficult neighbors, necessitated all the attributes of tolerance that Omanis could muster—and those were found in the `Ibadhi interpretations of Islam. Many of the tribes that gathered in the interior of Oman espoused `Ibadhism[5] and, holding to their traditions, established strong foundations in the land.

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[4]Wendell Phillips, *Oman: A History*, London: Longman, 1967, pp. 1–23; see also Dale F. Eickelman, "From Theocracy to Monarchy: Authority and Legitimacy in Inner Oman, 1935–1957," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 17:1, February 1985, pp. 3–24.

[5]For a full discussion of `Ibadhism, see Ahmed Hamoud Al-Ma`amiry, *Oman and `Ibadhism*, New Delhi, India: S. Kumar Lancers Books, 1989; see also H.A.R. Gibb and J. H. Kramers, "Ibadiya," *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, Leiden and London: E. J. Brill and Luzac and Company, 1961, pp. 143–145. The `Ibadhi influence on Omani political affairs was first reported in the West by Carsten Niebuhr, the Danish author of *Beschreibung von Arabien* (Copenhagen, 1772), who saw Muscat for the first time in 1765. Niebuhr wrote that among all Muslims he had met up with until his arrival in Oman, no one displayed "so little ostentation and live[d] so soberly as these `Ibadhi; they never smoke tobacco, they drink little coffee and even less of strong liquors. Persons of distinction do not dress more splendidly than those of lesser estate, they do not let themselves be easily upset by violent passions, and they are polite towards foreigners. . . ." Quoted in Philip Ward, *Travels in Oman: On the Track of the Early Explorers*, Cambridge and New York: The Oleander Press, 1987, p. 8. There is little doubt that the `Ibadhi influence has left its mark on Omanis, among whom qualities of intellectual sobriety and cultural finesse are noticeable today. In conducting their country's foreign policy, Omani officials have transcended the difficulties of time and display harmonious characteristics, seldom seeking to align their country with passing trends or momentary causes. Whatever consistency exists in Omani foreign policy must, therefore, be traced to this fundamental characteristic.

Among the Azd tribes, none were as important as the Azd Shanuah, who arrived in Oman from the Yamamah and the eastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula, during an admittedly weak Persian rule period. Their ascendancy to positions of leadership was amicable. It was also in tandem with special relationships established with Persian rulers who recognized the Azd Shanuah as "the kings of the Arabs."[6] Despite these gains, however, the majority of the Arabs did not "settle" to cultivate the land. In the interior, the people were mountain bedu, as in the Shawawi of Oman today. On the coast, on the other hand, Arabs did settle and became fishermen, sailors, and traders. Omani tradesmen quickly spread their domains to the Persian side of the Gulf and many became assimilated among the indigenous population. The Bani Salimah came to control the entrance of the Gulf during the Sasanid period in Iran as their members traded on both sides of the Straits of Hormuz. In fact, the family remained entrenched in the area throughout the Buyid period.

The coming of Islam resulted in the eviction of the Persians from Oman and the transfer of power to Arabs. As the caliphs abandoned Oman to the Julanda, the latter ruled for approximately 150 years in a semi-feudal fashion that resulted in political and social decay.[7]

As the interior of Oman lapsed into tribal anarchy, a "national" concept based on Islam was developing in Basra under the `Ummayad.[8] The Azd leadership was recognized by the Caliphate, which organized the Arab world into Akhmas (domains), giving the Omani Azd the leadership of a number of tribal groups in their own khums (domain). Opposition to the Ummayad empire, as well as the overbearing Hijaziz, meant that "Persianized" Omanis would have to be made subjects by force. Many Omanis returned to their home country, which they found to be different indeed. Their exposure to the outside world meant that differences between them and their fellow `Ibadhi tribesmen were far greater than when they left. This exposure to the outside world, therefore, changed the Omani perspective. Although `Ibadhism represented a version of Khariji views that evolved in Basra, it established roots among the more "responsible" members of society. `Ibadhi believers could not afford to be fanatical, as their wealth and position required more levelheaded discourse. Indeed, `Ibadhism

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[6]Wilkinson-Origins, op. cit., p. 73.

[7]Khaled Nasir Al-Wusami, *`Uman bayna Al-Istiqlal wal-Ihtilal: Dirasat fil-Tarikh Al-`Umani Al-Hadith wa `Ilaqatuha al-Iqlimiyat wal-Dawliyat fil-fatrat ma Bayna 1789–1904* [Oman Between Independence and Occupation: Omani History in Modern Times and Its State Relations Between 1789 and 1904], Kuwait: Muassasat Al-Shari` Al-`Arabi, 1993, pp. 25–44.

[8]The `Ummayad dynasty ruled the Islamic world between 661 and 750 AD. Although the `Ummayads were responsible for a great expansion of the Muslim realm, their political rule was brutal and, numerous religious conquests notwithstanding, the Damascus-based Caliphate transformed itself into an Arab kingdom. See Julius Wellhausen, *The Arab Kingdom and Its Fall*, translated from the German by Margaret G. Weir, Calcutta, 1927, reprinted Beirut, 1963.

drew its supporters from among those who rejected fanatical Khariji beliefs that called for violent opposition to authority. Quietists among believers were torn between the desire to live their lives according to their "beliefs and a cautious pragmatic approach to the political situation."[9] To avoid unpleasant outcomes, and no matter how influential its members were, `Ibadhi leaders kept their contacts with `Ummayad caliphs who valued the quietists.

True to Khariji arguments, `Ibadhis believed that the Caliph `Uthman (644–656 AD) had betrayed the Muslim community with whose welfare he was entrusted and that he had subsequently been deposed (and incidentally killed) at the will of the community.[10] Because `Uthman broke this fundamental constitutional measure, believers considered it their duty to actively disassociate themselves and withdraw their support from him. In the later `Ibadhi development of this theme, the imam was not automatically deposed (nor for that matter could he refuse to serve or resign, for it was a religious obligation to serve when elected); rather, the `ulama suspended judgment until such time as the two parties met together and, if it was adjudged that the imam was at fault, he was called on to make a formal repentance (tawbah). Provided he showed himself in earnest, his support was restored. This practice continued over the years and remains applicable to the religious leadership of Oman. The parallels of such concepts of leadership in the community with that of the tribe need no stressing. The fact that they are diametrically opposed to any form of dynastic rule poses critical problems especially at a time when dynastic rule may present an attractive solution to several monarchies in the Gulf region.

In Oman, the `Ibadhi ideal was to restore the pure Islamic state as it had existed before it started to be corrupted by `Uthman. In their early days, leading `Ibadhi scholars were concerned with the nature of the state.[11] According to "traditions transmitted from Abu Shaatha Jabar ibn Zaid Al-Yahmadi Al-`Umani (23 AH)"[12] and other `ulama, the need to assemble a corpus of `Ibadhi law was recognized, "to justify their claim that they developed a true legal system that was earlier and more authentic than that of the four orthodox

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[9]Wilkinson-Origins, op. cit., p. 75.

[10]One "accusation" that Ibn `Ibad lodged against `Uthman in his letter to the Caliph `Abd Al-Malik [a posteriori] was that the merchants of Bahrain and Oman could not sell their goods except through his state monopoly. It was from this fundamental issue that the idea of the powers and duties of the leader to the community (Imam al-Muslimin) were prescribed by the Prophet through the Quran and the Sunnah (to which can be added at a later stage, Ijma`). For further details, see Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi`i Islam: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi`ism*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985, pp. 75–85; see also Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1991, pp. 39, 243.

[11]J. C. Wilkinson, "The Ibadi Imama," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 39:3 (1976), pp. 535–551.

[12]AH = Anno Hegirae, AD = Anno Domini.

schools."[13] What is even more important in this context is that the Omani system of government has rigidly adhered "to a literal interpretation of the Shariah . . . from the level of the individual to the administrative and financial organization of the state." Whenever expediency called for different approaches, Omanis refused to waive their system of laws, and a rigid adherence to Shariah law, "along with the somewhat egalitarian principles of the Khawarij in general, has largely determined the social and economic organization of the country."[14] Given this determination to establish legal precedents to strengthen authority, the establishment of an `Ibadhi state in Oman followed an interesting pattern.

THE FIRST IMAMATE (720–1719)

`Abdallah ibn Yahya Al-Kindi along with Yemeni tribesmen captured Sanaa, Makkah, and Madinah at the end of the `Ummayad Empire. Al-Julanda ibn Masud, who played a crucial role in the actual establishment of the Imamate in 177 AH (799 AD), ushered in what was probably the most glorified period in Omani history until 1970. To be sure, the Ya`ribah Imams of the 17th century surpassed the first Imamate in garnering political power and wealth, but they cannot be compared to the first Imamate. In fact, later revivals of fundamental `Ibadhism, especially in the 18th and 19th centuries (Abu Nabhan Said ibn Khamis Al-Kharusi (1734/5–1822), Salim bin Rashid Al-Kharusi (1913–1920), and Muhammad ibn `Abdallah Al-Khalili (1920–1954)), were all influenced by the successful model of the first Imamate.

What made the first Imamate successful was the intrinsic ability of its leaders to unify Oman as a nation into which the Hadhrami `Ibadhi state was incorporated. In fact, "it represented the triumph of `Ibadhi theology over internecine tribal feudalism and conflict." Because the tribal disorder was at the roots of the development of `Ibadhi ideology in Basra, it was ironic that the first four missionaries were not from the major tribe, the Azd, then in power in the country. These distinguished men came from the Kindah, the Bani Samah, and the Riyami tribes. They devoted themselves to Oman and strove to establish an egalitarian system of government. Still, the `Ibadhi leaders gained power in Oman only by exploiting tribal weaknesses when some leaders pursued vendettas in the name of pious order. The Banu Hina, for example, were not reconciled to `Ibadhi traditions until years later. Nevertheless, as a new generation of men ruled Oman, a spirit of moderation—the true characteristic of Omanis—emerged, replacing old and often conflictual tribal

[13]Wilkinson-Origins, op. cit., p. 76.

[14]Wilkinson-Origins, op. cit., p. 76.

relations. Their piety notwithstanding, the early Imams never betrayed the Omani population's need to trade. Hence, many of the laws that were developed acknowledged the need for a sound commercial environment coexisting with basic agriculture.

These changes in governance did not mean the elimination of tribes in Oman. Rather, they meant that the Imamate redistributed the established power base. According to one assessment, "the Imamate became the prerogative of the Yahmad, the most powerful Azd clan, while the Bani Samah families of the Jawf [were] considered the Imam-makers."[15] This redistribution of power was best illustrated by the choice of the interior city of Nizwa as the Imami capital. To control and rule the tribes, it was correctly determined that the Imam must reside in the interior, close to his people, and this was the reason that the large coastal city of Sohar, for example, was not chosen as the Imami capital. To their credit, the Ya`ribah never lost sight of this critical principle, whereas the Al Bu Sa`id, on the other hand, alienated the peoples of the interior by making Muscat, Zanzibar, and then Salalah their capitals starting in the early 19th century.[16]

Nizwa was not a true capital city because no bedu society has known a sophisticated government machinery. Moreover, although the Imam was the leader of the community, local officials exercised a great deal of authority as well. Early on, `Ibadhi leaders agreed that no absolute power—and no absolute military might—should be in the hands of a single person. For example, one of the first `Ibadhis, Musa ibn Abi Jabir Al-Sami, called on his local governors to command `Ibadhi troops (Al-Shurat) before the selection of an Imam could begin.[17] When the security of the community was achieved, the Al-Shurat were disbanded, and only a small garrison of troops was kept to provide personal security to the Imam and local leaders. This solution was favored because under the Imamate, forces could easily be raised from local communities, whenever needed. Since all had sworn allegiance to assist the Imam when called upon to do so, this rule explained why Omani leaders remained in their respective villages and how the tribal balance was maintained in relative harmony for so long.

Given these numerous checks and balances, the `Ibadhi political-religious ideology proved to be an impractical basis for the permanent development of a

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[15]Wilkinson-Origins, op. cit., p. 77.

[16]The point was not lost to Sultan Qaboos, who has been conscious of the needs of the interior. In what must be a unique world phenomenon, Qaboos embarks on an annual tour of Oman that takes him close to his subjects. At a time when television is widely available, this annual exercise may seem futile but, in reality, remains a proven legitimizing tool of his rule.

[17]Wilkinson-Origins, op. cit., p. 78.

state in Oman. A new emphasis, stressing the vital need to preserve the nation, was adhered to and the tribal allegiances ensured that when the country was united, the population prospered. Consequently, leadership became the prerogative of a single group, which ensured the survival of this useful balance of power. What resulted was the establishment of temporal power (saltanah) that often led to a struggle for power among various tribes (assabiyah), sometimes resulting in outright civil war. Crisis situations were resolved when one of the parties called on outside assistance, often with disastrous results for Oman. This was the case during the first Imamate, of the Nabahinah, of the Ya`ribah, and of the Al Bu Sa`id, and it did not last.

When the Yahmadi Imam, Al-Salt ibn Malik Al-Kharusi, was deposed by the leading Sami scholar, Musa ibn Musa in 272 AH/886 AD (on the grounds of senility), a realignment of tribes—based on their settlement patterns—occurred. What ensued affected life in Oman for over 500 years, perhaps weakening Oman's nascent unity.

The rich Batinah coast fell under the control of the Yahmad, `Atik, Hina, and Salimah tribes, whereas the Huddan, Bani Harith, and Bani Samah tribes were excluded from this lush area. Earlier arrangements that allowed for settlements throughout the Batinah provided the latter with some resources and power. Not surprisingly, tribal skirmishes led the Yahmad alliance to seek revenge for its defeat at the battle of Rawdah, by killing Musa ibn Musa and plundering the property of the Bani Samah and Huddan in the Jawf. The Bani Samah and Huddan organized a force to march on Sohar, occupy the city, and declare the Huddani leader Imam. In the event, the raid failed, but the Samah called on the `Abbasids for assistance.[18] The `Abbasids took advantage of this internal dispute and invaded Oman. Yahmad tribesmen were soundly defeated and a sad chapter in Omani history was opened, during which the `Abbasid general, Al-Bur, ruled mercilessly. One of the most long-lasting effects of the `Abbasid rule was the whole destruction of Oman's qanat system that had facilitated the distribution of precious water throughout the country. It was not until the middle of the 11th century that `Ibadhi control was restored to the coast under the leadership of the Yahmad, who were, nevertheless, declared heretics for having organized and carried out the murder of Musa ibn Musa. This religious solution, embedded in Imam Rashid ibn Sa`id's (443 AH/1052 AD) religious decree (fatwa), divided Oman into the two schools of Nizwa and Rustaq. When the Yahmad insisted that their actions and interpretations were the correct ones, many `ulama defected to Sunni legal schools. In time, the Yahmad dropped their claims to the Imamate and it was their "Muluks" (rulers) who

[18]It may be worth noting here that all `Ibadhi religious norms were cast aside as the `ulama engaged in interminable and often bigoted debates. See Al-Wusami, op. cit., pp. 70–80.

finally succumbed to the Nabahinah (Atik Azd). Because of the spiritual split that was thus created, the Nabahinah were never able to unify Oman, and their dynastic rule soon declined.

These changes altered the Omani tribal structures as a gradual sedentarization led to the dispersal of many clans from their original settlement areas. The result was a weakening of the tribal structure and an end of many alliances established over the years. Second, the civil war witnessed the collapse of a "primitive tribal political heritage of the desert, and its partial replacement by locality alliances, [based] on the interests of lateral tribal relationships" in a particular region. It may be safely argued that the tribal confederations that dominate the Sultanate of Oman in the 1990s are partially the "product of this primary settlement pattern by the development of vertical locality ties of sedentarization."[19]

The Nabahinah rule proved that Oman was in a gestation period. The center of gravity of the country shifted to the Jawf, where the natural defenses of the region saved the last remnants of a national consciousness. Of course, this was achieved at the price of complete isolation starting at the end of the 9th century until the 17th, a period during which the interior was literally cut off from the wealth of the coast. In the interior, however, this isolation allowed for the development of unique introspection qualities that further shaped the Omani national character. In contrast, the people of the coast became oriented to maritime trading, establishing close alliances with the Indian subcontinent and beyond. A similar effort developed with the Zanzibari coast, links that survived until this century.

Importantly, the tribal alienation that occurred during the Nabahinah period proved enduring in isolating the interior. The tribes of the UAE, Qatar, and Bahrain sought political independence from the British while refusing to adhere to the historical Omani community. Moreover, the coastal tribes were forcefully converted to Sunni Islam (and they remain so today) by the Bani Samah after the end of the first Imamate. Clearly, this legacy was directly tied to events that occurred several centuries earlier, when the Nabahinah ruled.

Although the effect of this tribal division was resolved several decades ago, the northwestern regions of the Arabian Peninsula retain their defensive qualities. Similarly, the tribes of the northern area (i.e., in the UAE) need the support of those in the central area for strategic depth from potential Persian and Saudi threats. In the past, coastal ports fell to foreign powers, whereas the few oases fell to Bahraini dynasties. The Al Sa`ud eventually controlled the Buraymi region of Oman, further bringing them into the conflict.

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[19]Wilkinson-Origins, op. cit., p. 81.

With the Amir tribe in control of much of the Jawf, the unifying spirit of `Ibadhism weakened substantially, to the point that it was no longer possible to find judges (qadis) for the villages of the Ghadaf. Oman disintegrated as the Portuguese fortified their presence along the coast. The few remaining Omani tribes that retained control of their heritage were at loggerheads with each other, further postponing the day when Omanis could muster the necessary energy to regain control over their destiny. In the space of 25 years, however, Omanis would once again be reunited under the rule of an Azdi Imam and the Portuguese would be expelled. What emerged was a vast maritime empire that allowed the Ya`ribah to rival European powers. From the wealth of the Ya`ribah, "Oman, for a century or so, once again became a land abounding in fields and groves, with pastures and unfailing springs, ruled by its own Imamate government."[20] Another Imamate cycle would begin in 1869, after the empire rose and collapsed. It was more than a moment in the country's history, lasting for over 150 years, during which the borders of the empire stretched from the shores of the Indian subcontinent to those of Eastern Africa.

THE IMPERIAL AGE (1719–1868)

During the 9th centrury, Oman was mired in a particularly violent conflict with the Sunni center of authority in the fertile crescent, which had a long-lasting effect. Similarly, the elective nature of the Imam's office was seriously weakened when it was appropriated as the hereditary prerogative of the tribe that had the upper hand. Power passed from the Imams into the hands of the Nabahinah, who established the dynasty of the Muluks, in the middle of the 12th century. The influence of the Nabahinah remained predominant until 1624, when they were overthrown by the Ya`ribah, and Nasser bin Murshid established a line of hereditary Imams. Moreover, during his lifetime, Nasser bin Murshid succeeded in expelling the Portuguese from Sur, Quriyat, Muscat, and Sohar, which had been occupied since 1507.[21]

When Nasser bin Murshid died in 1719, rival Ya`ribah candidates emerged to succeed him. A period of unrest ensued with the Ya`ribah candidates soon overshadowed by the two chief protagonists on each side, Muhammad bin Nasser, Shaykh of the Bani Ghafiri, and Khalaf bin Mubarak, Shaykh of the Bani Hina. Almost all the tribes of Oman were drawn into the struggle, which divided the country into the great political factions of Ghafiri and Hinawi, a

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[20]Wilkinson-Origins, op. cit. p. 83.

[21]Phillips, op. cit., pp. 36–42.

rivalry that remained a significant factor in Omani politics for several generations.[22]

This period of political decay was capped by the Iranian occupation of Muscat and Sohar in 1743. The occupation created a reaction that "produced a remarkable leader who rose to revive the country's independence, restore her empire and supremacy in the Persian Gulf, and reassert the realm's unity." "This leader, Ahmad bin Sa`id, was a scion of a small Hinawi tribe of inner Oman, the Al Bu Sa`id," who truly shaped the history of modern Oman.[23] Unlike his predecessors, Ahmad bin Sa`id was notable for two features: First, since he had expelled the Persians and brought to an end a bitter civil war, his authority was based on more widespread support. As a result, despite some hostility from al-Ghafiri and Ya`ribah tribesmen, he achieved a greater measure of unity than the country had ever known. Second, although previous Imams had been dependent on their position as tribal leaders (as well as their fluctuating influences with their neighbors in the interior), Ahmad bin Sa`id was principally a merchant and ship owner who developed the maritime power of Muscat and Oman. His chief interest was to engage in major commercial ventures abroad, to enable him not only to gain power from the interior by winning the hearts of tribal leaders, but to exploit the coast's maritime resources to their fullest. It was the increasing importance of the coast, the result of Ahmad bin Sa`id's successes, that led his grandson Hamad (1784–1792) to transfer the capital from Rustaq to Muscat.[24]

A strong-willed ruler, Imam Ahmad imposed unity on Oman using whatever methods he deemed appropriate to achieve his objectives. Having consolidated his supremacy within the country, he carried on a successful struggle to restore Oman's dominance in the Persian Gulf, through both daring and luck. Ahmad entered into alliances whenever appropriate and fought bitter wars to strengthen Oman's maritime position. By the time of his death in 1783, Imam Ahmad "had definitely reestablished Omani preponderance in the Persian Gulf,

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[22]Ian Skeet, *Muscat and Oman: The End of An Era*, London: Faber and Faber, 1974, pp. 39, 66.

[23]Robert G. Landen, *Oman Since 1856: Disruptive Modernization in a Traditional Arab Society*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967, p. 58. See also Yaqub Al-Sharouni, *Sa`id Al-Kabir* [Sa'id the Great], Muscat: Ministry of Information,129-91, 1991.

[24]When Ahmad bin Sa`id died in 1783, he was succeeded as Imam by his son Sa`id bin Ahmad. The latter, who had no influence and was not a popular figure, was succeeded by his son Hamad within a year. When the capital was transferred to Muscat, Sa`id continued to exercise the religious functions of the Imamate in the old capital city until his death around 1821. During his lifetime, four successive members of the Al Bu Sa`id dynasty ruled in the country, and it was at this time that the rulers of Muscat and Oman, not wishing to arrogate to themselves the office of Imam, adopted the title of Sayyid (Lord). Later rulers were styled Sultan by Europeans, and both titles, Sayyid and Sultan, are used today in Oman. For further details, see J. E. Peterson, *Oman in the Twentieth Century: Political Foundations of an Emerging State*, London and New York: Croom Helm and Barnes and Noble, 1978, pp. 59–65.

strengthened the supremacy of Muscat as the Gulf's leading entrepôt, and had even concluded an alliance with the Ottomans, which netted his treasury a handsome sum each year in return for providing Omani naval protection for southern Iraq."[25]

The charismatic Ahmad bin Sa`id, who had understood that Oman's agricultural capabilities could not support a large population, favored intraregional trade to strengthen his political position and his people's fortunes. Under his rule, Muscat prospered but, upon his death, the Imam's second son, Sa`id, was elected Imam.[26] The ineffectual Sa`id commanded little respect and saw his son Hamad usurp "political control from his father, and move the capital to Muscat, where he ruled using the title Sayyid." In the capital city, Hamad flourished and, to maintain a peaceful relationship with the tribes of the Interior, supported the Imam in Rustaq with a generous subvention. When Imam Sa`id died, "no attempt was made to elect or appoint another Imam . . . nor did his successors ruling as temporal lords in Muscat, attempt to use the title of Imam."[27] Thus, Oman's capital was moved from Rustaq to Muscat in 1784, and the title "Sayyid" was introduced. Further, the name of the country was changed from "Oman" to "Muscat and Oman," thereby planting the seeds of yet another future division of the country, pitting traders and traditionalists.

Differences among ruling family members required a "family agreement" if they were not to consume each other. Under the leadership of Sultan bin Sa`id, an agreement was finally concluded at Barka, outside Muscat, in 1792. The Barka Pact resulted in a virtual dismemberment of Oman: Sa`id ruled in Rustaq as Imam; Qais was in charge of Sohar; and Sultan, the initiator of the agreement, reigned in Muscat. According to one historian,

> The compact of Barka was a tangible manifestation of the changes effected by two generations of Al Bu Sa`id rule. Sovereign power was now divided, the Imamate was falling into desuetude, and the most vigorous member of the ruling family, Sultan, was concerned almost wholly with maritime and commercial enterprises. Not unnaturally, a growing estrangement between the Al Bu Sa`id and the inland tribes developed, becoming more marked in succeeding generations. Oman's great need in the nineteenth century was for strong leadership and military strength.[28]

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[25]Landen, op. cit., p. 59.

[26]Hilal, Ahmad's elder son, was disqualified by blindness, and the vigorous sons, Sayf and Sultan, by their earlier opposition to their father. For further details, see John Townsend, *Oman: The Making of a Modern State*, London: Croom Helm, 1977, p. 39 and passim.

[27]Ibid., p. 39; see also John C. Wilkinson, *The Imamate Tradition of Oman*, London: Cambridge University Press, 1987, pp. 14–15 and passim.

[28]J. B. Kelly, *Britain and the Persian Gulf, 1795–1880*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968, as cited in Townsend, op. cit., p. 40.

Because it lacked the strong leadership and military strength to defend the country, Oman fell prey to two invasions between 1803 and 1807, both originating in the Najd in what is today Saudi Arabia. Were it not for an internal Al Sa`ud/Al Wahhab feud—that resulted in the assassination of the Saudi leader—Oman might well have come under the suzerainty of Saudi Arabia. In the event, Sayyid Sa`id bin Sultan was able to consolidate his power and gained a foothold in the Dhufar in 1829. The inhospitable Dhufar allowed him to earn needed credentials and, by 1832, he seriously began to cultivate his East African colonies, where opportunities and wealth abounded. Sa`id encouraged the spread of Arab influence along the East African littoral and developed one of the most lucrative trading axes in Asia. French and especially British interferences would eventually clip Sa`id bin Sultan's wings but, at the time, Oman was high on a significant economic perch. The architect of the Omani Empire died in 1856, his realm divided into Asian and African domains, each under the rule of a rival son. Although the history and practices of the interior shaped Thuwayni and Majid bin Sa`id's grievances, foreign interferences compounded the hostility that arose between the two brothers. The ambitions of tribal leaders further resulted in open warfare.

THE SECOND IMAMATE (1869–1954)

Faysal bin Turki was the first Al Bu Sa`id ruler to mount his throne peacefully in 1888. To be sure, the young man had to prove himself and unlike his father (who had nurtured special relationships with tribal leaders) wanted "to be the monarch of a united Oman truly independent of foreign tutelage."[29] Faysal was especially sensitive to excessive British influence and, to indicate his strong displeasure, sacked his pro-London Minister, Sa`id bin Muhammad.

His enthusiasm ran up against arch conservative tribal elements. In 1895, the situation reached a turning point when the tribes of the interior had found sufficient common cause for another major attack on Muscat. Led by Shaykh Salih bin `Ali Al-Harthy of the Sharqiyah, tribal forces gained the upper hand during the fighting and captured the city. Because of his anti-British tone, the Sultan was refused military help by his British "friends." This was a minor failure, however, because Faysal had recourse to two powerful alternatives: the Ghafiris and financial largesse. Opposition forces had neglected the powerful Ghafiris who, for the right amount of "gifts" were more than happy to fight for their Sultan. Faysal's reliance on the age-old Omani method of overcoming enemies—that is, borrowing money from the merchants to buy off the rebels—proved effective. His forces reoccupied Muscat on 10 March 1895, but

[29]Landen, op. cit., p. 365.

differences between the Sultan and tribal leaders arose again a few years later. Faced with a financial crisis, Faysal did not move to reconstruct his regime. Rather, he granted Paris a coaling station concession, which further irritated the British. The latter would eventually gain the upper hand but, at the time, they enthusiastically supported tribal efforts to revive the Imamate. When the Hinawi and Ghafiri joined together, it was natural that a new Imam, Shaykh Salim bin Rashid Al-Kharusi, would be elected. The 1913 election was not a permanent union, however. Sultan Faysal died later in 1913 and, ironically, his son Taymur received messages of loyalty from a number of leading tribal leaders in the interior, including `Isa, the leader of the Hinawi faction that elected Imam Al-Kharusi.

The Taymur-`Isa honeymoon was short-lived. Imam Salim and Shaykh `Isa reunited once again to execute their long-heralded assault on the capital in January 1915. They were not able to make a breakthrough and, although the Imam, the Shaykh, and the tribal leaders managed at very short notice to mobilize more than 3,000 men to fight the Sultan's well-trained force of 700 men, the adventure turned into a debacle.[30] With British assistance, the Sultan was able to repel the attack but unable to impose his will on tribal leaders. Similarly, the powerful men who ruled in the interior were unable to spread their beliefs to the coast. What emerged was not novel but served British interests well: The Sultan ruled Muscat and the Imam controlled the interior. A clear line had to be drawn between the two and this was achieved after a long succession of half-hearted negotiations between the Sultanate and the Imamate, under British tutelage.[31] The British assistance came about after India's viceroy, Lord Hardinge, visited Muscat in February 1915 and offered the services of the British Political Agent as a mediator. The Sultan accepted Lord Hardinge's suggestion, but the Imam's followers interpreted this decision as a sign of weakness. They banked on the Sultan's collapse and, consequently, delayed acceptance. Moreover, many wondered how impartial a British officer could be as a mediator, given the February 1895 skirmishes. These reservations notwithstanding, contact was established in April 1915, followed by talks between Shaykh `Isa and the British Political Agent, the former representing the Imam and the latter the Sultan.

Over a period of five years, these negotiations did not produce positive results. The Imam rejected the British military presence although he did not object to a political relationship. Tribal leaders also charged the Sultan with sedition because he allegedly "did not conform to their version of `Ibadhi practice," and demanded "that the British should not support him in matters contrary to

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[30]Landen, op. cit., p. 396.

[31]Landen, op. cit, p. 396.

religious truth." From the strict `Ibadhi point of view, the British "permitted the forbidden, such as the import and sale of wine and tobacco, but forbade the permitted, such as the trade in slaves and arms." The Imam's supporters objected to British claims that command of the sea was exclusive, insisting that it should be open to all. Moreover, they claimed that ordinary people were suffering from monetary fluctuations that affected the price of consumable products. Of course, these conditions "had been developing over many decades," but the dislocations associated with World War I "heightened the distress." In the end, the tribal leadership was willing to compromise and accept the Sultan as "Ruler of Oman" if he accepted some of their proposals. Heading their demands was the Imam's exclusive right to administer "the country according to religious law either personally or through a representative in Muscat."[32]

Sayyid Taymur bin Faysal rejected these demands when he became convinced that the Imam was not serious. For their part, the British realized that a successful reorganization of the regime required additional resources. When, in July 1920, Imam Salim bin Rashid Al-Kharusi was assassinated by a disgruntled Al-Wahibah tribesman, a climate "conducive to reaching an agreement" was created.[33] The election of the new Imam was held immediately, with Shaykh Muhammad bin `Abdallah Al-Khalili winning the tribal vote of confidence. Al-Khalili, who was a member of the Hinawi Bani Ruwahah, a confidant of `Isa bin Salih, and a grandson of Sa`id bin Khalfan Al-Khalili (who, in turn, was the chief organizer and advisor of the Imamate of Azzan bin Qais 50 years earlier), impressed all with his competence and sense of justice. A genuine effort was made in 1921 in Muscat to revamp law courts to represent the `Ibadhi version of Shariah. This, and a new British appeal to the Imam (to revive peace negotiations), suggested that positive steps were about to be introduced to the troubled political landscape. The austere Imam Salim, however, rejected the overture. Consequently, in search of a compromise solution to end the factional strife, "the Sultan's government increased penal taxes on Imamate-produced commodities up to almost 50 percent of the value of some classes of goods."[34]

With Al-Khalili in office as Imam, the atmosphere became more conducive for reaching a durable peace agreement between him and the Sultan, and a shift to a more conciliatory posture emerged. Negotiations resumed and, on 25

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[32]Landen, op. cit., p. 398.

[33]Landen, op. cit., p. 403.

[34]Landen, op. cit., p. 33.

September 1920, a treaty was signed at Seeb.[35] Vague in several respects, the treaty ensured that all parties would coexist in peace even if the "exact nature of the Sultan's rights of sovereignty in Oman [wa]s not detailed nor [wa]s the Imam specifically granted independence." Specifically, "nothing was said concerning the right of the Imam to carry on relations with foreign powers."[36] By and large, however, tribal leaders regarded the treaty's vagueness as being useful because the pact recognized two distinct regions in Oman, governed by two different regimes.

Undeniably, the country enjoyed relative peace and stability for the next three decades. The Sultan ruled the coast from Muscat, whereas the Imam ruled the interior from Nizwa. Two powerful rulers dominated the nation and, noticeably, worked and cooperated closely whenever needed in a modus vivendi that satisfied both sides. The Sultan retained charge of all external matters, corresponded with foreign governments, and adjudicated at the Muscat Appellate Court. In short, there was harmonious cooperation between Muscat and the interior on common interests. During the Saudi invasion of the Buraymi Oasis in 1952, for example, the Imam responded favorably to Muscat's request for a contingent of tribesmen from the interior. In turn, the Sultan acknowledged the right of the Imam to administer the interior by appointing governors (walis), judges (qadis), tax collectors, and other tribal officials, as needed.[37]

The balance of power between Sa`id bin Taymur and Muhammad bin `Abdallah Al-Khalili ended when the Imam died in May 1954. Sultan Said bin Taymur, on a quest for additional financial resources to meet the country's severe economic crisis, sent his troops to occupy Nizwa in December 1955. Oil exploration, which had gripped the Arabian Peninsula since May 1933 when the Standard Oil Company of California was granted its first exploration concession, galvanized the Sultan's attention. Sayyid Sa`id's father had granted a concession in 1925 to the D'Arcy Exploration Company to look for oil, gas, and minerals. At that time, the company did not find anything of commercial value and the concession lapsed three years later. Short on resources and mired in internal challenges, Taymur bin Faysal abdicated in favor of his son in 1932 and moved to India. Sayyid Sa`id realized that the prime reason for the erosion of Oman's independence was its chronic insolvency and consequent dependence

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[35]Many factors contributed to the successful conclusion of the Treaty of Seeb between the Sultan and the Imam. Pressures put by the Sultan on the Imam did not produce contemplated results. Moreover, the assassination of Imam Salim bin Rashid Al-Kharusi shocked his successors. Finally, Imam Al-Khalili won the hearts of many tribal leaders because of his moderate personality. See Landen, op. cit., p. 404.

[36]Landen, op. cit., p. 404.

[37]Eickelman, op. cit., pp. 6–9.

on financial support from outside powers, especially Britain. Sa`id developed a rare talent for husbanding his government's scarce financial resources without harming its limited effectiveness. Above all else, Sayyid Sa`id was eager to become economically independent, which naturally led him to new searches for oil. In 1937, a concession was awarded to the Iraq Petroleum Company Group, which was subsequently transferred to Petroleum Development Oman (and Dhufar) Limited.[38] What prevented a full development, however, was the lack of properly delineated borders between Oman, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia. From the mid-1930s onward, therefore, a race between oil specialists and diplomats started, to explore (and eventually produce) oil, before it was legally determined in which territory the fields were located. The Sultan failed to consult the Imam before granting his concessions, knowing full well that the exploration would be carried out in areas under the Imam's jurisdiction. Muscat calculated that the Imam's death would come sooner than the oil, further illustrating the intrigues of the time. Not surprisingly, the Imam and his supporters sought and received advice from Saudi forces that were still occupying parts of the Buraymi Oasis. An ambitious leadership in Riyadh welcomed the election of Shaykh Ghalib bin `Ali bin Hilal Al-Hinai as Imam and, soon after his election, encouraged him to proclaim his independence. The new "ruler" annulled the oil concessions granted by the Sultan in 1937 and, supported by three dignitaries of the interior, Shaykh Sulayman bin Himyar, Shaykh Salih bin `Isa, and the Imam's brother, Shaykh Talib, launched a major political opposition to Sayyid Sa`id bin Taymur.

THE BROKEN RULE OF SAYYID SA`ID BIN TAYMUR

Although the Imam abdicated, his brother refused to accept Sayyid Sa`id bin Taymur and, in the circumstance, appealed to Saudi Arabia for military assistance. Shaykh Talib banked on the Saudi desire to settle the Buraymi dispute in their favor, and anticipated suzerainty over the rest of Oman in exchange for his political support. Not surprisingly, Riyadh came through and provided him the resources needed to establish the Oman Liberation Army. Talib launched his "liberation" in 1957 only to meet the Sultan's British-trained and -equipped Armed Forces in several decisive battles. Sayyid Sa`id "lost sight of his earlier objective, to make Oman independent," but circumstances required that he welcome the Royal Air Force (RAF) and the Special Air Service (SAS) to help him keep the country united.[39] London wrested several

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[38]Francis Hughes, "Oil in Oman: A Short Historical Note," in Brian Pridham (ed.), *Oman: Economic, Social and Strategic Developments*, London: Croom Helm, 1987, pp. 168–176.

[39]Rosemarie Sa`id Zahlan, *The Making of the Modern Gulf States: Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Oman*, London: Unwin Hyman, 1989, p. 112.

concessions from the dependent Sultan, including a lease agreement of Masirah Island for the RAF, thereby establishing a significant foothold near the strategic Arabian Peninsula. Having defeated the rebels, Sayyid Sa`id moved to Salalah, from where he ruled in a most disinterested fashion. His neglect of the country galvanized homegrown opposition efforts and, by 1965, a full fledged rebellion was under way in the Dhufar. The reclusive ruler grew tired of his responsibilities and, save for spurts of enthusiasm to defeat rebel forces, left his country's governance to British officers serving him on secondment. The throne was occupied even if its authority was unrecognizable.

Chapter Three

THE MODERN OMANI STATE

I have undertaken the action against my father in an effort to place the country along the path of reconstruction and development.

—Sultan Qaboos[1]

Qaboos was heir not just to the throne he inherited from his father, but also to a dynasty that had provided Oman with impressive leaders. It was men like Ahmad bin Sa`id (1744–1783), Sultan bin Ahmad (1792–1804), Sa`id bin Sultan (1807–1856), and Turki bin Sa`id (1871–1888) who shaped the country's history and who gave its policies an overall direction. To Qaboos' credit, this rich legacy was not abandoned for foreign imitations and short-term revolutionary rhetoric. Following in the footstep of his predecessors, some of whom at different times acted in similar fashion, the Sultan acceded to the throne on 23 July 1970 with little save his determination to open the country to the world. His decision to rejuvenate Omani society, as well as the policy of infitah (openness), were both daunting tasks for what was then a rather fragmented country "struggling to achieve unity and modernization."[2]

Much like Charles de Gaulle, who had "a certain idea of France," Qaboos set out to reinvent Oman.[3] His greatest challenge was to end the Sultanate's isolation from the Gulf region, the Arab community, and the world at large. Since he was an unknown personality to most regional leaders, it was necessary for Qaboos to prove his independence, without reneging on commitments made to Britain

[1]Cited in Majid Khadduri, *Arab Personalities in Politics*, Washington, D.C.: The Middle East Institute, 1981, p. 241.

[2]Ibid., p. 242.

[3]The comparison with the French leader is appropriate because of similarities in style. De Gaulle referred to his "idea of France" and Qaboos aimed to "restore the past glories" of the Sultanate. See, for example, Charles De Gaulle, *Memoires de Guerre: L'Appel (1940–1942)*, Paris: Plon, 1954, p. 1 and "Speech of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Sa`id on the Occasion of the 2nd National Day, 18 November 1972," in Ministry of Information, *The Speeches of H. M. Sultan Qaboos bin Sa`id, Sultan of Oman, 1970–1990*, Muscat, 1991, p. 19.

by his predecessors. His "idea of Oman," which relied on age-old and proven principles, would mold much of his internal and foreign policies. Aiming to achieve lofty goals, maintaining the country's integrity and the population's dignity, Qaboos recalled how Omani empires had fared and, without wishing to reconstitute them, imagined a renaissance that would ensure a better life for his people. He would draw inspiration from the past, work diligently in the present, and look forward to the future, making sure that Omanis shared in these same aspirations.[4]

Proclaiming his intentions to modernize the country and to abolish unnecessary governmental restrictions imposed by his father, on 9 August 1970 Qaboos called on his uncle, Tariq bin Taymur, then in exile, to become Prime Minister and to form the Sultanate's first government. Sayyid Tariq (a younger brother of the deposed Sa`id bin Taymur), who was educated in Germany and was married to a German woman (his own mother was a Christian Circassian), was well versed in the business world. His command of Arabic, Turkish, English, and German, as well as his keen awareness of developments in the Gulf region—the result of extensive business representations—made him an ideal candidate for the newly created post. This critical appointment illustrated Qaboos' options. To be sure, the ruler was keenly aware that Oman had very limited political capacity. Sayyid Tariq was an exception, and although a bon vivant (his Beirut society life was well known), Tariq's savvy was a desperately needed commodity in Muscat. Well informed and intelligent, Tariq was a natural ally of his nephew as they both lamented Sultan Sa`id's regressions and lack of trust in the Omani population to lead a developed life. Unlike his brother, Tariq was liked and respected in Oman as well as among the large Omani exiled community throughout the Middle East, both of which made him a natural leader. For these reasons, members of the British planning committee advised the ruler to bring in his uncle in part to neutralize his enormous potential power. Perhaps this was a reason for the appointment, but a more logical explanation centered around Qaboos' desire to benefit from his uncle's experiences in the affairs of the world.

Both men realized that Oman's internal needs could not be satisfactorily met while the country remained isolated. Qaboos charged Tariq with the immense task of securing diplomatic recognition around the world even if regional disputes prevented accelerated resolutions. By necessity, attention was focused on border disputes on the Arabian Peninsula, and because Oman lacked de-

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[4]The historical legacy of Oman is discussed in Nur Al-Din `Abdallah bin Humayd Al-Salimi, *Tuhfat Al-Ayan bi-Sirat Ahl `Uman*, Cairo, 1966; see also Hamid bin Muhammad bin Ruzayq (ed.), *Al-Fath Al-Mubin Fi Sirat Al-Sada Al Bu Sa`idiyyun*, Cairo: Abd Al-Munim Amir and Muhammad Mursi, 1977; and Robert G. Landen, *Oman Since 1856: Disruptive Modernization in a Traditional Arab Society*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967.

fined boundaries, its destiny as a "state" was uncertain. Yet, neither Qaboos nor Tariq was willing to let circumstances determine their country's fate.

BORDER DISPUTES ON THE ARABIAN PENINSULA

The Sultanate faced several diplomatic challenges during the 1950s concerning its borders, which began to take on a new significance with the discovery of oil in the Arabian Peninsula. Defined borders first emerged as an issue in 1901 when London feared that Paris might establish a foothold in the Persian Gulf by securing an agreement with a ruler who managed to slip through their treaty web. To secure their crucial lines to India, the British were also looking for a naval base, which would allow for a permanent presence in the Indian Ocean. They therefore wanted to know what Oman's borders were, so that they could include certain territories in their domain under the Exclusive Agreement of 1891 as well as the Anglo-French Declaration of 1862.

The most complicated concern arose in the Buraymi oasis, which encouraged several parties to get involved. The Buraymi oasis region was divided among nine villages and five different tribes. Whichever tribe controlled it exercised a great deal of influence as to who had access to the coast. From the Buraymi, caravans moved via the Wadi al-Jizzi, the Dhahirah, and the Interior of Oman to the Trucial coast. It was this privileged location that gave it great strategic importance.

A border dispute did not start until 1933, when the Al Sa`ud awarded an oil concession to the ARAMCO conglomerate. Not surprisingly, the company wanted to know how far east and south its concession extended, whereas Britain, representing local tribal interests (although without the knowledge of any of the leaders subject to the conflict), claimed that the border had been defined in two agreements with the Ottoman Empire. London's reference to these two agreements—the Blue Line and the Violet Line—introduced a period of sustained conflict. The Blue Line, contained in the unratified Anglo-Ottoman Convention of 1913, set the southern boundary, whereas the Violet Line, in the 1914 Anglo-Turkish Convention, established the eastern boundary. In 1936, London notified Sultan Sa`id bin Taymur of border negotiations between the different rulers and, presumably, the Omani approved a border proposed by the British in 1937. World War II, however, caused the suspension of these talks before an agreement could be reached.[5]

[5]For a full discussion of border disputes on the Arabian Peninsula, as well as detailed analyses of the Blue and Violet Lines, see John C. Wilkinson, *Arabia's Frontiers: The Story of Britain's Boundary Drawing in the Desert*, London and New York: I. B. Tauris and Company Limited, 1991, pp. 3–109.

Following the war, the question of borders was rekindled when in 1949 Riyadh laid a claim to Buraymi. What complicated matters enormously was the Al Sa`ud's decision not to negotiate with Sultan Sa`id and the British. Saudi Arabia did not want to negotiate with Britain over its borders with Oman and, similarly, London did not allow Sultan Sa`id bin Taymur to determine his nation's destiny. Although the British sought evidence for Sa`id's claim, and the tribes of Buraymi proclaimed their independence or allegiance to the Saudis or Abu Dhabi, Riyadh forced the issue by occupying the entire oasis in August 1952. Sultan Sa`id immediately joined forces with the Imam. The two men gathered an army at Sohar to march on the Saudi garrison at Buraymi but, ironically, London interfered and prevented the assembled force from moving into the disputed area.

In October 1952, London and Riyadh agreed to a temporary solution that allowed Saudi forces to continue their occupation of the oasis while talks progressed. An agreement was reached in 1954 to seek arbitration, but almost immediately after a meeting in Geneva in September 1955, the talks collapsed. The British then expelled the Saudi garrison from the Buraymi, using their Trucial Oman units. Almost five years passed before a UN fact-finding committee, under the direction of Herbert de Ribbing, attempted to resolve the matter, but little was achieved. Talks in 1963 were also unsuccessful and in this instance, as well, the border remained divided between Abu Dhabi and Oman.[6]

Why did the Buraymi dispute follow this difficult trek and what were the reasons behind the international crisis that preoccupied Muscat?

In 1947–1948, Petrolum Development Oman (PDO) resumed its search for oil in the Trucial coast and the Buraymi districts. At the time, boundaries remained unclear in the whole area. Yet, because ARAMCO did not want to be shut out of a potentially lucrative concession area, its survey teams moved into the region in 1948. The area included the eastern limits of the Rub al-Khali, very close to the Trucial coast, where survey crews were moving faster than diplomats in determining boundaries. The inevitable occurred in April 1949, when a British political officer in Abu Dhabi "ordered an ARAMCO survey party to leave a place he claimed was part of Abu Dhabi." The British were annoyed that the survey team was accompanied by armed Saudi elements "evidently unaware that such an escort was standard on all ARAMCO survey operations in Arabia wherever these happened to be located."[7] The Al Sa`ud rejected this ultimatum and, to register their displeasure, lodged a formal complaint with the British

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[6]Husain M. Al-Baharna, *The Arabian Gulf States: Their Legal and Political Status and Their International Problems*, 2nd ed., Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1975, pp. 196–207.

[7]Landen, op. cit, p. 416.

ambassador. They also presented a counterclaim that the area where the team was surveying was in fact Saudi territory. This was the genesis of the Buraymi dispute that preoccupied several governments not only over the nine villages in the oasis but also over the thousands of miles of unprospected lands.

It was into this Byzantine dispute that the Sultan, as well as the Imam, were drawn. Regional concerns aside, London believed that its future could "be affected by the outcome of this dispute, not only because much of British and Western European industry was powered by Persian Gulf oil, but also because of the financial benefits—particularly in regard to the availability of new investment funds—that would accrue if sterling bloc companies and local princes friendly to Britain dominated any major new oil fields in the Persian Gulf."[8]

Although negotiations continued between 1949 and 1952, little was achieved in determining the frontier. Periodically, survey parties and troops clashed, often with tragic consequences for both Saudi and Trucial Oman Scouts. By October 1952, both Imam Muhammad and Sultan Sa`id bin Taymur became convinced that the Al Sa`ud were on an expansionist track, bent on taking all of Buraymi by force. The Sultan persuaded the Imam that the two should join forces to counter this eventuality while London was exerting immense pressures on Muscat. Ironically, these restrictions meant that the Imam would be free to act unilaterally, which, in turn, increased the Sultan's dependence on Britain. As fate would have it, Imam Muhammad bin `Abdallah died in May 1954. The new Imam was beset with an unusually high number of pressures, and his lack of experience in tribal intrigues meant that controversy would follow him everywhere. In September 1954, London became convinced that the Imam was receiving Saudi financial and military assistance and was about to become Riyadh's pawn in ongoing oil prospecting. Because the British themselves were testing in the area of Fahud (today the Sultanate's main oil fields), the news that the Al Sa`ud were scheming to make a deal perturbed them. Given that Fahud fell in an undetermined area on the edge of the Rub al-Khali, London fought mercilessly to protect its perceived interests. Imam Ghalib was subjected to a slew of rumors implying that he was no more than a figurehead and that the real power brokers in Nizwa were Sulayman bin Himyar and the Imam's energetic younger brother, Talib bin `Ali. In addition to accusations lobbed against the Imam, Sulayman bin Himyar and Talib bin `Ali were accused of being more interested in profit making than genuine concern for Oman.[9]

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[8]Landen, op. cit, p. 417.

[9]Although these developments occurred over four decades ago, they remain highly sensitive for most Omanis. Government officials who lived through this controversial period, however, confidentially confirmed this analysis.

The Sultan reacted to these allegations and accusations by sending the Muscat and Oman Field Force, supplemented with Duru tribal detachments, to occupy `Ibri in September 1954. Sayyid Sa`id reasoned that he should take advantage of anti-Imamate sentiments in the Dhahirah and, by occupying `Ibri, created a wedge between the Imam's territory and the Saudi outpost at Buraymi. Having lost an important battle (and town), the Imam sought a diplomatic solution to his dilemma. In the event, he instructed Talib bin `Ali to apply for membership in the League of Arab States (LAS) on 25 November 1954. In this instance, the rationale was to win diplomatic sympathy from Arab regimes whose anticolonial efforts had won certain tangible concessions. In a bizarre twist, League officials, uncertain how to respond to a request from a relatively unknown Imam (even if his communication assured everyone that Oman was governed according to the Shariah), turned to Riyadh and Sanaa for counsel. Almost a year later, the League formally accepted the Imamate's application but chose not to take any action. In the Interior of Oman, however, Imam Ghalib was defeated and the LAS was never called again to vote on the Imamate's membership application. This diplomatic failure did not deter the Al Sa`ud from searching for an alternative solution.

When negotiations also failed between the British and Saudis—who were haggling over technicalities in Geneva—London acted decisively. On 26 October 1955, Trucial Oman Scouts, operating under express orders from Sultan Sa`id bin Taymur and Shaykh Shakhbut bin Sultan (of Abu Dhabi), marched into Buraymi, expelled a small Saudi police detachment, and occupied the oasis in toto. London maintained that it was left with no choice but to impose a solution to the border dispute because of the machinations allegedly orchestrated by the Al Sa`ud. To buttress their use of force, the British invoked the 1937 "Riyadh Line" provision which, not surprisingly, left most of the disputed lands (where the British were eager to prospect for oil) under the full control of Abu Dhabi and Muscat. As expected, the Al Sa`ud refused to acknowledge this decision by fiat, even though they were outnumbered and outgunned. Consequently, this British-imposed "solution" was left unchallenged, because London was determined to impose its will at all costs. There could be no permanent solution on either the Imamate or border disputes, as long as the Al Sa`ud "marauded" in British-controlled areas.

The disputes forced the Sultan to act in a drastic fashion even though British actions were not always in Oman's best interests. Sayyid Sa`id bin Taymur was convinced that Imam Ghalib had violated the spirit if not the letter of the 1920 Treaty of Seeb—the imamate was autonomous but not independent—and, fearing that Nizwa's alignment with Saudi Arabia might weaken his rule, he

moved against the interior in late 1955. With British assistance, the Sultan's Armed Forces were divided into four, relatively well equipped, units.[10]

All four military units converged on `Ibri and rolled into Nizwa by mid-December 1955. On the 17th, Sultani units stormed Rustaq, where Talib bin `Ali put up a stiff resistance. Shortly after these lightning blows, Sayyid Sa`id bin Taymur entered Nizwa after enduring an unprecedented overland crossing of 600 miles from Salalah in the south. It was a well-orchestrated rout and the Imamate's leadership was forced to scatter. The Sultan defended his annexation of the Interior by asserting that the Imam had violated the Treaty of Seeb because he allegedly plotted with the Al Sa`ud to create a completely sovereign Imamate.[11]

The rout convinced Sulayman bin Himyar and Imam Ghalib to make their peace with the Sultan, but Talib bin `Ali refused to acquiesce. Rather, he chose self-exile in Dammam, Saudi Arabia, from where he vowed to overthrow the Sultan. For a short period of time, Riyadh considered lodging a formal protest against London but dropped the idea of going to the Security Council. Elsewhere in the Middle East, the British were embroiled in worse circumstances and, in the aftermath of the 1956 Suez crisis, Riyadh broke diplomatic relations with London. For a time, Talib bin `Ali, along with Salih bin `Isa and Muhammad bin Hamad Al-Harthy, moved to Cairo, where they established an "Imamate of Oman Office" whose purpose was to publicize the "British occupation of Arab Oman."

Talib bin `Ali knew, however, that a public relations campaign would not result in a voluntary British withdrawal from Oman. Consequently, starting in 1957, he arranged for the smuggling of arms and revolutionary forces into Oman. By mid-1957, Talib bin `Ali felt confident enough to rejoin his brother who, galvanized by his "men," reactivated the Imamate in Nizwa. Barely a month later—July 1957—all of the major towns of the interior were once again flying the white banner of the Imamate. Distressed by Muscat's economic crisis, and disappointed by London's lack of effective support, the Sultan did not rush to suppress the restored conservative government. To be sure, Sayyid Sa`id bin Taymur perceived the rekindled Imamate as a revolt against his rule, whereas the Imam perceived it as a war that sought an independence forcibly denied in 1955. Their stalling tactics aside, the British eventually appreciated the gravity

[10]The four units were the Dhufar Force stationed in Salalah, the motorized Muscat and Oman Field Force based at the PDO camp at Fahud, the Batinah Force stationed at Sohar, and the old Muscat Scouts based at Bayt Al-Falaj near the capital. See J. E. Peterson, *Oman in the Twentieth Century: Political Foundations of an Emerging State*, London and New York: Croom Helm and Barnes and Noble, 1978, pp. 180–187.

[11]Landen, op. cit., pp. 420–421.

of the situation and decided to rush sorely needed military assistance to Sa`id bin Taymur. The Sultan's forces reoccupied Nizwa by September 1957 despite substantial Saudi aid to Imami forces. Uncompromising conservative holdouts were eventually dragged out from the Jabal al-Akhdar region and by January 1959, the Imam, Talib bin `Ali, and Sulayman bin Himyar, were forced to leave. They finally set up a government in exile in Dammam. Soured by the decade-long crisis, the Sultan further hardened his opinion of Saudi Arabia as a potential regional partner. London welcomed Riyadh's calls to reopen arbitration talks, but Sayyid Sa`id remained steadfast in his opposition to such proposals. He returned to Salalah, never to leave Dhufar until 1970 (see Map 4).

On the international front, Sayyid Sa`id was disillusioned by the United Nations investigation. The diplomatic crisis was set in motion in August 1957 when the Security Council considered the "armed aggression by the United Kingdom against the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Imamate of Oman." The motion failed to win a place on the agenda, but in September 1957 ten Arab states requested that the Oman Question be considered by the General Assembly. According to their claim, the Imamate had been invaded by British-led forces in December 1955. The issue was assigned to the Special Political Committee. In hearings that followed, the British delegate, representing Muscat, maintained that the Sultan's authority had been recognized in international treaties, that the Treaty of Seeb had not ended that sovereignty, and that military assistance had been rendered at the request of the Sultan. Furthermore, the British concluded, the whole discussion was an interference into the internal affairs of the Sultanate and was against the charter of the United Nations. London's pleas fell on deaf ears, and in September 1959, Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold took up the question informally. A year later the "Question of Oman" was placed on the General Assembly agenda.

THE QUESTION OF OMAN AT THE UNITED NATIONS

Between 1960 and 1963, the Question of Oman was considered by the Special Political Committee, although none of its recommended resolutions were adopted by the Assembly. In 1962, the Committee approved a draft resolution by which the Assembly would have "expressed the conviction that a speedy restoration of independence to Oman was necessary for peace and stability in the area; recognized the right of the peoples of Oman to self-determination and independence; called for the withdrawal of foreign forces from Oman; and invited the parties concerned to settle their differences peacefully."[12] This draft failed to receive the necessary two-thirds majority and was never adopted.

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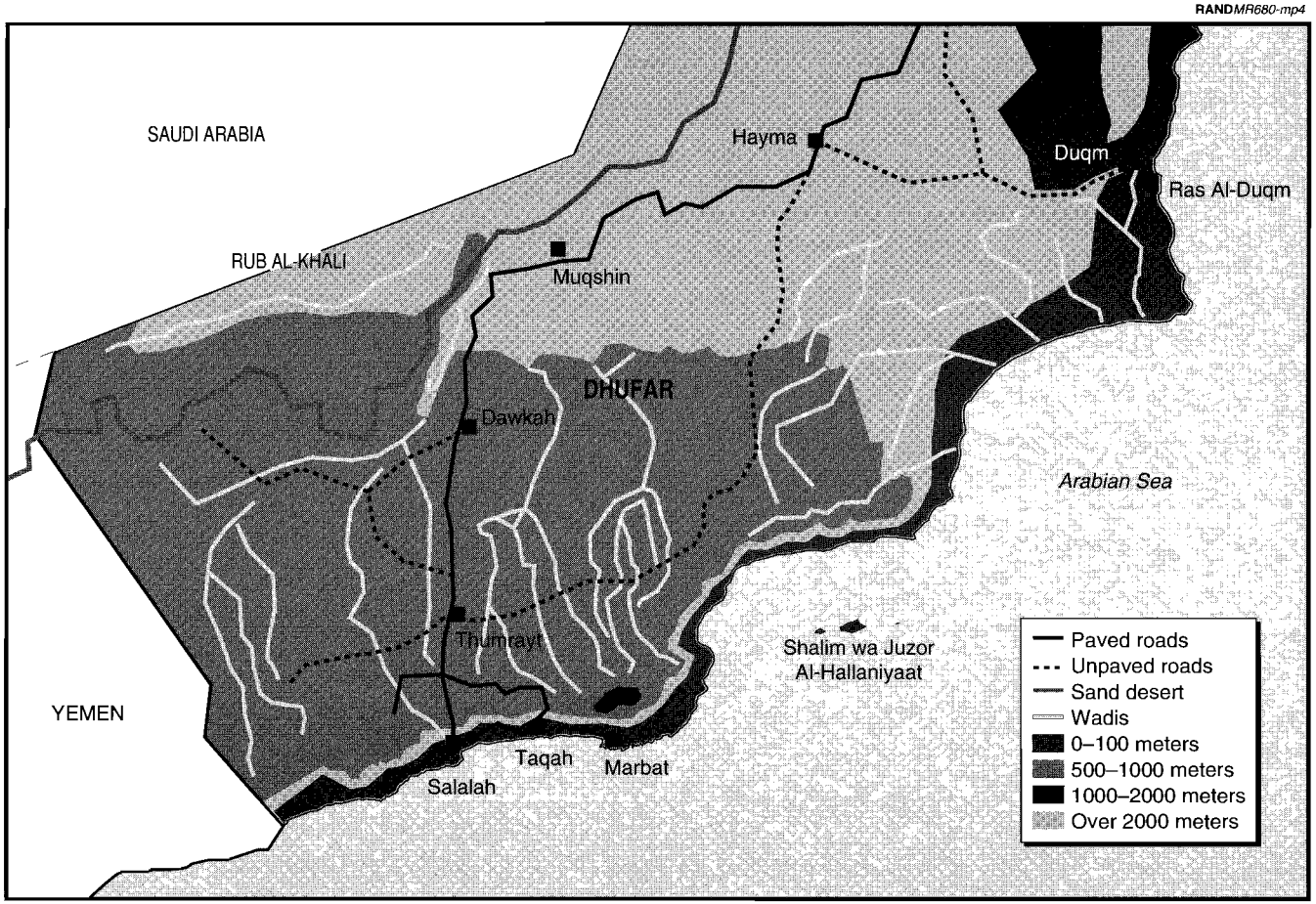
[12]"The Question of Oman," *Yearbook of the United Nations 1962*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1964, p. 147.



Map 4—Dhufar Province of Oman

Map 4—Dhufar Province of Oman

A year later, the discussion moved to the Fourth Committee, which established an Ad Hoc Committee on Oman mandated to report the results of its investigation at the next session. To preempt whatever recommendations the Ad Hoc Committee may have made, the representative of the United Kingdom informed the General Assembly on 11 December 1962 that the Sultan of Muscat and Oman, while preserving his position, was prepared to invite, on a personal basis, a representative of the Secretary-General to visit the Sultanate to obtain first-hand information. Seizing this opportunity, the Secretary-General appointed Herbert de Ribbing, the Swedish Ambassador to Spain, as his special envoy. Ambassador de Ribbing visited Oman during May and June 1963 and submitted a report to Secretary-General U Thant in August.[13]

With de Ribbing's report on hand, the Question of Oman was considered by the General Assembly in late October and November 1963. The issue raised by Arab states was that the people of Oman were still denied their right to freedom and independence. They further maintained that, in view of the continued policy of repression pursued by the British and their failure to end a colonial rule in accordance with the 1960 U.N. Declaration on granting independence to colonial countries, the Assembly should focus on this question as an essentially colonial problem.[14]

The multiyear debate at the United Nations preoccupied diplomats until December 1965, when the General Assembly adopted a resolution deploring Britain's attitude and, recognizing the inalienable right of the people of Oman to self-determination and independence, called on London to (a) cease all repressive actions against the Omanis, (b) withdraw British troops, (c) release political prisoners and allow the return of political exiles to the Sultanate, and (d) eliminate British domination in all its forms.[15] This was a major defeat for London, whose representative was livid with anger and outrage. Regardless of this diplomatic loss, however, London was not about to comply with the wishes of the General Assembly especially where it believed its national security interests lay. It was instructional, nevertheless, to note how responsive the British were to changes in Oman after this resolution was passed in New York.

In an exchange of letters in July 1958, the British formalized their military position in Oman and persuaded Sayyid Sa`id bin Taymur to begin a development

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[13]United Nations, *Report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on His Visit to Oman*, A/5562 (the de Ribbing Report). General Assembly, Official Records, 18th Session, Annexes, Agenda Item Number 78, 8 October 1963, pp. 2–24.

[14]The Arab states that called for this measure were Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Republic and Yemen. See "The Question of Oman," op. cit., 1961, pp. 194–195.

[15]Resolution 2073 (XX), *Yearbook of the United Nations 1965*, New York: United Nations, 1967, pp. 229–230.

program. An agreement later in the year terminated the nonalienation bond of 1891. There is little doubt that both of these actions were taken in light of the long-drawn-out debates at the United Nations. Once these agreements had been concluded, however, the Oman Question gained attention because of the military campaign on the ground. London opened its throttles by significantly increasing military assistance to Muscat to suppress the Jabal al-Akhdar revolt. The Sultan regained a firm control of the country, and the UN found itself concerned with more pressing matters in the Congo, Cyprus, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia. Oman ceased to be a concern for the world body. The only noticeable change in its ties with the United Kingdom was termination of extra territoriality in 1967.[16]

The de Ribbing report conclusions—that Omanis harbored no desire for independence and that accusations against the Sultan were unfounded—proved embarrassing to both Britain and Sayyid Sa`id bin Taymur. It was only after Qaboos acceded to the throne in 1970, when the Sultanate broke out of its isolation and became a member of both the Arab League and the UN, that the Oman Question finally disappeared from the General Assembly's agenda. Although its original sponsors neglected to call for its implementation, Sayyid Sa`id was very bitter about it, and that bitterness probably played an important part in his decision to shun publicity after 1958. Disappointed by the many international machinations that required his attention, he seems to have willfully left the ball in Britain's court. For Sa`id bin Taymur, the United Nations was a distant organization that could have little effect on his Oman. Despite his world tour, he failed to appreciate the UN's growing importance, especially in the economic arena, but this too may well have been colored by the attitudes of his British advisers. Nevertheless, Sa`id consented to Britain's annual defense of the Sultanate, which the British representative in New York undertook assiduously. Still, at no time was he comfortable with the war of words that pitted Britain against the majority of the newly independent developing world, and at no time was he confident that Muscat could escape its diplomatic isolation. That outcome, Sayyid Sa`id bin Taymur may well have concluded, rested in his son's hands.

TO RULE AND TO GOVERN

Since Sultan Sa`id bin Taymur had chosen to conduct foreign relations through London, there were no Omani diplomatic representations anywhere in the world in 1970. The extent of foreign representations in Muscat were the British and Indian consulates and the yearly (sometimes twice yearly) visits of a U.S.

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[16]Calvin H. Allen, Jr., *Oman: The Modernization of the Sultanate*, Boulder, Colorado, and London: Westview Press and Croom Helm, 1987, pp. 111–114.

consular agent from Saudi Arabia. Sultan Qaboos and Sayyid Tariq set out to immediately establish diplomatic relations with Arab and other leading states.[17] Because of Tariq's numerous contacts with many influential leaders in the Arab world, the task was facilitated immeasurably, and Oman was quickly admitted into the League of Arab States in 1971 against, ironically, the opposition of Iraq and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. Membership in the United Nations followed in October 1971. The fact that Tariq spent much of 1971 out of Oman—pleading the Sultanate's case on the world scene—in some ways explained his lack of attention to internal matters. In the event, the experiment with a prime minister failed, creating a temporary setback. Why did that first trial with a prime ministership blunder?

It failed, first, because there was no precedent for any divisions of power. In earlier rulerships, ministers served the Sultan with a clear separation of authority. The hastily devised prime ministership did not allow for such a clear distinction and whether Oman was ready for a structured government was, of course, highly debatable. What was unmistakable, however, was the Sultan's unwillingness to dilute his power. For his part, Tariq was not prepared to accept a simple administrative role, either. Ironically, no one other than Tariq was qualified to assume governmental responsibilities and, in any event, the need to replace him with another prime minister was not considered.

Second, British interferences did a great deal to ensure the failure of the prime ministership, as even a partial shift of authority into the hands of someone they did not trust, meant a sharp diminution of their influence with the Sultan.

Third, and despite all their public support to Tariq, regional leaders loathed the establishment of a precedent in their neighborhood. The rulers on the Arabian Peninsula reminded Qaboos of the need to maintain a form of government that was well suited for their tribally-based societies. Many, if not all, viewed the prime ministership as the first step in the establishment of a constitutional government in which the role of the ruler would not be paramount.

What emerged was a pressure cooker that threatened the stability of a young country. Under the circumstances, Qaboos adopted several key decisions to streamline his fledgling government. Over British objections, he brought in several Arab advisers to recommend appropriate development projects. He also appointed Tariq his senior adviser and asked several British advisers to leave. Simply stated, with the passing of time Qaboos concluded that they were not politically qualified. Finally, although Tariq contemplated the idea of a constitutional monarchy in Oman, neither he nor the Sultan was ready for political experimentation. The Sultan told a Lebanese journalist that

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[17]See Appendix H for a list of countries with which Oman has established diplomatic relations.

> It was not possible to follow the Western tradition of democratic systems. We are not yet ready to embark upon this stage. We have no constitution. We have no chamber of deputies.[18]

Critics concluded that Sultan Qaboos rejected the establishment of a popularly elected constituent assembly. To be sure, a rival organization with effective power would have created a potentially threatening environment to Qaboos, especially in the early 1970s. The criticism, however, was proven shallow as the Sultan encouraged the gradual development of a semiparticipatory form of government, with additional steps anticipated over a period of time.

Qaboos' Arab advisers reduced his reliance on British support as the Arab connection introduced him to the Egyptian, Jordanian, and Saudi leaderships, increased opportunities to receive financial support from alternative sources, coordinated intelligence and surveillance capabilities, and recruited development experts.[19] These additions produced two interesting results. First, there was a noticeable change in the country's outlook and, second, Qaboos grew in the position.

Indeed, Sa`id bin Taymur's policies of looking to the Indian subcontinent for services that the British failed to provide were rapidly amended. The vast Arab world was tapped for whatever Oman needed, thereby ending the Sultanate's three-century-long isolation. This was, after all, an Arab country with deep roots in the Muslim world and was not, naturally, part of the West. Of course, Muscat was keen not to import the Arab world's perennial problems, ranging from the repercussions of the Arab-Israeli conflict to a confrontation with Western powers. Rather, a subtle effort was made to place the country within the larger Arab orbit while reserving the right to alter course as needed. Moreover, the change in outlook did not mean that Muscat was distancing itself from Islamabad in favor of Cairo (geography dictated that the Pakistani capital was closer than the Egyptian), but that it was involved in a period of serious reassessment. Qaboos was not about to alter policies. Still, as he grew into the position, he redefined the Sultanate's interests and acted upon them. His enemies continued to distrust him, but his authority at home rose steadily. A strong foundation of trust was laid by the ruler who did not flinch from taking difficult, and at times painful, decisions. Omanis came to see that Qaboos was no longer relying on his British advisers alone. When the Sultan lost his trust in any individual, including the British Secretary of Defense who helped him take over from his father, he removed that individual and this too was publicly

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[18]*Al Watan*, Muscat, 6 April 1972, in Townsend, John, *Oman: The Making of a Modern State*, London: Croom Helm, 1977, p. 93.

[19]Jeff Gerth and Judith Miller, "Ex-Intelligence Agents Are Said to Have Major Roles in Oman," *The New York Times*, 26 March 1985, p. A8.

noted. Within a matter of a few years, the British political clout evaporated as the Sultan came to rule in toto.

By the mid-1970s, a number of ministries were created and portfolios assigned to prominent individuals, while the Sultan retained for himself the key posts of internal security, defense, finance, and oil affairs (see Map 5). This privatization of cabinet positions and the elusive way in which the Sultan conducted his government's defense and foreign affairs created major obstacles in coordinating activities within and among the ministries.

Between 21 January 1973 and 14 December 1979, the Omani cabinet was reshuffled 11 times as ministerial departments grew from 8 to 23, and a number of specialized bodies were set up, including the National Defense Council (11 March 1973), to act as a consultative branch to the Sultan, the Interim Planning Council (7 March 1972),[20] chaired by Thuwayni bin Shihab, and the Central Bank of Oman (December 1974) under the governorship of Tariq bin Taymur.[21] To be sure, these changes illustrated the economic progress under way. By 1975, however, few political steps had been taken to give Oman a written constitution or a parliament. Political parties were also not allowed. The scarcity of such institutions raised serious questions about Oman's political future. Nevertheless, Qaboos was persuaded that an effective parliamentary system could exist only when Omanis matured politically and exercised their freedom of speech in a more responsible way. According to Qaboos,

> a parliament whose members we will choose can be created; we can create a phony parliament to give the impression of a semblance of democracy in our country. All this is possible, but does it correspond to the aim for which a parliament is supposed to exist? We need more time to reach this stage.[22]

There was more than an element of truth in this declaration. With few trained Omanis and a high level of illiteracy (65–70 percent) among its population, the Sultanate was not ready to experiment with political systems in the late 1970s and early 1980s. By the late 1980s, on the other hand, social development and rapid modernization increased the demand for legislation dealing with such issues as labor regulations, banking, investment, and exploration of natural resources, among other things. As economic activity picked up in the Sultanate, the burdensome task of drafting legislation by decree took its toll on the ruler and his Council of Ministers. Inasmuch as the arbitrary decisionmaking pro-

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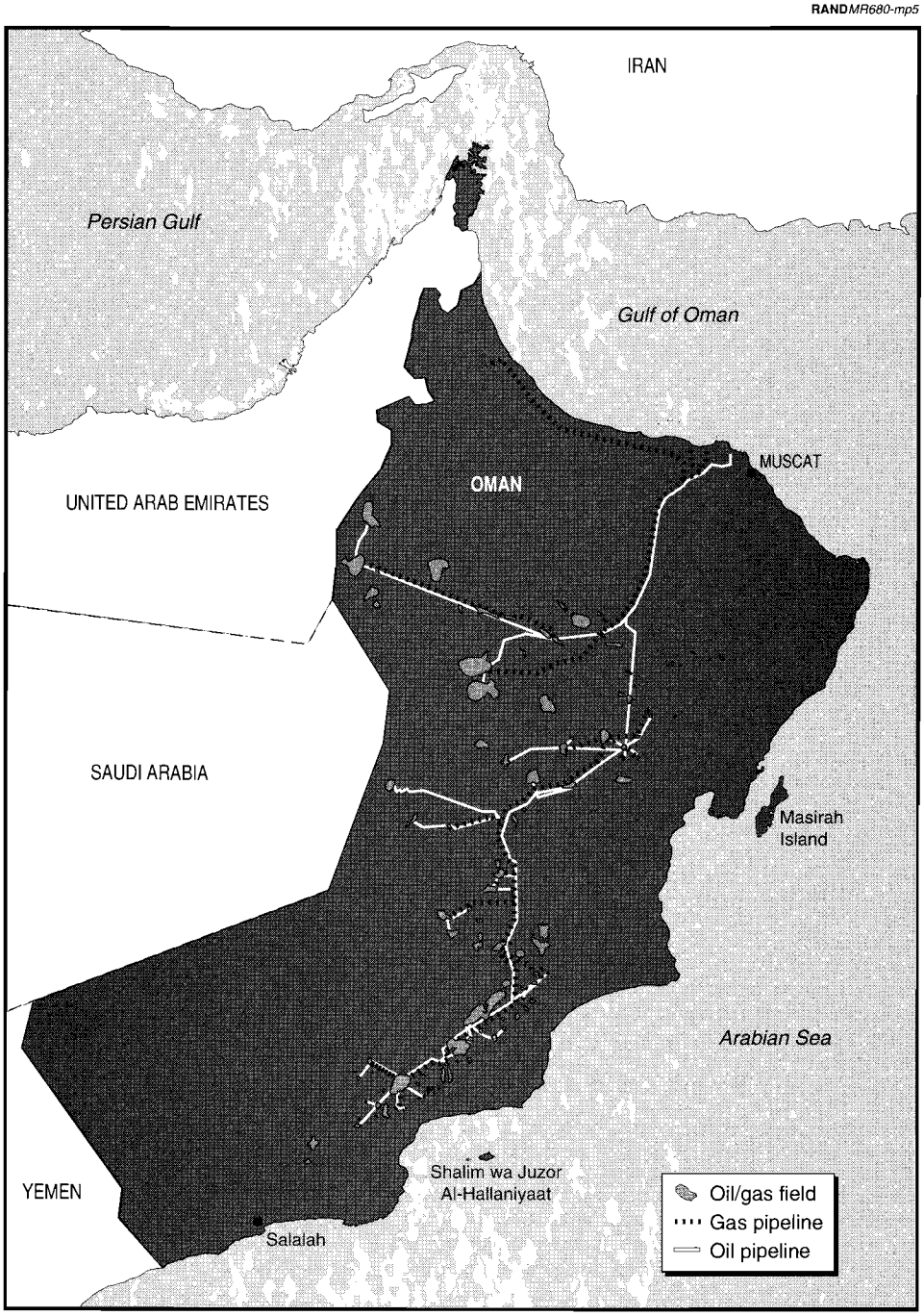
[20]This body was replaced in September 1972 with a Supreme Council for Economic Planning and Development—later the Ministry of Development.

[21]F. A. Clements, *Oman: The Reborn Land*, London: Longman, 1980, pp. 75–90.

[22]Attia Adel Moneim Attia, "Oman," in Albert P. Blaustein and Gisbert H. Flanz (eds.), *Constitutions of the Countries of the World*, Dobbs Ferry, New York: Oceana, 1974, p. 3.



SOURCE: Annual Report, Petroleum Development Oman LLC, 1991.

Map 5—Oman—Oil and Gas Fields

cess created some resentment among merchants and members of the small intelligentsia, Muscat opted for added participatory steps, in part to alleviate some of the political burdens that overwhelmed it.

Several government officials proposed to enlarge popular participation through the Council on Agriculture, Fisheries and Industry (CAFI). Until that time, the purpose of the 12-member appointed council was to encourage citizen participation in identifying priorities pertaining to basic subsistence. CAFI meetings led a number of participants to speculate on potential economic and political developments. Because multilevel conversations were encouraged, discussions of "democracy" and how it could be applied to Oman were routinely held as well. Therefore, when Sultan Qaboos issued a series of royal decrees on 18 November 1981 to abolish CAFI and establish a State Consultative Council (SCC) [Al-Majlis Al-Istishari lil-Dawla] in its place, the wheels of change were turned yet another revolution.[23]

At the SCC's first session, Qaboos defined the Council as "a continuation of [his] policy aimed at achieving a greater scope for citizens to participate in the efforts of the government to implement its economic and social projects [through] the task of formulating opinion and advice" on the country's economic and social development.[24] Despite these laudatory goals, the SCC's 54 delegates could only advise the ruler, since the Council was not a parliament and therefore did not have any legislative powers. Few Omanis were aware of what the SCC was supposed to be and do, particularly since the government failed to explain the Council's functions, and since each delegate represented "all" of Oman rather than a region. Given the Sultanate's complex tribal relations, this was understandable—it would have been difficult to try to classify each delegate's "constituency." Furthermore, in the absence of an official census, proportional representation remained an impractical option in the early 1980s. Thus, the lack of communications between Omanis further hampered potential progress within the SCC. In hindsight, because of its limited scope, the SCC was not meant to be a permanent fixture on the political scene. Rather, it was another bloc in the critical institution-building process, so essential to a state that lacked so much. Whether Qaboos fathomed a complete set of institutions at this early stage was far less important than his willingness to pursue policies that gradually introduced them. *In short, this much is certain: His early mistakes alerted him to adopt more fail-proof steps that would build institutions for and by Omanis.* Qaboos also realized that the Sultanate's long-term

[23]Dale F. Eickelman, "Kings and People: Oman's State Consultative Council," *The Middle East Journal* 38:1 (Winter 1984), pp. 61–71. The first president of the SCC was Khalfan Nasir Al-Wahaybi, followed on 28 October 1983 by Hamud `Abdallah Al-Harthi.

[24]Ibid., p. 56.

interests could be preserved only through an evolutionary approach that recognized both its strengths and weaknesses. Accordingly, he adopted policies aimed at gradual change, both on the international as well as domestic levels. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Muscat endeavored to provide basic services, increase literacy rates, and encourage foreign investments. Because Oman was an autocracy, however, critics of the regime voiced their opposition to Qaboos' perceived heavy-handedness in setting the tone of whatever debate took place in the Sultanate. Qaboos was painfully aware of his country's various needs and, in part because he felt that Oman's literacy rate had reached a high enough level, embarked on one of the most important political reformulations in the history of the country by establishing a full-fledged Consultative Council (*Majlis al-Shura*).

THE MAJLIS AL-SHURA

"With the setting up of this council, a new era and a new experiment start in Oman," declared Qaboos, as he inaugurated the *Majlis al-Shura* on 21 December 1991.[25] The ruler called on Omanis to assume nation-building burdens unprecedented in scope and substance. The Council, he declared, intended to bridge the gap between citizen and government. It was, in comparative terms, a concordance. In many respects, the 21 December announcement was the fulfillment of the Sultan's earlier pledge to establish a reinvigorated institution in which all provinces (Wilayats) would be represented.[26] Qaboos drew broad outlines for the kind of Majlis he envisaged, calling on the government to submit to the peoples' will and be responsible to its representatives. The Council, he declared, will be a "step on the road of participation which will serve the aspirations and ambitions of the citizens throughout Oman."[27] Made at the height of the 1990 crisis in the Persian Gulf when Oman—under United Nations mandate—was poised for war against Iraq, the pledge raised many sensitive eyebrows throughout the region. In time, however, others emulated its forward-looking mandate. Still, for Oman, the establishment of the Majlis was nothing short of a giant step forward, one that was part of a long-

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[25]"Nas Al-Khitab Al-Sami li-Hadrat Sahib Al-Jalalat Al-Sultan Qaboos bin Sa`id Al-Muazam bimunasabat iftitah Al-fitrat Al-oula li-Majlis al-Shura" [Text of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos' Inaugural Address to the First Session of the Majlis al-Shura], in *Al-Wathaiq Al-Khasat Bi-Majlis al-Shura, Al-Fatrat Al-Oula* [Private Documents of the Majlis al-Shura, First Session] [hereafter, Wathaiq 1991], Muscat: Majlis al-Shura, 21 December 1991, p. 1.

[26]The Sultan made this pledge in November 1990. See "Speech of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said on the occasion of the 20th National Day, 18 November 1990," in *The Speeches of H. M. Sultan Qaboos bin Said, Sultan of Oman, 1970-1990*, Muscat: Ministry of Information, 1991, pp. 215–216; see also "Oman Planning Democratic Step, Will Form Consultative Assembly," *The Los Angeles Times*, 19 November 1990, p. A14.

[27]Ibid., p. 215.

established plan to move the country forward on the road to full political participation. To be sure, Qaboos' frank assessment may well have been dictated by events in the area. Nevertheless, his policies were building on the legacy of the 1980s.

Qaboos appointed Shaykh `Abdallah bin `Ali Al-Qatabi speaker of the new assembly. Al-Qatabi, a former Interior Ministry under secretary and the SCC's last president, held foresightful views as well. The Council would be different from the SCC and the speaker was ready to shoulder new responsibilities.

Al-Qatabi closed the first Majlis session by saying that its establishment was a "curtain raiser for a new era of joint national action," hinting that further political reforms were likely before the completion of the assembly's first three-year term.[28] Others were equally confident that permanent changes were imminent. The deputy prime minister for legal affairs, Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmud Al Bu Sa`id, remarked that more was expected from the Majlis and that it "was only coincidental that there were no women members [in this first Majlis]."[29] This was a clear indication that Oman was not just experimenting with participatory government but that it was taking appropriate measures to stay well ahead of changing circumstances. Women would be called upon to assume their rightful roles in society not for superficial reasons but because it was in the best interests of Oman. The Sultan himself took the country's pulse on this issue in the course of his annual tour of the interior.

In informal settings, he heard first-hand his people's grievances, complaints, or suggestions that, according to informed sources, often belied the picture painted by close advisers regarding the state of affairs in the country. When a grievance had merit, the Sultan almost always summoned the responsible minister or officer and instructed him to deal with the matter immediately. It was the sum total of such interactions that most probably persuaded Qaboos to call on his people to take a more active part in the decisionmaking process.

Unlike the SCC, which was a purely advisory body, the Sultani decree establishing the Majlis called on its members to assume "responsibilities." In fact, the Council's by-laws were quite specific and, at least by Omani standards, nothing short of revolutionary. Article 78, for example, specifically states that members may question cabinet officers, a privilege which was rapidly exercised.[30]

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[28]Interview with Speaker `Abdallah bin `Ali Al-Qatabi at Majlis Headquarters in Seeb, 13 October 1993.

[29]Interview with His Highness Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmud Al Bu Sa`id, Deputy Prime Minister for Legal Affairs, Muscat, 14 October 1992.

[30]Wathaiq, 1991, op. cit., p. 48.

TRENDS IN OMANI DIPLOMACY

Less than three decades ago, the only form of communication between the ruler and his subjects was through the irregular notices stuck up on Muscat's main gates. Mostly related to "customs" issues, they reminded those who can remember them today of school bulletin boards, announcing "edicts [from] the bursar and the headmaster."[31] Qaboos brought the country a long way and, in 1994, announced that the membership of the Majlis Al-Shura would be adjusted to 80 to reflect the country's latest census results.[32]

In what was one of his most important pronouncements, the Sultan also announced that the first two women members of the Majlis, Shakour bint Mohammed bin Salim Al-Ghammari and Taiba bint Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Mawali, would join the institution.[33] Qaboos underlined the role that women must play in Omani society, drawing on Islamic teachings to emphasize his points. He chastised those who relegated women to subservient positions and belittled their status in Islam. "Women and men are companions," declared the Sultan, and "the Prophet, praise and peace be upon him, has instructed us to the role of women." He called on every Omani woman to shoulder responsibilities in ensuring that the Sultanate benefited from their inputs, sought their cooperation to teach children "the habit of saving as a contribution to the national economy," and, more important, to be "frugal and to distance themselves from the extravagance . . . appearing among developing countries."[34]

The ruler called on Omanis to welcome this momentous decision, declaring that women candidates "will not be confined . . . to the Muscat Governorate, but will gradually be extended in accordance with circumstances in other Governorates and Wilayats." By launching forward on this path, Oman further highlighted its difference with the other conservative Arab Gulf monarchies, even as it drew attention to this critical issue. For Muscat understood that the burden of a large and growing expatriate community could only be alleviated by galvanizing the indigenous female population. In a candid interview, the ruler acknowledged that he had "long held the belief that to exclude women from

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[31]Skeet, Ian, *Muscat and Oman: The End of An Era*, London: Faber and Faber, 1974, p. 29.

[32]Husayn `Abd Al-Ghani, "Al-Sultan Qaboos u`linu tadwir Majlis al-Shura wa-yad`u ilal-saytarat `ala Al-nimu Al-sukani," [Sultan Qaboos Announces Changes in the Majlis al-Shura's Membership Based on Census Results], *Al-Hayat*, 14 January 1994, p. 6.

[33]Husayn `Abd Al-Ghani, "Qaboos iftataha dawrat Majlis al-Shura bil-tashdid ala dawr Al-mara'at" [Qaboos Opened the Majlis Session by Stressing a Role For Women], *Al-Hayat*, 27 December 1994, p. 4. See also Appendix I for a list of Majlis members serving between 1 December 1994 and 30 November 1997.

[34]"Speech by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Sa`id Al Bu Sa`id on the Occasion of the Opening of the Second Term of the Majlis al-Shura," December 1994. Reproduced in Appendix J.

playing a meaningful role in the life of their country amount[ed], in essence, to excluding 50 percent of that country's potential."[35] Squarely addressing the question, Qaboos embarked on this epoch-making path. It was a form of accountability that acknowledged the need to draw on internal strengths: Were Oman to prosper and succeed in conducting its foreign policies, it was essential to maintain domestic harmony.

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[35]Anne Joyce, "Interview with Sultan Qaboos bin Sa`id Al Sa`id," *Middle East Policy* 3:4 (April 1995), p. 2.

PART II

FOREIGN POLICY IN THE MODERN ERA

The foreign policy of the Sultanate of Oman has differed considerably from those of other Persian Gulf countries because of Muscat's keen preoccupation with its national security. To be sure, Oman was ensnared in developing nascent political institutions that focused on internal stability. Still, Sultan Qaboos understood from the outset that foreign policy requirements necessitated some risky steps. The civil war in the Dhufar, as well as the repercussions of the Marxist-led People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (1968–1990) support of Omani rebels, colored Omani policies. Equally important was Qaboos' affinity for close relations with Western powers, including Britain and the United States. Although these associations were understandable to Omanis, many throughout the region—both Arab and Persian—were bewildered by Muscat's bold positions, even as the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan vindicated Qaboos' earlier stand.

In the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Muscat was not encouraged by the level of complacency displayed by regional leaders to its 1979 security proposal for the Straits of Hormuz, which naturally crystallized its intentions to align itself even closer with key Western powers. Consequently, it was not a coincidence that Oman signed a bilateral security agreement with the United States in June 1980. That agreement was directly tied to the failed regional effort to shoulder security responsibilities for the protection of the strategic waterway. Moreover, Oman established a solid working relationship with the Shah of Iran and, in the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution, quickly achieved a modus vivendi with Ayatollah Khumayni's government. Muscat did not accept the premise that the revolution would spill over into the Lower Gulf, arguing that conservative Arab Gulf monarchies ought to engage Iran on their side, not only to ensure the safety of the Straits but, more important, not to isolate Teheran from the affairs of the region. This pragmatic approach was deemed naive by several countries on the Arabian Peninsula, including Iraq, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia, all of which suffered the consequences of the Iranian wrath.

Oman further distinguished itself in the 1970s by adopting a tenacious foreign policy stance in supporting the Camp David peace accords between Egypt and Israel. It is worth noting that, along with Sudan and Morocco, Oman supported President Anwar al-Sadat's 1978 visit to Jerusalem as well as the ensuing 1979 agreement between Egypt and Israel. Given the dramatic changes on this front in 1993 and 1994, when the Palestine Liberation Organization and Jordan reached their own accords with the Jewish State, Muscat's consistent policy toward the Arab-Israeli conflict was nothing but foresightful.

What emerges from this cursory introduction is an early desire in the Sultanate for an "independent" foreign policy that would not be bogged down in the Arab ideological labyrinth. On his prime minister's recommendation, Sultan Qaboos formed an Omani Friendship Committee in early 1971, which toured several Arab and Gulf capitals to clarify the Sultanate's independent positions. Members of the Committee visited Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Iraq, and held informal conversations with leaders in the Trucial States (later the UAE), Bahrain, and Qatar. The latter three were still under British colonial rule and, consequently, could not respond to these overtures, but the opportunity allowed Omanis to gather first-hand impressions of how Muscat was perceived in the region. Although little was ever published on what the Committee achieved, this much is certain: It highlighted the general impression that Muscat was not perceived favorably in the Gulf. The Sultan confirmed this impression during his early visits throughout the Gulf and vowed to correct whatever misperceptions there were in the area about him and his country. The unique foreign policy that he was determined to outline may be said to have gone through several important stages:

- A consolidation period (1971–1975);
- A transition period (1976–1980);
- A maturity period (1981–1985); and
- A current period (1986–1994).[1]

In 1990, Omani foreign policy has entered a new era that recognizes intrinsic interests, but aims to increase the standard of living of every Omani citizen. As such, it is adaptive, pragmatic, and motivated by long-term objectives.

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[1]For a full discussion of these critical periods in modern Omani affairs, see Mohammed `Ali Masoud Al-Hinai, *The Dynamics of Omani Foreign Policy: Omani-Gulf Relations (1971–1985)*, Doctoral Dissertation, Canterbury, U.K.: University of Kent, 1991, especially pp. 300–447.

THE CONSOLIDATION PERIOD (1971–1975)

Because the Persian Gulf region has been the center of strategic considerations through much of the past four decades, and because of the uneven distribution of power among littoral states, security cooperation among conservative Arab Gulf monarchies has dominated the perceptions of their leaders. This focus on security matters did not mean that Gulf rulers neglected their religious, political, economic, and cultural interests. Rather, they perceived all of their interests through the security prism. Although differences existed between Muscat and its neighbors, commonly held objectives were the desire to safeguard their monarchic rules, to prevent radical movements from coming to power, to continue the uninterrupted export of oil at stable prices and, finally, to keep the area free from superpower rivalries. Ironically, Iran shared these objectives under the Shah and, after the 1979 revolution, continued to share all except the insistence on monarchic rule.

THE TRANSITION PERIOD (1976–1980)

By the mid-1970s, Oman's relations with key Arab Gulf states improved sharply, after the Sultanate introduced sorely needed improvements to bolster its post–Dhufar War economy. Muscat asked for and received financial assistance from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. This gesture narrowed existing differences between the Sultanate and its neighbors. Even Ba`athist Iraq acknowledged Muscat's independence and, to make amends, ended its support to People's Front for the Liberation of Oman (PFLO) rebels still operating in the PDRY. Relations with Iran were cordial for most of the decade. Where little progress was made, to Qaboos' utter dismay, was in collective security, as conservative Gulf rulers preferred to concentrate on internal matters.

THE MATURATION PERIOD (1981–1985)

By all accounts, Muscat's achievements between 1970 and 1980 were nothing short of phenomenal. In less than a decade, Oman emerged as a significant player in the Persian Gulf area, safeguarding the strategic Straits of Hormuz. When the world community was caught off guard in the aftermath of the 1974 oil embargo, by upheavals in Iran and Afghanistan in 1979, and by a war between Iran and Iraq starting in 1980, Muscat's vital role was duly noted. To some extent, Oman succeeded because it managed to put its internal affairs in order. As Qaboos recognized:

> In the past we lived by ourselves for logical reasons. It is useless to have a comprehensive foreign policy without having an internal one, which was what we were avoiding. Our view is that, in order to deal with the world's foreign poli-

> cies, the Omani internal security, economic and social development fronts must be strong.... Thus past years were completely devoted to internal Omani construction, from which emerges today's image. It is important that we are not against cautious and reasonable rapprochement with other countries, especially when terrorism and acts to undermine security escalate. I believe that we proceed within acceptable balances. The reasons for keeping close to ourselves in the past no longer exist. The internal Omani front is strong and well built. We have a respectable foreign policy. We have reached a good level of rapprochement with other countries.[2]

Oman's foreign policy thus entered a mature phase in early 1981 when the six conservative Arab Gulf monarchies joined in the Gulf Cooperation Council. Naturally, Oman's relations with its five allies grew in intensity, especially on internal and regional security matters. In less than five years, Muscat developed a clearer idea of Omani security objectives within the larger GCC orbit, gained a special understanding of the Iran-Iraq War, and secured the region from potential hegemons.

THE CURRENT PERIOD (1986–1994)

Three momentous developments marked Omani foreign policy in the second half of the 1980s. First, the end of the Iran-Iraq War confirmed Qaboos' views that neither Teheran nor Baghdad could be isolated from the security of the area. It was critical to find a role for both lest they embark on costly "adventures." Second, the collapse of communism ushered in dramatic changes worldwide that, ironically, were foreseen by Muscat. Indeed, the Sultanate established diplomatic relations with the former Soviet Union in 1986 and extended financial assistance to President Gorbachev's beleaguered government in 1989. Qaboos concluded that a "superpower" asking for donations from small countries (even if they were oil producers) could not last long. Oman was therefore in a strong position to extend diplomatic recognition to Russia (and to all 14 republics that declared independence from the USSR), confident that while it opposed their former ideological raison d'être, it was capable of helping them acquire their new raison d'état. Third, and in the aftermath of the 1 August 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Oman recognized that the Ba`athi leadership in Baghdad posed a direct threat to the security of the region. What was required, concluded Qaboos, was a full-fledged response. Muscat helped create opportunities to resolve the crisis without bloodshed but was adamant in upholding the rule of law. Its foreign policy evolved, taking a major leap forward in the latter part of the decade, by formally aligning itself against a fellow Arab government.

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[2]"Interview with Sultan Qaboos of Oman," *Al-Siyassah*, 10 December 1985, in *Foreign Broadcast Information Service—Middle East and Africa* [hereafter, *FBIS-MEA-V-*], 85-239, pp. C1–C4.

Because of its geographic location, Oman's foreign policy was primarily preoccupied with developments on the Arabian Peninsula as well as in both Iran and Iraq. Regional conflicts, especially the Iran-Iraq War and the War for Kuwait, ensured a quasi-permanent outside presence that, in turn, necessitated contacts with a variety of actors far and close. Part II first analyzes Omani relations with countries on the Arabian Peninsula; then examines ties with the West, including Britain, France, and the United States; and finally looks at the thorny contacts with the former Soviet Union and its successor states, as well as the crucial relationships with the Far East, South Asia, and Africa.

Chapter Four

THE ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF REGION

Control of the vital Straits of Hormuz was one of Sultan Qaboos' main strategic objectives when he acceded to the throne in 1970. This was a long-established Omani goal; Sayyid Ahmad bin Sa`id had sought similar advantages in the late 1770s. Indeed, internal Omani squabbling had led the Qawasim in Ras al-Khaymah to briefly reoccupy Khor Fakkan and the Jazirat al-Hamra, which essentially weakened Muscat's maritime empire. To strengthen his weak position, Ahmad bin Sa`id's son, Sultan, set out to acquire the ports that lined up the Straits. As he already controlled Gawadar, on the Makran coast—by virtue of the 1784 agreement with the ruler of the region—he went after Shah Bahar, which he conquered in 1793. He then moved against the governor of Qeshm and occupied Bandar Abbas. It was amply clear that Sultan bin Ahmad was not primarily interested in Bandar Abbas for commercial purposes. The city was important because of its regional strategic position: from it Qeshm, Minab, Hanjam, and Hormuz could be controlled, and trade passing through the region managed. In fact, "whoever controlled these islands, maintained a stranglehold on the Straits" and, in doing so, ensured their rule.[1]

Much like his predecessors, Qaboos sought to maintain Oman's preeminent role as the gatekeeper of the Persian Gulf. His relations with neighboring countries were guided by this principal objective. In addition, Qaboos was keenly interested in securing the Sultanate's borders with Iran, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen. Finally, he sought to develop solid economic ties with regional countries, realizing that Oman's future was inevitably tied to the area. The latter assessment was especially important given the isolationism practiced by Sultan Sa`id bin Taymur.[2] By adopting a diametrically opposed policy from that of his father, Qaboos signaled his long-term intentions, fostered vital new

[1]Calvin H. Allen, Jr., *Sayyids, Shets and Sultans: Politics and Trade in Masqat Under the Al Bu Sa`id, 1785–1914*, Doctoral Dissertation, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington, 1978, p. 40. [hereafter, Sayyids and Shets.]

[2]Interview with His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Sa`id, Seeb Palace, 18 January 1993.

contacts, and moved ahead. Relations with the conservative Arab Gulf monarchies (bilateral as well as collective), Iraq, Iran, and Yemen preoccupied the Sultan, who sought to mold his neighbors' policies to protect long-term Omani interests and establish mutually beneficial commercial contacts.

THE ARAB GULF MONARCHIES

The 1744 compact that was reached in Diri`yah between Muhammad bin Sa`ud Al Sa`ud and Shaykh Muhammad bin Ahmad `Abd Al Wahhab, to carry out religious and political reforms on the Arabian Peninsula, introduced a sense of permanence throughout the vast uncharted territories of the area. Although the focus of the men from Diri`yah was on what would eventually become the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, their effect was strongly felt elsewhere, from Kuwait in the north to Oman in the south.

Saudi Arabia

Inflamed with religious zeal and political ambition, and encouraged by tribal factionalism and competition for greater power and territorial gains among local rulers in eastern and southeastern Arabia, the Saudis began to promote their influence and extend their authority there. They also annexed settlements in Qatar, spread their supremacy over Bahrain, and pressured Kuwaiti rulers to submit to their will.

Saudi contacts with Oman in modern times began after inhabitants in the Buraymi oasis transferred their allegiance to Riyadh.[3] This watershed development contributed to a subsequent alliance between the Al Sa`ud and the Qawasim on the coast of Oman, who became staunch supporters of the Saudis. With the consolidation of their power in Buraymi, the Saudis challenged Sultan bin Ahmad's rising power by inviting him to adopt Muwahiddun-Wahhabi principles and acknowledge their religious and political supremacy. The ambitious ruler of Muscat resisted the Saudi military advance but failed to hold the more powerful Najdis. He subsequently managed to prevent Saudi incursions into Muscat "through intermittent nominal acknowledgment of their supremacy."[4]

The Saudi presence and influence in eastern Arabia and Oman deteriorated drastically during the early years of the second decade of the nineteenth cen-

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[3]Christine Moss Helms, *The Cohesion of Saudi Arabia: Evolution of Political Identity*, Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981, pp. 182–186.

[4]Zamil Muhammad Al-Rashid, *Su`udi Relations with Eastern Arabia and `Uman (1800–1871)*, London: Luzac and Company, Ltd., 1981, p. 129.

tury, because of the war in the Hijaz against the Ottoman Empire. By the time Diri`yah fell in 1818, Al Sa`ud influence had been confined to Buraymi and the coast of Oman, but their conquest of Makkah and Madinah reinvigorated the religious and political achievements of the past. Ironically, the Saudi "state" was revived after Turki bin `Abdallah Al Sa`ud expelled the Egyptian garrisons from the Hijaz, established his own rule over Najd and Hasa, resumed relations with certain areas in eastern Arabia, and recovered Saudi influence there.

Saudi relations with eastern Arabia and Oman, as well as their expansion in those territories, were precipitated by various factors. To be sure, religious motivation played a major role because the Al Sa`ud and their followers, convinced of the universality of their reforms, *recognized no geographical boundaries or political divisions within the Peninsula.* They resolved to enforce their views by totally subjugating certain districts, winning local chiefs to their side, and enforcing the reform practices through them. The acknowledgment of Saudi supremacy by local rulers or tribal chiefs in eastern Arabia and Oman entitled Riyadh to levy religious taxes (zakat), take shares of spoils, and collect fines. In securing their positions in these regions, the Al Sa`ud occasionally employed the naval power of the maritime principalities against opposing elements in the area, thus strengthening their power and enhancing their prestige.

Although Saudi supremacy made intermittent headway in eastern Arabia and Oman, it could not establish permanence. In the end, Riyadh's administration and military proved to be insufficient to entrench Al Sa`ud rule, protect their interests, and deter opponents everywhere on the Arabian Peninsula. Difficulties were compounded by the aspiration of rulers and tribal chiefs who, determined to preserve their own prerogatives and rights to rule, managed on various occasions to withdraw their allegiance and weaken whatever influence the Saudis had succeeded in gathering.

Finally, the rising British presence throughout the Persian Gulf became the major factor that destabilized the Al Sa`ud's influence in Eastern Arabia and Oman. London frustrated whatever gains Riyadh managed to make to maintain its influence. From the very beginning, British authorities had associated the Saudi presence in Eastern Arabia and Oman with acts of piracy. As British prestige increased and the military power of the maritime principalities weakened, London forced restrictive treaties with individual tribal leaders to maintain law and order on the maritime routes. In doing so, Britain intimidated local rulers from allying themselves with the Saudis and, at the same time, discouraged Saudi efforts to gain influence in the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman.

Despite this outside interference, the Al Sa`ud had an effect on local culture as a vast number of inhabitants in Bahrain, Qatar, the northern part of the coast, the Dhahirah region in Oman, as well as some of the `Ibadhi tribes in southern

Oman, adhered to the Muwahiddun-Wahhabi reform movement and adopted the Saudis' practices and traditions. Such affiliations promoted the Saudi influence in various regions in the past and preserved a sentimental attachment toward Saudi Arabia in the present. Still, Sayyid Sultan bin Ahmad was the first Omani ruler to confront Saudi expansionism on the Arabian Peninsula and, as he attempted to secure his tenuous hegemony over the economy of the Gulf, the Al Sa`ud in Najd stood in his way.[5]

When, in 1799, Duru tribesmen clashed with Buraymi settlers over internal trade, the raids affected Muscat.[6] Sayyid Sultan, and his brother Qais, who ruled Sohar, challenged what they perceived as Al Sa`ud intrusions in their internal affairs. The threat to Sayyid Sultan did not originate exclusively from the interior, however. The Al Sa`ud prodded their Qawasim allies, whose sole interest was to enhance a growing mercantile power to attack Muscati interests. Unlike the Saudis, the Qawasim had no territorial ambitions; but by aligning themselves with the Al Sa`ud, the rulers of Ras al-Khaymah enlarged the gulf separating them from their eastern neighbors. Faced with such a coalition, Sayyid Sultan marched on Buraymi, hoping to expel the Saudis from their headquarters in what is today the UAE. In the event, the Muscati force was defeated, and Sayyid Sultan was left with a truce imposed by Riyadh.

It was this unfortunate experience that clarified the threat to Muscat. Omanis understood that the greatest challenge to their quasi-monopoly over Gulf trade came from the Al Sa`ud. To counter this overwhelming presence, Sayyid Sultan visited Makkah in 1803—ostensibly to perform Hajj—where he met with the Sharif Al-Hussein. He committed men and supplies to Al-Hussein, who was preparing to defend the Hijaz from Najdis. When the Al Sa`ud learned of this alliance, they attacked Oman, reaching the capital city of Muscat on the coast. On the verge of defeat, Sultan arranged for a truce: the Al Sa`ud would not occupy Muscat in exchange for an annual tribute of MT$12,000[7] as well as the permanent presence of a Saudi political agent in the city. Although the tribute was considerable, it was far less than revenues collected through various trade activities, including taxes levied on transiting merchandise and entrepôt charges imposed on goods forwarded to other destinations. Meanwhile, in Diri`yah, a succession struggle led to several assassinations in late 1803. As a result, Sayyid Sultan's freedom of action in Muscat improved considerably. Once

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[5]Khaled Nasir Al-Wusami, *`Uman bayna Al-Istiqlal wal-Ihtilal: Dirasat fil-Tarikh Al-`Umani Al-Hadith wa`Ilaqatuha Al-Iqlimiyat wal-Dawliyat fil-fatrat ma Bayna 1789–1904* [Oman Between Independence and Occupation: Omani History in Modern Times and Its State Relations Between 1789 and 1904], Kuwait: Muassasat Al-Shari` Al-Arabi, 1993, pp. 210–214.

[6]Sayyids and Shets, op. cit., p. 65, note 30.

[7]MT is "Maria Theresa" dollars—Portuguese currency widely used at the time.

again, his attention shifted rapidly to affairs in the Gulf, where Muscat's influence had deteriorated substantially.

Benefiting from the Al Sa`ud/Sultan rift, the Qawasim in Ras al-Khaymah occupied Qeshm Island, from where they launched sea raids on Muscati ships. Adding insult to injury, the ruler of Baghdad withheld his annual tribute to Muscat, arranged after the latter had assisted Basra in 1775. Faced with such dilemmas, Sayyid Sultan set sail for Basra in 1804, nominally to collect his fees and, perhaps more important, to seek an alliance of his own with the Ottoman Empire against the Al Sa`ud.[8] As fate would have it, the Sultan never reached Basra, as he was killed on Qeshm Island during an engagement with Qawasim and `Utub warriors. Was Sayyid Sultan a victim of British machinations? Did London fear that a Muscati-Ottoman alliance would tighten the noose around all maritime activities in the area? Were the British ready to enter into an alliance with the Al Sa`ud? Although historians have debated these questions, one thing is certain: London was not ready to allow an "independent" Omani foreign policy to emerge.[9]

There is little doubt that throughout Sayyid Sultan's rule, the British played an important role in his many adventures. Moreover, British interests increased because of improved Omani-French ties. Sultan employed a number of French citizens, including his personal physician, who played crucial roles through their advice on gaining trade advantages in the Gulf. As Britain was at war with France in 1798, London feared that Paris would sever its communications network that ran up the Gulf and overland to London. To avert such a possibility, London dispatched a goodwill mission to Muscat in October 1798. What resulted was an agreement that froze French advances in Oman by forbidding the construction of a French factory on the coast. This was not a routine achievement and, in exchange for the switch in position, certainly gained under duress, Oman was promised favorable commercial privileges on the Indian subcontinent.[10] Still, London failed to realize that Sultan's relations with the French were mostly commercial in nature (a clear French mistake), and nothing in the treaty signed with London prevented Oman from continuing those ties. Moreover, the treaty also played in Sayyid Sultan's hands vis-à-vis the French, who continued plans to erect the factory despite the diplomatic crisis that ensued with the British. This agreement allowed for the "Sayyid's Persian holdings, originally acquired for the control they offered of the Straits of

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[8]Sayyids and Shets, op. cit., p. 46.

[9]J. B. Kelly, *Arabia, the Gulf and the West: A Critical View of the Arabs and Their Oil Policy,* New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1980; see also Malcolm Yapp, "British Policy in the Persian Gulf," in Alvin J. Cottrell (ed.), *The Persian Gulf States: A General Survey,* Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980, pp. 70–100.

[10]Sayyids and Shets, op. cit., p. 48.

Hormuz," to become important sources of revenue. By 1802, revenues drawn from Bandar Abbas, where Oman exported Hormuz salt, had risen to MT$100,000, one-third of Sayyid Sultan's annual income. These benefits were well worth the sacrifice of the treaty with London that was reaffirmed in January 1880 after Britain intercepted confidential letters from Napoleon to Sayyid Sultan calling for a reassessment of their bruised relations.

No matter how convoluted and contradictory many of Sayyid Sultan's foreign policy directives may appear, his motivations never flinched, because he was keenly aware that control of Muscat was vital for his commercial life. It mattered little who controlled the interior. If the Saudis wanted parched desert, his logic went, so be it. As long as he secured trade routes, including in the Gulf itself, his objectives were achieved. Sayyid Sultan would fight only when his lifeline was threatened and everyone who signed treaties with Muscat was well aware of these intrinsic commercial interests. At times, Sultan encouraged, even authorized, his "pirate" allies to go after Indian/British merchants when the latter threatened his lifeline in the Gulf. For the astute statesman, treaties of friendship and amity were one thing, business was another. Where Sayyid Sultan erred was in setting certain precedents regarding Al Sa`ud ambitions in the "parched desert." Not only was Riyadh keenly aware of internal Omani problems, it expressly set out to exploit differences between the interior and the coast. For decades, the Al Sa`ud supported a leadership that professed "independence" from Muscat, extended financial and military assistance to the Imamate when the latter was established, and offered asylum to its fallen leaders after the Imamate fell. These were clear markers that had an effect on the majority of Omanis.

The Consolidation Period (1970–1975): With Qaboos on the throne in Muscat, Riyadh moved to sever its ties with the Imamate and, under the circumstances, favored settling the festering border dispute between the two countries. Although hard-line elements in Saudi Arabia never abandoned their expansionist ambitions to rule over the entire Arabian Peninsula, King Faysal and certainly then-Prince Fahd ibn `Abdulaziz, were positively inclined to reach a border agreement with several of their neighbors. Nevertheless, and because of the chaotic situation of the early 1970s in the Sultanate, the nefarious historical legacy that pitted Saudi and Omani forces did not end. Riyadh further objected to the sizable British presence in the Sultanate. More than any other factor, however, what irritated the relationship was Riyadh's consistent support of Imam Ghalib. The deposed leader found refuge in Saudi Arabia where he received substantial political, financial, diplomatic, and military aid. His putative government-in-exile was based in Dammam, where an Oman Liberation Army was also created with the full cooperation of Saudi authorities. These decisions were taken in the late 1950s and early 1960s when Riyadh was on record that it

could not recognize Sultan Sa`id's regime as long as peace talks between the Imam and the Sultan were not initiated.[11] With Qaboos in power, however, the troubling caveat was removed. Moreover, following the news that the British would withdraw from the Gulf in 1971, Saudis and Omanis entered into a sensible, even if sudden, reconciliation owing to the hostility of both to the new, left-wing, and at times Soviet-controlled, People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY).

Under the chairmanship of the able Shaykh Sa`ud Al-Khalili, the Sultanate's first Minister of Education, the Omani Friendship Committee visited Riyadh in January 1971 to clarify what remained obscure on the political reawakening under way in Muscat. Al-Khalili paved the way for Sultan Qaboos' state visit to Saudi Arabia in December 1971, and the Qaboos-Faysal meeting was more productive than many anticipated.[12] The two men met as equals, although the Saudi was far more experienced in world affairs. They discussed the Saudi support to Imami forces (at a time when Oman was struggling to gain admission into the United Nations and the League of Arab States) and Riyadh's diplomatic support of Imam Ghalib and his "government in exile." They also discussed, to Faysal's utter surprise, their critical border dispute.[13] In turn, Faysal raised several irritating issues, including the need for security cooperation that, in effect, implied an Omani acknowledgment that the security of the Peninsula would be guaranteed by Najdis. Faysal further sought to link Riyadh's extension of such security measures with whatever financial assistance he might be inclined to provide Oman. Qaboos, for his part, understood that Oman needed to secure financial assistance without losing its independence. As a concession to King Faysal, he agreed to arrange peace talks between himself and the Imam, and even went so far as to offer the former Imam full recognition as a prominent religious leader in the Sultanate with the right to hold high office. This astute offer was reciprocated by Faysal, who quickly dropped his "recognition of the 'Oman Revolutionary Movement' and withdrew [his] vestigial support of

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[11] *Fusul Min Tarikh Al-`Arabiyah Al-Sa`udiyah* [Chapters from the History of Saudi Arabia], Beirut: Dar Al-Fada` lil-Tibayat wal-Nashr wal-Tawzi`, 1988, pp. 496–497.

[12] See Appendix K for a list of meetings with heads of states held by Sultan Qaboos.

[13] Interview with Ahmad bin `Abd Al-Nabi Macki, Minister of Civil Service, 21 September 1993, in Muscat. This point was confirmed by H. H. Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud Al Bu Sa`id, Deputy Prime Minister for Cabinet Affairs, in a 25 September 1993 interview in Muscat. Qaboos' desire to tackle the thorny border issue reflected his keen interest in resolving the troublesome question early on. Limited as it was, the Sultan's experience in Europe left an impression on him. He was very much impressed by the effects that border wars have had on people in Europe and North America and how settling border disputes there allowed for proper development. Qaboos longed for similar outcomes for his people and indeed for all of the inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula.

Imam Ghalib bin `Ali, partly because of Ghalib's arrogance towards the Sultan at a conciliation meeting."[14]

Although the visit to Riyadh was successful, it did not produce the expected level of support longed for by Sultan Qaboos. Without even a formal communiqué, itself a significant mark of recognition, the two leaders nevertheless agreed that their countries would establish diplomatic relations and exchange ambassadors. Moreover, Riyadh promised to provide modest economic and military assistance, and Muscat welcomed King Faysal's pledge to study the undemarcated-border dispute. As for the Imam, he continued to live in Dammam under Saudi protection, but with considerably diminished influence in internal Omani affairs.

In early May 1972, a Saudi military delegation arrived in Salalah for a week-long fact-finding mission, ostensibly to assess the Omani position in the Dhufar war. Riyadh was eager to see Muscat follow its lead in regional security matters and, toward that objective, approved the recommendation that a contingent of Omani officers and soldiers be trained in Saudi Arabia. In turn, Qaboos authorized 150 men from the Parachute Regiment to go to the Kingdom for advanced training. In addition, an undisclosed number of light weapons were transferred to the Sultanate in 1972, all gratefully received by a ruler preoccupied with an internal uprising in the south. At the end of the year, Qaboos visited Riyadh for the second time, where he accepted a $12 million grant for development projects from the Kingdom.

These two visits set the stage for more fruitful exchanges between the two capitals. In 1974, in a move interpreted as a sincere effort to end their border dispute, Omani, Saudi, and UAE officials worked together to end the century-old territorial conflict over the Buraymi oasis.[15] Riyadh renounced its spurious historical claim and Abu Dhabi pledged not to exploit that portion of the Zarrar field lying within its own boundaries. In exchange for this arrangement on the UAE-Saudi border, Riyadh gained access to the Khawr al-`Ubaid inlet via a territorial corridor across its frontier with Qatar. The positive Saudi move was precipitated by the need for close cooperation between the states of the Gulf. Although there were three contenders for regional leadership—Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Iraq—Riyadh was indeed in a position to claim that it was closer to the

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[14]J. E. Peterson, *Oman in the Twentieth Century: Political Foundations of an Emerging State*, London and New York: Croom Helm and Barnes and Noble, 1978, p. 214, footnote 11 [hereafter, Peterson, 1978].

[15]Robert Litwak, *Security in the Persian Gulf: Sources of Inter-State Conflict*, Montclair, New Jersey: Allanhead, Osmun and Company for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1981, p. 52. For a full discussion of the Buraymi dispute, see John C. Wilkinson, *Arabia's Frontiers: The Story of Britain's Boundary Drawing in the Desert*, London and New York: I. B. Tauris and Company, Ltd., 1991, pp. 52–57 and passim.

Shaykhdoms than the other two. Of course, this newly found largesse was politically motivated, but, in any event, at least one dispute was amicably resolved.

Between 1972 and 1975, relations between Saudi Arabia and Oman improved steadily, as the total amount of Saudi aid to Muscat reached $150 million. Qaboos visited Saudi Arabia again in early 1975 before returning a few months later to attend funeral services for the slain King Faysal.

The Transitional Period (1976–1980): Relations between Oman and Saudi Arabia improved significantly between 1976 and 1980. Because Riyadh perceived the putative Soviet-inspired, PDRY-supported threat to Oman as being a threat to itself (its growing dependence on the free flow of oil through the Straits of Hormuz converted many in Najd), it extended whatever financial and military assistance that the Omanis asked for. As stated above, Qaboos was selective in his requests but was also aware of the need to keep peace with the Kingdom given the latter's immense potential.

King Khalid visited Muscat in March 1976 when the two leaders discussed, inter alia, regional security, the Middle East crisis, and their border disputes. Qaboos and Khalid established a positive working relationship because the Saudi monarch appreciated the young Sultan's deference. An increasingly confident Qaboos next visited Saudi Arabia in 1977, ostensibly on a private visit, where he pressed for additional financial support. On this occasion, Riyadh mediated a cease-fire between Muscat and Aden, after Saudi Arabia recognized the PDRY in March 1976. By August 1977, Riyadh had concluded an economic cooperation agreement—the $100 million Copper Project Development—that further enhanced economic ties with Muscat. A number of Saudi teachers were sent to Oman and hundreds of Omani students enrolled in Saudi universities. When a hurricane hit the Sultanate in 1977, Saudis rushed sorely needed humanitarian assistance to the Oman interior, where the damage was extensive. And in early 1979, the two governments concluded an economic agreement whereby Riyadh granted Muscat about $300 million to finance a 1,000-km road project that connected Muscat in the north to Salalah in the south.[16] Not even the distinctive Omani position on the Camp David Accords hindered the steady improvement in relations between the two states. Still, no formal border agreement could be reached, in part because of differences over a proper demarcation line. Although Oman was neither a member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) nor the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC), oil played a vital role in the Sultanate's economy, and

[16]Ghassan Salamé, *Al-Siyasat Al-Kharijiyat Al-Sa`udiyat Munzu `Am 1945: Dirasat fil-`Ilaqat Al-Dawliyat* [The Foreign Policy of Saudi Arabia Since 1945: A Study in International Relations], Beirut: Muassasat Al-Rihani Lil-Tiba`at wal-Nashr, 1980, pp. 490–503.

Muscat was not ready to concede any potential oil-rich areas on its disputed borders with the Kingdom before signing a formal agreement.

The Mature Period (1981–1985): The years between 1981 and 1985 witnessed even closer cooperation between the two countries. Although bilateral agreements were limited, collective accords through the GCC mechanism increased sharply in the first part of the decade. Saudi Arabia's strengths notwithstanding, Riyadh valued the strategic position of the Sultanate and, accordingly, devised unique foreign policy initiatives toward it. Both countries agreed that internal security matters were of paramount importance, even though the Iran-Iraq War posed serious threats to the entire area. Moreover, both sides believed that the East-West rivalry jeopardized the region's long-term stability. The two countries were in full agreement over their opposition to the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan as well as Moscow's growing presence in the PDRY and the Horn of Africa. In the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution, both Sultan Qaboos and King Khalid (later King Fahd), acknowledged that the Khumayni government was fundamentally antagonistic to monarchic rule, but neither panicked that a spillover in either Oman or Saudi Arabia would threaten their respective governments, public pronouncements to the contrary notwithstanding. With respect to the Arab-Israeli conflict, both leaders recognized the pivotal role that the Palestinian Question played in Arab affairs and, closer to home, condemned Israeli violations of Saudi airspace that culminated in the 1981 overflights to reach the Tamuz nuclear reactor near Baghdad.[17] Indeed, Muscat used especially strong language to condemn violations of Saudi airspace when Israeli jets destroyed the Tamuz nuclear facility.[18]

To further cement their relations, and in the aftermath of the December 1981 coup attempt in Bahrain, Oman and Saudi Arabia signed an important internal security agreement on 23 February 1982 that allowed Riyadh certain extraterritorial rights against criminal elements attempting to escape from the Kingdom. Saudi authorities were allowed to pursue criminals 20 miles inside Omani borders that were still not properly demarcated.[19] In accordance with GCC regulations, Oman and Saudi Arabia held joint naval exercises in October 1984 and September 1985. Although border disputes between the two states lingered, progress was being achieved on several other fronts, and those were not negli-

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[17]Joseph A. Kechichian, "National Security," in Helen Chapin Metz (ed.), *Iraq: A Country Study*, Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1990, pp. 231–232.

[18]Interview with Hamad bin Mohamed bin Mohsin Al-Rashdi, Undersecretary for Information Affairs, Ministry of Information, Muscat, 21 October 1992; see also Erik R. Peterson, *The Gulf Cooperation Council: Search for Unity in a Dynamic Region*, Boulder, Colorado, and London: Westview Press, 1988, p. 129.

[19]"Security Agreement Signed with Oman 23 February," *FBIS-MEA-V-82-39*, 24 February 1982, p. C5.

gible.[20] Considerable attention was devoted to the nascent Gulf Cooperation Council, which galvanized all regional leaders' interest, even if Sultan Qaboos remained skeptical of their "will to power" and, equally important, of the necessity to assume a far larger share of the responsibilities to provide for the security of the Persian Gulf region.

The Current Period (1986–1994): Three key developments have dominated relations between the Sultanate and the Kingdom since the mid-1980s: the repercussions of the Iran-Iraq War, the War for Kuwait, and the demarcation of borders.

Qaboos visited Riyadh in early December 1988, a few months after Ayatollah Khumayni acquiesced to the Security Council's Resolution 598 calling for a permanent cease-fire in the eight-year-long Iran-Iraq War. In the course of several meetings with King Fahd and Foreign Minister Sa`ud Al-Faysal, the Omani ruler reiterated the need to move fast on regional security, certainly before Iran and Iraq galvanized their resources and rekindled their challenges. Muscat enthusiastically participated in the Peninsula Shield air exercises that were held in Kuwait in early November and, despite the latter's reservations, favored the proposed GCC internal security pact. In the event, neither he nor members of his delegation were successful in persuading their Saudi counterparts of the urgency to act decisively towards Iran and Iraq. It was, as the monarch would recognize, a "lost opportunity."[21]

Oman successfully mediated between Saudi Arabia and Iran and, although it did not take credit for the rapprochement, was nevertheless the principal architect of this reconciliation. In March 1991, Riyadh and Teheran announced that they were reestablishing severed diplomatic relations—after a three-year break—and, noticeably, made the announcement in Muscat.[22] This was an important achievement because Iran voiced its unconditional opposition to the 1991 GCC+2 Damascus Declaration, which attempted to ensure the security of the Gulf region, with the assistance of Egypt and Syria. If the War for Kuwait clarified any point, and Qaboos was keenly aware of this reality, it was that the security of the area could not be ensured without the full participation of all regional states. Toward that end, he proposed that a real security system be established, one that would eventually include both Iran and Iraq.

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[20]It is impossible to determine how many border clashes occurred between Oman and Saudi Arabia in the 1980s. Anecdotal and hearsay evidence implied that three such incidents had indeed taken place but none of them could be independently verified using open sources. When queried, Omani officials discreetly answered that whatever incidents may have occurred in the past, they belonged there.

[21]Interview with His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Sa`id, Seeb Palace, 18 January 1993.

[22]"Oman Contributes to Saudi-Iranian Rapprochement," Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report for Oman and Yemen*, No. 2, 1991, London, p. 12 [hereafter, *CR-O/Y*].

Qaboos returned to Riyadh in May 1991, where he ratified the Saudi-Omani border agreement. Tentatively settled in March 1990 at Hafr Al-Batin, the basic text of the agreement and its two annexes were formally exchanged at the Foreign Minister level.[23] In July 1995, the two countries reached final agreement on detailed border maps and ratified their earlier accord in toto.[24] The Omani leader further advocated that Riyadh and Sanaa improve their ties to eliminate existing mistrusts.[25] In June 1992, Qaboos returned to Saudi Arabia to discuss the reawakened Abu Musa and Tunb crisis, as well as the delicate Iraqi situation. Conscious that the long-term isolation of Iraq would further damage ties with the GCC states, Qaboos insisted that the Iraq Question be placed on the discussion table. He was successful inasmuch as King Fahd considered Qaboos' assessment, even if their discussions proved inconclusive. Omani officials raised this question again and again in 1993 and 1994, aware that the long-term security of the area would be guaranteed only if the postwar military arrangements were also politically sound.

The United Arab Emirates

Until 1971, the seven Shaykhdoms that now form the UAE were intermittently identified as being Omani. In Arabic sources, the area was known as the Omani Coast (Sahil Oman) long before it became known as the Pirates' Coast and before it was referred to in English sources as the "Trucial States."[26] Travel documents and passports identified local residents as Omanis under British rule. Although the Musandam Peninsula remained geographically divided from the mainland by Fujayrah, currently nestled within the UAE, relations between inhabitants of northern Oman and the rest of the Sultanate existed well before Qaboos acceded to the throne, and before the UAE gained its independence from Britain on 2 December 1971 (see Map 6). In fact, Shaykh Zayed of Abu Dhabi and Sultan Sa`id had maintained close ties and, after the failed 1966 UN effort to settle the border dispute, agreed to divide the Buraymi oasis. As a result, Abu Dhabi and Muscat bolstered their de facto claims to the oasis and, to affirm their jurisdictions, divided the control of the nine villages among themselves: Six owed allegiance to Abu Dhabi and three fell under Omani rule.[27]

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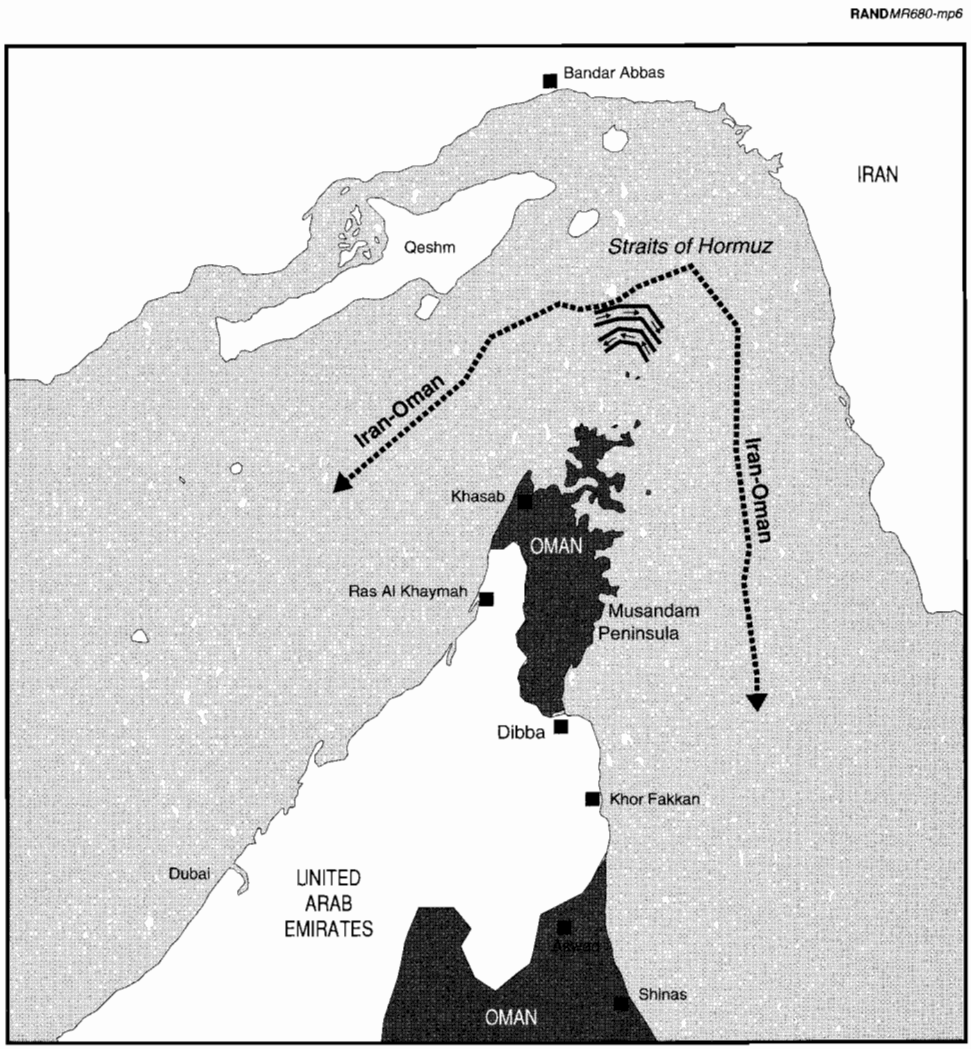
[23]The international border agreement, its two annexes, minutes, instruments of ratification, and royal decree between Saudi Arabia and Oman are reproduced in Appendix F.

[24]Mustafa Shihab, "Al-Riyadh wa-Masqat Tawaqa`an Ghadan Kharait Tarsim Al-Hudud" [Riyadh and Muscat To Endorse Detailed Border Maps], *Al-Hayat*, No. 11826, 9 July 1995, p. 6.

[25]"Border Agreement with Saudi Arabia Ratified," *CR-O/Y 91-3*, p. 11.

[26]John Duke Anthony, *Arab States of the Lower Gulf: People, Politics, Petroleum*, Washington, D.C.: The Middle East Institute, 1975, pp. 97–122.

[27]Hassan Hamdan Al-Alkim, *The Foreign Policy of the United Arab Emirates*, London: Saqi Books, 1989, pp. 108–112.



SOURCE: *Continental Shelf Boundaries in the Persian Gulf*, Office of the Geographer, Department of State, Washington, D.C., 1981, [4128 (4021) 7-81].

Map 6—Northern Oman and Shipping Lanes in the Straits of Hormuz

The Consolidation Period (1970–1975): Given the historical legacy between the two countries, relations between Sultan Qaboos and Shaykh Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahayyan—who was the only head of state to have paid an official visit to Sultan Sa`id bin Taymur in Salalah in 1968 through the latter's 38 years of reign—were bound to be truly special.

Zayed was the first foreign head of state to visit Oman after Qaboos acceded to the throne, and he pledged his full support to the young ruler. In turn, Muscat supported the concept of a federation for the former Trucial States, and when that failed to take root, warmly welcomed the creation of the United Arab Emirates in 1971. Zayed returned to Muscat in May 1972 and Qaboos visited Abu Dhabi in May 1973. Not surprisingly, the two leaders discussed cooperation efforts in several areas, including economic assistance that the UAE might provide Oman. Abu Dhabi granted Muscat a total of $200 million in 1973 and offered to build roads connecting the Sultanate's northern regions with the UAE at its own expense.[28] Of course, building such a network of roads benefited Abu Dhabi as well, because communication with Shihuh tribesmen, who lived on the Musandam Peninsula and whose allegiance the UAE sought, was greatly facilitated. In the event, Qaboos welcomed the offer not only because he wanted the Musandam to develop as fast as the mainland, but also because he realized that the Shihuh were not about to surrender their fierce independence to anyone, much less politically savvy Shaykhs from nearby Abu Dhabi. Still, Qaboos' positive step, namely to accept the UAE plans for the Musandam, was reciprocated when UAE troops, mostly Baluchi trainees and Omanis living in exile in the federation, deployed in the north, thereby freeing the Sultan's Armed Forces for duty in the Dhufar.

This was a significant gesture by Abu Dhabi as it allowed Qaboos some latitude in devising the Sultanate's defense policies. Moreover, because a substantial number of Omanis were already in the UAE, working in a variety of areas and serving in the Armed Forces, Qaboos was fairly confident that tribal concerns in the north could wait.[29] Muscat was keenly interested in improving relations with all federation members and the respite was particularly useful. In fact, Omani officials were delighted that their ties with UAE federation members were placed on the back burner and, contrary to the assumption that Oman was opposed to a strong UAE confederation, Qaboos repeatedly offered to mediate between Dubai and Abu Dhabi whenever leaders in both Shaykhdoms were at odds.

By the mid-1970s Oman had opened a commercial office in Dubai, the UAE's booming commercial capital, and planned to connect the two states' road networks.

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[28]Litwak, op. cit., pp. 54–55.

[29]Although accurate figures do not exist, an estimated 30,000 to 35,000 able-bodied Omanis lived and worked in the UAE in the mid-1970s, 85 percent of whom were serving in the military. Interview with Salim bin `Abdallah Al-Ghazzali, Minister of Communications, Muscat, 11 October 1993.

The Transitional Period (1976–1980): Relations between Oman and the UAE expanded and prospered during the second half of the 1970s. High-level exchanges produced several important agreements in the economic and security fields even though the critical border demarcation talks failed to produce a desired outcome. This was a sensitive issue, not because insurmountable objections were raised by either Abu Dhabi or Muscat but because of interior UAE political concerns. Sensitive tribal allegiances were at stake, and it was during this period that Qaboos recognized that he would not be able to conclude a unified border agreement with the UAE in toto. Faced with this challenge, his negotiators were instructed to pursue a six-track approach—to conclude separate agreements with the six federation members whose territories touched Oman. By adopting this strategy, Muscat illustrated that it was interested in a comprehensive solution, whereas Abu Dhabi was more inclined to focus solely on the Buraymi crisis. Ras al-Khaymah, the federation member who rejected Muscat's offer, was keenly aware of exploration potentials and refused to comply with Qaboos' request to negotiate.[30] In the event, Oman ruled out the use of force to control land and pursued a wait-and-see policy toward the Qawasim in Ras al-Khaymah.

The years 1978 and 1979 proved particularly active because of the repercussions of the Iranian Revolution on the conservative Arab Gulf monarchies. Motivated by developments in Teheran and certainly concerned that Ayatollah Khumayni's rhetoric could jeopardize regional stability, UAE officials understood that a consolidation of interests with Oman was the order of the day. Toward that objective, several high-ranking UAE delegations made the short air hops between Muscat, Abu Dhabi, and Dubai. Zayed returned to Oman to pursue his discussions with Qaboos and was followed, in September 1979, by Shaykh Rashid bin Sa`id Al-Makhtum, the ruler of Dubai. This was a watershed visit because it confirmed Qaboos' earlier premonitions that Oman would have to negotiate separate border agreements with six separate federation members. As expected, the two men signed a protocol settling their long-standing border dispute and turned over the agenda to a committee of experts to draft a final agreement.[31] Because the agreement was not initiated between two "sovereign" states, neither country's Foreign Ministry was responsible for the negotiations. Rather, the responsibility was shouldered by the Ministry of the

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[30]The border dispute between Oman and Ras al-Khaymah proved embarrassing because Shaykh Muhammad had sought, and received, the support of the Soviet Union in 1978. The dispute was a minor affair and certainly did not warrant the intervention of a superpower. Given the Sultanate's overt pro-Western policies, however, Moscow behaved just as it was supposed to: It issued anti-Qaboos diatribes. The event was a genuine learning experience to the Omani ruler, who vowed to prevent such disputes from gaining notoriety in the future. See Litwak, op. cit., p. 61.

[31]Lenore G. Martin, *The Unstable Gulf: Threats from Within*, Lexington, Massachusetts, and Toronto: Lexington Books, 1984, pp. 61–62; see also *MEED*, 21 December 1979.

Interior in Muscat and the respective "Diwans" in the six federation Shaykhdoms.[32]

Disagreements over the need for a singular border agreement notwithstanding, Oman signed several accords with the UAE in the 1970s that tied both countries even closer. In October 1978, the Abu Dhabi Fund for Arab Economic Development disbursed $400 million to develop oil fields in the Dhufar. Similarly, the operational Muscat-Abu Dhabi highway further increased trade contacts between the two capitals as goods flowed in both directions. As the decade closed, significant improvements in the economic arena were recorded by both countries.

The Mature Period (1981–1985): From the mid-1970s to the late 1980s, the UAE had an ambassador in Muscat whereas Oman failed to appoint a representative to Abu Dhabi. Because an Omani could travel to the UAE without a visa—whereas a UAE national required one to enter the Sultanate—the situation could not go on in perpetuity without some correction: Muscat was reluctant to move on this front and Abu Dhabi maintained a chargé d'affaires in the Omani capital through most of the mid-1980s. Oman, however, did not interpret this difference of view simply as a question of reciprocity.

In an interview with the UAE's *Al-Khaleej*, Qaboos explained his decision in the following terms:

> The brotherly relations between the two peoples are flourishing—for this has surpassed the diplomatic and routine and complex procedures. By this I mean we are two brothers, you in your house and we in ours, but the two houses are next to each other. Do you really need a mediator? In my opinion, what affects you affects me automatically—therefore, it would be of interest to both of us to concentrate our attention on the internal security matters rather than diplomatic affairs. We have to work for the expansion and strong cooperation and coordination among our security apparatuses. [The Sultan concluded by stating:] when I visited the UAE for the first time in 1974, I mentioned the above-mentioned view, but our brothers in the UAE insisted that they should have an embassy in Muscat—and my answer was we had no objection to their desire.[33]

Clearly, Qaboos was after far more meaningful associations than mere formalities. In contrast, the UAE's search for diplomatic recognition was motivated by a whole set of other considerations, including the critical issue of acceptance of

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[32]According to Foreign Minister `Alawi, "the Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not even have copies of these agreements because they were held at the Ministry of the Interior." Interview with Yusuf `Alawi bin `Abdallah, Muscat, 29 January 1993. `Alawi instructed his ministry's documentation office to provide the author with copies of the border agreements with Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Iran; these are reproduced in this volume as Appendixes E–G.

[33]Sultanate of Oman, Ministry of Information, *Oman in the Eyes of the World*, Muscat, 1987, pp. 22–23.

the federation as a unified state by as many countries as possible. Despite this difference of view, the misunderstanding between Muscat and Abu Dhabi did not prevent other cooperative efforts from moving forward. In 1984 and 1985, Sultan Qaboos sought Shaykh Zayed's advice on developments in the region and welcomed several rulers to Oman from Ras al-Khaymah, Sharjah, and Umm al-Qiwain.

Within the GCC guidelines for joint military exercises, Omani and UAE air and naval units practiced together in February 1984 and again in May 1985. To top things off, Oman and the UAE signed an important bilateral security agreement in 1985 that allowed either side to extradite known criminal elements seeking refuge in the other country. Still, by the mid-1980s, relations between the UAE and Oman matured considerably, so that sensitive questions—especially the critical border agreements—could be discussed frankly. Thus, although Muscat and Abu Dhabi shared many attributes, they also faced political differences.

The Current Period (1986–1994): Despite regular meetings and continuous consultations between high-ranking officials of the joint Omani-UAE Higher Committee, unresolved border disputes loomed over Omani-UAE relations. On 8 November 1992, an incident in the border area of Dibba highlighted the need for a final demarcation agreement, although few anticipated a quick resolution.[34] In the event, Shihuh tribesmen—who inhabit both sides of the border and live, consequently, in a no-man's land—objected to the construction of a road on the Oman side. A fracas ensued when one person was reportedly killed and six others, including two policemen, were wounded after Shihuh tribesmen warned the local company's employees to stop.[35] Although officials of both countries played down the shooting incident, claiming that it was nothing more than a localized tribal skirmish of no political significance to their bilateral relations, the incident emphasized the need to resolve outstanding border issues. To avoid similar incidents, the UAE Supreme Council issued a unified decision on 11 May 1992, appointing Abu Dhabi sole negotiator for all agreements signed between any constituent Emirate and a foreign country. Ostensibly intended as a response to Iran's implacable positions on the Abu Musa and Tunb Islands (which were part of Sharjah and Ras al-Khaymah), the

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[34]The fragmented nature of the Omani-UAE borders and the difficulties of defining water rights where ground water and surface water flowed across the border, made such an agreement problematic in the extreme.

[35]Dibba remained divided into three component settlements under the authority of Oman and the two UAE federation members of Sharjah and Fujayrah. Located near the southern frontier of the Omani enclave of Musandam (see Map 4), which itself is separated from the rest of Oman by territory belonging to various constituent emirates of the UAE, the sovereignty of Dibba has been disputed ever since Britain ruled over the area. Oman and the UAE agreed to a temporary arrangement in 1988 but, as this incident illustrated, not in a satisfactory way. See "A Shooting Incident on Omani-UAE Border Highlights the Need for Final Demarcation," *CR-O/Y 93-1*, p. 11.

decision granted UAE federal authorities for the first time the responsibility to settle border disputes between Oman and each of Dubai, Fujayrah, and Ras Al-Khaymah.[36] Indeed, this may prove to be the catalyst that will rekindle efforts toward the long-sought unified border agreement between Oman and the UAE.

Bahrain, Kuwait, and Qatar

Relations between Oman and the three Shaykhdoms of Bahrain, Kuwait, and Qatar were affected by the dynamics of the Arabian Peninsula, pitting tribal as well as commercial interests against political ambitions. Manama, Kuwait, and Doha were drawn into this whirlwind, which galvanized Muscat to act whenever its long-term interests were threatened. In fact, after the Al Sa`ud defeated Sayyid Sultan in Buraymi, Muscat turned its attention to `Utub tribes who had failed to pay Oman certain transit fees. In May 1801, Sultan's forces occupied Bahrain and arrested 25 members of influential families in Manama and several surrounding communities. The victory proved elusive, as the Al Sa`ud intervened on behalf of the `Utub and expelled the Omani garrison from Bahrain a year later. Oman's influence throughout the Persian Gulf diminished and, in the aftermath of the British occupation of the Lower Gulf States, relations between the Sultanate and Bahrain, Kuwait, and Qatar entered a hiatus.

The Consolidation Period (1970–1975): Omani contacts in the Gulf still reflect a rich historical legacy. By the mid-1970s, an estimated 12,000 Omanis were living in Bahrain, 14,000 lived in Kuwait, and 6,000 in Qatar. The 1965 Bahrain census listed 12,628 Omanis living in Bahrain, whereas the 1971 census showed only 10,785.[37] The 1970 Kuwaiti census showed 14,670 Omanis in the Emirate.[38] Kuwait listed 1,108 residence permits to Omanis in 1965. By 1970, the figure had swelled to 6,042, but by 1974 it had dropped to 762.[39]

In 1972, Oman exchanged diplomatic representatives with the three states, but Bahrain did not open an embassy in Muscat until 1989. Although relations between Oman and the smaller Gulf Shaykhdoms were cordial, high-level contacts were limited, largely because of sharp differences of view on relations with the West. When Sultan Qaboos visited Bahrain and Qatar in June and July 1972, he heard a great deal about the necessity to fold in Arab ranks and limit contacts with the West. For Qaboos, relations with Kuwait posed yet another problem, because the "Imamate of Oman" had maintained an office in the

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[36]"UAE-Oman Demarcation Eased," *Mideast Mirror*, 14 May 1992, p. 21.

[37]State of Bahrain, Central Statistical Office, *Statistical Abstract 1972*, Manama, 1973, p. 10.

[38]State of Kuwait, Central Statistical Office, *Statistical Yearbook of Kuwait 1974*, Kuwait, 1974, p. 23.

[39]Ibid., p. 59.

Emirate until June 1971. In short, relations were difficult and, in part under Saudi tutelage, Oman welcomed a Kuwaiti delegation in Muscat that proposed to foster economic, cultural, and information relations between the Sultanate and the Emirate in June 1973.

Even if relations between the two countries did not improve as rapidly as was anticipated, the cold war in the Gulf ended after the Bahraini, Kuwaiti, and Qatari ruling families came to appreciate the gravity of the Dhufar situation and altered their heretofore lukewarm relations with Muscat.[40] It must be emphasized that the young states of the Gulf—themselves the product of recent colonial rule—were ill-equipped to devise effective and well-coordinated foreign policies for the area. Many leaders were still reeling from the overwhelming British presence east of Suez and expected Sultan Qaboos to take the lead in severing ties with London. Qaboos disagreed, as the pragmatic statesman based his foreign policy agenda on long-term interests, which required a steady hand. He painstakingly cajoled his neighbors to accept that, for better or worse, a British military presence in the area was still a necessity given the threats faced by the conservative Arab Gulf monarchies. Nevertheless, London's shadow colored relations between Oman and the three smaller Shaykhdoms.

The Transitional Period (1976–1980): The large number of Omanis working in the Shaykhdoms meant that contacts between the latter and Muscat could only improve. In addition to official delegations that started a form of shuttle diplomacy, Kuwait in particular, distinguished itself by providing significant financial aid to the Sultanate. The effort was duly acknowledged by Oman as high-level contacts increased in frequency. In June 1976, a Kuwaiti financial delegation carried out a feasibility study to help Oman establish a desalination plant and an agreement was signed shortly thereafter with the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development.

Oman welcomed Kuwaiti calls for regional political union and the opportunity to host the 1976 Muscat Summit that examined Gulf security matters.

The Mature Period (1981–1985): Unlike previous periods, a noticeable shift in relations between Oman and Bahrain, Kuwait, and Qatar was apparent in the second half of the 1980s. Bilateral relations were replaced by more sustained activities under the GCC umbrella. Consultations increased in frequency and quality on a variety of issues, including sensitive security matters as well as the Iran-Iraq War.

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[40]Aryeh Y. Yodfat, *The Soviet Union and the Arabian Peninsula: Soviet Policy Towards the Persian Gulf and Arabia*, London & New York: Croom Helm and St. Martin's Press, 1983, pp. 38–44.

Reciprocal high-level visits were held between Gulf rulers, with Shaykh Khalifah of Bahrain visiting Muscat in May 1982 and Sultan Qaboos stopping in Manama in April 1985. Following a GCC accord, both Bahrain and Oman were slated to benefit from an estimated $2 billion allocation to substantially improve the two countries' defensive capabilities. Toward that end, the two air forces held joint maneuvers in May 1985 and on a regular basis thereafter.

Similar exercises were held between the Omani and Kuwaiti Air Forces in March 1985 and naval maneuvers were held between Omani and Qatari naval units starting in September 1985. An important cultural and information agreement was signed between Oman and Qatar in 1981. High-level contacts were also held between the Kuwait National Assembly and Oman's State Consultative Council when Ahmad Saadoun, the Speaker of the Kuwaiti parliament, visited Muscat in late 1985.[41]

The Current Period (1986–1994): In March 1989, Oman and Kuwait, long at loggerheads within the GCC over both foreign and security matters, held talks aimed at boosting cooperation in various fields connected with regional security. The Kuwaiti minister of the interior, Shaykh Salim Al-Sabah, spent four days in the Omani capital with his delegation, meeting his Omani counterpart, Sa`id Badr bin Sa`ud bin Harib, as well as other officials, including the director general of Police and Customs.[42] These talks proved vital as ties improved dramatically. It must be emphasized that this visit occurred after the failed 1985 assassination attempt on the Kuwaiti ruler but, importantly, the Shaykhdom aligned itself squarely behind the position of the Sultanate on security issues.

Relations also improved sharply with the UAE after a communiqué was issued in the name of the Supreme Omani-UAE Joint Committee in March 1992 advising "that nationals of Oman and the UAE could move freely between the two countries on presentation of their identity cards."[43] Although the unified border agreement was not yet concluded by late 1994, regular consultations were held with the UAE, on this and a variety of other subjects.

A high-level delegation, headed by the deputy prime minister for legal affairs, Fahd bin Mahmud Al Bu Sa`id, visited Doha and Bahrain, respectively, in September and October 1992. The declared purpose of the visits was the establishment of joint ministerial committees with both countries, which were to

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[41]Jasem Matar, "Saadoun Sees Security in People's Solidarity," *Kuwait Times*, Number 7221, 25 September 1985, p. 3.

[42]"And Holds Security Talks With Kuwait," Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report for Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, The Yemens*, No. 2, 1989, London, p. 22 [hereafter, *CR-BQOY*].

[43]"Oman's Border Problems with Yemen and the UAE are Still to Be Resolved," *CR-O/Y 92-2*, p. 11.

meet regularly to further bilateral ties, especially those of an economic nature.[44] A first sign of concrete achievements came in early 1995 when the two countries' stock markets established links, allowing traders to invest in both countries simultaneously.[45] Oman also welcomed the February 1995 joint Qatar-Bahrain Declaration to resolve by peaceful means the lingering border dispute between the two neighboring states.[46]

Unlike relations between Oman and Saudi Arabia, contacts with the smaller GCC Shaykhdoms were steady, allowing for a variety of political and economic interactions. Inasmuch as the security of the Sultanate was intrinsically tied to that of the entire area, regional stability issues earned the attention that they rightly deserved.

GULF SECURITY AND GULF COOPERATION

Against a plethora of threats facing the conservative Arab Gulf monarchies, decisive action was called for by wary rulers who, after much deliberation, agreed on the creation of the Cooperation Council of the Arab Gulf States (CCAGS), more commonly known as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in May 1981. Given their geographical proximity, close historic relations, similar political systems, and common language, religion, and customs, Arab Gulf rulers took decisive steps to thwart anticipated gains by the Iranian Revolution.[47] How did Oman perceive Gulf security and what considerations did it have in devising security ties with other GCC member states?

At the internal level, Muscat's perceptions of security have been shaped by 15 years of civil war that, at various times, was fueled by regional powers. Although Oman has not experienced an outright "revolution," its tragic history in the 1960s and 1970s influenced its leaders, whose keen awareness of past shortcomings propelled them into action.

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[44]"Oman Looks to Self-Sufficiency in Security—and Continues to Lay Emphasis on Strengthening Relations with Neighboring States," *CR-O/Y 92-4*, p. 9.

[45]"Al-Bahrayn wa-Sultanat `Uman tawaqa`an rabt bursatuhuma" [Bahrain and the Sultanate of Oman Agree to Link Their Stock Markets], *Al-Hayat*, No. 11712, 16 March 1995, p. 10.

[46]"Qatari-Bahraini Efforts to Resolve Border Dispute Welcomed," *FBIS-NES-95-036*, 23 February 1995, p. 30.

[47]Over a decade after its establishment, the GCC's raison d'être is still under development and, naturally, is beyond the scope of this study. For further analyses, see R. K. Ramazani, *The Gulf Cooperation Council: Record and Analysis*, Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1988; see also John A. Sandwick (ed.), *The Gulf Cooperation Council: Moderation and Stability in an Interdependent World*, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1987; Emile Nakhleh, *The Gulf Cooperation Council: Policies, Problems and Prospects*, New York and London: Praeger, 1986; and Erik R. Peterson, op. cit.

At the regional level, and despite the military assistance received from Iran, Jordan, and Britain, Muscat had to maintain a semblance of order if it was not to be embroiled in a multitude of crises. Simply stated, the Sultanate's Armed Forces remained limited in size and scope and, recent progress notwithstanding, were not able to defeat the Dhufar rebellions without considerable outside assistance. Between 1955 and 1959, Sultan Sa`id bin Taymur welcomed British military aid because he realized that he would not be able to put down the rebellion without it. From the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s, Sa`id and his successor, Sultan Qaboos, reached the same conclusion. They welcomed Iranian and Jordanian cooperation when those were offered. In fact, as early as 1974, Muscat and Teheran agreed on joint naval and air patrols over the Straits of Hormuz to guarantee free navigation through the vital waterway.[48] When the Iranian revolution erupted, however, the importance of Oman increased sharply, as Muscat assumed full responsibility for the safety of all traffic through the passageway (see Map 6).

At the international level, Oman supported all appeals for regional cooperation to provide for the area's security without outside involvement. As early as 1974, Qaboos reminded his Arab Gulf neighbors that the security of the region should be their sole concern.[49] He reiterated the call to achieve Gulf security without outside interference at the 1976 Gulf Foreign Ministers Muscat Summit, and at every additional platform since then. For the Sultanate, the threat of the Soviet Union was clear, which nothing short of a full-fledged response would deter. Ironically, Oman rejected the Carter Doctrine (identifying the security of the Persian Gulf as being "vital" to U.S. national security), not because it did not agree with its fundamental points, but because it considered it to be ineffective. Muscat was disappointed with the meager assistance it received from its allies when so much was at stake. Qaboos was equally disappointed with the Brezhnev Doctrine, which called for a nuclear-free Indian Ocean, especially as the New Delhi "peace message" had been delivered to the Indian Parliament in the shadow of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. In addition to this presence, less than 500 miles from the Straits of Hormuz and the Musandam Peninsula, Soviet advisers were deployed in the PDRY, where anti-Omani activities were still under way. In short, Oman was keenly aware that the East-

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[48]Rouhollah K. Ramazani, "The Strait of Hormuz: The Global Chokepoint," in Larry W. Bowman and Ian Clark (eds.), *The Indian Ocean in Global Politics*, Boulder, Colorado, and Nedlands, Australia: Westview Press and University of Western Australia, 1981, pp. 7–20.

[49]"Speech of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Sa`id on the Occasion of the 4th National Day, 18 November 1974," in Ministry of Information, *The Speeches of H. M. Sultan Qaboos bin Sa`id, Sultan of Oman, 1970–1990*, Muscat, 1991, pp. 31–39.

West conflict was fueling the appetites of both superpowers and, for this reason, called for the establishment of a "zone of peace" in the Gulf.[50]

Given its intrinsic concerns, Muscat's perceptions of regional security for the Persian Gulf region in the late 1970s may be summarized as follows:

- Oman favored political solutions to resolve border disputes. Toward that end, Muscat adopted conciliatory policies—without surrendering its sovereignty—to settle border disputes with Iran, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen.
- Against a powerful Soviet presence throughout the Indian Ocean, Muscat favored a strong deterrent force and, when it could not accomplish its stated objectives alone, called on its allies for assistance.
- Despite the fact that all shipping lanes through the Straits passed through Omani territorial waters, Muscat considered the safety of the passageway to be an international responsibility.[51] In the past, it cooperated with Iran and called for Western powers to contribute to its security. Indeed, Oman never believed that the security of the Straits was an exclusive Omani responsibility.
- Oman viewed the Iran-Iraq War as being a nefarious conflict, underlining its negative implications on both parties, and concluded that its spillover effects would be detrimental to regional security. Although it never believed that Teheran would attempt to close traffic through the Straits as a retaliation against GCC countries assisting Iraq, it opted to coordinate with Ayatollah Khumayni's regime on this critical point. It believed that the war between the two protagonists ought to be settled peacefully.
- Finally, Oman did not consider its ties with London and Washington as odd and, consequently, never accepted Arab nationalist calls to curtail them.

Against this plethora of concerns, the Omani Armed Forces were too small to deter potential aggressors and, taking into consideration the presence of other forces in the region, the only sensible solution was to develop close military cooperation with Western powers that were capable and willing to provide assistance. To Qaboos' disappointment, his first Straits of Hormuz security proposal failed to secure Gulf states' support. Only after this political defeat did Muscat negotiate a facilities access agreement with the United States, which was

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[50]Omani delegates at the United Nations General Assembly delivered several important speeches calling for the establishment of this zone of peace. See Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Speeches Delivered by the Omani Delegations, United Nations General Assembly Meetings*, 27th (1972) and 30th Sessions (1975), Muscat, 1985, pp. 21 and 34.

[51]See Map 6 for a description of the shipping lanes in the Straits of Hormuz.

formally signed in 1980. A disgruntled Qaboos summarized his perceptions of regional threats, as well as his resolve to take whatever actions he deemed appropriate, when he declared:

> Oman has given repeated and, we regret to say, largely unheeded warnings about these dangers. We have invited our brothers to join with us and aid us in preserving the stability of the area—not only vital to ourselves but to the whole world—but to no avail. Therefore, threatened as we are—and we still have vivid and bitter memories of the realities and form of that threat—we have had no other choice than to seek the assistance of those who will provide us with the means to defend ourselves.[52]

This pronouncement was misunderstood and widely criticized, ironically by nationalist writers in Kuwait and the Levant who, a decade later, would fall squarely behind the Al-Sabah in calling on the United States to liberate the Shaykhdom from Saddam Hussein's thrall. At the time, however, the Omani leader was reviled and ridiculed. Qaboos was not intimidated and defended his actions in an interview with the pro-Saudi London weekly *Al-Majallah*:

> We must make clear that the question of facilities has been overblown and given different interpretations. Some have even gone as far as saying they are bases in the guise of facilities. This is unthinkable from the outset, and we refuse to discuss it in any way. However, because of the conditions created in the world, and our area in particular, if was necessary to have some kind of understanding between us and our friends, without specifying a particular state. Also, while the United States is on one side of the international scale, it has become necessary for the area that there be a balance because the opposite side has become heavy and the Eastern Camp's presence has become large . . . particular[ly] in South Yemen and Ethiopia as well as in Afghanistan in the north, which is only 300 nautical miles from here. As for the U.S. naval presence, Oman has nothing to do with it—it is in the Indian Ocean and not under the sovereignty of a particular state.
>
> It is in our interest that there be an understanding with the other superpower, because in the case of extreme necessity, God forbid, the area will need the United States. Therefore, there must be arrangements facilitating the rendering of U.S. aid.
>
> The United States is prepared to develop our airfields and ports. It would be of no avail to lose such an opportunity to develop the facilities. As for the use of such facilities for anything, this will be by our request. On this basis, the Sultanate has welcomed giving facilities to the United States. That is all there is to it.[53]

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[52]"Speech of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Sa`id on the Occasion of the 10th National Day, 18 November 1980," in Ministry of Information, *The Speeches of H. M. Sultan Qaboos bin Sa`id, Sultan of Oman, 1970–1990*, Muscat, 1991, p. 80.

[53]"Interview with Sultan Qaboos of Oman," *Al-Majallah*, 1–7 May 1992, pp. 12–17, in *FBIS-MEA-V-82-089*, 7 May 1982, pp. C2–C4.

In addition to this agreement with Washington, Muscat was also criticized for the large British military presence in the Sultanate.[54] Undeterred by such criticisms, Oman pursued its well-defined policy and, to drive the point home, submitted a paper on regional security to the first GCC Summit in 1981. Because Muscat unabashedly maintained close associations with Western countries and because Sultan Qaboos refused to join the rejectionist front against Egypt in the aftermath of the 1979 Camp David Accords, GCC states ostracized the Sultanate. When asked whether Oman's decision to grant Washington access to certain facilities ran contrary to GCC foreign policy, Qaboos responded by hoping that the day would come when it would "be possible to reach a middle ground acceptable to all and satisfactory to the desires of the peoples of the area."[55] Arab nationalists in Kuwait and to a lesser extent in Saudi Arabia conceded that Qaboos had a point and, in time, recognized the Sultanate's political acumen.

In the aftermath of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the hurried 1991 Damascus Declaration solution, Qaboos was determined to devise genuine security arrangements. The U.S.-brokered GCC+2 settlement, ostensibly designed to provide for the security of the Persian Gulf by combining Egyptian and Syrian military capabilities, failed to garner the necessary support from GCC leaders. Most objected to "Arabizing" regional security, aware of the delicate Iranian factor, and, more important, most wanted to shield their military forces from highly politicized sister institutions in Cairo and Damascus. Still, in addition to encouraging reconciliation efforts between Iran and Saudi Arabia and even Iraq, the Omani Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Khamis bin Hamid Al-Kalbani, "assiduously vaunted the notion of a 100,000 man strong GCC army despite opposition from the rest of the council states."[56] Muscat expressed its preference for a force that would be separate both from the national armies and from the small Peninsula Shield Force stationed in Saudi Arabia. Although Omani officials recognized the manpower difficulties that would be associated with the establishment of such a large force (especially when individual member states fielded rather small armies), their concerns were more with the necessity to establish a unified command. In short, Muscat wanted to avoid a repetition of the crises that emerged during Operation Desert Storm when

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[54]According to the 1984–1985 edition of the IISS *Military Balance,* an estimated 3,700 foreign military personnel were "seconded" to the Sultan's Armed Forces. Senior British advisers as well as technical personnel from private British defense firms worked in the Sultanate. See *The Military Balance 1984–1985,* London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1984, p. 68.

[55]*Al-Majallah,* op. cit., p. 15.

[56]"Oman Has Its Own Proposals on Gulf Security," *CR-O/Y 91-4,* pp. 11–12.

"national contingents, ostensibly attached to a multinational force, remained under their own national commands."[57]

At the 1991 Kuwait GCC Summit, Sultan Qaboos was entrusted by the Council to chair the Higher Committee on Security, review proposals, and formulate plans for future arrangements for the region. Consequently, security matters have figured prominently on the agenda of the Sultan's discussions with foreign dignitaries visiting Muscat. Postwar military arrangements were in the forefront of the topics discussed by the Omani leader with French President François Mitterand in late January 1992 and the British Secretary of Defense, Tom King, at about the same time. Although both Mitterand and King "voiced their support to the defunct proposal, put forward by Oman in 1991, that the six GCC states set up a 100,000-man joint army, this position was viewed as intended to encourage the Sultanate's attempts to persuade its GCC partners to go beyond individual reliance on Western powers and to achieve a degree of self-sufficiency in security matters."[58] No matter how diligent Qaboos was, he could not convince GCC leaders to adopt his 100,000-man proposal. In April 1993, General `Ali bin Majid Al-Ma`amari, the Minister of Palace Office Affairs, articulated Muscat's anxiety at the lack of progress. He regretted any misunderstandings that existed on the proposal and "expressed the hope that others will eventually correct their views."[59] The GCC Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Saif bin Hashil Al-Maskari, was more forthcoming when he concluded that "implementation of the military aspects of the [Damascus] declaration would be finalized on the basis of separate bilateral agreements between individual states."[60]

When both the GCC+2 initiative and the 100,000-man army proposal failed, Oman embarked on its own independent policy. In May 1992, Qaboos declared to an Australian newspaper that the Sultanate could defend itself if war broke out again. He declared: "I believe that today we are stronger than ever before. We cannot rely on others. We need our own deterrent, based on our own forces." Asked how this related to his role as chairman of the Higher Committee on Security for the GCC, the Sultan replied that his country "had laid the foundations for its own defense potential, which allow[ed Oman] to secure peace in the region together with [its] friends" (see Map 7).[61]

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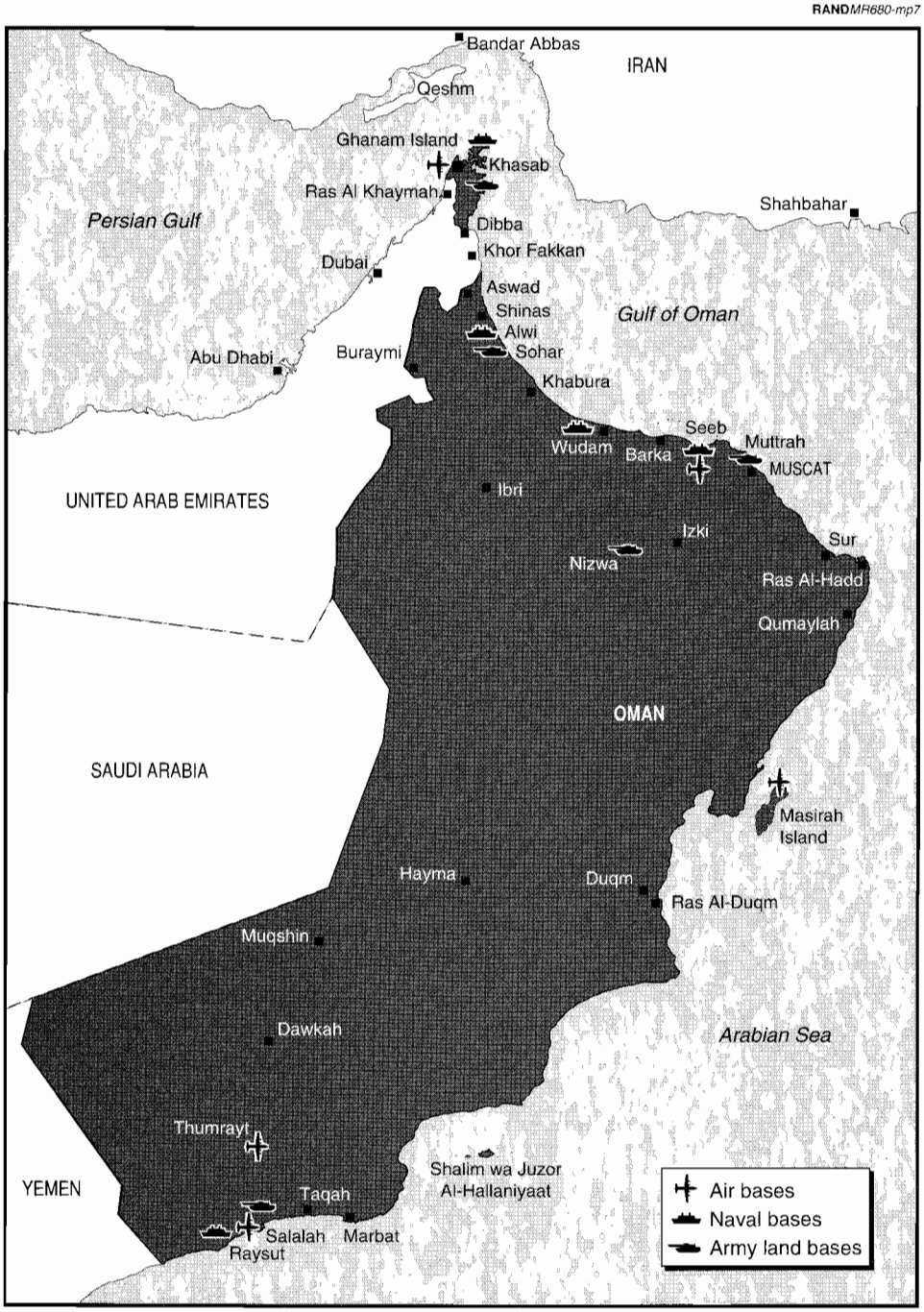
[57]Interview with Lt. General Khamis bin Hamid Al-Kalbani, Chief of Staff, Sultan's Armed Forces, Muscat, 21 September 1993.

[58]"Gulf Security Remains the Main International Pre-Occupation of the Sultanate," *CR-O/Y 92-2*, p. 10.

[59]"Oman Pushes for Action on a GCC Force," *CR-O/Y 93-2*, p. 9.

[60]Ibid. Interview with Saif bin Hashil Al-Maskari, former Assistant Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Muscat, 29 September 1993.

[61]"Oman Seeks to Achieve a Degree of Self-Sufficiency in Security Matters," *CR-O/Y 92-3*, p. 9.



Map 7—Oman—Major Military Installations

All was not lost on the GCC front, however. At the 1993 Riyadh Summit, the GCC agreed to increase the size of the Peninsula Shield Force from 8,000 to 25,000 and, in a novel departure from previous positions, to "integrate it with additional naval and air units." Yet, GCC Secretary-General Shaykh Fahim bin Sultan Al-Qasimi acknowledged that neither the often discussed joint defense system nor the 25,000-man force was "finalized."[62] Qaboos was not surprised as he doubled his political efforts to secure the Sultanate's regional position.[63] He finally endorsed the GCC's internal security agreement in April 1995, which was duly noted by the Saudi Cabinet in an official statement.[64]

YEMEN: FROM IDEOLOGICAL FOE TO STRATEGIC ALLY

During his two decades in power, to improve the Sultanate's strategic position on the Arabian Peninsula, Sultan Qaboos drastically altered his country's policies towards Yemen. This was a difficult undertaking, especially in light of the decade-long Dhufar War, which pitted Muscat against Aden. Still, the Sultan weighed his policies and, on balance, tipped the scales on the side of pragmatism. That was his forte and, more important, what was needed to ensure the security of the country. Perceived as ideological foes for close to 30 years, Yemenis became strategic allies, not only to restore the balance of power on the Peninsula but also because of significant commercial opportunities for Oman.

The Conflict with the PDRY

Steps to reduce the tension in relations between Muscat and Aden assumed a great deal of importance on the Omani political agenda after the end of the Dhufar War. In November 1981, barely a few months after the regional organization was established, the GCC Supreme Council decided to dispatch a military mission to Oman to assess the extent of the threat posed by Aden and to seek recommendations on how to reduce tensions. In fact, under Omani tutelage, the threat posed by the PDRY became the principal focus of the first GCC Defense Ministers' January 1982 meeting.[65] On the political plane, a mediation

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[62]"Peninsula Shield Force May Be Upgraded," *CR-O/Y 94-1*, p. 9.

[63]Husayn `Abd Al-Ghani, "`Uman tatamasak bi-Majlis Al-Taawun Al-Khaliji lakinaha ta'mal bian takun Al-qinat bidayat marhala jadidat" [Oman Lodges a Note with the GCC But Hopes That a New Chapter May Be Opened], *Al-Hayat*, 22 December 1993, p. 6.

[64]"Sultan Endorses GCC Security Agreement," *FBIS-NES-95-066*, 6 April 1995, p. 24. See also "Council of Ministers Views Yemen, Oman, Chechnya," *FBIS-NES-95-065*, 5 April 1995, p. 29.

[65]J. E. Peterson, "The GCC and Regional Security," in John A. Sandwick (ed.), *The Gulf Cooperation Council: Moderation and Stability in an Interdependent World*, Boulder, Colorado, and Washington, D.C.: Westview Press and American-Arab Affairs Council, 1987, pp. 172–173.

effort between the two countries, which was praised by the Supreme Council in November 1982 for its "spirit of perseverance," was carried out by the UAE and Kuwaiti ministers.[66] Several factors enabled the GCC initiative to succeed:

- The political shift in Aden allowed Qaboos to send confidential messages to President `Ali Nasser Muhammad.
- Yemen abandoned its confrontation policies toward the Sultanate, preferring to engage in more moderate and cooperative efforts.
- The PDRY had serious economic needs that needed outside assistance.

Against these rapidly changing circumstances, Aden welcomed the Saudi Interior Minister, Prince Naif bin Abdulaziz, on 6 June 1982. Naif discussed possible Saudi financial assistance and, in a dramatic change in position, linked that assistance to needed changes in Aden's political attitudes. This was an important victory, particularly in light of added pressures from Moscow to reduce subsidies paid out to the PDRY. Together with mediation by Kuwait and the UAE, these developments culminated in the conclusion of an agreement between Oman and South Yemen on 27 October 1982 that provided for an "exchange of ambassadors, non-interference in internal affairs, negotiations on border disputes, and negotiations on the future of facilities for foreign powers."[67] The agreement was followed by a suspension of the 45-minutes-daily "Voice of Oman Revolution" broadcast on Aden Radio.[68]

Following these first contacts, Aden expressed confidence that ambassadors would soon be exchanged and that leaders would visit each other's capitals.[69] In November 1985, Foreign Minister `Alawi made it clear that Oman would not exchange ambassadors with the PDRY until a border agreement was duly ratified. The minister pointed out that the exchange of ambassadors was the crowning point in relations between two countries but that Muscat and Aden were still organizing their ties on a suitable basis. This statement contradicted one made by the PDRY leader, `Ali Nasir Muhammad, who favored the exchange of ambassadors before a border accord was reached.[70] It was not long

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[66]Erik R. Peterson, op. cit, p. 133.

[67]Erik R. Peterson, op. cit., pp. 132–133. See also "GCC Mediation Triumphs: Oman, South Yemen Agree to Normalize Ties," *Emirates News* 11:328, 28 October 1982, p. 1.

[68]The suspension, which went into effect on 6 November 1982, deprived the Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman of its most important platform. It highlighted Aden's commitment to the accord and, although short-lived in duration, was a genuine step in fostering the spirit of the agreement. See David Lay, "Muscat and Aden: Why Stability Must Come First," *The Middle East*, December 1982, p. 20.

[69]"Efforts of UAE, Kuwait Fruitful: Oman, Aden to Exchange Ambassadors," *Emirates News* 12:339, 29 October 1993, p. 1.

[70]"But Oman Is Ready to Exchange Ambassadors with South Yemen," *QER-BQOY 85-1*, p. 16.

before ambassadors were exchanged, however, because Qaboos determined that a far more pragmatic approach was required. Oman's ambassador to Aden, Muhammad bin Salim Al-Hajri, presented his credentials on 27 December 1987 and, following this presence, Aden closed the PFLO radio broadcasting station in the PDRY for good. In the words of the last PFLO leader `Abdulaziz Al-Qadi, "the changing attitude towards Oman in Moscow and Aden d[id] not necessarily preclude support for the PFLO." This was a far cry from earlier remarks in which Al-Qadi boasted of "unconditional support." In 1987, Al-Qadi, probably under PDRY instructions, asserted that he did not "want to see tension between states of the region and w[as] convinced that revolution was not for export." Nothing in his interview indicated the kind of implacable hostility to the Omani regime previously associated with the PFLO, his statements amply illustrated how rewarding Sultan Qaboos' policies were.[71]

The Republic of Yemen

When the Yemen Arab Republic and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen united in May 1990, the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Yemen opened a new chapter in their relations. Motivated by a sense of conciliation, Oman strengthened its bilateral efforts, acknowledging that changing circumstances warranted bold initiatives. Still, the long-awaited border demarcation treaty, expected to have been signed and sealed by the end of 1991, ran into some minor problems. Following accusations by opposition parties in Sanaa that the government was planning to transfer to Oman 15,000 square kilometers of territory in the thinly populated eastern province of Al-Mahrah, the Yemeni prime minister, Haydar Abu Bakr Al-`Attas, boasted that Yemen itself was to gain 5,000 square kilometers of territory from the Sultanate. Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmud Al Bu Sa`id, the Deputy Prime Minister for Legal Affairs, recognized that some problems did indeed exist, saying: "We are now waiting for the Yemeni side to decide on its position in a final move, and then the demarcation agreement can be signed."[72] A few months after this temporary setback, Sayyid Fahd declared that an agreement was finally reached and, although a lot of time was taken to iron out the details, that this was the "civilized method to pave the way for positive cooperation in all fields."[73]

In an official ceremony attended by high-ranking officials from both countries, the Oman-Yemen border agreement was signed in Sanaa by Thuwayni bin

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[71]"PFLO Accepts Changing Face of Peninsula Politics," *CR-BQOY 88-1*, pp. 17–18.

[72]"Oman's Border Problems with Yemen and the UAE Are Still to Be Resolved," *CR-O/Y 92-2*, p. 11.

[73]"Official on Border Agreement, Relations with Yemen," *Foreign Broadcast Information Service—Near East and South Asia, 92-192*, 2 October 1992, p. 13 [hereafter, *FBIS-NES*].

Shihab Al-Sa`id, the personal representative of Sultan Qaboos, and Haydar Abu Bakr Al-`Attas, then Yemen's Prime Minister on 1 October 1992.[74] Consisting of ten articles, the demarcation agreement defined the onshore boundary as a straight line running from a point at Ras Dharbat on the Gulf of Aden and extending in a northwesterly direction, bending slightly around the area surrounding the town of Habrut—which remained on the Yemeni side—through to the furthest point on the Omani-Saudi border. Furthermore, the agreement delineated the offshore boundary between the two countries in accordance with the provisions of international law, relevant United Nations conventions, and Law of the Sea provisions. Of the two annexes appended to the agreement, the first (comprising 18 articles) lay down provisions for regulating relations and procedures between frontier authorities of the two states. The second nine-article annex provided for the rights of nationals from both countries to free movement and, in compliance with established nomadic traditions, regulated the equitable use of pasture lands and the exploitation of water resources in border areas.

It was, to say the least, a precedent-setting agreement that illustrated a depth of compromise by both sides. The agreement was ratified in Yemen by the cabinet and the national assembly, and in Oman by royal decree by the end of October 1992. According to the terms of the agreement, a binational technical committee was to be set up to delineate on the ground all frontier coordinates and to draw official maps as needed.[75]

Ironically, the Oman-Yemen border agreement was signed a day after Saudi and Qatari border units clashed around Al-Khaffus, resulting in the death of two Qataris—a warrant officer and an Egyptian seconded to Qatar's border forces—and the capture of one.[76]

The border agreement with Yemen received widespread support throughout the Sultanate. On 4 October, the Minister of State and Governor of Dhufar, Mussallam bin `Ali Al-Busa`idi, together with the Minister of Information, `Abdulaziz bin Mohammed Al-Rowas, held a meeting with tribal leaders to explain the details of the agreement and solicit reactions. The two men stressed the accord's historical significance, as well as the benefits to be expected from Omani-Yemeni cooperation. The effort was clearly an attempt to win over Al-Mahrah tribes where opposition to the central government had historical roots.

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[74]The international border agreement, its two annexes, protocols, and instruments of ratification between Oman and Yemen, are reproduced in Appendix G.

[75]"The Border Agreement with Yemen Is Signed and Ratified," *CR-O/Y-92-4*, pp. 9–10.

[76]"Saudi Troops Attack Border Post; 2 Killed," *FBIS-NES-92-191*, 1 October 1992, p. 16. The Oman-Yemen accord stood in sharp contrast to ongoing border clashes elsewhere on the Arabian Peninsula.

In the event, the explanations proved satisfactory and key tribal leaders sent a cable of congratulations to Sultan Qaboos.

The instruments of ratification for the border treaty were formally exchanged during an official ceremony in Muscat on 27 December 1992. Dr. `Abd Al-Karim Al-`Iryani, the Yemeni Minister of Foreign Affairs, and his Omani counterpart, Yusuf bin `Alawi bin `Abdallah, signed the documents before forwarding them to the United Nations and the League of Arab States. Through this process, the agreement became effective, opened broad horizons for bilateral cooperation, and facilitated contacts and links between the two countries. The two ministers added important subtleties to their understandings of what this agreement would provide. Al-`Iryani declared that the agreement was meant to render "borders more like open doors than walls separating the two countries."[77] `Alawi stressed that the agreement was the fulfillment of the Omani leadership's aspirations to coordinate policies with its southern neighbor. To be sure, Oman had made important concessions to Yemen, a fact that was readily recognized by Al-`Iryani. The Yemeni Foreign Minister stated that "there w[ould] be no compensations to the Omani Government or Omani citizens for areas whose ownership was transferred to Yemen after the signing of the border agreement." He attributed this to the "reconciliation and brotherhood achieved in relations between the two countries [and called for a similar effort in the ongoing Saudi-Yemeni border discussions], which eliminated the need to compensate any party for anything." `Alawi was quick to emphasize that this was an "event which w[ould] not be repeated."[78] Both sides agreed to form a joint working team at the foreign ministry level to coordinate and consult on political issues of mutual concern. They also agreed to tackle the difficult issue of mines scattered along the border dating back to the Dhufar War. Although Oman and Yemen had fewer mines than Afghanistan, Iran, or Iraq, the problem was real nonetheless, necessitating immediate attention if tragedies were to be avoided. Omani defense officials were amply aware of the challenge facing them, raised the issue with their Yemeni counterparts, and sought assistance from several Western powers to help devise the optimal approach to solve the problem. The task was arduous, required financial and technical resources and, above all, trust on both sides. Final border maps were exchanged in June 1995.[79]

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[77]"Ratification of Border Agreement with Oman," *FBIS-NES-92-250*, 29 December 1992, p. 19.

[78]Husayn `Abd Al-Ghani, "Al-`Iryani: We Wish to Conclude Integrated Border Agreement with Saudi Arabia," *Al-Hayat*, 29 December 1992, pp. 1, 4.

[79]Iqbal `Ali `Abdallah, "Al-Yaman wa-`Uman Tahtafilan bi-Intiha' Tarsim Al-Hudud" [Yemen and Oman Celebrate the Completion of Border Mapping], *Al-Hayat*, No. 11790, 3 June 1995, p. 6.

Reactions to the agreement were muted. Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates issued no official statements. Kuwait reserved its comments to a mere congratulatory cable, although deputy prime minister and foreign minister Shaykh Salim Al Sabah assured Egyptian journalists on 5 October 1992 that the Saudi-Qatari clashes were contained.[80] The irony was not lost in Muscat. Only Bahrain went on the record, praising Oman and Yemen for their bold initiative. The Bahraini prime minister, Shaykh Khalifah bin Salman Al Khalifah, "congratulated the Sultanate's leadership, government, and people on the great achievement of signing an agreement on the demarcation of the international borders between the Sultanate and the fraternal Republic of Yemen. His Highness described it as an example to be emulated."[81]

In the aftermath of their agreement, Oman recommended that a free trade zone be created at the newly demarcated border. Discussions on this and several other proposals reached the technical level in early 1993 when construction ministers announced a meeting to discuss the development of roads linking the two countries. A Ministerial Committee headed by the Deputy Prime Minister for Financial and Economic Affairs assumed the responsibility to develop the border area. In fact, the proposed zone was intended to boost trade and industry in the largely underdeveloped Hadhramawt area adjoining Oman. Similar efforts were visible on other fronts. Starting in January 1993, Oman's Minister of Petroleum and Minerals, Sa`id bin Ahmad Al-Shanfari, visited Sanaa a number of times and received his counterpart in Muscat, to explore production, refining, and marketing possibilities with Yemen.[82] As a result of such visits, Muscat announced that it would send teams of experts to determine the feasibility of upgrading the old BP refinery in Aden and of cooperating in the development of a new refinery in Mukalla. Toward the end of January 1993, a delegation of businessmen from the Omani Chamber of Commerce arrived in Yemen for a brief visit to determine investment prospects. They pronounced themselves satisfied with what they saw, claiming that Yemen was "a good place to do business." Unquestionably, Omani tradesmen perceived Yemen as a potential partner and an almost untapped market.

On 26 May 1993, the Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, Qais bin `Abdul Munim Al-Zawawi, presided at the opening of the first border crossing near Mazyouna, where a new free trade zone will be established. This was followed by a formal visit by Sultan Qaboos to Sanaa in October 1993, partly to mark the first anniversary of the historic border agreement. Because of internal disputes between the leaders of Yemen, the Sultan cut short his planned four-

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[80]"Foreign Minister: Saudi-Qatar Dispute 'Contained'," *FBIS-NES-92-193*, 5 October 1993, p. 12.

[81]"Official Border Negotiations with Oman End," *FBIS-NES-92-195*, 7 October 1992, p. 17.

[82]"Omani Minister of Petroleum Meets Salih," *FBIS-NES-93-001*, 4 January 1993, p. 25.

day visit and, without visiting Aden, returned home. Internal Yemeni disputes notwithstanding, the visit was a resounding success, as thousands of Yemenis lined the streets "to greet the Sultan." These pictures were "beamed across television screens and printed in the local press," illustrating the Yemeni interest in Oman.[83] To be sure, most were keenly interested in the economic windfalls that improved relations with the Sultanate would provide, and many were rewarded as a slew of economic agreements were signed in late 1993, and early 1994. The Sultan signed an agreement to provide a $21 million loan toward the construction of a road linking the two countries, and both Petroleum Minister Al-Shanfari and Deputy Prime Minister Qais Al-Zawawi initiated separate economic accords. But the deepening crisis in Yemen marred bilateral relations.

The 1994 civil war in Yemen struck a severe blow to the Omani government because of the Sultan's personal initiatives. All mediation efforts had failed and Oman's primary consideration—that is, to "ensure its own stability and to maintain its strategic relationship with those areas of Yemen which border the Sultanate"—was threatened. Muscat was keenly aware that the civil war in Yemen might spill over into the Sultanate and, denial to the contrary notwithstanding, had to deal with a Yemeni "refugee problem."[84] Moreover, Qaboos faced the unpleasant task of discussing with `Ali `Abdallah Salih the fate of several Yemeni leaders, including `Ali Salim Al-Baydh, who had sought refuge in Oman. The Omani ruler rejected Salih's call to extradite Vice President Al-Baydh but agreed to impose severe restrictions on the latter's political activities while in the Sultanate.[85]

Although there were no incursions into Oman after Sanaa captured the southern stronghold of Mukalla, the crisis expanded because it created a rift between the Sultanate and several of its GCC allies. Oman came under pressure from Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, and the UAE, to support the breakaway Democratic Republic of Yemen (DRY). Only Qatar stood firm with Oman in supporting the legitimacy of Yemen, even though Doha's motives were probably far more complex than most analysts assumed. For Oman, the issue was clear: How could the DRY enhance the Sultanate's strategic position? Because Qaboos could not find a suitable answer to this question, he stood firm, concluding that Sanaa would eventually win the war. This assessment

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[83]"Yemeni Politics Mar Sultan Qaboos' Visit," *CR-O/Y 93-4*, p. 12.

[84]"Civil War in Yemen Is a Blow to Oman," *CR-O/Y 94-3*, pp. 8–9.

[85]Husayn `Abd Al-Ghani and Iqbal `Ali `Abdallah, "Muhadathat Qabus wa `Ali Saleh tatarakazu al-yaum ala masir qadat al-janub" [Discussions Between Qaboos and `Ali Saleh Today on the Fate of Southern Leaders], *Al-Hayat*, No.11530, 12 September 1994, pp. 1, 4; see also Faysal Makram and Iqbal `Ali `Abdallah, "Ali Salih Talaba Qabus bi-taslimihi Al-Baydh li-muhakamatihi" [`Ali Salih Asks Qaboos to Extradite Al-Baydh to Stand Trial], *Al-Hayat*, No. 11531, 13 September 1994, pp. 1, 4.

aside, the GCC was polarized and, since the War for Kuwait, had drifted apart on regional security matters. Still, Qaboos emerged relatively unscathed in his strategic assessment. With a victorious Sanaa and an intact border agreement, Oman could, once again, concentrate on the critical political and economic linkages that were being established with Yemen. With a temporary settlement in Sanaa, Oman gained time to foster new ties with the Yemeni leadership, to arrange to further mediate between President `Ali `Abdallah Salih and some DRY leaders who sought—and received—refuge in Muscat, and to lure its GCC allies back to the negotiating table. Vindicated on at least one score, namely, Sanaa's victory on the battlefield, Muscat could indeed coalesce the GCC to adopt more forthcoming policies towards Yemen.

REVOLUTIONARY IRAN

Even before the British withdrawal from Aden in 1967 and the subsequent decision to withdraw military forces from the Persian Gulf region, Oman approached Iran from a unique perspective. Muscat understood that both religious and ethnic features would play important roles in its relations with Teheran.

The Iranian Role in the Dhufar War, 1964–1975

When Sultan Qaboos visited Teheran in October 1971, ostensibly to attend celebrations at Persopolis commemorating the 2,500th anniversary of the Persian Empire, he shared with the Shah his concern that communist insurgents in the Dhufar threatened regional stability. Because the Shah considered himself the most powerful leader in the area, his vision of regional stability prevailed, which—for the purpose of their discussion—was not limited to internal Omani issues.[86] Qaboos did not disagree, for he realized that Muhammad Reza Pahlavi's personality aside, Iran was indeed the most powerful country in the area. Consequently, Qaboos had a clear idea of what kind of security the area would have. He disapproved of the Shah's heavy-handedness when Iran occupied the UAE's Abu Musa and Tunb Islands in 1971 but agreed with Iran

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[86]It is important to note that the Iranian-Omani relationship long preceded this discussion and, most probably colored it. Indeed, contacts between Persian and Omanis were fairly well established. One observer described those ties by emphasizing the nature of Iran's long-term interests in Oman in the following terms:

> Only one organized army had ever penetrated those heights [Jabal al-Akhdar]—the Persians [who], in the tenth century, stormed the mountains with great losses and fought a victorious battle on their summit, nine thousand feet up. Many of them, strangely enough, liked the place so much, despite this bloody introduction to it, that they settled on the slopes of the Jebel Akhdar; and their descendants live there still.

See James H. Morris, *Sultan in Oman: Venture into the Middle East*, New York: Pantheon, 1957.

that regional security required some cooperation in the security field. In addition to Soviet expansionism, the two men were inclined to favor joint patrols of the Straits of Hormuz and to oppose whatever insurgencies emerged in the region. In addition, Qaboos was keenly aware that he needed a clear border agreement with Iran, not only to control the critical passageway through the Straits but also to indicate to Saudi Arabia and the UAE in the first instance, and the PDRY at a later stage, that Muscat meant business when it called for the establishment of secure borders. Even if the Shah insisted on his hegemonic agenda, Qaboos reasoned he would at least secure a border agreement. A successful conclusion on this front, further posited the young ruler in Muscat, would elevate his stature in the Arab world by virtue of his negotiations with a powerful potentate.

Following the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries, Teheran deployed troops into Oman where they seconded the Sultan's Armed Forces in the south. In time, the two countries started joint naval patrols around the Straits and, on 23 March 1973, Teheran announced that the Royal Iranian Navy would, in cooperation with the Royal Omani Navy, inspect ships passing through the waterway. As in the past, Qaboos had little choice but to acknowledge Iran's preponderant military power but, in exchange for his acquiescence, insisted that an "Agreement on the Continental Shelf" be signed between the two countries. The Shah relented and the two states formally entered into an agreement in July 1974.[87] This was followed by an "Agreement on Cultural Cooperation," and in September 1975, Qaboos returned to Iran on a private visit that lasted 9 days. No matter how unpalatable the Shah's posturing may have been, Qaboos saw that his Machiavellian approach paid off. The Sultan concluded that his country's security would be better served if he were to acknowledge the Iranian hegemonic power. In early 1975, Major General T. M. Creasey, the Commander of the Sultan's Armed Forces, declared that the Shah of Iran had "guaranteed" Oman's airspace against intruding foreign aircraft by committing his Air Force to combat aggressors if Muscat requested such assistance. Teheran based several F-5 fighters, along with a number of other military aircraft, in the Sultanate under the command of an Iranian Brigadier General who would be subordinated to Omani officials.[88] The deployments indicated that the Shah was also concerned with the strategic stability of the Persian Gulf region.

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[87]The agreement delimiting the continental shelf between Oman and Iran, essentially a formal border agreement, is reproduced in Appendix E.

[88]*The New York Times*, 3 February 1975, p. 2.

Common Security Perceptions

Iran's understanding of security threats to the region coincided with those held by Oman. Muscat was of course indebted to Teheran for the military assistance extended throughout the Dhufar War. Sultan Qaboos publicly expressed his gratitude to the Iranian people—more than 100 Iranian soldiers died in the Dhufar War—when their new ambassador presented his diplomatic credentials in January 1976. Qaboos reiterated his appreciation to the Shah's brother, Prince Shahpur, when the latter visited the Sultanate in early 1976.[89] High-level contacts continued throughout this period. Sultan Qaboos visited Iran in June 1976 and again in 1977 and received the Shah in Muscat, in December 1977.

By mid-1977, the bulk of Iranian forces dispatched to Oman in the early 1970s were withdrawn, with the exception of a small number performing specific counterinsurgency duties. Because of the 1979 revolution in Teheran, the remaining troops were rapidly withdrawn, and Muscat welcomed Ayatollah Khumayni's call to maintain good relations with its neighbors. Oman was keenly aware that it could not afford to allow its carefully nurtured relationship with Iran lose momentum. Consequently, it proposed to send a delegation—led by the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs—to meet with Khumayni. Yusuf bin `Alawi bin `Abdallah was told by the revolutionary leader that Iran would honor all of the agreements signed by the previous regime and would work closely with Oman to ensure regional security. At the conclusion of the visit, the Omani Information Minister declared:

> Iran is our neighbor, we have close historical, religious and geographic links with her and we are eagerly looking forward to expanding our relations with her in all fields in order to make the region a safer place to live in. . . .[90]

Still, the effect of the revolution was significant and brought about a cool period in the relationship. Ties between Oman and revolutionary Iran deteriorated in April 1979 after a People's Front for the Liberation of Oman (PFLO) delegation visited Teheran. Yet Oman, and unlike other states, officially considered the revolution an internal matter for Iran and realized that there was precious little it could have done to influence its outcome one way or the other. To be sure, there was some anxiety concerning the attitude of Oman's Shia minority toward the Islamic revolution but, in any event, there was no point in opposing a popular revolution that swept an entire nation just because its proponents harbored radical views. Rather, the Omani logic went, Muscat had better find a modus vivendi to protect its long-term interests and, insofar as the Straits were concerned, Oman reminded the Khumayni regime that it was eminently

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[89] *Al-Watan (Muscat)*, 5 and 12 February 1976.

[90] *Al-Watan (Muscat)*, 25 July 1980.

equipped to patrol its territorial waters and would ensure safe passage for all parties (see Map 6). Pragmatism won the day, even if Teheran did not perceive the Omani position as being that much different from those of other Arab Gulf monarchies.

Omani-Iranian relations entered a critical phase at the beginning of the 1980s as Teheran began to appreciate the Sultanate's strategic position far more than at any other time. It feared that Muscat could be used as a jumping point for anti-Iranian forces (following allegations that Iraqi Air Force units were stopping in Oman during their long-range attacks on shipping in the Persian Gulf). In the event, no Iraqi Air Force planes refueled in Oman because Muscat was not about to embroil itself in the war, nor allow outside forces to abuse their welcome. At no time were the Straits of Hormuz in any danger. What Oman called for repeatedly was to end the war through reconciliation but, for a variety of reasons, Ayatollah Khumayni rejected such peace overtures.[91] The leadership in Teheran noted the good relations between Oman and Iran but circumstances were not right to improve them. A senior Iranian official summarized the Omani role a few years after the 1988 Iran-Iraq cease-fire when he declared: "We have had vast relations with Oman compared with the other Gulf countries. These were interrupted for eight years by the war."[92]

Relations with the Khumayni Government

For strategic reasons, Muscat accepted Iran's military assistance in putting down the Dhufar rebellion in the 1970s and, after the 1979 revolution, maintained correct relations with the Khumayni regime despite a period of strained and difficult contacts. Ironically, the most openly pro-American government in the area was, and remained, the one most capable in dealing with Iran. What accounted for these policies included a keen appreciation for Iran's geographic position, the outright disregard of Iranian revolutionary rhetoric, and the realization that Omani as well as Western interests (which for Oman effectively meant regional stability) could only be preserved by continuing the dialogue. Qaboos avoided the trap of having to react to Iranian-instigated policies in the area. Instead, he guided them.

At about the same time, the Joint Oman-Iran patrols in the Straits of Hormuz ended. When an Iranian helicopter flew undetected into Omani territory, Muscat unilaterally reinforced its military units on the Musandam Peninsula,

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[91] For a full discussion of Oman's mediation role during this period, see R. K. Ramazani, *Revolutionary Iran: Challenge and Response in the Middle East*, Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988, pp. 137–143.

[92] Ali Naji Khomashi, President of the Iranian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, *Daily Oman Observer*, 13 January 1990, p. 1.

and discreetly authorized units of the U.S. Seventh Fleet to use its facilities on Masirah Island. The rift between Muscat and Teheran brought Oman closer to Saudi Arabia. Throughout the Gulf region, and certainly elsewhere in the Arab world, the revolutionary threat emanating from Iran loomed large. Little if any of the ensuing Arab courtship of Oman escaped Sultan Qaboos. Even Iraq attempted to persuade rather than chastise. Still, twice in 1979, Oman made overtures toward Iran, to discuss how best to protect sea traffic through the Straits. In June, Yusuf bin `Alawi met with high-ranking revolutionary leaders, including Ayatollah Khumayni and, in September, Special Envoy Malallah bin `Ali bin Habib negotiated a new transit "arrangement" through the strategic waterway. Rather than base its dialogue on ideological differences, Muscat tapped the Khumayni regime's national security interests. Moreover, Oman quickly began to act as a useful channel of communications between Teheran and the conservative Arab gulf monarchies, while ensuring the unimpeded flow of oil through the Straits. It was, therefore, with some reservations that Qaboos supported the GCC tilt toward Iraq when the Iran-Iraq War started in September 1980. Still, the decision was made easier after Omani Navy units clashed with Iranian forces in 1980, when the latter violated Omani territorial waters in the Straits.

Relations deteriorated further in 1982, when Teheran failed to respond to the Fez Summit resolutions on the Iran-Iraq War. Muscat recalled its chargé d'affaires from Teheran in October and, shortly thereafter, contributed a token $10 million to the Iraqi war effort. Saddam Hussein expressed his appreciation and pride in the Sultanate's "pan-Arab stand." In early 1983, Qaboos provided a gloomy assessment of his relations with Iran:

> They are going to cause problems because they are going to use subversive mechanisms in the area, and that is going to create some instability. . . . But we are very determined to prevent them from threatening, intimidating or overthrowing the present government.[93]

When Iran threatened to close the Straits in mid-1983 and overthrow "retarded" rulers, the Omani ambassador to Kuwait, Sa`ud bin Salim Al-Ansi, declared:

> The Strategic Straits of Hormuz is Omani territory and neither Iran nor any other country has the right to interfere in Oman's internal affairs. . . . [We] will not accept this nor allow it to occur.[94]

Al-Ansi was referring to navigation channels, not the entire passageway, but Iran blamed these pronouncements on the United States, hoping to create a rift

[93]*Newsweek*, 10 January 1983.

[94]Gulf News Agency, 29 July 1983, as cited in Colin Legum (ed.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey 7*, 1982–1983, New York and London: Holmes and Meier Publishers, Inc., 1985, p. 490.

between Sultan Qaboos and the Omani people. The effort failed. Anticipating an Iranian move to seize key islands in the Musandam Peninsula, Oman increased its military presence near the Straits in late 1983. Under the circumstances, and aware of the GCC's inherent military limitations, Qaboos once again donned his candid hat and cautioned his GCC colleagues on the need to seek Western assistance:

> We do not possess the military capacity to confront Iran . . . joint maneuvers by the GCC member states do not mean we have an Army capable of shouldering the security of the Gulf region. Possessing advanced weaponry is not enough.[95]

This and similar statements concerned the Khumayni government, which feared a potential U.S. military deployment in the area. By mid-June 1984, however, tensions were easing between Oman and Iran as the tanker war galvanized regional and international interests and attention shifted to the northern Gulf. Displaying keen diplomatic flair, Qaboos initiated a new round of discussions with Iran by offering an olive branch to the besieged regime. For example, he commented on the GCC's plan to form a security alliance, by declaring:

> To be perfectly frank, I say that here in Muscat we do not believe it to be in the interest of security in the Gulf that Iran feels we intend to establish an Arab military pact that will always be hostile to it, or that we are about to form a joint force, whose main task is to fight Iran. . . . There is no alternative to peaceful coexistence between Arabs and Persians in the end, and there is no alternative to a minimum of accord in the region.[96]

The Omani desire to invite Iran into a future security arrangement in the Gulf reflected the Sultan's dissatisfaction with the GCC tilt toward Iraq. Indeed, Qaboos did not welcome the Kuwaiti and Saudi largesse toward Baghdad, whose regime continued to keep agents in GCC states. Moreover, Qaboos' strategic understanding of Iran was sharp enough to appreciate that only Teheran could potentially act as a balance to an immensely powerful Baghdad. To drive this point home, Oman did not condemn Iran's seize-and-search operations in the Persian Gulf. In fact, Haitham bin Tariq, the Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs, explained that under international law, Iran had certain rights to stop and search ships because it was at war. Muscat's chief concern, he

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[95]Ibid.; see also Ahmad Al-Jarallah, "Iran lan-taghluk mudif Hurmuz" [Iran Will Not Block the Straits of Hormuz], *Al-Jazeerah*, No. 4052, 2 November 1983, pp. 1, 11.

[96]Itamar Rabinovich and Haim Shaked (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey 9*, 1984–1985, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1987, p. 413.

further asserted, was to safeguard the free flow of traffic through the Straits. In large measure, that objective was successfully accomplished.[97]

Oman's political investments with Iran paid off in September 1987, when Iranian soldiers, captured by the United States in Gulf military engagements, were repatriated through Muscat.[98] Interestingly, the U.S. reflagging of Kuwaiti tankers and the resulting military deployments in the area did not have negative effects on Omani-Iranian relations. When Muscat rejected UN, LAS, and GCC resolutions threatening to collectively sever diplomatic ties with Iran, Teheran took note. Not only would Oman not neglect its overture toward Iran but, equally important, it refused to abide by the Iraqi dictat. Still, Oman supported the 1987 GCC-sponsored LAS summit resolution condemning Iran's aggression in the Gulf, in large part to maintain GCC unity. Qaboos adopted a dual-track policy. He criticized Iran while urging both belligerents to observe UN calls for a cease-fire.[99] Indeed, Oman was "relieved" when Iran and Iraq finally accepted a cease-fire on 20 August 1988. As Minister of Information `Abdulaziz bin Mohammed Al-Rowas explained, Oman was deeply concerned that its long-term interests with Iran would be permanently affected by the war. "History and geography" dictate our foreign policy goals towards Iran, he posited, and "these are permanent features."[100]

Although Iranian policymakers were concerned with their country's probable isolation in Arab/Muslim affairs, Oman did not perceive Iran as a regional detractor. To be sure, the 8-year-long war with Iraq scarred the area, and the GCC—especially under Saudi influence—collectively viewed Teheran as a regime where doctrinaire fanatics dominated. It was equally correct to assume that many in the Gulf feared Iranian hegemony, considering revolutionary rulers to be no different from the late Shah. Both the Shah and Khumayni, they posited, harbored imperialist ambitions.[101] Whatever the record on this score, Oman did not join the wholesale bandwagon of Iran-bashing so prevalent in Bahrain or Saudi Arabia. The latter in particular had legitimate reasons to be wary of Iran, because Teheran challenged the Saudi claim that the Kingdom was the premier Muslim state. Ayatollah Khumayni prodded Kings Khalid and

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[97]Interview with the Under Secretary for Political Affairs, Sayyid Haitham bin Tariq Al-Bu Sa`id, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Muscat, 25 December 1989.

[98]John Kifner, "Captured Sailors Returned to Iran," *The New York Times*, 27 September 1987, p. 15.

[99]Sultanate of Oman, Ministry of Information, "Speech of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Sa`id on the Occasion of the 16th National Day," in *The Speeches of H. M. Sultan Qaboos bin Sa`id, Sultan of Oman, 1970–1990*, Muscat, 1991, pp. 155–158.

[100]Interview with Minister of Information `Abdulaziz bin Mohammed Al-Rowas, Ministry of Information, Muscat, 24 December 1989.

[101]Jerrold D. Green, "Iran's Foreign Policy: Between Enmity and Conciliation," *Current History* 93:576, January 1993, pp. 12–16.

Fahd to rule with divine justice, not monopoly. He regularly called on the Saudi people to rise up against usurpers of power who wasted Muslim wealth and whose alleged corruption was beyond redemption. Iran's lukewarm and selective support for international law, the takeover of the U.S. Embassy in Teheran in 1979, the death sentence on novelist Salman Rushdie, and the continued Iranian support to opposition forces throughout the Middle East all contributed to the perception that Iran had hegemonic ambitions.

None of this concerned Oman directly even if Muscat understood Iranian hegemonic tendencies. If the Islamic Republic remained separated from the entire region, which was highly unlikely, Muscat was willing to live with an imperial Iran as long as the latter recognized a strategic role for Oman in the Gulf region. Moreover, Muscat also weighed Iran's limited successes in reaching its cautious, yet entirely accurate assessment of Iran. Omani officials discussed the Iranian record in Afghanistan and Central Asia as cases in point.

Despite vital interests in Afghanistan, the Iranian record there was replete with serious errors. For most Muslim states, including Oman, the struggle over Afghanistan was twofold: to deny Moscow both strategic gains near the Persian Gulf and a hold over Kabul. In Central Asia, the struggle for influence involved Turkey, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, the United States, China, and Russia. Under the circumstances, not only was Iran potentially vulnerable—losing control over its northern border—but it also weighed the strategic implications of letting the emerging republics go their own way. The struggle of influence with Turkey in particular can and probably will change the tone of the debate as Islam—a subject carrying far less political clout in "secular" Turkey than in the rest of the Muslim world—catapulted Central Asia into the 21st century. In short, Iran faced a far greater security risk in Central Asia than it did in Afghanistan, and this was of concern to the Omani leadership. Indeed, Muscat was fully aware of this fundamental foreign policy dilemma facing Teheran and, accordingly, decided to establish crucial commercial links with Iranian companies, to circumvent potential mishaps that would increase regional threats as well as deny Oman financial gains.

As tensions cooled in the Gulf, Foreign Minister `Alawi visited Iran twice in 1988. Iranian radio quoted `Alawi saying that Oman had told the other GCC members that "it saw no obstacles in the way of a GCC session being held including Iran and Iraq, after the main differences between [them we]re resolved."[102] Oman did not deny the radio report, leading to speculations that talks between littoral states would be held by the end of the year. But regressing relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia effectively put this plan, if indeed it

[102]"Links with Iran Are Cemented," *CR-BQOY 88-4*, pp. 24–25.

had been articulated, in abeyance. Oman nevertheless continued to push ahead on its own.

In March 1989, the two countries established a joint economic industrial commission that opened a week-long exhibition of Iranian heavy industrial products at the Oman Exhibition Center. Yusuf bin `Alawi met with his Iranian counterpart, Dr. `Ali Akbar Velayati, to discuss GCC-Iranian relations. He briefed King Fahd of Saudi Arabia on these critical talks a few days later. It was, Under Secretary Haitham bin Tariq explained, "in the interest of Oman and the GCC states" to talk with Iran, "inform all sides of changing political developments, and foster an environment for peaceful co-existence."[103] Not only were Omanis exploring "the possibilities of boosting trade," as well as finding out "what role the Sultanate could play in Iran's reconstruction effort," but they were attempting to mediate in the dispute between Saudi Arabia and Iran.[104] Similarly, despite Muscat's participation with the other GCC states in condemning Iranian aggression on Abu Musa, reciprocal visits of trade delegations to Muscat and Teheran have continued.[105] In December 1993, Rear Admiral Shihab bin Tariq Al Bu Sa`id, Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman, visited Teheran, where he met with Iranian President `Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. At the conclusion of their talks, Admiral Shihab "announced that the two countries ha[d] agreed to cooperate in maintaining security in the Straits of Hormuz." This visit was followed by a highly publicized award ceremony at which Sultan Qaboos conferred the Al-Numan Order, First Class, to the outgoing Iranian ambassador to Muscat, Mr. Mohammed `Arab. Qaboos reiterated that the award was "in appreciation of [Ambassador `Arab's] efforts to reinforce bilateral relations and cooperation during his term in Muscat."[106] For no matter how it was perceived in the West, Qaboos considered "Iran as having an important role to play in the region." In an early 1995 interview, the Sultan reiterated that he did not regard Iran as "a long-term threat to [the] stability of the region."[107] In fact, Oman and Iran reached yet another "understanding" on the security of the Straits in April 1995, further recognizing their respective roles in the area.[108]

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[103]Interview with Sayyid Haitham bin Tariq, Under Secretary for Political Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Muscat, 25 December 1989.

[104]"Oman Offers to Mediate Between Tehran and Riyadh," *CR-BQOY 89-4*, p. 25.

[105]"Oman . . . Continues to Lay Emphasis on Strengthening Relations with Neighboring States," *CR-O/Y 92-4*, p. 9.

[106]"Oman Continues Its Cordial Contacts with Iran," *CR-O/Y 94-1*, p. 10.

[107]Roger Fontaine and Dennis Mullin, "Sultan Cites 'Positive Role in the Search for Peace'," *The Washington Times*, 4 January 1995, p. A12.

[108]Husayn `Abd Al-Ghani, "`Uman wa-Iran tatafahaman ala sa`i ila-mana`Al-tawatur fil-Khalij" [Oman and Iran Reach an Understanding on Political Tensions in the Gulf], *Al-Hayat*, No. 1748, 21 April 1995, p. 1.

In the end—despite past difficulties with Teheran—Oman's foreign policy toward Iran necessitated a steady approach as well as bold steps. Muscat was willing to take both.

REVOLUTIONARY IRAQ

When Qaboos acceded to the throne in 1970, Baghdad was already deeply immersed in the internal affairs of the Sultanate, because successive Iraqi regimes had provided financial and military assistance to the Dhufar rebellion. Although Iraq was a young revolutionary power in its own right—wallowing in Ba`athist politics—it was galvanized by Arab nationalist sentiments and, naturally, felt obligated to champion the rights of anticolonialists and revolutionaries. That is not to say that Iraqi leaders were pure revolutionaries but rather that they welcomed the opportunity to lead Arab revolutionaries in the Ba`athist image. Thus, when London announced that it planned to withdraw from the Persian Gulf region by 1971, Baghdad assumed an increased determination to lead the area. Ba`athist ideology was adamant about Western encroachments and championed the end of all forms of colonialism. It went so far as to allege that even cordial relations with Western powers would be tantamount to neocolonialism.

Still, despite the heavy-handed British presence in the Persian Gulf region, conservative Arab Gulf leaders were not about to sever all of their ties with London. Muscat in particular did not feel the need to do so and, moreover, Qaboos fully realized that he needed the British to assist in defeating the Dhufar uprisings. As relations between Oman and several Western powers improved, Baghdad's fury increased. In retaliation against the close Omani-Western relationships, Iraq opposed the Omani admission to the Arab League in 1971, provided training and sanctuary to rebels in Southern Oman, denounced the close contacts with Western leaders and, until the end of 1975, provided a safe haven to the PFLO.

Save for a minor contact in June 1971, when the Omani Minister of Information—Shaykh `Abdallah Al-Ta`ie—visited Baghdad to deliver a special message from Sultan Qaboos, the two countries remained at ideological odds. Even when the Sultan proposed to forge a new relationship between the two countries, President Ahmad Hassan Al-Bakr rejected the offer, creating a political barrier where none had existed for centuries.

Maturing Common Security Perceptions

The acrimony of the past between Baghdad and Muscat ended at the beginning of 1976. Having lost its clients in the Dhufar, Baghdad sought to make amends

with Muscat and established diplomatic relations with the Sultanate in January 1976. High-level delegations initiated a dialogue between the two regimes and Baghdad invited Sultan Qaboos to attend the October 1978 Rejectionist Front Summit in the footsteps of Egyptian President Anwar Al-Sadat's historic visit to Israel. Qaboos declined the invitation not only because he thought that the Summit was unnecessary (after all, Oman was one of three Arab countries that supported the Sadat initiative), but because he did not believe in joining "rejectionist" fronts. Oman would not join a pack dominated by weak ideas and even weaker concepts. This was more than a technical matter. Indeed, Muscat reminded Baghdad of the latter's 1972 "Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation" with the USSR and, even though Saddam Hussein publicly ostracized Moscow for its invasion of Afghanistan (as well as for its increased military presence in the Horn of Africa), of Baghdad's huge dependence on the Soviet Union for military assistance. If the Iraqis were so concerned with a superpower presence in the Persian Gulf region, argued Qaboos, then they could start by severing their umbilical cord with Moscow. The point was effective even if symbolic in nature and substance.

Nevertheless, Oman did not wish to isolate Iraq from Gulf affairs. Quite the opposite. It recognized a role for Baghdad and, toward that objective, kept the Ba`athi leadership fully informed of its security schemes for free navigation through the Straits. In mid-1980, the Omani Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Qais Al-Zawawi, visited Iraq carrying a private message from Sultan Qaboos to President Saddam Hussein. Upon his arrival, Al-Zawawi declared that Oman wished to initiate cooperation with Iraq and "remove any misunderstandings that might have arisen as a result of certain political opinions."[109] Al-Zawawi reportedly supported Saddam Hussein's Arab nationalist agenda, although he later clarified that there were no changes in Omani policies. In fact, there were no changes in policy even as the area was mired in fears that the Iranian Revolution might spill over into the lower Gulf. Baghdad hyped the fear and tried in earnest to gather Arab Gulf support to its hegemonic intentions. Whether Qaboos was privy to such intentions has not been possible to verify. In conversations with high-ranking officials in Muscat, however, it has been possible to determine that Muscat was wary of Iraqi claims of protection, and, therefore, Oman signed an important bilateral facilities access agreement with Washington in 1980, coincidentally at about the same time as these developments unfolded.[110] For its part, Baghdad was not particularly pleased with

[109]Gerd Nonneman, *Iraq, the Gulf States and the War: A Changing Relationship, 1980–1986 and Beyond*, London and Atlantic Highlands: Ithaca Press, 1986, p. 21. It is important to note that this visit occurred before the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War.

[110]Several officials, including the Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, Qais Al-Zawawi, the Minister of Information, `Abdulaziz bin Mohammed Al-Rowas, and the Under Secretary for Political

Muscat. For several reasons, however, including its full agenda with Iran and the fact that Qaboos was well known for his peculiar foreign policy approach, Bagdad left him alone. In the end, the Iraqis did not want to alienate Qaboos, preferring instead to use the Omani channel to communicate with Teheran whenever needed.

At the 1980 Amman LAS Summit, Sultan Qaboos met with President Saddam Hussein, where the two men discussed means to end the Iran-Iraq War. The meeting was important for another reason as well. The two men finally agreed that Baghdad would withdraw its recognition of the PFLO and expell its representatives from Iraq in March 1981. To be sure, Iraq undertook this initiative because it became increasingly conscious of the need to foster closer relations with the Sultanate.[111] In an important pronouncement, Foreign Minister Tariq `Aziz confirmed Baghdad's departure from radicalism to openness and understanding toward Muscat, when he announced "that the policy of seeking regional domination by one country or leader in the area was outdated—the future, rather, lay in cooperation."[112] Despite these positive pronouncements, contacts between Omani and Iraqi leaders were limited throughout this period. In October 1983, Qaboos received an emissary from Saddam Hussein who was followed, in August 1984, by a senior member of the Ba`ath Party. These two visitors were followed by Hamid Alwan, Hussein's senior adviser, who was granted an audience by the ruler in October 1985. A month later, Yusuf bin `Alawi arrived in Baghdad bearing a message from the Sultan on Iraqi attacks in the Persian Gulf. As discussed above, Oman welcomed the Iraqi readiness to settle its disputes with Iran and appealed to the latter to respond to such overtures. No matter how diligent Qaboos was, however, his offers to negotiate a cease-fire and find an equitable solution to the Iran-Iraq War came to naught.

Oman and the Iran-Iraq War

The Sultanate's position toward the Iran-Iraq War was clarified by Sultan Qaboos to the Beirut weekly *Monday Morning* in late 1983:

> In any war situation, there is the possibility of hostilities getting out of hand. That's why I believe every possible step—on the national, regional and international level—should be taken to stop the [Iran-Iraq] war. I understand from the Iranian declarations that Iran will not follow through its threats with steps on

Affairs, Sayyid Haitham bin Tariq Al Bu Sa`id, reiterated this point in interviews conducted in Muscat on 20 and 27 September 1993.

[111]Nonneman, op. cit., p. 42.

[112]Quoted in Mohammed `Ali Masoud Al-Hinai, *The Dynamics of Omani Foreign Policy: Omani-Gulf Relations (1971–1985)*, Doctoral Dissertation, Canterbury, U.K.: University of Kent, 1991, p. 399.

> the ground unless all its oil facilities are crippled or destroyed. In such a situation, the Iranians will have nothing to lose. I believe too that the Iraqis are wise enough to evaluate what they are doing.[113]

Qaboos certainly recognized that Iraq, as an Arab country, was entitled to whatever assistance Arab countries could muster against Iran. He further believed that Iran, as a Muslim country, deserved similar assistance because of its Islamic credentials. Still, because such support would have created a "catch-22," whereby both sides were ensured of undetermined and unending assistance, Muscat opted for a position of neutrality.[114] The Omani leader also acknowledged that both sides were capable of inflicting serious damage on the Sultanate and, consequently, sought to mediate a settlement of the conflict. Teheran and Baghdad responded to these overtures even though Muscat was not ready to embark on hasty actions when neither party to the conflict was willing to settle its differences peacefully. In an interview with *Al-Musawwar*, the Sultan acknowledged Iraq's positive response to peace initiatives, while regretting Iran's reticence. He warned:

> We must not do anything that will have future negative effects on us. . . . Our problem in the Gulf is that Iraq believes—and perhaps is partly right in its view—that Arab duty dictates that we should support it without reservations and regardless of the consequences. At the same time, Iran believes we are not qualified to play a mediating role because of our Arab affiliation, despite our efforts to adopt objective views on this futile conflict.[115]

The Omani ruler adopted an even more neutral position toward the war in his opening speech to the 1985 GCC Muscat Summit when not even a hint of favoritism was uttered.[116] When he was reminded that the Summit's final communiqué was implicitly supportive of Iraq and critical of Iran, he stressed that "the GCC communiqué was a GCC affair but one which had the same

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[113]"Interview with Sultan Qaboos," *Monday Morning*, 7 November 1983, pp. 100.

[114]Although the government opted for a position of neutrality, Omani military assistance to Iraq did not end. Qaboos acknowledged that Muscat saw nothing wrong in providing such aid to Baghdad. When asked about Oman's role in purchasing military spare parts from Egypt for Iraq, for example, he answered:

> "Whenever there is an opportunity, the Sultanate of Oman always loves to contribute to any good efforts. We are in favor of any effort by any Arab, Islamic or non-aligned state to try to resolve a problem between two Muslim neighbors, uphold right and stop bloodshed among Muslims. We are prepared to make any efforts to this end. As for being a go-between in the purchase of weapons for Iraq, we do not hesitate in rendering a service to any Arab state when we are asked to do so."

See *Al-Majjallah*, op. cit., p. 16.

[115]"Interview with Sultan Qaboos of Oman," *Al-Musawwar* (Cairo), 5 April 1985, p. 1.

[116]"Speech of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Sa`id at the Opening Session of the 6th Summit of the Co-Operation Council of the Arab Gulf States, 3 November 1985," in Sultanate of Oman, Ministry of Information, *The Speeches of H. M. Sultan Qaboos bin Sa`id, Sultan of Oman, 1970–1990*, Muscat, 1991, pp. 125–129.

meaning as [his]—it d[id] not contain a criticism of either side."[117] Qaboos and through him all GCC states accepted the notion that neutrality was their best option. These public pronouncements aside, Oman was engaged in discreet negotiations to bring the two parties together. Not surprisingly, Qaboos preferred that "things be done quietly and not in the limelight" of public scrutiny where every statement was weighed beyond its actual value.[118] Still, Oman supported the Islamic Conference Organization's (ICO) Good Offices mediation efforts, as well as those of Arab countries such as Algeria, calling for peace between the two warring factions. It was finally relieved when Ayatollah Khumayni accepted the UN Security Council cease-fire resolution in August 1988.

Oman and the War for Kuwait

In the aftermath of the August 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Oman benefited, both economically and politically, from the crisis that ensued. Given its geographic position facing away from the Persian Gulf, which is far from the instability of the northern Gulf, the Sultanate was far less affected by the insecurity and uncertainty afflicting other GCC states and a defeated Iraq. Muscat was able to ship its crude oil to Far Eastern markets, where it has been consolidating its position as a reliable partner, without paying the high insurance premiums burdening exporters confined to the Persian Gulf itself. On the political front, Muscat, compared with other GCC states, was rather subtle in dealing with Iraq. Despite its support of the war effort against Baghdad, the Sultanate pressed for a diplomatic settlement of the conflict and, in doing so, avoided the nationalist backlash that undermined the positions of Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Unlike Riyadh, for example, Muscat remained sympathetic to Yemen—when the latter sided with Saddam Hussein—throughout the crisis, seeking to avert instability in the southern Peninsula. Unquestionably, these initiatives marked Oman as a far more progressive diplomatic player in the area than any other country.[119]

This position of strength allowed Muscat to seek Iraq's rehabilitation at the appropriate time without losing face. For example, when Oman publicly expressed its support for a successful conclusion of UN-brokered negotiations on the possible resumption of Iraqi oil exports, few chided it. In July 1993, Yusuf bin `Alawi stated his hope that Iraq and the UN would reach a settlement to ease severe sanctions imposed by the Security Council in 1991. Describing the situation in Iraq as a "slow-paced death," the Omani minister called upon the

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[117]"Sultan Qaboos Outlines Oman's Development Strategy," *Middle East Economic Digest* 29:50, 14 December 1985, pp. 8, 11.

[118]Ibid., p. 11.

[119]"Oman Gains from the Gulf Crisis," *CR-O/Y 91-1*, p. 8.

UN "to soften the burden on women, children, the elderly and the sick."[120] This was not an unusual position. Indeed Muscat had demonstrated its concern for the population of Iraq throughout the crisis and was in a unique position to reach its own independent conclusion because of its presence in the Iraqi capital. Oman never severed diplomatic relations with Iraq. Still, Muscat believed that the onus was on Baghdad to reconcile its policies with the United Nations and expedite its reintegration into the Arab world.[121]

FOREIGN POLICY OBJECTI VES

Sultan Qaboos' foreign policy objectives in the Persian Gulf region ensured that Oman maintained and strengthened its control over the strategic Straits of Hormuz. Moreover, Muscat achieved in less than two decades one of the most successful accomplishments in recent Arab history: It secured most of its borders by entering into agreements with all of its neighbors. The border accords alone illustrated the extent to which the Sultanate was willing to go to achieve long-term security objectives. Toward the states of the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf, Oman boasted other achievements as well.

Political Cooperation

In the years after the British withdrawal from east of Suez, modest efforts were initiated among the leaders of the Gulf to coordinate their political agendas. Gulf leaders exchanged information about their dominions, introduced themselves to their neighbors' populations, and got to know each other without British tutelage. Shaykh Zayed, for one, was enthusiastic about Oman joining the UAE in 1971, along with Bahrain and Qatar, but Sultan Qaboos did not favor such an option. In any event, Manama and Doha opted to go their own ways as well, even if discussions on a possible "Gulf integration" effort continued. A proposal to form a "Gulf secretariat," presumably to serve as a regional forum "where regional questions could be discussed by the member states at meetings to be held at various levels," was debated for a while, but the eight littoral states and the two Yemens could not agree on its outline.[122] Although a center was not established, the idea of Gulf cooperation was kept alive by the UAE foreign

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[120]"Visiting Omani Foreign Minister Holds News Conference," *FBIS-NES-93-130*, 9 July 1993, p. 14; see also "Iraq Publicly Favors Iraq's Rehabilitation," *CR-O/Y 93-3*, p. 10.

[121]Husayn `Abd Al-Ghani, "Al-Rowas lil-Hayat: Alal-`Iraq hal mashkalatuha ma`al umam Al-mutahidat wa natamana `awdatuha `abr bawabat `arabiyat la-gharbiyat" [Rowas to Al-Hayat: Up to Iraq to Solve Its Disputes with the United Nations and We Hope That Its Return Will Be Through an Arab, Not a Western Door], *Al-Hayat*, No.11235, 17 November 1993, p. 6.

[122]Ahmed Hamoud Al-Maamiry, *Whither Oman*, New Delhi: S. Kumar Lancers Books, 1986, p. 53.

minister, who proposed that all nine countries in the region assume responsibility for their destinies and free themselves from outside interference. Iran, Iraq, and the PDRY, in particular, were too different from the six conservative Arab Gulf states and the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR). Still, the foreign ministers of the six Arab Gulf monarchies periodically held discussions, focusing on the necessity to create a single regional agenda to coordinate domestic and foreign policies. Little was achieved by the mid-1970s but the efforts continued.

The 1976 Muscat Summit included Iran and Iraq but failed to gather the support it required to achieve regional security. This was because Baghdad championed Arab unity in the aftermath of the Camp David Accords, and Iran faced growing internal challenges At the time, Saddam Hussein was promoting his "National Charter," which called on Arab and Muslim states to come to each other's assistance when in need. All condemned the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan but Kabul did not qualify for much assistance. In fact, few Arab or Muslim states rushed to each other's help, especially in Lebanon, Jordan, and Sudan, and even fewer were actually capable of doing anything concrete about the Soviet occupation of a fellow Muslim state. Omanis hoped for more pragmatism and less radicalism.

These hopes were short-lived, however. Iraq embarked on a sustained policy to exercise its hegemony by competing with Iran for regional leadership, rekindled its differences with Saudi Arabia over their 2,500-square-meter neutral zone, claimed the Kuwaiti islands of Warbah and Bubiyan as "strategic" war assets, and ensured that the conservative Arab Gulf monarchies would not pull away from Baghdad.

Equally problematic was the Iranian Revolution, which spread panic throughout the region. Few appreciated President Bani Sadr's comments that "Arab governments in the Gulf area were friends of the U.S. and that Iran did not consider them as being independent." The Iranian president further asserted that Teheran did not wish to cooperate with them and, more important, that it intended to export its Islamic Revolution to every state where devout Muslims welcomed it.[123] Wary Gulf leaders were equally incensed by Ayatollah Sadeq Rouhani's threats to annex Bahrain, while Ayatollah Sadeq Khalkhali openly called on Teheran to annex Abu Musa and the Tunb Islands.[124] Although the Iranian Foreign Ministry denied that these statements were made in the name of the government, Muscat took note of their overall tone. GCC leaders scrambled to align their disparate foreign policies. In

[123]*Al-Rai Al-Am*, 15 March 1980, p. 1. in Nonneman, op. cit., p. 21.

[124]Shaul Bakhhash, *The Reign of the Ayatollahs: Iran and the Islamic Revolution*, New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1986, pp. 126–127.

part because of the growing perception that the Iranian Revolution might indeed have severe repercussions on the conservative Arab Gulf monarchies, Muscat sought to diffuse tensions elsewhere, especially on its southern border with the PDRY. On 27 October 1982, Muscat and Aden signed a protocol that provided for an "exchange of ambassadors, non-interference in internal affairs, negotiations on border disputes, and negotiations on the future of facilities for foreign powers."

Security Cooperation

The Omani concern over regional security was shared with the littoral states around the Persian Gulf even if agreements to start providing indigenous security measures were slow in coming. To be sure, all were caught in the vortex of the superpower rivalry and all were keenly aware of the dependence that oil-importing countries felt. For the conservative monarchies, however, domestic stability was far more important than any international requirements.

Where the Arab Gulf monarchies failed was in separating their domestic and foreign policies, and discussions to that effect took place in November 1980 during the Amman League of Arab States Summit meeting. Further consultations led to the January 1981 declaration issued at the conclusion of the Islamic Conference Organization Summit.[125] In time, the GCC came into existence, especially as the Iran-Iraq War raged and literally removed both belligerents from membership consideration. A decade late, Qaboos' political vision for the Gulf states had finally materialized.

When Oman proposed that they establish a regional security organization capable of securing the area's vital assets, or when the United States proposed that the countries of the Persian Gulf adopt specific security measures, the efforts were rapidly stifled by a lack of unanimity. For example, when the Nixon Administration articulated its "dual pillar" policy in 1972, essentially calling for the creation of a new axis between Iran and Saudi Arabia, intrinsic differences between Persians and Arabs were ignored. Similarly, when in April 1975 Muscat proposed that all littoral states extend financial support to the joint Iranian-Omani naval patrols in the Straits of Hormuz, Saudi Arabia and the UAE objected, proposing instead that security arrangements be worked out within the "Arab Nation." To be sure Riyadh, Kuwait, Doha, and Abu Dhabi established the Arab Military Industries Organization (AMIO) in May 1975, but that was in the aftermath of the 1973 October War and the repercussions of a semi-successful OAPEC-orchestrated oil embargo against Washington and The Hague. The public theme of the day was to forge regional security without

[125]Erik R. Peterson, op. cit., p. 103, note 16.

superpower interferences (that is, without the United States). It was impossible to reconcile the conflicting interests of Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia, all jockeying to influence the smaller Shaykhdoms and Oman, to align their policies against potential superpower obstructions.[126] By the end of 1975, several crises ended, which, on the surface at least, led regional leaders to feel more secure. The Sultan was relieved from his primary preoccupation when the Dhufar rebellion ended. At the same time, Iran and Iraq concluded a border agreement over the Shatt Al-`Arab at the 1974 OPEC Algiers Conference, which led to an improvement in the internal security situation of every Gulf state.

Still, Iran, and to some extent Iraq, objected to the renewed cooperative efforts under way in the Lower Gulf. Teheran recalled its ambassadors from the conservative Arab monarchies in January 1976 as a protest against the establishment of the Gulf News Agency that, allegedly, was "Arabizing" the area. In July 1976, the Iraqi president called on all states of the Gulf to issue a "Collective Declaration" guaranteeing freedom of navigation for all littoral states. The call was made to mark the 1958 overthrow of the monarchy and the 1968 return to power of the Arab Socialist Ba`ath Party. These early efforts, however, failed to produce a desired solution and when the Muscat Summit was held on 25–26 November 1976, it too was destined for failure. At the time, the Omani Minister of State for Foreign Affairs summed it up best: "It is apparent that the present atmosphere is not suitable to reaching a formula for mutual co-operation. There are many reservations and many options to clear up first."[127]

It must be emphasized that the Muscat security summit failed because there were no agreements on how to keep foreign fleets out of the Persian Gulf, how to cooperate at the military level to guarantee safety of navigation, how to settle existing intraregional disputes, how to agree not to provide military facilities to Western powers, and how to discuss the territorial division of the waters of the Gulf. An impasse was reached and there would be no way to reach agreement on security matters that could include Iran, Iraq, and the conservative monarchies. Qaboos concluded that separate arrangements would have to be reached with Iran and Iraq but that another effort should also be made to join the Arab monarchies together. In an appeal to his fellow rulers, he asked for the establishment of a $100 million Common Defense Fund that would be responsible for safeguarding the security of the Straits.[128]

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[126]Mazher A. Hameed, *Arabia Imperiled: The Security Imperatives of the Arab Gulf States*, Washington, D.C.: Middle East Assessments Group, 1986, pp. 14–21 and 121–149.

[127]*International Herald Tribune*, 26 November 1976.

[128]Joseph Wright Twinam, "Reflections on Gulf Cooperation, with Focus on Bahrain, Qatar and Oman," in Sandwick, op. cit., p. 37.

Motivated by the 1979 Makkah Mosque takeover, the Iranian Revolution and its spillover effects on extremists throughout the area, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Iran-Iraq War, the Carter Doctrine as well as the subsequent formation of the Rapid Deployment Force (the precursor of the U.S. Central Command), and the Brezhnev Doctrine (which aimed to neutralize the area), conservative Arab Gulf leaders welcomed the Qaboos initiative. Within a matter of weeks, a series of bilateral security agreements was concluded between Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and the UAE.

Finally, on military issues, Oman also played an important role in bridging gaps within the the loose mechanism of the GCC. From its inception, the GCC's preoccupation with security matters was quite apparent as defense ministers hammered at specific policies. At the end of the their January 1982 Riyadh meeting, for example, they agreed to spend $30.6 billion on weapons systems and training and to establish a joint command structure in Riyadh. This latter step was novel and required that individual member states confer GCC-wide responsibilities to their military personnel.[129] The ministers also discussed the formation of a joint air defense network.

Oman's constant prodding of these important security issues achieved some success in November 1982, when GCC leaders agreed to provide Bahrain and the Sultanate special financial assistance to upgrade facilities and purchase additional equipment. Manama and Muscat shared a $1.8 billion grant to build a new air base in Bahrain as well as purchase F-16 fighters and, in the case of Oman, to enhance counterattack capabilities in the Straits.[130] A year later, GCC leaders took the bold initiative of forming a joint military industry with an initial commitment of $1.4 billion.[131] Starting in 1982, GCC states initiated a variety of joint air, naval, and land exercises, and conducted a regionwide exercise in the UAE, named Dar` al-Jazirah (Peninsula Shield), "as a symbol of unity among the Arab Gulf countries and the common objectives that bring their peoples together."[132]

Oman felt vindicated that Gulf rulers were indeed capable of coordinating their activities if the will was found. In June 1984, a combined force was established at Hafr al-Batin, Saudi Arabia, based on the 1981 Omani defense paper submit-

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[129]Joseph A. Kechichian, *The Gulf Cooperation Council: Search for Security in the Persian Gulf*, Doctoral Dissertation, Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 1985, pp. 381–388.

[130]Twinam, op. cit., p. 39.

[131]This decision was reached during the May 1983 GCC Defense Ministers' Doha meeting, even though it was not made public at the time. "In late 1985, Saudi Arabia established a General Institute of Military Industries, after Riyadh had explored the potential of creating a tank assembly installation, together with Brazil" (Erik R. Peterson, op. cit., p. 203).

[132]Statement by Lt. General Khalifah bin Zayed, Crown Prince and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces. See *Emirates News* 12:304, 24 September 1983, p. 1.

ted at the first GCC Summit meeting. To be sure, the Peninsula Shield force was small, and perhaps not much of a deterrent against well-entrenched threats emanating from Iran and Iraq, but it was a first step that Muscat had insisted upon. It illustrated that GCC leaders were capable of facing squarely the intrinsic need to defend their countries without having to rely only on outside forces. Even if everyone realized that against an Iranian or an Iraqi threat much more than Peninsula Shield forces would be needed, the symbolic measure was important, especially because GCC countries have almost always been far more concerned with internal security matters than with foreign aggression. Oman had prevailed and this, too, was a significant foreign policy achievement. In the aftermath of the August 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Oman was further vindicated by the need to prepare for worse-case scenarios. For Qaboos, the GCC's lack of resolve, especially on his 100,000-man army proposal, was ample evidence of the lack of trust among members states.

Economic Cooperation

If limited progress was made at the political and military levels, more positive developments were noted in the economic field. Because Kuwait had established a unique tradition of providing development assistance to several Shaykhdoms through its Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED), and Saudi Arabia extended similar assistance through several of its dedicated funds, economic activity between Oman and the Gulf states improved in the early 1970s. Trade agreements were followed by unified import policies, themselves followed by bilateral accords. As Gulf states established joint institutions, Oman joined in several.[133] Muscat was invited to join OPEC and OAPEC but, interestingly, refused to join either on the grounds that it would be better served by tacitly following their policies without maintaining formal associations.

Between 1976 and 1980, several bilateral and multilateral treaties were negotiated between the Arab Gulf states. Moreover, in the aftermath of the creation of the GCC, a "Unified Economic Agreement" was signed in June 1981, which aimed at reducing tariffs and establishing a genuine economic union among

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[133]Oman joined Bahrain, Qatar, and the UAE in establishing the regional airline "Gulf Air" in March 1973. In February 1976, it joined with Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE in establishing the Gulf Organization for Industrial Consultancy (GOIC). This was followed by its October 1976 decision to join in the Gulf Ports Union and the March 1978, Gulf News Agency. Along with Iran, Iraq, and all of the conservative Arab Gulf states, Oman established the Regional Organization for the Protection of Marine Environment (ROPME) in April 1978. Other joint efforts were also initiated, some including Iran and Iraq, and some excluding the two major regional powers. For a more complete list of the accords that predate the GCC, see Fatimah Mubarak, *`Alaqat Al-Iqtisadiyah bayna duwal Al-Sahil Al-Gharbi lil-Khalij Al-`Arabi* [Economic Relations Between States of the Lower Arabian Gulf], Cairo: Dar Nashr al-Thaqafah, 1982.

member states. This was followed in 1983 by the more powerful Gulf Investment Cooperation (GIC), with $1.2 billion in capital.

These efforts indicated that sharp differences were placed aside as a desperate search for collective security eventually led to the creation of the GCC. Relative stability gave way to a period of turmoil, but without Iran and Iraq, the GCC states fared much better. The area was caught in the vortex of international intrigue, a full-scale war, and a superpower deployment. These circumstances called for a steady hand and mature policies. Oman realized that its resources and capabilities were limited. Consequently, Qaboos adopted specific policies toward the states of the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf because he could not ensure regional security alone. He was amply aware that Muscat was not capable of achieving all of its regional security objectives if Saudi Arabia remained reticent and Kuwait pretended that Western and Eastern interests were identical. For the Omani ruler, a more pragmatic agenda was necessary, one that would guarantee his country's domestic stability without infringing on other states' interests. He chose to achieve what was achievable, starting with a defusion of tensions with Iran, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen.

Chapter Five

OMAN AND THE WEST

When the Portuguese explorer Alfonse de Albuquerque left Lisbon on his second voyage to the Indian Ocean in 1506, he had a single aim: to establish Portuguese control over the entire Indian Ocean area. He achieved this objective in a ruthless manner and, reaching Oman in 1507, he first burned a fishing fleet off Ras al-Hadd, threatened Qalhat with total destruction if its inhabitants resisted (they did not), and applied the same logic farther up the coast in Qaryat where the people resisted (and perished), before reaching Muscat.

The bustling coastal city pleased Albuquerque, who found that it resembled Lisbon because it had many "orchards, gardens and palm groves and an ancient market for horses and dates, and [was] supplied from the Interior with much wheat, maize, barley and dates."[1] To their surprise, the Portuguese learned that Muscat was part of the Kingdom of Hormuz. This did not impress the fierce warrior, who demanded allegiance and tribute. Albuquerque thus fulfilled his mandate. Still, he ordered "the town to be sacked, and all shipping in the harbor destroyed," when he sensed a plot was brewing against his rule. The brutal treatment left Muscat in ruins. A few "prisoners were left behind with their noses and ears lopped off," before Albuquerque departed for Sohar, Khor Fakkan, and finally Hormuz, which he captured in October 1507.[2]

This was the first impression that a European left on Muscat and its people.

Oppressive in form and character, the Portuguese presence in Oman lasted for 15 decades before Omanis could avenge their forefathers. In 1650, Sultan bin Saif set off with an army from Rustaq and, with the help of an Indian merchant, successfully launched an attack to capture both Mirani and Jalali forts.[3]

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[1]Ian Skeet, *Muscat and Oman: The End of an Era*, London: Faber and Faber, 1974, p. 33.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Historians debate just how Sultan bin Saif captured Muscat. Still, the tale associated with the Indian merchant, Narutem, is interesting, as he was trying to prevent a Portuguese officer from marrying his daughter. He apparently "persuaded the commander of the Muscat garrison to empty

Remarkably, the Portuguese had no interest in Oman nor Omanis save for purely commercial reasons. For Lisbon, Muscat was a base in the region, and Omanis provided a pool of labor. They left alone those who accepted their rule but suppressed those who complained. Although Muscat, Qalhat, Qaryat, and Sohar were important for this trade, the Portuguese business empire in the Indian Ocean was centered around Hormuz. To better defend Muscat, however, in 1527 the Portuguese decided to build Jalali and Mirani. Both forts stand today in their 1587 and 1588 shapes, respectively, testament to Portuguese know-how and endurance. Used as a jail, Jalali was probably unrivaled in its heyday as one of the most oppressive spots on earth. Mirani, on the other hand, was chiefly used as a garrison facility then and later under British rule.

The rise of Britain, especially the establishment of the East India Company in 1600 and Britain's close relations with Persia, meant that Portugal would be challenged by both Teheran and London.[4] Both considered the Portuguese presence a nuisance and both, for different reasons, wanted them expelled from the region. Another important reason to expel Lisbon was London's need to strengthen its communication networks in the region. Because of the newly established contacts between Britain and Persia, Teheran sought to gain control over Hormuz and its lucrative trade, and London wanted to confirm its own dominance over the area. This meeting of interests led Persians and British to combine forces in 1622 to defeat Lisbon in Hormuz. One observer noted that the action "was a totally unjustified piece of belligerence by the East India Company, the sort of thing that the later invention of the telegraph put an end to."[5] At the time, however, London was far more interested in expanding its hegemonic influence than bothered by breach of etiquette. When the Persians called on the British to rise against Muscat, the East India Company refused. With or without British assistance, however, Shah Abbas occupied Khor Fakkan and Sohar and, in a dramatic twist of fate, allowed Hormuz to waste away in favor of the new merchant center, Gombroon, renamed Bandar Abbas. Portugal was soundly defeated and received treatment similar or equal to what is had inflicted on the Omani population earlier.[6]

The demise of Portuguese influence in the Gulf region did not mean the end of European activity. Quite to the contrary, Dutch, British, and French merchants

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the water from the cisterns of the two forts, and limit provisions and gunpowder from his permanent stores, on the grounds that, since a long siege was to be expected, everything should be renewed and fresh." Ibid., p. 34.

[4]London established itself on Jask Island, up the coast from Hormuz, which became one of the stops for the overland cable line to India with a spur to Muscat drawn in 1901.

[5]Skeet, op. cit., p. 34.

[6]Between 1650 and 1956, no Portuguese ship entered Muscat harbor. A naval vessel arriving from Goa, India, docked in Mutrah in 1956 and was granted full protocol, which meant that the ship flew the Portuguese flag and received an appropriate gun salute from the shore. Skeet, op. cit., p. 37.

filled the void created by this Portuguese defeat. Omani ties with the Dutch were benign, as Amsterdam was mostly interested in a regional "office" to handle mail and the personal affairs of Dutch seamen. The British, on the other hand, were to leave their marks. Coincidentally, the British presence in Oman started around 1650 with the accession to power of Sultan bin Saif, from the Ya`ribah dynasty.

THE UNITED KINGDOM

With the formal British announcement to withdraw from the Persian Gulf region in 1968, Oman did not alter its post-British policies and did not rush to join the League of Arab States (LAS). In fact, it would join the LAS only in October 1971, more as a matter of fact than for any ideological conviction. Muscat had lived a good portion of its contemporary life outside of the Gulf (trading principally with India), preferring to deal with the rest of the world through London. It retained a long-standing connection with Britain, with which it had treaty relations since 1798, considering the ties advantageous in a variety of ways.[7]

The First Treaties

The first treaty of friendship between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Kingdom was concluded between the Imam of Muscat and the British Government of India in 1798. Although later treaties, including the critical 20 September 1951 Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation, superseded the 1798 treaty, earlier accords remained relevant. Moreover, "since the conclusion of these early agreements was overshadowed by an Anglo-French controversy over the establishment of spheres of influence in Muscat and Oman," they deserve special attention.[8]

Beginning in 1822, London persuaded Muscat to sign two important treaties to ban the slave trade in the Sultan's dominions. The 1822 accord banned the slave trade with Christian nations only but allowed the Sultan to continue his slave trade within the Muslim world. This situation was "corrected" in 1845 when a new treaty widened the ban to include Muslim countries too. In

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[7]No country has played such a major role in the Sultanate's political life as Britain. Because of the overall nature of this study, however, limited attention is devoted to London. For additional details, see J. B. Kelly, *Arabia, the Gulf and the West: A Critical View of the Arabs and Their Oil Policy,* New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1980; see also Malcolm Yapp, "British Policy in the Persian Gulf," in Alvin J. Cottrell (ed.), *The Persian Gulf States: A General Survey,* Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980, pp. 70–100.

[8]Husain M. Al-Baharna, *The Arabian Gulf States: Their Legal and Political Status and Their International Problems,* Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1975, p. 47.

addition, it empowered British naval vessels to "seize and confiscate" any ships (whether these belonged to Omanis or not), if they were transporting slaves. The only caveat was that the British would not interfere with the Sultan's ships if these were moving from one part of his African territories to another. This was a significant concession to the Sultan, as Oman's African dominions were extensive, providing a large portion of his annual revenues.

Despite this restriction, the Anglo-French rivalry in the Indian Ocean persuaded London that the Sultan (and Britain) would be better served with additional legal restrictions on the Omanis. Paris was eagerly pursuing a lease agreement with the Sultan for a coaling station in Muscat, which naturally displeased London. British authorities were, for their part, considering seriously what practical measures they ought to take to "frustrate the French action regarding the possession of the lease in question."[9] Several British politicians entertained the idea of a British protectorate over Muscat to check French advances but, for a variety of reasons, shelved their proposals. However, London was confident of its position, arguing that:

> In consequence perhaps of the activity of the French Colonial party, of which we shall have more to say hereafter, a discussion had in the meantime, in 1890, been initiated in London between the Foreign and India Offices as to the best means of precluding the interference of other European powers in Oman affairs. The consolidation of British influence by means of a protectorate treaty, similar to those recently concluded with the chiefs of the South Arabian coast, was at first suggested by the India Office; and the arbitration of 1861, the "Zanzibar" subsidy, the practical importance to successive Sultans of recognition by the British Government, the occasional intervention of that Government in dynastic disputes and the deportation of claimants or pretenders to India, the armed assistance lent to Sayyid Turki in various crises, the negotiation of the Dutch treaty of 1877 through the British Resident, and the predominance of British national and commercial interests in Oman were adduced by the Government of India as proofs of the existence already of a virtual British protectorate over Oman or, at least, of the justice of the claim that Oman should be regarded as falling within the British sphere of influence.[10]

Lord Curzon was more ambitious, as he regarded Muscat to be a mere British dependency. "We subsidize its ruler; we dictate its policy; we should tolerate no alien interference," he observed in 1892.[11]

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[9]Ibid., p. 48.

[10]J. G. Lorimer (comp.), *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman, and Central Arabia,* Calcutta: Suprintendent, Government Printing; Volume 1, 1915; Vol. 2, 1908. Reprinted Farnborough Hants: Gregg International Publishers, 1970; Shannon, Ireland: Irish Universities Press, 1970; in six volumes.

[11]G. N. Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question,* 1892, p. 443, in Al-Baharna, op. cit., p. 48.

These early British signs of overconfidence in dealing with Oman were dashed by the realization that declaring Muscat a British protectorate would contradict the 1862 Declaration that France and Britain had issued to maintain Muscat's independence. On 10 March 1891, London and the Sultan signed a non-alienation of territory agreement, aiming to achieve British objectives without complicating matters by declaring the Sultanate a protectorate.[12] With this agreement, the Sultan pledged and bound himself, his heirs, and successors "never to cede, sell, to mortgage or otherwise give for occupation, save to the British Government, the dominions of Muscat and Oman or any of their dependencies."[13]

The pattern of signing such treaties continued unabated and, over the years, the British added several more Omani concessions to their long list. On 31 May 1902, for example, the Sultan signed another agreement with London in which "he bound himself not to grant concessions for working the coal-fields in the hinterland of Sur to any foreign government or company without first communicating with the British Government in order that they may themselves take up the matter [with him] if they feel so inclined."[14] An equally serious agreement was signed on 10 January 1923, in which the Sultan conceded that he would "not exploit any petroleum which may be found anywhere within (his) territories without consulting the Political Agent at Muscat and without the approval of the High Government of India."[15] Although petroleum was not a burning issue at the time, the Sultan was not aware of what the accord entailed. This was a classic case of a decision being made without having access to all of the facts. The British, on the other hand, aimed to gain unlimited concessions from the ruler and, in doing so, intended to achieve two specific objectives: first, to ensure their unrestricted authority in Oman, irrespective of who ruled; and second, to provide British companies advantages when and where exploration for the country's natural resources was under way. The approach was cunning but short-sighted, as such actions planted the seeds of the eventual demise of British influence throughout the Arabian Peninsula.

The 10 March 1862 Declaration Between France and Britain

Until Sayyid Sa`id's death in 1856, both Muscat and Zanzibar formed a single part of the dominions of the Sultan of Muscat. In 1840, Sayyid Sa`id's residence

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[12]Lorimer, op. cit., pp. 534–535.

[13]C.U. Aitchison (comp.), *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries*, Volume XI, New Delhi: Manager of Publications, Government of India, 1933, pp. 317–318, as cited in Al-Baharna, op. cit., p. 48.

[14]Al-Baharna, op. cit., p. 48.

[15]Al-Baharna, op. cit., p. 49.

was in Zanzibar. At his death, two sons succeeded their father: Thuwayni in Muscat and Majid in Zanzibar. When Majid asserted his independence, a dispute arose between the two brothers, which was settled by arbitration only in April 1861. The arbitrator, Lord Canning, appointed to this capacity by the Governor-General of India, recognized that Zanzibar could maintain its independence if it agreed to pay Muscat an annual tribute. He further concluded that such payment was "not to be understood as a recognition of the dependence of Zanzibar upon Muscat."[16] With this arbitration, the British decided to place Zanzibar under British protection and, to seal the deal, issued a joint Declaration with the French that recognized the award as well as their joint obligations to respect the independence of both Muscat and Zanzibar. The effects of the 1862 Declaration, presumably recognizing each state's rights, created a major controversy between Paris and London.

The Anglo-French Dispute

As the French government was one of several European powers that concluded treaties of friendship with the Sultan of Muscat, the British-Omani Declaration prevented Paris from exercising many of the privileges conceded to it earlier. The 17 November 1844 treaty with France, for example, conferred on France "Most Favored Nation" status as well as extraterritorial jurisdiction over French nationals living in Muscat. In fact, Paris enjoyed the privilege of having a Consul stationed in Muscat until 1920 but, not long after the 1862 Declaration, the two European powers parted ways.

When London found out that the Sultan had signed an agreement granting France the right to establish a coaling station on a strip of land near Muscat in 1898, it issued an ultimatum calling on the ruler to revoke the grant as of 9 February 1899. Britain invoked the 1891 nonalienation agreement as the basis of its demand.[17] Caught by surprise, the Sultan revealed the contents of the 1891 agreement to the French Consul, who argued that such an agreement could not be valid as it contradicted the joint 1862 Anglo-French Declaration respecting Muscat's independence. This assurance aside, the Sultan, embarrassed by the revelation, wrote the British Consul that his "gift" of the coaling station to Paris did not violate the 1891 agreement. He further declared that his "honor" was on the line, since he had already promised the French this piece of land.[18] The British, who paid little attention to such vagaries, categorically rejected this plea, reminding him instead of his obligations to the Crown. Paris

[16]Lorimer, op. cit., p. 471.

[17]Lorimer, op. cit., pp. 556–559.

[18]Lorimer, op. cit., p. 559.

attempted to persuade the Sultan that the 1862 Anglo-French Declaration forbade both parties from acquiring a "lease or cession in Oman territory," but this too was in vain. London had flexed its muscle and, having boxed the Omani ruler where it wanted him, ignored French steps to gain any advantages in the Sultanate.[19]

Toward the end of the 19th century, the French government authorized Omani vessels to fly the French flag while trading in the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea, and the Persian Gulf.[20] For Paris, the practice was sanctioned by the 17 November 1844 treaty between France and Oman, although London refused to accept it. In effect, the practice extended French jurisdiction over "Sultani subjects" and, although Muscat benefited from the resulting trade, the Sultan came under duress. Prodded by London to end this practice, the Sultan wrote Paris, asking for an end to the reflagging, on the grounds that such activities contradicted the spirit if not the letter of the 1862 Anglo-French Declaration. France was neither ready nor willing to end its claim and, under the circumstances, the matter was submitted to the Hague Court of Arbitration for a settlement in 1905.

British authorities presented themselves as the plaintiff to the Court, while the Sultan was kept in the background, further illustrating who was seeking what from whom. London painstakingly argued that it was entitled to sole representation, because the dispute was between France and Britain, the two sole signatories of the 1862 Agreement.

In its decision, however, the Hague Court of Arbitration upheld French rights to offer reflagging privileges to whomever they pleased. That was the prerogative of a sovereign state, asserted the Court. Moreover, it was made clear that since Omani ships flying French flags did not do so against the wishes of the Sultan, there was no reason for anyone to object. The Court further asserted that Article 32 of the 2 January 1892 General Act of Brussels allowed a state to grant authority to fly its flag only to "native vessels owned by or fitted out by her subjects or protégés."[21] Since the 1844 French-Muscat treaty recognized Omani subjects as French protégés, the ruling insisted that such rights be reserved to bone fide protégés rather than those carrying French papers allowing them to carry commercial trade under a French flag. Still, as some of these papers were granted before the Brussels Act, France was not in contradiction of its obligations but, unquestionably, faced a unique situation. Accordingly, the Court held that persons who were authorized to fly the French flag "[we]re entitled, in the territorial waters of Muscat, to the inviolability provided by the French-

[19]Lorimer, op. cit., pp. 560–511.

[20]Lorimer, op. cit., pp. 562–567.

[21]Al-Baharna, op. cit., p. 51.

Muscat treaty of 1844." That right, continued the ruling, could not be extended "to any other person or dhow, and the owner, masters and crew of such dhows or members of their families who d[id] not enjoy any right of extra-territoriality which exempt[ed] them from the jurisdiction of the Sultan of Muscat."[22]

Overall, despite legal nuances, the ruling was a victory for Britain. Through it, London gained an aura of legitimacy in promoting its regional and global interests. This judgment emboldened the British Consul in Muscat to lobby for additional agreements that subjected the Omani ruler to London's unending wishes.

The 1951 and 1958 Treaties

In the wake of its 1798, 1839, 1891, and 1939 treaties, London concluded a new Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation on 20 September 1951 between "His Majesty the King of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the British Dominions Beyond the Seas, and Sultan Sa`id bin Taymur, Sultan of Muscat and Oman and Dependencies." The accord was signed by the Sultan and the British Resident in the Gulf in his capacity as British plenipotentiary. It entered into force on 19 May 1952 after the exchange of its instruments of ratification.

The treaty underscored the friendly ties between the two sides, emphasizing the need to improve commercial relations and, in the aftermath of the Franco-Omani precedents, adopted several provisions from the 1844 French-Muscat treaty. Article 5, for example, granted both sides most-favored-nation status.[23] Reciprocity was also recognized for the exchange of consular representation (Article 11) with full diplomatic immunity. This measure was different from the 1939 treaty that had granted British subjects living in Oman extraterritorial rights. Article 15 contained an extension clause by virtue of which Britain could apply the treaty to territories under its control save for the British protected states of the Arabian Gulf.[24] Noticeably, the treaty contained a termination clause (Article 17), provided that 15 years had passed and a year-long notice was formally lodged with the other signatory. To avoid any legal repercussions, the treaty was registered by London with the United Nations Secretariat in 1952,

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[22]Al-Baharna, op. cit., p. 52.

[23]There were no such measures in the 1939 treaty, which recognized such privileges for British nationals only; it must be added that these measures were not surprising given the British influence on Sultan Sa`id bin Taymur. For a flavor of that influence, see his 1932 accession address, reproduced in Appendix M.

[24]Al-Baharna, op. cit., p. 53.

because the post-World War II environment called for far better legal accountability.[25]

There was little doubt that Britain reached a new plateau in its ties with Oman by signing the 1951 treaty. Unlike previous accords, this one was more egalitarian and, more important, presumed that the Sultanate actually had certain rights. Yet, to protect its citizens and interests in the area, London appended an "Exchange of Letters" to the treaty that vested extraterritorial jurisdiction in certain civil and criminal cases for a period of ten years from 1 January 1951. After 1 January 1967, full jurisdictional powers fell under the authority of the Sultan but, on 25 July 1958, a separate agreement was signed between Muscat and London to strengthen Oman's army and thereby extend British influence in the Sultanate. Importantly, this "Exchange" called for the British to "make available regular officers on secondment from the British Army, who w[ould], while serving in the Sultanate, form an integral part of [His] Highness's armed forces." London further agreed to provide training facilities as well as extend an open-ended commitment to advise the ruler on an as-needed basis.[26]

If any loopholes existed in earlier treaties, the 1958 accord closed them all by covering the relationship between Oman and Britain in the political, military, and economic fields. At the military level, it openly acknowledged that London was committed to the security of Oman, even though such a commitment was not extended to other states on the Arabian Peninsula at the time.[27]

Britain and Oman in the 1960s

By the early 1960s, the Sultanate of Oman, although independent, was for all practical purposes closely allied with Britain. Little in the treaties subjected Oman, either explicitly or implicitly, to a protectorate status. Yet, its special relationship with Britain gave the latter significant latitude and immeasurable advantages. There was no doubt that the independence of Muscat was categorically stated in the 1862 Anglo-French Declaration but, in reality, Britain adjudicated as it judged best. Ironically, this was the case despite the fact that the United States, France, and India, among others, had recognized the sovereignty of the Sultan by maintaining diplomatic relations. Nevertheless, in all instances, those ties were "managed" through a special ad hoc arrangement with the British government. It is this latter point that cast some doubt on

[25]United Nations, *United Nations Treaty Series 149 (1952)*, New York, 1952, p. 250.

[26]United Nations, General Assembly, *Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Oman*, A/5846, New York, 22 January 1965, p. 166.

[27]Miriam Joyce Haron, "Britain and the Sultan of Muscat and Oman and Dependencies, 1958-59," *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 4:1, March 1993, pp. 90–102.

Oman's true independence in the immediate period before Sultan Qaboos' accession to the throne, because no written agreement existed to refute allegations to the contrary. It must be emphasized that the Sultan had accepted British services because of the long-standing friendship between Britain and the Sultanate. In fact, Sayyid Sa`id bin Taymur freely entered into these agreements with London, which supervised Omani interests abroad. Equally important were the Sultan's specific instructions that such representation would be undertaken only when specifically requested. In reality, the British "handled" Omani foreign policy as they saw fit, while providing Omani subjects all the assistance the latter required while traveling abroad. The British Consul in Muscat reported to the British Political Resident in Bahrain, not only for administrative purposes but also to coordinate his actions with wider British interests in the area.[28] In the end, although legal scholars have documented how British-Omani treaties were classified—published in the same way as those with independent states—Lorimer summarized it best: Oman fell "within the British sphere of influence," technical details notwithstanding.[29]

It must be acknowledged that London did not treat its ties with Muscat in the same way it treated relations with the Shaykhdoms of the Arabian Peninsula. Muscat was not even included in the 1927 Saudi-British Treaty of Jiddah, nor in the 1913 draft convention between the British and Ottoman empires, which covered the Arab Shaykhdoms. For London, the difference between Oman and the Shaykhdoms was simple. The Sultanate had a unique strategic position on the Peninsula facing the Indian subcontinent and that alone deserved special attention. Moreover, Oman had a long-established history that needed to be respected, and such recognition did not contradict true British intentions toward the Sultanate. Unfortunately, this crucial difference did not mean that London would treat Muscat as an equal. Quite the contrary; it meant that the Sultan would be made to feel that he was vital and irreplaceable, even if his true powers were tightly controlled. At least three specific reasons may be advanced to illustrate how Muscat consented to this subtle dictat.

First, the Sultan was not free to engage in slave trade after the 1822 and 1845 agreements that stripped his powers to do otherwise. British ships could confiscate or open fire on Omani vessels engaged in such trade. Such authority meant that independent Oman conceded extraordinary powers to the British government.

Second, by signing the 1891 Non-Alienation Agreement, the Sultan deprived himself "of the right to dispose of his territories, by any means, to any foreign

[28]Al-Baharna, op. cit., p. 68.

[29]Lorimer, op. cit., p. 534.

Government, save to the British Government."[30] This concession prevented an allegedly sovereign ruler from choosing the destiny of his own dominion.

Third, both the 1902 and 1923 agreements prevented the Sultan from granting coal-field or oil concessions to any entity without consulting with, and gaining the approval of, the British government. Simply stated, such restrictions could not be imposed on a sovereign while pretending to uphold his independence.

Britain and the "Question of Oman"

When the Question of Oman was brought before the United Nations, both London and the Sultan felt the need to clarify their respective positions, in part to rectify perceptions that past British actions had established. The Sultan informed the Ad Hoc Committee on Oman that all agreements were "terminated with the death of the Sultan who concluded them," unless they contained clauses making them "binding on his heirs and successors." His exception to this rule was the 1891 Non-Alienation Bond that, Sultan Sa`id argued, was null and void despite the fact that it "had been binding the Sultan's heirs and successors."[31] London reacted to this 1964 interpretation with an interesting spin: It argued that the essence of the 1891 agreement "was that while the Government of India sought no derogation of the Sultan's independence, the Sultan deferred to Her Majesty's Government in ensuring that no other power should derogate from that independence to British disadvantage.[32] London further argued that the 1902 and 1923 exploration agreements were reached under amicable circumstances allowing it no more than "a first option on any oil discovered in his territories." Although neither of the treaties was formally terminated, the British delegate in New York posited that these were peripheral questions because neither treaty was in force. London suggested that these agreements were simply "undertakings" given by the Sultan that had neither affected their actions between 1945 and 1965 nor derogated from the sovereignty of the rulers who had acquiesced to the option.[33] It was too little and too late, however, for the argument that London was benignly looking after Omani interests fell on deaf ears. Thus, although some of these agreements may have lost their legal force over time, no steps were actually taken by London to cancel them. The 1891 agreement, for example, was not formally terminated until 1958. No matter how hard London tried to distance itself from these policies,

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[30]Al-Baharna, op. cit., p. 69.

[31]*Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Oman*, op. cit., pp. 124–125.

[32]As circumstances changed, this particular agreement lost its force. It was finally terminated by an exchange of letters between Sultan Sa`id and Her Majesty's government in 1958, after having long been regarded as a dead letter. See Al-Baharna, op. cit., p. 69.

[33]*Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Oman*, op. cit., pp. 100, 123–124.

the past haunted it in the early 1960s. *The fact was that British influence was pervasive over Omani foreign affairs for over a century and was not merely limited to strengthening the Sultan. Rather, its purpose was to ensure a strategic advantage on the Arabian Peninsula, something akin to a British presence "over the horizon" of the Rub al-Khali, but "on the doors" of the Straits of Hormuz and the Indian Ocean, instead.*

Britain's role in the Sultanate was brought before world public opinion in September 1957 when ten Arab states requested that the "Question of Oman" be placed on the United Nations General Assembly agenda. Arab delegates asserted that the British-led forces had "invaded" the Imamate in December 1955. This, they posited, was unacceptable at a time when decolonization was the norm. In hearings before the Special Political Committee, the British defended their treaty obligations and rejected charges concerning interferences in Omani internal affairs. Still, because London sensed a shifting mood in the Gulf, it introduced a modest development program in 1958 and agreed, shortly thereafter, to terminate the 1891 Non-Alienation Bond. These measures won a certain reprieve at the UN but the debate was rekindled once again in December 1965, when the General Assembly called on Britain to withdraw its military forces from the Sultanate, desist from dominating the area, and grant Oman self-determination.[34] None of these calls were heeded because Sultan Sa`id's grip on the country was more entrenched than ever, and he was not prepared to abandon his privileged ties with London. In any event, Britain terminated its extraterritoriality agreement in 1967 but remained a close ally, exerting necessary influence where it mattered most: in security affairs. The 1970 succession meant that the fundamentals would not change.

Britain and Sultan Qaboos

Qaboos was fully aware that he needed British military assistance to defeat the Dhufar rebellion.[35] Toward that end, he authorized a close Omani-British military relationship that, not surprisingly, greatly favored British firms competing for lucrative government contacts. To be sure, some Omanis opposed giving London this largesse, maintaining that it was an intrusion in Omani internal affairs. Still, the ruler persuaded many that British personnel serving in Oman were doing so to satisfy intrinsic Omani needs and by training the Sultanate's

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[34]J. E. Peterson, "Britain and the 'Oman War': An Arabian Entanglement," *Asian Affairs* 63:3, October 1976, pp. 285–298.

[35]According to Tony Jeapes, a former Special Air Services (SAS) Commander, a full SAS squadron was deployed in the Dhufar where British officers trained Dhufari irregulars, the Firqats, whose performances in the mountainous terrain proved critical. See Colonel Tony Jeapes, *SAS: Operation Oman*, London: William Kimber, 1983; see also "Britain's Bloody Secret Gulf War," *Kuwait Times*, No. 5629, 25 November 1980, p. 5.

Armed Forces to defend the country were performing valuable services. Inescapably, Omanis also exerted some influence on Britain, especially in terms of promoting Omani interests in the West.

Throughout the 1980s, Britain encouraged Oman to modernize its military infrastructure and enhance its cooperative ventures with Western powers. In 1980, Oman placed an important order with Britain's state-owned Aerospace Corporation for 12 Jaguar strike aircraft as well as a number of Rapier Blindfire missiles. The cost of the order was estimated at over $140 million, with each Jaguar at $11.5 million. The aircraft in effect doubled the Sultanate's fleet of Jaguars. In November 1980, Muscat signed an agreement with British Admiral of the Fleet Sir Terence Lewin for the refueling of Royal Navy ships at Mina Qaboos. During the same year, following visits by both Foreign Minister Sir Douglas Hurd and Defense Minister John Nott, additional British officers were transferred to serve with Omani forces. In 1981, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and Sultan Qaboos agreed to appoint General Sir Timothy Creasey, the former commander of British Land Forces, as Chief-of-Staff of the Omani Armed Forces for a two-year period. Little attention was paid to Omani public opinion and, according to a senior British adviser, "when you have a family of children, you don't consult with them until they've grown up a bit."[36] In time, Qaboos' "Omanization" program matured and senior Omani nationals filled most of these key positions. But, the military ties with London were vital. In fact, they reached a crescendo in 1986 with "Operation Saif Sari`a (Swift Sword)," the largest British military deployment in the Gulf until the 1991 War for Kuwait.[37] This and similar exercises facilitated the 1987 "Armilla" deployment in the Persian Gulf to patrol the Straits of Hormuz to allow the free passage of oil tankers. That effort, which was meant to help stop attacks on tankers during the Iran-Iraq War, was supported by RAF Nimrod maritime reconnaissance planes operating out of Muscat. British mine sweepers routinely docked for replenishment in Omani ports as well.[38]

Oman proved a valuable asset to Britain in the aftermath of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. According to the "White Paper on Defense Estimates for 1991," Muscat extended noncash assistance to Operation Granby (the UK part of Desert Storm), by making its airfield available to British aircraft. Airfield services, utilities, and accommodation were provided to a British Jaguar squadron as well as

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[36]Quoted in Dale F. Eickelman, "U.S. Interests in Oman," *The New York Times*, 16 April 1983, p. 23.

[37]The exercise, which involved 4750 British servicemen, as well as elements of the Sultan's Armed Forces, lasted from 16 November to 8 December 1986. See Drew Middleton, "Oman Holds War Games Against 'Fantasia'," *The New York Times*, 30 November 1986, p. 22, and "Flight Refueling in UK/Omani Exercise," *Jane's Defense Weekly*, 22 November 1986, p. 1219.

[38]"And Is Wary of the UK's Role," *CR-BQOY 87-3*, p. 21.

to two VC10K tanker aircraft at Thumrayt Air Base between 11 August and early October 1990 when they were moved to Bahrain. Throughout the war, three Nimrod patrol aircraft were stationed at Seeb Air Base after mid-August 1990 for sea surveillance operations.[39]

This was an important point because it reaffirmed the close military cooperation between the United Kingdom and the Sultanate. In March 1992, Oman placed firm orders for two warships with Vosper Thornycroft of Southampton. The $250 million package for two 83-meter corvettes, equipped with antiaircraft missiles as well as antiship Exocet missiles, was yet another example of the crucial relationship.[40] In January 1993, Oman purchased 18 Challenger-2 battle tanks and expressed an interest in a second batch after the 1995 delivery of its first order. Prime Minister John Major, who stopped in Muscat on his way back from India, was "pleased" to make the announcement.[41]

Historical ties between these two ancient monarchies have been amalgamated by more recent contacts. Over time, the nature of the British influence in Oman changed and, although London did not need to sign a facilities access agreement with the Sultanate (because the persons who would authorize the landing of British forces in the Sultanate might still be British), its overall influence was diminishing. Except for intelligence and some immigration officers, "Omanization" was in full gear and, in the higher ranks, the British will certainly be affected by such changes.[42] Moreover, it is important to note that military cooperation was no longer limited to the London-Muscat axis. In addition to Britain, Oman was engaged in full-fledged contacts with France, the United States, and several other countries, to acquire necessary purchases. With respect to the political penchant of the past, and although Muscat relied on selected British advisers, it pressed ahead with its Omanization program and pursued a foreign policy agenda aimed at promoting Omani national interests. Still, London played a key role.

FRANCE

Although Omani-French relations dated back to the 17th century, with Oman the first Arab country to establish diplomatic relations with Paris in the 1890s, relations between the two countries were not reawakened until Sultan Qaboos

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[39]"As UK Details Omani Assistance in Gulf War," *CR-O/Y 91-3*, p. 10.

[40]"UK and French Firms Add to the Omani Navy," *CR-O/Y 92-3*, p. 9.

[41]"Oman Selects Challenger-2 Battle Tanks to Equip Army," *Oman Daily Observer*, 30 January 1993, p. 1.

[42]Christopher Dickey, "British Influence Fading in Oman," *The Washington Post*, 12 November 1985, p. A25.

initiated several steps in the mid-1970s. As a student of international affairs, Qaboos appreciated French political strengths at the UN Security Council, certainly within the European Community, in the Pacific region, and especially in the Middle East. It was essential, therefore, that Muscat establish a healthy working relationship with Paris. Equally important was the Omani perception that relations with France could be placed on an "equal" footing, because Paris was not a colonial power on the Arabian Peninsula and both countries drew strengths from distinguished historical legacies. His British education notwithstanding, Qaboos was amply aware of France's unique role in the world as he set out to foster ties that would benefit the Sultanate.

The First Contacts

From their onset, Omani-French relations were intended to enhance commercial contacts and, for Paris, to intensify a fledgling presence in the Indian Ocean. Indeed, as Muscat became a favorite stop for ships plying between India and Europe, Oman fortified its naval assets in the area. This commercial success threatened Persia, leading Shah Sultan Husayn (1694–1722) to seek a French alliance to conquer Muscat. Both Louis XIV and Louis XV rejected the Shah's repeated calls despite potential strategic gains in the propositions. "France intends to cultivate friendships with all nations," wrote General Gardane, the Consul in Teheran in 1721.[43] This important step set the stage for very cordial relations between Oman and France.

After 1750, contacts between the two countries were driven by intensified commercial needs, only to be affected by tense Franco-British-Dutch rivalries. Nevertheless, constant improvements were achieved between Oman, its dependencies in Zanzibar, and the Isle de France (today's Maurice), as well as the Isle de Bourbon (Reunion). In 1775, Paris accepted Sultan Ahmad's invitation to open a mail station in Muscat and, in 1786, Sultan Hamid extended an invitation for the first French "representative" to his Court. Unfortunately, the appointment fell through the cracks of the French Revolution, and "Citoyen Beauchamp," nominated as Consul in 1795, never joined his post in Oman.[44]

In 1798, Napoleon Bonaparte sought to form an anti-British alliance with Sultan bin Ahmad but, when the correspondence fell into British hands, London maneuvered to position itself forcefully on Oman. As discussed below, the British "signed" several treaties with the Sultan and, in 1801, appointed a resident

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[43]R. K. Ramazani, *The Foreign Policy of Iran 1500–1941: A Developing Nation in World Affairs*, Charlottesville: The University of Virginia Press, 1966, p. 41; see also France, *L'Oman et la France: Quelques Elements d'Histoire*, Ministère des Affaires Étrangéres, Paris: n.d., p. 4.

[44]Interview with Jacques Champagne de la Briolle, Former-Deputy Chief of Mission of France, Embassy of France, Muscat, 25 January 1993.

Political Agent in Muscat. This presence prevented any Franco-Omani rapprochement throughout the 19th century. Napoleon's envoy, Cavaignac, dispatched to make contact with the ruler in 1803, failed to achieve his objective largely because of British duress. In 1807, Sayyid Sa`id bin Sultan finally signed a maritime convention with Decaen, the Governor of the Isle de France, who in turn appointed M. Dallous as his representative in Oman. Dallous left Muscat in 1810 after France was militarily defeated in the Indian Ocean.

Between 1814 and 1840, Paris rebuilt its presence in the area, leading authorities on the Isle de Bourbon (Reunion) to contact Muscat. To be sure, these contacts occurred at the height of a dominant Omani presence on the high seas, stretching from Bandar Abbas in Persia to Gawadar in Baluchistan (later Pakistan) to Zanzibar to Cape Delgado (the current northern border of Mozambique). Moreover, Sultan Sa`id, who resided mostly in Zanzibar after 1830, initiated multipronged diplomatic initiatives, including signing bilateral agreements with Britain, the United States, and France. Because of France's renewed presence in Madagascar and the Comores, the Sultan adopted far more eclectic policies toward the French. Appraising the rising influence of Paris, and after a first accord in 1841, the Sultan signed a Treaty of Amity and Commerce with France, which was ratified in 1846.[45]

This treaty allowed a development of commercial ties between Zanzibar and Reunion, followed by direct contacts between Oman and France proper. In 1849, the Omani merchant ship *Carolina* docked in Marseilles, where it received a most favorable welcome. At about the same time, Hajji Darwish, Sultan Sa`id's personal envoy, visited Toulon and Paris, where he was received by the President of the Republic, Louis Napoleon Bonaparte (Napoleon III). By all accounts, Napoleon III favored improving ties with the Sultanate but these efforts faced formidable British opposition. London correctly perceived improved French economic activities, especially in Zanzibar, as being detrimental to its own regional interests. In the end, although Sultan Sa`id managed his relations with the major powers rather well, his 1856 death—and subsequent division of Omani authority between Zanzibar and Muscat—ushered in far more difficult times. Given what was at stake, namely, a lucrative commercial presence, both Paris and London agreed in 1862 to "respect the independence of the two Sultanates in Zanzibar and Muscat."[46] France's victory, ostensibly achieved through this 1862 accord, proved pyrrhic, because Britain asserted itself in Muscat. For better or worse, the French faced an uphill battle in protecting their commercial holdings throughout most of the Indian Ocean and, to counter the rising British influence, accorded Omani ships the right to fly the

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[45]Ibid., 22 September 1993.

[46]*L'Oman et la France*, op. cit., p. 121.

French flag. Of course, Omani merchants sought to benefit from these arrangements by engaging in alleged illegal trafficking. Whether Paris overlooked them or not was far less important than London's decision to use the example of slave trafficking to object to any reflagging. Sultan Faysal, who benefited from his relations with the French and who welcomed Paul Ottavi as French Consul in 1894, eventually relented under strong British pressure.[47] In 1899, London forced a reversal, whereby Sayyid Faysal canceled his 1898 accord to lease a coaling station to France. Although this dispute was settled in favor of Britain, Paris maintained its diplomatic presence in Oman and did not close its consulate in Muscat until 1920. Under the strict rule of Sultan Sa`id bin Taymur, Oman wallowed in semitotal isolation. It was not until the reign of Sultan Qaboos that contacts were reestablished with Paris. The French envoy to Kuwait was appointed nonresident ambassador to Oman in 1972 and, two years later, a resident plenipotentiary was accredited to the Sultanate.

Renewed Contacts

Because the 17 November 1844 Treaty of Commerce included a clause that allowed either party a "reciprocal and most-favored-nation treatment," Qaboos sought to engage Paris in a more active role in the Sultanate. Not only was he in search of closer diplomatic associations but, more important, the Omani ruler hoped for better French investments in his country. Between 1970 and 1990, Oman welcomed French commercial investments, particularly in the oil exploration sector, and signed a series of agreements in the agricultural and construction fields. A military cooperation agreement was signed following the Sultan's visit to Paris in May 1989 as well. Additional Super-Puma helicopters, Exocet missiles, and new armored cars were acquired immediately after this trip. Muscat expressed an interest in new antitank missiles, portable ground-to-air missiles, trucks, light-armored vehicles, and the Atlantique-2 light maritime surveillance aircraft. It even was considering the Mirage 2000 fighter, although severe economic constraints prevented Muscat from placing an order. France nevertheless represented an alternative source of armaments for Oman within the GCC's overall military diversification program and Qaboos carefully nurtured his ties with Paris.

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[47]Ottavi played a rather important role in Franco-Omani relations. His story is colorfully recounted in splendid displays in the Omani-French Museum in Muscat (Bayt Faransa), which opened its doors in 1992. See Sultanate of Oman, Ministry of National Heritage and Culture, *Al-Mathaf Al-`Umani-Al-Faransi* [The Omani-French Museum], Ruwi, Oman, 1992.

In January 1992, President François Mitterand arrived in Muscat on the first visit ever by a French president to the Sultanate of Oman.[48] Despite long-established diplomatic contacts, the French presence in Oman was rather limited compared to that of other industrialized countries. Between 1985 and 1990, for example, no French company won a major contract for project work in the Sultanate itself. This was, to put it mildly, a disappointment to Qaboos. It was only in late 1990 that the deadlock was broken when Thomson-CSF won a $67 million contract to expand the Omani television network. French arguments centered around existing preconceptions that the Sultanate's markets were well protected by Britain. By visiting Muscat, Mitterand hoped to invigorate Omani-French cooperation further and, more important, cross the difficult psychological barrier of the historical British presence. The French president was accompanied by a high-level delegation that included the ministers of defense and of commerce and foreign trade. In the joint statement issued after talks were held between the Omani and French delegations, the military and economic spheres were identified as being among those in which bilateral cooperation would be consolidated. French officials were also quoted as saying that there was a clear potential for a stronger presence in areas such as power and telecommunications. In 1993, the Royal Oman Navy signed an important contract for three 54-meter P-400 vessels, well suited to the high temperatures and humidity in the Gulf of Oman.[49]

Importantly, Mitterand's visit was his first to any country in the Middle East after the War for Kuwait. On the international level, the visit was seen as a boost to Oman's position on postwar security arrangements throughout the region. Since then, Paris has been showing the flag whenever possible, not only to stand by Oman but also to build on this new policy. In June 1994, for example, a squadron of French Air Force Mirage F1Cs from Djibouti stopped in Thumrayt on their way to Al-Dafra in the United Arab Emirates. Although the stopover was "technical" in nature, it further demonstrated Paris' determination to provide military assistance to Muscat.[50] What Paris sought to achieve was commensurate with what Muscat was ready to accept. For Oman, long-term progress meant successful commercial ties and, towards that end, the emphasis

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[48]The visit was originally scheduled for October 1990 but, in the aftermath of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, both sides agreed to postpone it. Still, in October 1990, Mitterand dispatched Foreign Minister Roland Dumas to discuss postwar security arrangements with Sultan Qaboos. Both sides agreed that all diplomatic initiatives should be exhausted before international coalition forces, including Omani and French units in Saudi Arabia, forced the occupying Iraqi army from Kuwait. See Jean-Pierre Langellier, "La Visite de M. Dumas: Oman Veut Marquer Sa Difference," *Le Monde*, 18 October 1990, p. 3.

[49]"Goes to a French Company," *CR-O/Y 93-4*, p. 15. See also Husayn `Abd Al-Ghani, "Mitterand's Visit to Muscat Underlines Oman's Policy of Equilibrium," *Al-Hayat*, 3 February 1992, p. 4.

[50]"La FAC à Al-Dafra," *Air Actualités*, No. 477, November-December 1994, pp. 16–17.

was on the steady work of the Joint Omani-French committee, established in 1992.

Several projects were initiated under the committee's scrutiny. Although pale in comparison with the British Council, which has been operating in Muscat for over a decade, France inaugurated its own language center—the Franco-Omani Center—in December 1993. Rather than treat this center as a foreign policy matter, Paris pushed for it through the Ministry of Education. Under Secretary for Research and Foreign Relations Shaykh Salim bin Mustahel bin Ahmad Al-Mashani pledged that government authorities "would spare no efforts to encourage the French language teaching."[51] In October 1994, the Omani-French Joint Committee held its fifth session, reaching agreement on new investment projects. The session, attended by Foreign Minister Alain Juppé, was held on the 100th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Oman and France. Muscat encouraged French investments and agreed to avoid double taxation for a variety of firms investing in the fisheries sector as well as light and medium-sized industries.

These were significant achievements on the long road that Ambassador Regis Koetschet had faced when he arrived in Muscat in 1992. Many Omanis referred to him as the "Achiever Ambassador" who was embarked on slowly but surely fulfilling François Mitterand's stated objectives in the Sultanate.

THE UNITED STATES

The United States "has courted Oman spiritedly" in recent years and "has received substantial cooperation from Muscat" even though U.S. objectives were formulated without taking into account "the nature of Omani history, society and politics."[52] Nevertheless, Oman remained a critical country for the United States, because of the Sultanate's strategic position on the Arabian Peninsula. Indeed, Washington faced the British hurdle for close to two centuries before it successfully launched independent initiatives. In turn, Muscat looked to the sole remaining superpower with awe, even though its modest policies, which benefitted the West in general and the United States in particular, were not always reciprocated.

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[51]"Franco-Omani Center Opened," *The Times of Oman*, 6 December 1993, p. 2. A second center opened its doors in Salalah in 1994.

[52]J. E. Peterson, "Legitimacy and Political Change in Yemen and Oman," *Orbis* 27:4, Winter 1984, p. 973.

The First Contacts: 1790–1850

Sporadic commercial contact between the United States and Oman began in the late 1700s. Records suggest that the first American vessel to visit Muscat was the Boston brig, *Ramber*, captained by Robert Folger, in September 1790. Two years later, in 1792, another group of Americans traveled via the grueling mountains and deserts of south and central Oman to Muscat. They were the survivors of the ill-fated Boston ship, *Commerce*, bound for Bombay but wrecked on the uncharted South Arabian coast near Cape Chancery (Ras Sharbithat).

For the next quarter century, American merchant vessels occasionally touched at Muscat. Their cargoes were not usually of American origin but consisted of sugar, tea, spices, and other products of the East Indies. American shipmasters engaged in "coastal trade," transported cargoes to Muscat because of its importance as a transit port for Arabian Gulf commerce, and, generally speaking, benefited handsomely from contacts in Oman.

Political turbulence in the Gulf, however, and the constant threat of piracy at the hands of Qawasim tribesmen during the first two decades of the 19th century, disrupted Muscat's trading position. These developments, coupled with the shipping embargo imposed by President Thomas Jefferson between 1807 and 1809, a war with great Britain from 1812 to 1814, and the closure of the Isle de France (Mauritius) to U.S. ships after the British seizure of that island in 1819, reduced the number of visits to ports in the northern Indian Ocean area, including Muscat. Significantly, American shipmasters recognized that they were in maritime competition with the substantial Omani fleet of Sayyid Sa`id bin Sultan Al Bu Sa`id. When not engaged in naval operations against Qawasim pirates or rebellious East African subjects, many of his vessels regularly were sent on trading missions to East African and Indian ports.

Despite maritime competition, both the United States and Oman pursued commercial interests, with Sayyid Sa`id playing a major role in this relationship. Few Arab rulers were as well known and respected by Americans as was Sayyid Sa`id during his long reign (1804–1856). In a period when Americans were ill informed about Arabs and when their sparse contacts with Arabic-speaking peoples were often contentious, Sayyid Sa`id enjoyed an unrivaled reputation for forceful leadership, decisiveness, friendship, and commercial savvy. For the better part of a quarter century, he maintained close personal and commercial ties not only with American consuls and shipmasters who resided in or visited his domains, but also with merchants who had never left the United States and who knew him only through correspondence. Many an American shipmaster benefited from his personal benevolence. Whether to replace lost anchors, advance funds, or provide other services, he sought to be of help.

These private contacts resulted in closer contacts between the United States and Oman. In 1828, Edmund Roberts met with Sayyid Sa`id in Zanzibar. Believing that American commercial ties with the Sultan's realm suffered disadvantages, Roberts urged that American traders receive the same treatment extended to the British who, he noted, already enjoyed treaty status with Oman and thus were accorded a favored position.[53] Moreover, unlike the British or the French, Roberts argued, the United States had no territorial ambitions abroad and was solely interested in mutually beneficial commerce. Roberts proposed that Sayyid Sa`id entrust him with dispatches to the government of the United States, setting forth the terms under which American merchant vessels might trade in ports under "Sultani control." He further suggested that a commercial treaty be concluded between the two governments to finalize his proposal.

Sayyid Sa`id saw in Edmund Roberts' proposal significant opportunities to obtain military equipment that might enable him to drive the colonialist Portuguese out of Mozambique and to recapture Mombasa.[54] Before Roberts' departure, Sa`id affirmed his desire to place official and commercial relations with the United States on a firm treaty basis.

Unfortunately, due to a transition in American leadership and other domestic considerations, President Andrew Jackson did not address U.S.-Omani bilateral questions until 1831. In 1831, Senator Levi Woodbury—a relative of Roberts through marriage—became Secretary of the Navy and convinced the President to mount a naval expedition against Javanese pirates who had attacked an American merchant ship in the Indian Ocean. This move put Washington on a course to establish bilateral commercial agreements with states in East Africa and the Persian Gulf.

Through Woodbury's influence, the Secretary of State named Roberts Special Diplomatic Agent and instructed him to proceed to various East Indian and Arabian ports to conduct treaty negotiations. On 18 September 1833, Roberts arrived in Muscat. He outlined American ideas for a commercial treaty, which Sa`id accepted with few modifications. A few days later, on 21 September 1833, the United States and Oman agreed on the "Treaty of Amity and Commerce." It was the first bilateral accord between the United States and an Arab Gulf state.[55] The president of the United States ratified the treaty on 30 June 1834 with formal ratification in Muscat on 30 September 1835. Once word was received in

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[53]Roberts blamed the British for property he lost during his travels to Oman. See Wendell Phillips, *Oman: A History*, London: Longman, 1967, p. 105.

[54]Ibid., p. 106.

[55]The U.S.-Omani treaty was the second treaty ever signed by the United States and an Arab country. The oldest U.S. treaty with an Arab state was signed in 1787 with Morocco.

Washington that treaty ratifications had been exchanged, arrangements were made for the posting of American consuls. Richard Palmer Waters arrived in Zanzibar in 1837 and was accredited to Muscat as well. In 1838, the U.S. Consulate opened in Oman, and Sa`id bin Khalfan, the Omani translator at the 1833 treaty negotiations, was named acting consul and confirmed in the post in 1834.[56]

As Muscat welcomed American vessels, Sa`id pondered the usefulness of sending Omani vessels to the United States, because, he reasoned, such direct trade would enable Oman to obtain cheaper products. On his orders, the Omani vessel *Sultana* entered New York harbor on 30 April 1840. Sayyid Sa`id's special emissary, Ahmad bin Nu`man, delivered merchandise and gifts for President Martin Van Buren.[57] Nu`man, who was the first Arab diplomat accredited to the United States, received a warm welcome in Washington, and while the *Sultana* unloaded its cargo, the ship was refitted in New York at U.S. government expense.

Trade Acceleration and Decline: 1870–1910

In the late 1870s, some 20 years after the death of Sayyid Sa`id, a new burst of U.S. trade expansion resulted in exploration of untapped Persian Gulf markets. As part of this effort, the U.S. government dispatched Commodore R. W. Shufeldt, a naval officer and a former American consul to Havana, aboard the U.S.S. *Ticonderoga.* He was to explore trade potential in areas that had no resident American representatives.

The absence since 1845 of a consular officer representing the United States in Muscat had a great effect on U.S. policies toward the Sultanate. When Shufeldt arrived in Muscat on 18 November 1879, his instructions regarding Muscat and Oman reflected Washington's uncertainty as to the precise nature of the changes introduced after Sa`id died in 1856.[58] Washington seemed unclear about the implications of the separation between Muscat and Zanzibar (which had been formalized in an 1861 British arbitration award). In talks with the Omani ruler, Sayyid Turki bin Sa`id, a younger son of the late Sayyid Sa`id,

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[56]The ninth article of the treaty introduced the historic principle of extraterritorial rights, granting to a foreign official jurisdiction over his fellow citizens at all posts in the Sultanate. See Phillips, op. cit., pp. 107–108.

[57]The cargo included dates, Persian carpets, gum copal, ivory, and cloves. See Phillips, op. cit., p. 109.

[58]Sa`id bin Khalfan died in 1845. Consequently, his jurisdiction reverted to the American Consul in Zanzibar, which left Muscat unattended. See Ambassador Frederick Eilts, *United States and Oman: A Sesquicentennial Commemoration,* Washington, D.C.: United States Information Service, 1983, p. 5.

Shufeldt discussed Washington's interest in reopening the Muscat consulate. Turki agreed, although noting that American trade had been conducted satisfactorily for many years without a resident American official, and confirmed his agreement in writing. In the absence of a readily suitable American candidate, Louis Maguire, an Irish resident in Muscat who represented a number of European and American firms, was selected as American consul. By 22 July 1880 the new American consulate was in place.[59]

In addition to trade, American medical aid to Oman helped solidify ties between the two countries. In December 1893, the Reformed Church of America established a permanent station of its Arabian Mission in Muscat. Over the next 70 years (with an interregnum between 1915 and 1928), dedicated American missionaries, mostly physicians and nurses, performed sorely needed medical work. They also established an Arabian Mission and hospital in Mutrah in 1909 and conducted work in both Muscat and Mutrah as well as medical missions into Inner Oman.

Nevertheless, by the early 1900s, trade relations between the United States and Oman began to decline. In October 1906, total import and export trade between the two countries was slightly less than a quarter of a million dollars per year. Thereafter it dropped sharply, particularly for American products sold to the Sultanate. The cause of this decline appeared to be competition from Indian and British shipping over the Omani date trade. Significantly, direct steamship service from Europe and India to the Gulf signaled an upsurge in non-American flag carriers for the lucrative date trade. Moreover, internal problems in Oman, beginning in 1913, adversely affected the Omani date industry and presented opportunities for competition from Basra in Iraq, which turned American attention away from Oman.

U.S.-Omani Relations in Flux: 1911–1970

The collapse of trade between the United States and Oman, coupled with the growth of British control throughout the Indian Ocean region, pushed U.S.-Omani relations to their lowest level in several decades. In 1915, the U.S. Consulate closed its doors in Muscat, because there was hardly any work left to do. Ironically, the absence of American and French interests produced a vac-

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[59]The system of using non-American consuls continued until 1906, when Washington decided that only career consular officers, not people engaged in private trade, should be assigned to American posts. Between that year and the closure of the Muscat consulate nine years later, three American consuls served in the post. Throughout this period, Mohamed Fazel, an Indian expatriate first appointed by Maguire, whose relations with the ruler of Oman were excellent, remained as deputy consul and later as vice consul. He served as acting consul in 1914 when World War I broke out and when Washington closed the post, chiefly because of political uncertainties. Ibid., p. 9.

uum that was filled by the British. Consequently, Britain continued to maintain a strong presence in the country and the region throughout and after World War I.[60]

In the 1930s, the United states sought to rekindle its trade relationship with Oman, however, and, in 1934, sent its Minister to Iraq, Paul Knabenshue, to Muscat with a presidential letter marking the centennial celebration of the 1833 treaty. Welcomed by the Omani ruler, Sayyid Sa`id bin Taymur, Knabenshue presented an official invitation to the Sultan from President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to visit the United States. Sa`id toured the United States in 1938. Secretary of State Cordell Hull formally greeted the Sultan in Washington where he was an honored guest at a White House state dinner.

During World War II, Sa`id made available British RAF air facilities at Salalah in Dhufar and on Masirah Island to U.S. aircraft bound for the Far East. A small number of U.S. Air Force maintenance personnel were stationed at these installations to service transiting aircraft. The servicemen upgraded the Ras al-Hadd and Masirah airfields as time permitted.[61]

In 1956, with prospects growing for oil in Oman, the United States proposed reestablishing an American consular office in Muscat. Consequently, Sultan Sa`id suggested that the 1833 treaty was in some respects outdated and that a new consular treaty should be negotiated. Discussions began in June 1957, with the Sultan personally conducting the talks for Oman. In the absence of a resident American representative, Walter Schwinn, the American Consul General in Dhahran, regularly shuttled to Salalah to negotiate for Washington. A new Treaty of Amity, Economic Relations and Consular Rights was signed on 20 December 1958. It superseded the 1833 treaty and, in accordance with Article XII, accorded each party the right to send consular representatives to the cities of the other country. President Dwight D. Eisenhower ratified the treaty on 9 May 1959, opening a new chapter in the relationship.[62]

The Strategic Relationship Unfolds: 1970–1980

Several observers have posited that American policy in the Persian Gulf region between 1970 and 1980 concentrated on the "Twin Pillars" of Iran and Saudi Arabia articulated by Presidents Nixon and Ford. This policy promoted and as-

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[60]As oil was discovered elsewhere on the Arabian Peninsula, Oman remained rather isolated (and poor), partly because American oil companies were not allowed to prospect in the Sultanate.

[61]Calvin H. Allen, Jr., *Oman: The Modernization of the Sultanate*, Boulder, Colorado, and London: Westview Press and Croom Helm, 1987, p. 118; see also Joseph A. Kechichian, "Oman and the World," *American-Arab Affairs*, No. 35, Winter 1990–1991, p. 145.

[62]"U.S. Supplying Missiles and Instructors to Oman," *New York Times*, 9 February 1975, p. 4.

sisted military developments in Teheran and Riyadh ostensibly to promote regional stability. Because of this overwhelming emphasis, little attention was devoted to Oman during this period.

In 1972, Washington opened an embassy in Muscat and Ambassador William H. Stolzfus, Jr., who was also accredited to Kuwait, presented his credentials to Sultan Qaboos as nonresident plenipotentiary. An Omani Embassy opened in Washington in May 1973, where Sayyid Faysal bin `Ali Al Bu Sa`id served as ambassador. Stolzfus was replaced in July 1974 by William D. Wolle. Both men were fully aware of the Sultan's preoccupation with the Dhufar rebellion. Still, U.S. military assistance to Oman, discreet or otherwise, was very limited until 1980 even though Washington expressed an interest in Omani "facilities," chiefly the use of the RAF field at Masirah, as early as 1973.[63] In September 1973, U.S. Army Colonel George Maloney visited Oman and stressed the potential significance of the airstrip.[64] Sultan Qaboos informed his British advisers that Washington was interested in Masirah and that it had expressed an interest in using it "occasionally."[65] A high-level State Department official, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Sidney Sober, visited Muscat in September 1974 to further discuss the terms under which such arrangements were to be made.[66] No agreements were reached until Qaboos visited Washington in January 1975, where he met President Ford, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger, and CIA Director William Colby.[67]

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[63]The RAF maintained a base at Masirah Island since 1958 under a previously secret agreement that contained provisions for landing rights to other friendly powers. Vulcan bombers, the only British aircraft with nuclear capability, sometimes stopped at Masirah on flights around the world. But Masirah was largely used as a refueling stop and staging point for transport planes flying to the Far East and for jet fighters supporting the British-led Omani forces in Dhufar. Two medium-range Andover transports were stationed there for regular supply runs to the RAF base at Salalah and Muscat. Group Commander Captain Keith Hepburn stated that Masirah "ha[d] six aircraft movements a day, sometimes 12." Hepburn commanded 580 British RAF personnel, 120 British civilian base employees, and 300 Pakistani and Omani laborers. There was no fresh water on the island. The RAF had a desalinization plant, which supplied 4,000 Omani fishermen with water. See "Strategic Oman Island 'Discovered' by USAF," *Christian Science Monitor*, 13 February 1975, p. 8.

[64]P-3 antisubmarine patrol planes based on Diego Garcia had been using Masirah regularly for some time. The landings occurred despite the fact that British officers at Masirah had stated that they had "not seen any American advance parties courting a possible base site within the past few months." Ibid.

[65]Joe Stork, "The Carter Doctrine and U.S. Bases in the Middle East," *MERIP Reports*, No. 90, September 1980, p. 11.

[66]For details on these difficult negotiations see Jeff Gerth and Judith Miller, "U.S. Is Said to Develop Oman As Its Major Ally in the Gulf," *The New York Times*, 25 March 1985, pp. A1, A8; see also Jeff Gerth and Judith Miller, "Ex-Intelligence Agents Are Said to Have Major Roles in Oman," *The New York Times*, 26 March 1985, p. A8; Gerald F. Seib, "U.S. Quietly Expands Its Military Partnership with Oman, Strategic Plum in Persian Gulf Overlooking Oil Routes," *The Wall Street Journal*, 11 April 1985, p. 34; and David B. Ottaway, "U.S., Oman Hold Delicate Negotiations over Bases," *The Washington Post*, 19 July 1985, p. A29.

[67]At a dinner reception for the Sultan, Kissinger stated "but, finally, we also take a strong interest in the independence and sovereignty and progress of our old friends, such as His Majesty, who faces

was the first and only such agreement between the United States and an Arab country.[74] The agreement was not a "base" accord in the strict sense, because Oman requested that Washington provide advance notice of the landing and mooring of vessels entering the Sultanate. According to Sultan Qaboos, the United States was to be granted access to Omani facilities only at the request of the Omani government or a majority of GCC states, and only in the case of a direct threat that Oman could not repulse alone.

From Qaboos' perspective, it was clear that the arrangement provided more than support for his regime.[75] The agreement stated that there were to be no American ground troops stationed in Oman and none "in rotation" through the Sultanate, and it formally excluded using any parcel of territory as a rest and recreation area for American troops in the region.[76] Muscat was anxious to keep U.S. military visibility in Oman at a minimum. It defined this low profile to mean little publicity about U.S. military activities, military personnel wearing civilian apparel rather than uniforms, maximum use of civilian contractors rather than military personnel, and U.S. military exercises conducted away from populated areas.[77] Still, the agreement allowed the United States to stockpile supplies at three large depots as well as to use Masirah Island for flights bringing in equipment, food, and supplies for the U.S. fleet in and around the Persian Gulf.[78]

In terms of regional contingencies, the agreement provided the United States with access to Omani military facilities in circumstances where both countries would benefit from such usage. Logistically, the agreement greatly enhanced U.S. military capabilities in the Indian Ocean where Washington was undertak-

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See *U.S. Security Interests in the Persian Gulf,* Report of a Staff Study Mission to the Persian Gulf, Middle East, and Horn of Africa, October 21–November 13, 1980, Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives, 16 March 1981, pp. 16–17 [hereafter, *U.S. Security*]; see also Jeff Gerth and Judith Miller, "U.S. Is Said to Develop Oman as Its Major Ally in the Gulf," *The New York Times,* 25 March 1985, pp. A1, A8.

[74]The agreement had been sought since 1977 when the RAF abandoned its air base at Masirah. See Allen, op. cit., p. 119. In addition, U.S. Under Secretary of Defense Robert Komer was reported to have testified that the United States would be willing to finance any reconstruction or to make improvements to the airstrips at Seeb and Thumrayt and seaports at Mutrah and Salalah for U.S. use in peacetime or during conflict. See U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *Military Construction Appropriation for 1981,* Hearings Before a Subcommittee of the House Committee on Appropriations, 96th Congress, 1st Session, March 10, 1982, p. 1151.

[75]*U.S. Interests in and Policies Toward the Persian Gulf, 1980,* Hearings before the Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, 97th Congress, 2d Session, March 24–September 3, 1980, Washington, D.C., p. 92.

[76]Liesl Graz, *The Omanis: Sentinels of the Gulf,* London and New York: Longman, 1982, p. 60.

[77]*U.S. Security,* op. cit., p. 16.

[78]*War in the Persian Gulf: The U.S. Takes Sides,* A Staff Report to the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 100th Congress, 1st Session, November 1987, Washington, D.C., p. 34.

ing a thorough sea surveillance program over Soviet ships. B-52 bombers flown out of Guam could have landed at Masirah, especially since "the British Government ha[d] refused to permit the bombers to land at Diego Garcia."[79] Still, Washington could have used Omani facilities to respond to a Soviet attack on the region, but it was not certain whether it would be able to use them to intervene in an intra-Arab conflict where American interests were threatened.[80] Nevertheless, the agreement was widely criticized by several Arab governments, who feared that it was a U.S. encroachment in the Gulf. Relations with the United States, declared Foreign Minister `Alawi, were based on mutual respect and equality "without any pressures or other methods entailing any form of hegemony," even if few Arab critics believed him.[81]

From the Omani perspective, the access agreement included a commitment for economic as well as military assistance, estimated at $80–$100 million in 1982.[82] In fact, Washington requested from Congress $45 million in FMS guarantees for Oman, as well as $100,000 in IMET assistance for 1984. An additional $15 million was requested from the Economic Support Fund.[83] By 4 August 1980, following an exchange of notes between representatives of the two governments, this cooperation was given concrete expression with the establishment of an Omani-American Joint Commission for Economic and Technical Cooperation. Consequently, agreements were signed to provide assistance for fisheries development, for the construction of an aquifer recharge dam, and for a training program for Omanis in the United States. Omanis became frustrated by the U.S. delay in implementing the agreement, however, and, at the end of 1980, were still awaiting the arrival of an Army Corps of Engineers survey team—promised for September—to identify specific construction needs and projects. Continued delays in U.S. implementation of the agreement helped reinforce the Omani perception that Washington did not live up to its security commitments.[84] According to Secretary of State Alexander Haig, for example,

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[79]"U.S. Announces Pact with Oman on Access to Air Bases and Port," *The New York Times*, 6 June 1980, p. A4.

[80]*U.S. Security*, op. cit., p. 16.

[81]*Radio Muscat*, 8 June 1981, as cited in Colin Legum (ed.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume 5, 1980–81*, New York and London: Holmes and Meier Publishers, Inc., 1982, p. 493.

[82]Ibid., p. 494.

[83]*Security and Development Assistance*, Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 98th Congress, 1st Session, February 17–March 14, 1983, p. 304. The FMS figure for 1984 was considerably higher than the $533,000 in 1983, but it remained meager in comparison with Oman's needs. The critical problem, as far as Muscat was concerned, was the limited funds available to the Sultanate considering its large requirements for economic development.

[84]*U.S. Security*, op. cit., p. 17.

the Omani access was constrained by expenditures associated with improving key facilities.[85]

In earnest, the United States started military assistance and training for Omani forces, and improved its arms sales program in 1980. Six M-60 tanks and an undetermined number of TOW and Sidewinder missiles for Oman's Jaguar fighter aircraft were sold that first year. U.S. training advisory field teams trained Omanis on these weapons systems as Washington agreed to also sell Oman C-130 aircraft. These sales notwithstanding, the United States could not expand its military transfers fast enough, because Britain pushed hard to remain the Sultanate's principal arms supplier.[86]

The Critical 1980s

The first term of the Reagan Administration brought the two countries closer together in the politico-military sphere. Leading American officials who visited Oman included former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee Senator John Tower, and former President Gerald Ford.[87] All three leaders met with the Sultan and Foreign Minister Al-Zawawi. In military-to-military contacts, joint exercises dominated bilateral contacts and in February 1981, a small contingent of U.S. Army and Air Force personnel set up a temporary communications center in the Sultanate to monitor airborne surveillance of the Straits.[88] Consequently, the United States upgraded its military facilities on Masirah as well as the international airport at Seeb, and U.S. General P. X. Kelly, Commander of the Rapid Deployment Force, visited Muscat to finalize logistical procedures. By the fall of 1981, Oman had purchased M-60 tanks, in part on Kelly's advice.[89] In late December, U.S.

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[85]*Persian Gulf Situation,* Hearing Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 97th Congress, 1st Session, 17 September 1981, p. 15.

[86]*U.S. Security,* op. cit., p. 19.

[87]Tower's visit took place at a desert camp in the northern part of the country where he presumably watched exercises by the Sultan's Armed Forces. "Senator Tower, in Visit to Oman, Meets the Sultan at Desert Camp," *New York Times,* 19 February 1981. See also, respectively, for other U.S. dignitary's visits to Oman, "Henry Kissinger Arrives in Muscat 8 January," *FBIS-MEA-V-81-05,* 9 January 1981, p. C2; "Qabus Receives U.S. Senate Committee Chairman," *FBIS-MEA-V-81-35,* 18 February 1981, p. C5; "Muscat Reports Arrival of Gerald Ford 13 March," *FBIS-MEA-V-8-54,* 16 March 1981, p. C1.

[88]"Oman Announces Joint Maneuvers with U.S. Forces," *FBIS-MEA-V-81-27,* 9 February 1981, p. C4; "Omani-U.S.-Maneuvers End; U.S. Force Leaves," *FBIS-MEA-V-81-44,* 2 March 1981, p. C2. Several GCC members criticized Oman for conducting these exercises. See, for a flavor of the debate, *Al-Ray Al-Amm,* 11 February 1981, p. 1.

[89]According to CRS research, there were no security commitments or obligations to sell weapons, nor were there any obligations on the U.S. to expend funds or to maintain forces in Oman, Somalia, and Kenya. See *The Persian Gulf: Are We Committed? At What Cost? A Dialogue with the Reagan Administration on U.S. Policy,* Joint Economic Committee, Congress of the United States, with the Assistance of the Congressional Research Service, 21 December 1981, p. 20.

troops participated in "Bright Star 81" maneuvers, landing on the Dhufari coast.[90] These exercises were held under the agreement signed between Muscat and Washington on 5 June 1980 giving the United States access to Omani ports and airports. To forestall its Gulf partners' objections, Muscat pushed Washington to reduce the length and scope of the maneuvers—which involved more than 6000 Army, Marine, Air Force, and Navy personnel. The landing was designed to demonstrate American intentions to help safeguard the security of oil-producing states in the Gulf.[91] Yusuf bin `Alawi declared that Bright Star maneuvers were being conducted with

> a state that was a friend of all the area's states. On this basis, the maneuvers could not be interpreted as being directed against any Gulf state. The United States was a country which had transcended the stage of friendship to the point where it could be said that it was an allied state, despite the fact that there was nothing written in this respect.[92]

Public pronouncements to the contrary notwithstanding, Oman encouraged the building and improvement of airfields, as well as the prepositioning of arms, equipment, and fuel for use by USCENTCOM forces during an emergency. Senior Omani officials asserted that Muscat could not agree to the outright establishment of bases in the Sultanate but, to meet the country's strategic responsibilities, would cooperate with its Western allies. And to illustrate its commitment, Oman participated, albeit on a modest scale, in the annual U.S. military exercises in Southwest Asia, code-named "Jade Tiger." The exercises involved about 2500 American soldiers, who tested their defenses in the event of a Soviet or other foreign attack on the Persian Gulf region. Omani officials, however, in conjunction with the Pentagon, made no announcements about Jade Tiger because the Sultanate wanted to play down its links with Washington to avoid criticism from vocal Arab regimes.[93] Clearly, Oman's close military ties with the United States were aimed at ensuring the security of the Sultanate and those of the conservative monarchies. For Qaboos, the choice was obvious:

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[90]Before Bright Star 81, GCC states asked Oman to reduce its military cooperation with the United States. The newspaper *Al-Qabas* quoted a "high official from the Gulf" as stating that Oman, in exchange for complying with the request, was offered a pledge that the Council would intervene with the PDRY to stop meddling in internal Omani affairs. In addition, the GCC and Saudi Arabia offered Oman $2 billion in development aid. Saudi Arabia later denied the offer. See "Oman Reportedly Asked to Reduce U.S. Ties," *FBIS-MEA-V-81-208*, 7 December 1981, p. C1; and "Minister Denies $1.2 Billion Offer to Oman," *FBIS-MEA-V-81-205*, 4 December 1981, pp. C9–C10. For a flavor of the discussion on early American military preparations in Southwest Asia, see Congressional Budget Office, *The Marine Corps in the 1980s: Prestocking Proposals, the Rapid Deployment Force, and Other Issues*, Washington, D.C., May 1980.

[91]"U.S. Asked to Trim War Games," *New York Times*, 6 November 1981; *FBIS-MEA-V-81-208*, 7 December 1981, p. C1.

[92]*Ash-Sharq Al-Awsat*, 9 November 1981, pp. 1, 2.

[93]"2500 U.S. Soldiers Reported Holding Maneuvers in Oman," *The New York Times*, December 6, 1982, pp. 1, 6.

The security of the conservative Arab Gulf monarchies facing multi-pronged threats required the military assistance that only the United States was capable and willing to provide. The relationship also generated Omani support for U.S. objectives in the Middle East. For example, between 1982 and 1983, Oman publicly supported U.S. policy in the Middle East even if it expected some financial assistance to shore up its public image.[94]

Between 1982 and 1983, U.S.-Omani military relations became more sophisticated as the Reagan Administration built on the Carter Doctrine. In January 1982, Senator Charles Percy, chairman of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, spent four days in the Sultanate and met with Sultan Qaboos to discuss bilateral relations.[95] In February 1982, Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger visited Muscat to discuss detailed arrangements for U.S. military use of facilities. According to Omani sources, Weinberger sought "to acquaint himself with the capability of the Omani Armed Forces, the efficiency of the Omani soldier, and his comprehension of the latest weapons and advanced equipment."[96] Minister `Alawi asserted that the December 1982 "maneuvers ha[d] goals that coincide[d] perfectly with what [Oman] want[ed]."[97] In February 1983, the Assistant Secretary for Politico-Military Affairs concluded an updated accord to establish certain procedures for consultation in emergency situations.

Political ties reached new heights in 1983 after Sultan Qaboos visited the United States at the invitation of President Reagan. He endowed a National Symphony Orchestra chair for narrative music in honor of Nancy Reagan. On a more substantive note, the Sultan expressed his confidence that Washington would indeed, if requested, come to the assistance of the GCC states to repulse a foe. He cautioned that Oman was not ready to become a "target of superpower con-

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[94]David B. Ottaway, "Oman Expects U.S. Help for Use of Its Bases," *The Washington Post*, 7 April 1982, pp. A1, A28.

[95]"Senator Percy, Delegation Arrive Oman 12 January," *FBIS-MEA-V-82-08*, 15 January 1982, p. C3, and "U.S. Senator Percy Concludes 4-Day Visit," *FBIS-MEA-V-82-11*, 18 January 1982, pp. C7–C8.

[96]"U.S. Defense Secretary's Visit Praised," *FBIS-MEA-V-82-29*, 12 February 1982, pp. C4–C5. The article also discussed Omani defense needs: "The sultanate, as it endeavors to establish a strong army and defend the territory and sanctity of the homeland and region, exerts every conceivable effort to achieve this objective in view of the fact that the Omani Army is a shield protecting the Gulf and Arab states. Therefore, the sultanate is always ready to effect all possible modernization in the Omani Army so as to strengthen its potential and efficiency and consolidate Oman's military capability."

[97]"Minister on Soviet Threat, U.S. Maneuvers," *FBIS-MEA-V-82-238*, 27 December 1982, pp. C2–C3. `Alawi further stated that "We feel these agreements fall within the framework of the fundamental interests of Gulf Cooperation Council countries and that cooperation between the United States and Arab nations should be increased."

frontation."[98] In hindsight, this statement was a clear signal of the evolving Omani foreign policy. Although allied with the West and committed to the GCC, Qaboos was concerned with the nihilistic characterization of the Soviet Union during the first term of the Reagan Administration. In June 1983, the Sultan argued that Oman still required its military facility agreement with the United States as a backup, despite plans for a separate GCC Rapid Deployment Force.[99] Little of what transpired after these understandings changed the Omani perception. Following the October 1983 car bombing of U.S. troops in Beirut, Muscat denounced the attack and stated that such behavior could only lead to the destruction of peace efforts.[100] The Sultan called for a renewal of the dormant Camp David accords in December 1983 to serve as a model for future peace talks in the Middle East. He asserted that

> the Camp David accords had been and still were the only means that achieved a constructive step in the direction of reaching a peaceful solution to the Middle East issue. We believe it is necessary to regard the Camp David accord as alive, and that every effort designed to attain further progress should be based on it.[101]

Progress on the political front was urgently needed, reasoned Qaboos, who conveyed his concerns to President Reagan's personal envoy, Donald Rumsfeld, who held long and much noticed meetings with both the Sultan and Major General `Ali Majid al-Ma`mari.[102]

These contacts led Lieutenant General Robert Kingston, commander of USCENTCOM, to visit Oman during a tour of the Gulf in March 1985.[103] Kingston and Major General David Watts, director of Logistics and Security Assistance for USCENTCOM, posited that Washington had nearly completed building and modernizing sites in Oman for use by a rapid deployment force in the event of a crisis. These new installations supported tactical air operations, MAC (Military Airlift Command) operations, and prepositioning of Air Force war readiness material assets. Other American agencies called Oman a huge asset to security in the Gulf and the Middle East. A senior military official

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[98]*Financial Times*, 13 March 1984. Egyptian Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Dr. Butros Butros Ghali also briefed the Sultan on Middle East developments and the result of Egyptian President Husni Mubarak's tour of Asian states during the Sultan's Washington visit. See "Sultan Qaboos Meets Egypt's Ghali in Washington," *FBIS-MEA-V-83-88*, 15 April 1983, p. A2.

[99]*Arab Times*, 28 June 1983, p. 1, in "Qaboos Stresses Continuing Need for U.S. Support," *FBIS-MEA-V-83-122*, 30 June 1983, p. C1.

[100]"Government Denounces Beirut Explosion," *FBIS-MEA-V-83-187*, 25 October 1983, p. C2.

[101]"U.S. Magazine Interview of Sultan Qaboos Reported," *FBIS-MEA-V-83-226*, 20 December 1983, pp. C1–C2.

[102]"Sultan Qabus Receives Reagan Envoy," *FBIS-MEA-V-83-220*, 13 December 1983, p. C7.

[103]"U.S. Commander Ends Visit, Departs for Oman," *FBIS-MEA-V-85-56*, 21 March 1985, p. C6.

asserted that "Oman had become what we had hoped Egypt might be," while a State Department official claimed that "we could never secure the kinds of access in Saudi Arabia that we have negotiated in Oman."[104] Furthermore, Americans claimed that Oman was a priceless staging area whose usefulness was proven by providing an invaluable link in the logistical chain that supplied military equipment to Afghan rebels.

In April 1985, the Sultan discussed the Omani-American military relationship, and stated that

> it [wa]s not true that Oman gave the Americans bases in Masirah or elsewhere in the country. All we gave was naval and airport facilities that c[ould] be used upon request from the majority of the GCC countries, if they decide[d] they [we]re under a direct threat which they c[ould] not repel with their own forces.[105]

The Sultan explained that the facilities did not mean a permanent foreign military presence on Omani soil, independent from national decisionmaking, but that the facilities, as stipulated by the agreement with the United States, were confined to transit or temporary presence for a defined and temporary mission, in response to a request from the majority of the GCC countries. He added:

> I would like to reveal one of the reasons behind this agreement. The strategic location of Oman and the possible threats, however remote, made it indispensable that Oman should enlarge its military establishments and airports. Consequently, we asked the GCC brothers to help us in this task, particularly as our oil resources are very limited in comparison to theirs. The required improvements involved about $2 billion, a sum which most brothers declined to spend, while the U.S. showed readiness to finance these projects. That is how we came to agree on the facilities.[106]

A five-year review of the Access Agreement was undertaken in September 1985, which resulted in specific clarification to the agreement including: (1) all U.S. military deployments to Oman required the prior approval of Oman, (2) Oman would enjoy priority use of certain MILCON facilities, (3) an agreement was reached on sharing of costs of operating certain facilities, and (4) final agreement was reached on conditions for prepositioning U.S. military supplies. In

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[104]Jeff Gerth and Judith Miller, "U.S. Is Said to Develop Oman As Its Major Ally in the Gulf," *The New York Times*, 25 March 1985, pp. A1–A8.

[105]"Sultan Qabus Interviewed on Gulf Issues," *FBIS-MEA-V-85-80*, 5 April 1985, pp. C2–C5. This point was echoed by the Omani Ambassador to Qatar `Isa ibn Ahmad ibn `Ali in *Al-Yawm*, 11 June 1985, p. 6, in "Ambassador Views PDRY, Hormuz, U.S. Presence," FBIS-MEA-V-85-114, 13 June 1985, p. C2.

[106]FBIS-MEA-V-85-80, 5 April 1985, op. cit., p. C2. Saudi Arabia denied that it had offered the Sultanate an aid package if it disassociated itself from the United States. See "Official Source Denies Report on Aid to Oman," *FBIS-MEA-V-85-122*, 27 June 1985, p. C2.

tandem with its review, the White House notified Congress of its decision to sell Oman 300 Sidewinder missiles, worth an estimated $20 million, ostensibly to support Washington's "linchpin in [its] Southwest Asia strategy."[107] The agreement, according to U.S. diplomats, was accompanied by Omani political support for ongoing Middle East talks. In October 1985, Oman called for direct negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis and, although the Kuwaiti media criticized this initiative as "an insult to Arab rights and aggression against the blood of martyrs," Muscat did not budge. The year ended with a successful rescue mission in which a U.S. carrier-based aircraft landed in Oman to avoid imminent loss at sea. The safe landing saved a considerable number of lives and, over the ensuing years, similar episodes were recorded by the Omani Ministry of Defense.

In October 1986, a USCENTCOM briefing team visited Oman and reviewed regional threats and military capabilities. There was no mention of secret U.S. arms transfers to Iran even though the November 1986 Iran-Contra revelations shocked many in the Lower Gulf. If Muscat was angered or disappointed, it was difficult to tell. `Abdulaziz bin Mohammed Al-Rowas declared that "we must not be surprised if a country makes contact with Iran. The fact is that the entire world makes contact with Iran in one way or another."[108] The minister pointed out that Arab states, including Syria and Libya, assisted Iran throughout the Iran-Iraq war without penalty. This perspective revealed at least a degree of sophistication and, under the circumstances, Oman was once again correct in pursuing an independent foreign policy toward Teheran. Still, this was a delicate matter. Oman knew that it needed American assistance after the Iran-Iraq cease-fire and that its larger foreign policy objective—security in the Gulf—could easily be misinterpreted in Iran. For Muscat, the delicate balance between these two factors required immense skills and for Qaboos, that balance would be preserved best if the Sultanate could meet its defensive requirements preferably with Western, including American, assistance.

In March 1986, a delegation from the State Consultative Council traveled to Washington for a two-week fact-finding mission on legislative matters. This was another milestone because Omanis were "introduced" to the workings of the U.S. Congress as they experimented with political participation.[109]

Vice President George Bush returned to Oman in April 1986 to discuss regional developments and Gulf security at a time when yet another joint military

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[107]Robert S. Greenberger, "White House Notifies Congress of Plan to Sell Oman 300 Sidewinder Missiles," *The New York Times*, 27 September 1985, p. 20.

[108]The Minister of Information was interviewed by the London-based *Al-Hawadith*, 19 December 1986.

[109]"Consultative Council Delegation Leaves for U.S.," *FBIS-MEA-V-86-65*, 14 March 1986, p. C3.

Norman Schwarzkopf visited Sultan Qaboos in March 1991 to personally acknowledge the modest but important Omani role in the war. Schwarzkopf stressed Muscat's support during the early stages of the conflict before major U.S. reinforcements arrived into the theater.[116]

Trends

In the aftermath of the War for Kuwait, Qaboos chaired the GCC Higher Committee on Security that sought to investigate what kind of security arrangement might be adopted for the region but, unfortunately, his efforts came to naught. His proposal to create a 100,000-man GCC army, which could become a first shield against potential aggressors, lingered in committee. Qaboos concluded that a lot more must be done to change preconceived security notions among senior GCC leaders.[117] Disappointed, Qaboos instructed his negotiators to move ahead with Western powers, including the United States, in planning future contingencies. Still, he instructed them to insist on being treated equally regardless of existing problems, to maintain a degree of pragmatism and continuity in the Sultanate's foreign policy. Muscat signed a "Facilities Access Agreement" with Washington in 1980 when it was not a popular thing to do and, even though it reaped the ire of the Arab world, Oman refused to budge from its perceived long-term interests. Then as now, it strove to delineate intrinsic interests and to persuade Washington to stand by its allies.

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[116]"Sultan Qaboos Receives Schwarzkopf in Muscat," *FBIS-NES-90-060*, 28 March 1991, p. 6.

[117]His Majesty confirmed that his proposal did not receive the wholehearted support that regional circumstances necessitated. Interview with His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Sa`id Al Bu Sa`id, Bayt Al-Baraka, Seeb, 18 January 1993.

Chapter Six

RUSSIA, CENTRAL ASIA, AND THE CAUCASUS

Omani-Soviet (later Russian) relations since 1970 covered the gamut. The year 1970 ushered in a decade of vitriolic attacks against Sultan Qaboos but, ironically, closed on a noticeably quiet tone. A most remarkable chapter opened in the mid-1980s, when Muscat extended Moscow sorely needed financial aid and established diplomatic relations. The difference between these two extremes could not have been more apparent were it not for Oman's most astute management of relations that went from the nonexistent to the businesslike. In the aftermath of the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), the Sultanate of Oman reaped the fruits of its much maligned, but inherently correct policies toward Moscow. Indeed, much like the Nixon Administration in the United States, Sultan Qaboos understood the importance of devising eclectic policies that would turn a former foe into a potential commercial partner. Nixon introduced "détente" with Moscow and "recognized" the People's Republic of China, even as he chastised communism, and Qaboos stood firm while Moscow unraveled. It was a policy of strategic strength that bore fruit in less than two decades. Consummate enemies that fought a nasty ideological war have now become business partners, signing competitive oil agreements, forging solid commercial accords not only with Russia but also with several newly independent republics in Central Asia and the Caucasus.

RUSSIA

In the late 19th century, the most dangerous of the various imperial thrusts against the British position in the Persian Gulf was that presented by Russia's advance into Central Asia. Russia annexed most of Central Asia and, in time, increased its trade with peripheral states. Both London and Calcutta—then overseeing British interests in most of the Gulf region—were "wary of Russian expansion toward India, and between 1876 and 1894, the British, through the use of alliances, missions, subsidies, war, and border commissions, secured the Afghanistan frontier and turned that country into a buffer separating the Anglo-

Indian and Russian empires."[1] Between 1900 and 1903, Moscow expanded its sphere of influence in Iran and directed its attention toward the Persian Gulf, in large measure to settle a score with London. An important internal dispute emerged within Tsar Nicholas II's political circle, with some officers calling for more active efforts while others were wary of ill-advised adventurism.[2] With the consent of the Tsar, Russia pursued its expansion by providing concessional loans to Iranian political forces and attempted to take over the country's economy (as well as orchestrating several financial crises). Moreover, St. Petersburg opened consulates in Bushire, Bandar Abbas, Seistan, Muhammarah, and Baghdad, and Russian-led Persian Cossacks were placed in Isfahan. As if these measures were not sufficient, Russia organized a number of scientific expeditions to explore transport routes to the Gulf itself, and sent several warships on regular visits to Gulf ports. It established a subsidized shipping line—the Russian and Persian Gulf Steamer Service, which never made a single penny—between Odessa and Gulf ports. The company was created for political reasons and, despite its financial losses, became an irritant for the British. As these measures were being implemented, an unsuccessful attempt was made to open a consulate at Muscat but, for a variety of reasons, it never materialized.[3]

Oman and the Tsarist Empire

St. Petersburg's actions brought a number of counteractions. Lord George Curzon, the Viceroy in India, took special interest in running Britain's Gulf affairs from his perch. He derided Prime Minister Salisbury for his nonconfrontational attitude toward Russia in the Gulf, arguing that St. Petersburg was a major naval force capable of effective power projection.[4] Curzon inspected the area in 1903, arriving in Muscat harbor with full regalia and, to make a point, the largest assemblage of warships to enter the Arabian Sea since Albuquerque's visit in 1515. The British Viceroy presented Sultan Faysal with the

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[1]Robert G. Landen, *Oman Since 1856: Disruptive Modernization in a Traditional Arab Society*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1967, pp. 101, 242.

[2]The dispute arose because of differences over the Boer War that polarized Britain against France, Russia, and Germany. London wished to prevent a European alliance from emerging (even if this was highly unlikely) and took "precautionary" measure against the only naval power capable of challenging it on the high seas. Russia was caught short-handed and Nicholas II was naturally inclined to settle his differences with the British. Central Asia and Iran were ideally placed for this coup de tête to unravel as the St. Petersburg Court was in utter turmoil. See Michael T. Florinsky, *Russia: A History and an Interpretation*, Volume 2, New York: Macmillan, 1953, pp. 268–269.

[3]Landen, op. cit., p. 261.

[4]This was not the case and Salisbury was correct to fear Russia's land capabilities far more than its naval strengths. Salisbury argued that India could be best protected with a massive land presence in Baluchistan (and eventually Iran) and not through the Gulf region; thus, his measured policies toward Russia. Curzon, on the other hand, insisted on his interpretation that the Gulf region was "vital" to British interests and necessitated total control. For further details, see W. L. Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism, 1890–1902*, 2nd ed., New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965, pp. 788–789.

Grand Cross of the Order of the Indian Empire and listened with amusement as his host referred to Mary Curzon as a "pearl." Having heard that Sultan Faysal was offered a large financial incentive from the Russians for a coaling station in the Muscat area, Curzon replied that the Persian Gulf was also a pearl but for Britain it was "beyond price." The emphasis was not missed by the Omani.[5] Curzon insisted that Oman's agreements with the British, especially the 1891 cessation of territory accords, disallowed the Omani from accepting any such offers from a foreign potentate and that all foreign policy matters were to be handled by his able self on his resident Political Adviser's recommendations. To drive his point home, Curzon arranged for a few naval vessels to anchor off Muscat in case the Sultan had difficulties reassessing his contemplated decision. This was not the first nor last time the British flexed a little muscle to persuade the Omanis. In this instance, it rendered the Russian offer moot. London's iron grip on all foreign policy matters effectively meant that no Omani ruler could even fathom a relationship with Russia. British-Russian differences that were forged out of both empires' colonial legacies turned into British-Soviet ideological disputes after the communist takeover in Moscow. True to their traditions, British political advisors throughout the Gulf Shaykhdoms and Oman made a genuine effort to highlight Leninism's anti-monarchical tendencies. Such sentiments, London believed, would endear it in the eyes of Gulf rulers eager to forge friendly ties with the British monarchy. The hold was strong and, at the time, Oman's abilities to seek alternative relationships nonexistent.

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Although contacts between the Soviet Union and Arab Gulf governments, notably Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, occurred during the 1950s and 1960s, no efforts were made to establish diplomatic ties with Oman. Moscow concluded that Britain ruled the Sultanate even if it refused to acknowledge the British canard that Oman was not a formal British colony. To be sure, the USSR supported most if not all anti-British propositions, but the extent to which it was concerned with "retarded" Gulf states proved disastrous.[6] The only support it could gather was from disgruntled elements of society in search of an alternative to established powerbrokers. In other words, the USSR was never ap-

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[5]Wendell Phillips, *Oman: A History*, London: Longman, 1967, p. 153.

[6]It must be emphasized that Moscow was never particularly successful in the Arab and Muslim worlds as communism found few adherents there. Strong religious beliefs stood as a formidable obstacle to Moscow's influences, but equally important was the Soviet lack of appreciation for deep-rooted capitalist tendencies among the peoples of the region. By calling Arab rulers "capitalist-stooges" and "retarded dwarfs," Soviet leaders displayed a total lack of understanding of Arab and Muslim societies as well as of the innermost beliefs and interests of those societies.

proached as a legitimate authority with its intrinsic strengths, but as an alternative to Western, especially British, interests on the Arabian Peninsula. This was best illustrated during the 1957–1959 Imamate revolt in Oman. At the time, while Moscow expressed its support for the rebels, it never took into account the complications that mired the Dhufar region in a protracted civil war. Weak Soviet tendencies died hard and, in October 1963, *Izvestiia* published a statement by the Imam of Oman expressing his confidence that the USSR would assist the Omani people if asked to do so. There was no evidence that the Soviets gave the Imamate any support beyond the verbal kind in its controlled media outlets and at the United Nations, and they gave nothing to deserve the confidence lodged in them by the Imam. On the contrary, in 1964 a number of articles were published in several Soviet sources criticizing the Imam for keeping interior Oman so isolated.[7]

The USSR and the Dhufar Rebellion

The Dhufar rebellion, which sprang from minor skirmishes between the Sultan's forces and Dhufari tribal forces opposed to the Sultan, preoccupied the Soviet Union. Ironically, it was Saudi-supported tribal elements that joined members of the Dhufar Arab Nationalist Movement, then known as the "Dhufar Charitable Association," as well as the Dhufar Soldiers Organization, in forming the Dhufar Liberation Front (DLF). Despite the arrest of some 40 to 60 members in April and May 1965, the DLF was able to hold its first congress a month later at Wadi al-Aydim, on the Oman-Yemen border. At the conclusion of the congress, delegates issued a manifesto calling for the overthrow of the Sultan and, concurrently, sought outside assistance to bring their stated objective to fruition. The congress closed with a coordinated DLF ambush of a government patrol on 9 June 1965 that became the event from which the rebels would date the formal beginning of the "revolution."[8]

Little attention was paid by the Soviet press to the activities of the DLF between 1965 and 1968. After the organization transformed itself into the overtly Marxist-Leninist Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Arabian Gulf (PFLOAG), the Soviets expressed occasional sympathy but appeared reluctant to give it their blessings.[9] Moscow supplied the "guerrilla" movement with

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[7]Stephen Page, *The USSR and Arabia: The Development of Soviet Policies and Attitudes Towards the Countries of the Arabian Peninsula 1955–1970*, London: Central Asian Research Centre, 1971, pp. 36–37, 51, 63, and 82; see also "Narod Omana Oderzhait Pobedu" [People of Oman Gain a Victory], *Izvestiia*, 10 October 1963, p. 2, in Mark N. Katz, *Russia and Arabia: Soviet Foreign Policy Toward the Arabian Peninsula*, Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986, p. 113.

[8]Ibid., pp. 108–109.

[9]Soviet reluctance stemmed from the PFLOAG's efforts to spread the revolution beyond Oman to the Arab states of the Gulf. Despite all of their revolutionary rhetoric, the Soviets were pursuing a

some weapons and brought a number of Omanis to Moscow for military and ideological training.[10] It also portrayed Sultan Qaboos as an agent of British imperialism, who was trying to suppress "patriotic forces," and charged that London had deployed troops into the Sultanate to exert military and political pressure on the entire area. The Soviets explained Iran's military presence on the battlefield using similar language, arguing that Teheran shared British objectives in the area, namely, to prop up conservative monarchies. In 1969, the English-language mouthpiece of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), *New Times*, praised the DLF espousal of scientific socialism, and later in the year a *Pravda* correspondent visited the Dhufar, from where he filed several eyewitness accounts on the "glorious achievements of the revolution." By the late 1960s, as the Dhufar rebellion entered one of its most sensitive periods, PFLOAG delegations regularly visited the Soviet Union at the invitation of the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee. Ironically, no public meetings between PFLOAG leaders and CPSU officials were announced in either 1969 or 1970. In September 1971, after Chinese support for the PFLOAG declined, another Front delegation visited the USSR but this time was received by CPSU Secretary Konstantin Katushev. Later, a PFLOAG delegate declared to the Aden News Agency that the Soviet Union had offered to "double" its assistance to the Front.[11]

As the intensity of the battles increased, so did Soviet interest in their outcomes. Between 1973 and 1975, the Soviet media reported PFLOAG claims that the Front controlled 90 percent, or almost all, of Dhufar's territory and population which, to put it mildly, was untrue.[12] For reasons that are impossible to discern, Moscow believed that rag-tag PFLOAG rebels could successfully achieve their declared objective of overthrowing Sultan Qaboos. Rhetoric aside, Soviet military advisers on the ground surely provided a better assessment of their allies' performances and success rates against well-organized and, after 1971, highly motivated and loyal Omani forces. Notwithstanding their exaggerated

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consistent policy to improve ties with conservative monarchies, including Iran, and did not wish to jeopardize their ongoing discussions. Moscow was also irked by the presence of China in the Dhufar, which derided Moscow for its numerous failures in supporting national liberation movements; Ibid., p. 113.

[10]Calvin H. Allen, Jr., *Oman: The Modernization of the Sultanate*, Boulder, Colorado, and London: Westview Press and Croom Helm, 1987, p. 71.

[11]A. Vasilev, "Buntuiushchie Gory Dofara" [Revolt in the Mountains of Dhufar], *Pravda*, 29 September 1969, p. 4; idem, "Partizanskimi Tropani Dofara" [Partisans on the Paths of Dhufar], *Pravda*, 4 October 1969, p. 4; and idem, "My-Ne Raby" [We Are Not Slaves], *Pravda*, 12 October 1969, p. 4, in Page, op. cit., p. 116. The Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee provided links between the socialist states and national liberation movements around the world. It had strong ties to the KGB and the Communist Party. See also Katz, op. cit., p. 114.

[12]Katz, op. cit., p. 114.

optimism, why did the Soviet Union ascertain that the Dhufar rebellion could succeed?

In late 1970, Moscow concluded that Sultan Qaboos was merely a version of former British-protected Yemeni Sultans, and that he would eventually be overthrown with ease.[13] By January 1974, however, Soviet officials realized that the contest was in doubt after a series of very successful Omani military offensives. They further decided that massive Iranian, as well as considerable Jordanian and British, assistance were far more effective than heretofore believed. Despite Moscow's strategic considerations, Iran came under strong criticism in 1974, allegedly for playing an obstructionist role in the Sultanate.[14] *Radio Moscow* alluded to Oman's strategic importance which, in and of itself, was a sharp departure from earlier pronouncements. After 1974, and even as the rebellion persisted, the Soviets reported little of what the rebels purportedly achieved. In November 1975, *Krasnaia Zvezda* acknowledged that "the question of the rebels [wa]s . . . complicated" although it still predicted that the "forces of reaction" were "doomed to failure." This and similar statements were nothing more than a last *baroud d'honneur.*[15]

Such a dramatic change in the Soviet position did not go unnoticed. The PFLOAG went through another metamorphosis (changing its name to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman or PFLO) and issued a fresh appeal for assistance. Moscow, by now fully aware of the Front's severe military shortcomings, did not respond generously. The Soviet reply consisted of laudatory statements for the courage displayed on the battlefield even if there was little to show for it in military terms. Paradoxically, Soviet sources described their country's aid to the PFLO in flowery references. "Soviet citizens," one would proclaim, were "by the side of the patriots," or, the Omani "people's just struggle" was met "with the understanding and support of the peoples of the socialist community."[16] The people may have sided with the rebels but Moscow did not.

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[13]Manfred W. Wenner, *Modern Yemen 1918–1966*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1967, especially, pp. 141–189.

[14]Arthur J. Klinghoffer, *The Soviet Union and International Oil Politics*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1977, p. 111.

[15]U. Gavrilov and V. Vingradov, "Dofar: Bitva za sovobodu" [Dhufar: Battle for Freedom], *Krasnaia Zvezda*, November 2, 1975, p. 3, in Katz, op. cit., p. 114–115.

[16]The PFLO sent delegations to the USSR in November 1972, September 1973, and March 1975, to seek clarification on Moscow's policies; see, for example, "Oman Liberation Front Leader Notes Soviet Aid," *Foreign Broadcast Information Service-Soviet Union [hereafter, FBIS-SOV], 74-097*, 17 May 1974, p. F14; *FBIS-SOV-75-113*, 11 June 1975, pp. F5–F6; and *FBIS-MEA-74-202*, 7 November 1972, p. B2. According to Mahmoud Abul-Nasr, Oman's Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York, PFLO delegates were "invited every year to attend the national day of the Soviet Union" celebrations. Abul-Nasr maintained that they were "invited as representatives of Oman"; see Raghida Dergham, "Muscat and Aden: Why Stability Must Come First," *The Middle East*, December 1992, p. 19.

Every indication pointed to the irrefutable notion that the USSR no longer perceived the Front to be a viable entity.

Although the Dhufar rebellion ended in December 1975, the CPSU maintained that the struggle continued and that "patriotic forces" were undefeated. In 1977 and 1978, references to the PFLO were few, mostly portraying it as a determined force capable of winning an ephemeral struggle against Sultan Qaboos. This was disingenuous to say the least. Soviet statements on Iranian and Chinese assistance to the Sultan acknowledged that the PFLO was indeed defeated. The PFLO received a final favorable notice in 1979 after the Shah of Iran was overthrown and Ayatollah Khumayni ordered home all remaining Iranian troops.[17] Iranian revolutionary elements contemplated reviving the PFLO and other regional liberation movements to oppose conservative Arab Gulf monarchs. Notwithstanding this ill-conceived plan, the new Iranian government was not able to export its revolution, at least not then. Moreover, Oman had been successful in integrating the Dhufar region into the Sultanate, and few "rebels" were indeed available to lead any new uprisings. Without a cadre of leaders, it was next to impossible to revive the PFLO. Some renegade PFLO elements who never accepted the end of the rebellion managed to mount isolated military operations between 1978 and 1980, but these were small hit-and-run attacks, and even the PFLO admitted that they "did not have the same momentum." An unfounded charge was made by both Soviet and PFLO sources alleging that Muscat agreed to replace the Iranian troops with 7,000 Egyptian soldiers. This was, of course, untrue. Besides, by 1980, Qaboos had won over most of the Dhufari leadership and was slowly winning over the mainstream body politic of the Sultanate.[18]

The Soviet Union and Sultan Qaboos

The Soviet reaction to Sultan Qaboos' accession to the throne was noticeably different from similar instances elsewhere in the Middle East. Moscow initiated routine bilateral contacts with a new head of state whenever the opportunity arose. With Qaboos the denunciation was immediate. The Soviets labeled the Sultan a "British puppet" whose reforms were mere public relations gimmicks

[17]By the late 1970s, approximately 300 Iranian troops were still deployed in Oman, but for reasons that are impossible to verify, both the Soviets and the PFLO claimed that the figure was 3000. Presumably this larger figure would be interpreted as a "threat" to the Sultan. However, this was not the case, and Ayatollah Khumayni rendered the issue moot by pulling his remaining forces. The lower figure of 300 Iranian troops was verified by Lt. General Khamis bin Hamid Al-Kalbani. Interview with the Chief of Staff, the Sultan's Armed Forces, Muscat, 21 September 1993.

[18]See, for example, "Tainaia Voina" [Secret War], *Pravda*, 5 January 1976, p. 4; V. Fedorov, "V soiuze s reaktsiei" [In Union with Reactionaries], *Krasnaia Zvezda*, 26 January 1979, p. 3; and A. Kudryavtsev, "Looking for a New Prop," *New Times*, No. 11, March 1979, p. 12.

and, surprisingly, made no effort to establish relations with the new government. Moscow erred in this instance because Qaboos, while seeking advice from British officials, did not kowtow to every British request as had his immediate predecessors.

Moscow blundered again throughout the 1970s when the Dhufar uprising was under way. The unending Soviet vilification of Sultan Qaboos did not match PFLOAG performances on the battlefield. At times, the Soviets were surprised and at other times they were annoyed with the Qaboos phenomenon throughout the Persian Gulf region. Welcomed in Riyadh and Teheran, in Cairo and Abu Dhabi, Qaboos won over many skeptics. Emboldened by such support, the Sultan used strong language to accuse both Aden and Moscow for backing the rebellion in the south. At one point, he stated that the insurgents were directed by the "world communist movement." This brought an immediate Soviet response claiming that the insurgency arose out of local causes and that the Sultan was making "anti-Soviet" statements to garner Western assistance. When Oman and the United States signed the 1980 facilities access agreement, for example, Moscow unleashed a barrage of anti-Qaboos statements. The Sultan was vilified for accepting a semipermanent American presence on Masirah Island and for participating with American forces in periodic Rapid Deployment Force exercises.[19] For the Soviets, who practiced the Cold War rhetoric as well as their American counterparts, Oman was a prime example of how best to further damage one's interests. At no time did Moscow entertain that Qaboos may have his own strategic agenda and was desperately trying to focus on building his state. At no time was he given any credit for seeking an end to foreign incursions in the Sultanate's internal affairs. And at no time was he judged to be a capable ruler. What mattered were the generalized and peripheral issues pertaining to the Cold War—which proved ephemeral with the passage of time. Prominent Soviet political figures understood these intricacies but were incapable of breaking the CPSU hold on public discourse. Moscow squandered many opportunities on the Arabian Peninsula and failed to appreciate where the majority stood. In short, Soviet commentaries towards Oman and Sultan Qaboos before 1982 were neither accurate nor friendly.

After Oman and the PDRY "normalized" their ties in late 1982, Moscow commentaries toward the Sultanate displayed a noticeable difference in tone. Instead of condemning Oman for its joint military maneuvers with Western forces, the criticisms were reserved for Washington, portraying the Sultanate as a victim of U.S. "militarism." In addition, instead of denouncing the Sultan per-

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[19]"U.K. Motivates Omani Leader's Anti-Communist Statements," *FBIS-SOV-73-063*, 27 March 1973, pp. B16–B17; see also L. Mironov, "Pentagon na Masire" [The Pentagon on Masirah], *Krasnaia Zvezda*, 6 January 1977, p. 3.

sonally, the Soviets blamed other government officials including Yusuf bin `Alawi, one of the Dhufari rebellion leaders who later became Qaboos' Minister of State for Foreign Affairs.[20] Whether calculated or not, by early 1983, an important reappraisal of the Sultanate was noticeable in Soviet perceptions.

A similar reassessment of the Soviet Union was under way in Muscat as well. Three full years after the Iranian Revolution, the Soviet invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and two years into the seemingly unending Iran-Iraq War, Qaboos appraised the Soviet threat for what it was becoming: a desert mirage.

Oman Appraises the Soviet Threat

The Soviet Union failed everywhere in the Middle East save in the PDRY and, for many years, Aden wore the epithet of the only Arab Marxist-Leninist government proudly even if the oddity in Arab politics was more comical than threatening. Although the PDRY was distant from the Levant and the Arab-Israeli conflict arena, die-hard Arab nationalists considered the detour worthwhile. For the countries on the Arabian Peninsula, however, the Soviet influence was a far more serious matter. Muscat did not dismiss the political rapprochement between the Soviet Union and the PDRY as an aberration but considered the relationship to be detrimental to both Yemen and Oman. Qaboos concluded that a Marxist-Leninist PDRY posed a real threat to Omani security. This concern was heightened after Aden signed a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the USSR in October 1979 and joined with Libya and Ethiopia in creating the pro-Soviet Aden Pact in August 1981.[21] For Muscat, these agreements, as well as the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, confirmed that Moscow was positioning itself around the Peninsula focusing on the Straits of Hormuz, through which a considerable percentage of the world's oil resources transited each day. Qaboos did not dismiss this threat but correctly assessed the vulnerability of the waterway.[22] Earlier, Muscat criticized Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev and his 1980 Persian Gulf peace proposals, delivered to the Indian Parliament in New Delhi, as an attempt to neutralize the region. Qaboos feared that the proposal was a disguised bid to interfere in the internal affairs of Gulf states. He correctly pointed out that the Soviets were well poised in both Aden and Kabul. This evidence, the Sultan reiterated, illustrated how

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[20]`Alawi was the DLF representative in Cairo, certainly one of the Front's most visible leaders. See Katz, op. cit., pp. 117–118.

[21]The Aden Pact was nothing more than a paper tiger ostensibly created to stand against the more cohesive and pro-Western GCC. See Michael C. Dunn, "Soviet Interests in the Arabian Peninsula: The Aden Pact and Other Paper Tigers," *American-Arab Affairs*, No. 8, Spring 1984, pp. 92–98.

[22]In a 1982 interview with the London *Daily Telegraph*, Qaboos stated that the Soviets were not in Afghanistan "just to support Babrak Kamal but for their own expansionist goal." See Denis Warner, "Anglo-ANZAC Force Is Welcomed by Oman," *The Daily Telegraph*, 26 February 1982, p. 6.

shallow Brezhnev's proposals were. Rather than keeping the region free from superpower conflicts, Oman argued, Moscow's actions were increasing superpower involvement in Southwest Asia. The Sultanate pointed to the massive Soviet naval presence in the Arabian Sea as further evidence of the CPSU leaderships' double-speak. Fortunately, no clashes were ever reported involving Soviet naval forces in Omani territorial waters, but the concern never waned.

When Leonid Brezhnev died in 1983, Yusuf bin `Alawi declared that a fresh opportunity was now available to alter the failed policies of the USSR. He expressed the "hope that the new Soviet leadership w[ould] adopt a more positive policy," even if senior Omani officials ruled out the establishment of diplomatic ties. Still, no ties were possible, because the Sultanate was not ready to maintain relations with a power that interfered in its internal affairs.[23]

Diplomatic Relations with the USSR

Irrespective of such concerns, however, Oman and the Soviet Union held secret talks on establishing diplomatic relations as early as 1983 after Yurii Andropov came to power in the Kremlin. Several written messages were exchanged between the two leaders, although official policy was to deny rumors of any communication.[24] Beginning in March 1985, President Mikhael Gorbachev shifted the trend of Soviet foreign policy away from its ideological mode to one that promoted pragmatism and economic cooperation. Gorbachev sought to rebuild the USSR by strengthening its neglected economy, reforming its jaded bureaucracy, and encouraging a gradual process of decentralization. He could not have achieved these objectives as long as the USSR was entangled in Afghanistan, and building sandcastles in every country around the world would not help him accomplish newly identified objectives. Moscow was distancing itself from its cherished presence in the former East European theater and calling on the 14 republics within its federation to assume economic independence. Under Gorbachev, the Kremlin side-stepped much of the USSR's ideological dogma, moving quickly to improve ties with the conservative monarchies of the Persian Gulf, including Oman.

Qaboos saw the writing on the wall. Dramatic changes were unfolding in the USSR and it would not be in the interest of the Sultanate to sit idly by and re-

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[23]*Newsweek*, 10 January 1983, as cited in Colin Legum (ed.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey 7 1982–1983*, New York and London: Holmes and Meier Publishers, Inc., 1985, p. 492.

[24]In 1983, Yusuf bin `Alawi asserted that ties could well be established were the USSR committed not to interfere in GCC states' internal affairs. See "Omani Calls, for Positive Soviet Steps," *Kuwait Times*, No. 6512, 31 May 1983, p. 2; see also "Pas de Relations Diplomatiques Oman-URSS dans l'Immédiat," *L'Orient-Le Jour*, No. 5069, 15 November 1984, p. 4.

main a spectator to unforeseen situations. As Gorbachev desperately sought to establish viable relations with wealthy states around the world, Muscat deemed the time ripe for the September 1985 establishment of diplomatic relations with Moscow.[25]

The sum total of these major developments alerted Qaboos to the coming upheaval in the USSR. Were the GCC states to play a role in their outcomes, Qaboos reasoned, they had to be present on the spot for their voices to be heard.[26] No matter how other GCC leaders interpreted developments in Moscow, Qaboos was determined to move ahead and, consequently, asked Gorbachev for a foreign ministers' meeting at the 1985 U.N. General Assembly meeting in New York.

A stunned world heard Yusuf bin `Alawi and Eduard Shevardnadze, then the Soviet Foreign Minister, announce at the conclusion of their meeting in New York that the Sultanate of Oman and the USSR were to establish diplomatic relations within three days.[27] Public interpretations naturally focused on the Omani membership in the nonaligned movement and the Sultanate's desire to balance East-West relations. Others focused on the need to keep pressure on the PDRY. Both interpretations were valid but, by mid-1985, the East-West conflict had lost much of its luster and many openly questioned its viability. According to a number of public opinion polls in several Western countries, Gorbachev was more popular than President Ronald Reagan, and his popularity was climbing fast. As stated above, Gorbachev was not particularly interested in providing additional funds to support the PDRY or any other government that did not provide Moscow tangible benefits. Sultan Qaboos may well have underlined his expectations that the USSR would keep an eye on the PDRY, but he was equally motivated to move ahead for other reasons. At a time when revolutionary Iran was at one of its most bellicose stages, with Ayatollah Khumayni calling on the GCC states to distance themselves from Washington, Oman demonstrated a unique level of independent action. The fact that U.S. aid, economic as well as military, decreased through the first part of the 1980s, created additional motives to assert this independent policy. The decision "to do business with Gorbachev"—as British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher would say

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[25]"Sultan Discusses U.S.S.R. Relations, Other Topics," *FBIS-MEA-85-239*, 12 December 1985, pp. C1–C2.

[26]This interpretation was confirmed by the Sultan, who described how his views were in the minority within the GCC. Interview with His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Sa`id, Bayt Al-Baraka, Seeb, 18 January 1993.

[27]Simultaneously, Omani Foreign Ministry Under Secretary Sayf bin Hamad Al-Battashi met with GCC members and European diplomats accredited to the Sultanate, to make sure that they understood the rationale behind the move. See "Diplomatic Relations to Be Established with USSR," *FBIS-MEA-85-187*, 26 September 1985, p. C1.

in 1984—was taken despite strong reservations by a number of GCC states, further illustrating how bold it was.[28]

In response to his critics, Qaboos noted that GCC states were left with few choices at a time when instability was widespread. Yusuf bin `Alawi, for his part, stressed that the new Soviet trend in enhancing stability on the Arabian Peninsula could not be ignored and a response was indeed warranted.[29]

In September 1985, Muscat and Moscow prepared for an exchange of ambassadors, and the Soviet news agency TASS opined that relations with Oman marked "a first important step along the road of developing bilateral relations with a view to strengthening peace and international security." The volte-face in TASS was vintage Soviet Union. This time, however, it was on a nonconfrontational level, as the New York meeting with Shevardnadze was productive. `Alawi pushed ahead and, after his meeting with his Soviet counterpart, met then Vice President George Bush to brief Washington on his government's decision. During the 30-minute meeting, Bush renewed the U.S. commitment to Oman, and according to a spokesman for the vice president, the latter expressed his appreciation for Omani support of American interests in the area.[30]

Western diplomats offered their own interpretations of the Omani decision, with some confiding that the strain of the Iran-Iraq war, now in its sixth year, contributed to the Omani decision. Moscow, the principal supplier of weapons to Iraq, could no longer ignore its relations with Kuwait and Oman and, the diplomats further speculated, had to consider the two countries' views. Other speculations centered around improvements in the Omani-PDRY relations themselves. Many noted the long reconciliation process between Oman and the PDRY that preceded the 28 September 1985 announcement. Yusuf bin `Alawi acknowledged that Moscow had "undoubtedly helped the Sultanate by improving relations between states of the Arabian peninsula," without identifying the PDRY, but the inference was clear.[31] Moreover, Yusuf bin `Alawi argued that the Soviet change of policy was the primary reason for the Omani decision. He declared to the *Boston Globe* that "the attitude of the Soviet Union has

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[28]Saudi Arabia, in particular, was opposed to the Omani decision. See Allen, op cit., p. 120.

[29]"Reportage on Establishment of Relations with U.S.S.R.," *FBIS-MEA-85-189*, 30 September 1985, p. C2. See also "Izvestiia Publishes Soviet-Omani Communiqué," *FBIS-SOV-85-189*, 30 September 1985, p. H1. See also Bill Kritzberg, "Oman's Fresh Ties with Soviets Underscore Its Strategic Weight," *The Washington Times*, 7 November 1985, p. A8.

[30]Celestine Bohlen, "Soviets, Oman Establish Relations; Step Seen as Setback for U.S.," *The Washington Post*, 27 September 1985, p. A33.

[31]Philip Shehadi, "Oman's Diplomatic Ties with Moscow Linked to South Yemen," *The Los Angeles Times*, 6 October 1985, p. 25. Privately, the British, who exercised considerable influence in Oman, warned `Alawi that a Soviet embassy might not be desirable. Nonresident ambassadors were exchanged to start the process. See H.D.S. Greenway, "Soviet Interest in Arab Emirates Apparently Growing," *The Boston Globe*, 16 January 1986, p. 11.

shown considerable change in the last two or three years," which could not be ignored. "They are recognized as a superpower," declared `Alawi and "that is why His Majesty Sultan Qaboos came to the decision that this [wa]s the right time" to establish relations with Moscow.[32]

At first, nonresident ambassadors in Amman, Jordan, managed the new relationship, confirming speculations that King Hussein had acted as the intermediary between Qaboos and Gorbachev.[33] More critical to the Omani decision were the Kuwaiti-brokered negotiations between the Sultanate and the PDRY. Undoubtedly, Oman considered the advantages of having a sympathetic audience in Moscow during these protracted discussions with Aden. For Muscat, a satisfactory resolution of the Dhufar rebellion required not only a solid border agreement but also a pledge from the PDRY that it would refrain from supporting anti-Qaboos rebel forces in the future. Although Aden's commitments were not questioned on that score, Soviet assurances guaranteed them, allowing for more fruitful discussions.

In May 1986, the Soviet Ambassador to Jordan, Aleksandr I. Zinchuk, presented his credentials to Qaboos as the USSR's nonresident ambassador to the Sultanate. The Ambassador declared that both countries shared a number of concerns including the peaceful settlement of the Palestinian Question, the spill-over effects of the Iran-Iraq war, and the militarization of the Indian Ocean area. He promised to seek satisfactory solutions to all three. Qaboos replied that Oman supported the USSR's stand on Arab causes in the Middle East, called for an end to the Iraq-Iran War, and committed the Sultanate to search for an effective solution to problems in the Indian Ocean region.[34] Khamis bin Hamad Al-Battashi, Oman's representative in Jordan, reciprocated with Gorbachev in July 1986.[35] Al-Battashi emphasized the need to consult with Moscow on key regional and international developments, calling on the Soviet Union to facilitate the resolution of the Iran-Iraq war and reduce tensions in the Indian Ocean. Reading into this statement, at least one observer believed that the American peacetime naval presence in the Indian Ocean would be in jeopardy.[36]

It was not, because Oman never contemplated a freeze in its relations with Washington, especially after the successful facilities access agreement was

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[32]Ibid.

[33]The speculation was entirely plausible given the friendship that exists between the two Arab monarchs.

[34]"Omani Sultan, Envoys Laud Relations," *FBIS-SOV-86-091*, 12 May 1986, p. H10–H11.

[35]"Ambassador to U.S.S.R.," *FBIS-MEA-86-138*, 18 July 1986, p. C3.

[36]Dore Gold, "Oman," in Itamar Rabinovich and Haim Shaked (eds.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey, Volume 10: 1986*, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1988, p. 316.

implemented. Besides, Omani-Soviet relations moved slowly. Indeed, the highest-ranking Soviet official to visit the Sultanate almost one year after ties were established was Deputy Foreign Minister Vladimir Petrovskii. In April 1987, Petrovskii met with Qaboos to discuss the security of the Persian Gulf region and specifically that of the Straits of Hormuz.[37] Petrovskii reiterated the USSR's commitments to respect international agreements and supported a negotiated settlement of the border dispute with the PDRY. Moscow favored these approaches, Petrovskii told Qaboos, because it feared the spill-over effects of the Iranian revolution in Central Asia. It, too, was eager to see the protracted Iran-Iraq War end in the shortest time possible, concluded the Soviet emissary. At the end of these discussions, the two sides agreed to open resident embassies in their respective capital cities and, by August, a Soviet diplomatic mission flew to Muscat to make the necessary arrangements. A year later, resident ambassadors were assigned with the appointment of Nazar bin Muhammad bin `Ali Al-Shaykh to Moscow in August 1987, and that of Viktor Bosovak to Muscat in April 1988.[38] In April 1988, a delegation from the USSR Supreme Soviet (Parliament), including Vice President of the USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium Georgi Tarazevich, First Secretary of the Board of the Union of Writers of Tajikistan Muminsho Kanoatov, and TASS General Director Sergei Losev, visited Oman and held meetings with Qaboos, Yusuf bin `Alawi, as well as Shaykh `Abdallah Al-Qatabi, the President of the State Consultative Council.[39] `Alawi expressed his gratitude over the Soviet decision to end the War in Afghanistan and noted, with satisfaction, Moscow's vote on UN Security Council Resolution 598 calling for a cease-fire between Iran and Iraq. He also welcomed the Soviet proposal to create a UN naval force for the region.[40] At every stop, the Omanis impressed on their Soviet visitors their intractable positions in the area and explained their policies toward Iran and Yemen. The Minister of State for Foreign Affairs told his visitors that despite Resolution 598, he doubted that the international community would end its arms shipments to the two belligerents in the Iran-Iraq War. Iran and Iraq were neighbors, and Oman was "vitally committed to maintaining normal relations" with both Teheran and Baghdad, `Alawi concluded. The Soviets gained an appreciation for the Omani positions on this and several other issues.[41]

Omani-Soviet relations entered a new phase in 1989 as high-level contacts multiplied, covering a fuller agenda. Ambassador Nizar Al-Shaykh met with

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[37]"Visits Sultanate of Oman," *FBIS-SOV-87-083*, 30 April 1987, p. H4.

[38]"Talks Are Held with Officials of the USSR, China, the U.K. and U.S.A.," *CR-BQOY-2-88*, p. 18.

[39]"Visit of Soviet Delegation," *Oman Daily Observer*, 6 April 1988, p. 1.

[40]"Supreme Soviet Delegation Meets Omani Sultan," *FBIS-SOV-88-067*, 7 April 1988, p. 19.

[41]"Losev Reviews Tour," *FBIS-SOV-88-076*, 20 April 1988, pp. 36–37.

Deputy Foreign Minister Aleksandr Bessmertnykh in March to discuss bilateral issues as well as the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan and Aleksandr Patsev replaced Ambassador Viktor Bosovak in June.[42] In October, President Mikhail Gorbachev met with Omani Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, Qais bin `Abdul Munim Al-Zawawi, to thank Oman for extending generous credits to the Soviet Union during the perestroika period.[43] Gorbachev and Al-Zawawi discussed a variety of subjects including the potential for Omani investments in the USSR and the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Saddam Hussein's belligerent actions echoed through most of the summer, heightening fears that another war was imminent. Like its allies, Oman was concerned with Saddam Hussein's anti-GCC campaign and his threats to take unspecified actions to regain the honor of the Arab masses. Gorbachev expressed his confidence that another conflict in the Persian Gulf would be averted even as the UN was passing a record number of resolutions condemning Iraq and authorizing the massing of the largest military concentration of men and weapons since World War II. He expressed confidence that Moscow's relations with Baghdad were strong enough to allow for an honest dialogue and that he would do whatever was necessary to alleviate GCC states' concerns. The conversation ended with vague promises, but a State Consultative Council delegation met with the Chairman of the Council of Nationalities, Rafiz Nishanov, to discuss measures needed to reverse the "unlawful [Iraqi] occupation" of Kuwait.[44] The year closed with Presidential council member and USSR Academy of Sciences Vice President Yurii Osipyan's visit to the Sultanate. Osipyan traveled to Muscat to participate in the Sultanate's National Day celebrations where he delivered a message from Gorbachev.[45]

The War for Kuwait froze in place ongoing bilateral discussions between Oman and the USSR, and they were not revived until July 1991. In mid-1991, the Omani National Biscuit Industries company successfully negotiated an agreement to export its products to the Soviet Union.[46] Similar negotiations were under way when Gorbachev resigned, changing the course of history.

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[42]"Bessmertnykh Meets Omani Ambassador 23 Mar," *FBIS-SOV-89-056*, 24 March 1989, p. 28; see also "Patsev Appointed New Ambassador to Oman," *FBIS-SOV-90-120*, 21 June 1990, p. 13.

[43]Muscat provided $200 million following a direct appeal from Gorbachev. Interview with His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Sa`id, Bayt Al-Baraka, Seeb, 18 January 1993. See also "Omani Deputy Premier Visits with Gorbachev: Conveys Message from Sultan," *FBIS-SOV-90-193*, 4 October 1990, p. 25.

[44]"Nishanov Greets Omani Parliamentarians," *FBIS-SOV-90-193*, 4 October 1990, p. 25.

[45]"Qaboos Receives Messages from Gorbachev, Salih," *FBIS-NES-90-224*, 20 November 1990, p. 25.

[46]"National Biscuit Industries Negotiates Export Agreement with Soviet Union," *Middle East Economic Digest* 35:28, 12 July 1991, p. 24.

Oman and the Russian Republic

Despite the collapse of the Soviet Union in late December 1991, Russia continued to expand its relationship with Oman in earnest. In April 1992, Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev visited Muscat where he asserted that Russian interests focused on consolidating stability and security in the region. Moreover, the Russian diplomat declared that both countries shared the same view with regard to the problem of "the proliferation of extremism disguised as Islam." Kozyrev claimed that he gained the conviction that "true Islam ha[d] nothing to do with aggression, violence, or obscurantism." He stressed that the problem concerned Russia because of its large Muslim population. For Kozyrev, Oman was an enlightened country capable of playing a far greater role than heretofore recognized, and Muscat was called upon to take part in working group sessions of the U.S.-USSR sponsored Middle East peace talks.[47] At the conclusion of his meeting with Kozyrev, Yusuf bin `Alawi recognized the difficulties that the Yeltsin government faced, pledging to support it as best as possible. "We want Russia to triumph over the trials of the transitional period which have befallen it, something that is no doubt in the interests of the whole world," declared `Alawi.[48]

Without the cloak of the Cold War, Russia sought to earn hard currency from the Sultanate by offering in June 1992 to sell its BTR-80 armored personnel carriers. Moscow competed with Washington on this project. The latter marketed the Cadillac Gage V-300 Commando armored vehicle.[49] This was not the only economic contract under discussion, however. In February 1993, the Russian Parliament initiated discussions to join the petroleum consortium established between Kazakhstan and Oman. Chairman of the Foreign Trade Subcommittee Leonid Gurevich claimed that "pumping oil from the Tenghiz field in Kazakhstan along a pipeline in Russia to Novorossiysk for subsequent shipment to Oman" would be Russia's contribution to this new proposal. Gurevich acknowledged that three parliamentary committees endorsed the draft resolution of the Supreme Soviet on this matter and that he was confident of its imminent success.[50]

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[47]"News Conference Held," *FBIS-SOV-92-085*, 1 May 1992, p. 18.

[48]Ibid.

[49]The United States issued a letter of agreement to Oman that awaited ratification. The U.S. Congress was notified of the potential sale, valued at $100 million, for up to 119 vehicles, on 19 June 1991. See Philip Finnegan, "Russia Extends Mideast Arms Sales Hunt," *Defense News* 7:23, 15 June 1992, pp. 1, 37.

[50]"Russian Parliament to Discuss Joining Kazakh-Oman Consortium," *INTERFAX New Bulletin*, 8 February 1993, p. 8.

OMAN AND THE POST-SOVIET STATES

Russia stood to gain a great deal from its novel approach toward Oman. Similarly, Muscat was well poised to offer expertise in certain areas, notably the oil industry, not as a producer but as a marketer. The ideal framework for the Sultanate was to encourage the development of joint consortia that enabled it to use its expertise with Western producers. Still, Russia was but one of the new republics with which Oman intended to interact. Opportunities in Central Asia and the Caucasus abounded. In Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia, Omani diplomats canvassed available business partnerships for possible joint investments. Similarly, in Belarus and Ukraine and throughout Central Asia and the Caucasus, Omani officials sought new avenues for profitable accords. What emerged from these initial efforts was astounding. Omanis excelled in entering into small-scale agreements with their counterparts in several republics and were pursuing additional arrangements in late 1994. These successes illustrated how Oman reacted to the breakup of the Soviet Union. For Muscat, many more business opportunities were created where none existed a few years earlier, a trend that received full support at all levels.

UKRAINE

A month after Ukrainian Prime Minister Leonid Kuchma visited the Sultanate, diplomatic relations were established with Ukraine in May 1992.[51] Kuchma was searching for alternative sources of oil given Kiev's ongoing difficulties in securing Russian supplies. Yurii Seleznev, the Press Secretary of the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry, recognized that Kiev was keenly interested in fostering close business relations with a number of Gulf states, including Oman. Moreover, Ukrainians were interested in joint ventures that covered the gamut of industrial and commercial products. After his return from the Gulf, Kuchma declared that military cooperation between Ukraine and the GCC states was also discussed, but no contracts were signed by late 1994.[52]

KAZAKHSTAN

Oman and Kazakhstan established diplomatic relations in April 1992. During their initial contacts, both sides expressed interest in exploring cooperation in agriculture and the processing industry. Almaty (then Alma Atta) sought Omani investment credits as well. Kazakhstan was particularly interested in GCC

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[51] "Diplomatic Relations Established with Ukraine," *FBIS-NES-92-098*, 20 May 1992, pp. 13–14.

[52] *Kommersant*, 20 April 1993; *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 24 April 1993, p. 1, as cited in *Commonwealth of Independent States and the Middle East* [hereafter, *CISME*], 18:4, April 1993, p. 43.

states' health industries, especially after senior Kazakh government officials visited several Omani and UAE hospitals and clinics.[53] These initial contacts led to Prime Minister Sergei Tereshchenko's June 1992 visit to the Sultanate. His delegation included oil and gas ministers and directors of state enterprises reflecting the Kazakh interest in this new relationship. On 16 June, Sultan Qaboos received senior members of the delegation to express his desire that the two countries develop strong economic links, especially in oil prospecting, production, and refining. Tereshchenko met with the Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, Qais bin `Abdul Munim Al-Zawawi, and Oil and Mineral Resources Minister Sa`id bin Ahmad Al-Shanfari for two rounds of critical negotiations. At a press conference after these meetings, the Kazakh Prime Minister reported that agreements were reached on the establishment of a joint consortium for building a pipeline from the Tenghiz oil field to the shores of the Persian Gulf, the Black Sea, or the Mediterranean. In addition, Muscat agreed to participate in oil production in western Kazakhstan, and Almaty committed itself to developing the Sultanate's copper industry. An important agreement on agriculture was also concluded that called for large Kazakh investments in Oman. Finally, a commercial and economic agreement was signed to streamline Omani loans and credits for Kazakhstan. Tereshchenko was elated by this visit and acknowledged that Kazakhstan considered "Oman and the other GCC states [as] the most advantageous partners" for his nascent republic.[54]

Qais Al-Zawawi reciprocated Tereshchenko's visit in April 1993. Additional contracts were signed between the two countries including the establishment of the Tenghizshevroil joint venture. Kazakh officials also confirmed that Muscat had granted a $100 million line of credit to Almaty for the construction of the Tenghiz-Novorossiysk pipeline.[55] Although initial discussions on this venture started in 1988, when Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev was seeking Central Asia's development, negotiations were not conclusive until 1992. Muscat acted as an intermediary between Kazakh authorities and the Chevron Oil Corporation. Minister Al-Shanfari earned the support of his Kazakh counterpart by advising Almaty during the negotiations that settled the final terms of the Tenghiz contract.[56] In the process, Oman proved its abilities to act as an effective intermediary and earned substantial income in what a diplomat involved in the talks referred to as "millions and millions and millions of dol-

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[53]"Diplomatic Relations Established with Kazakhstan," *FBIS-NES-92-082*, 28 April 1992, p. 17.

[54]"Diplomatic Relations Established with Kazakhstan," *FBIS-SOV-92-087*, 5 May 1992, pp. 52–53; see also *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, 17–19 June 1992, p. 1, as cited in *CISME* 17:6, June 1992, p. 36.

[55]Ivan Zakharchenko, "Nazarbayev Receives Oman Delegation; Treaty Signed," *FBIS-SOV-93-067*, 9 April 1993, p. 77.

[56]Interview with Sa`id bin Ahmad Al-Shanfari, Minister of Petroleum and Minerals, Muscat, 18 January 1993.

lars."[57] From Almaty's perspective, this was money well spent given their overall inexperience in this area. According to one analyst, Kazakhs were at least 50 years behind in the oil business compared to Persian Gulf states, which—for better or worse—have accumulated a vast pool of knowledge on the subject.[58] In the event, Oman committed itself to the Tenghiz project and discussed the additional investment of $100 million to participate in the building of the Tenghiz-Novorossiysk pipeline. Both sides identified new areas of cooperation during the visit, including joint exploitation of copper and gold mines in the Sultanate, drilling oil wells on the Caspian Sea Shelf, and exporting food from Kazakhstan to Oman. Al-Zawawi and his delegation were received by President Nursultan Nazarbayev and Prime Minister Tereshchenko and ended the visit by signing a bilateral agreement to survey the Atyrau region for oil deposits. The agreement called for the proportional division between the two countries of whatever potential deposits were harvested.[59]

By all accounts, this was a highly successful visit that set the pace of negotiations for the Omanis, who carved out an important niche for themselves and proved unwavering when others were hesitating. To be sure, the Omani-Kazakh relationship gave Muscat an edge in the ongoing struggle for influence in Central Asia. Of course, the risks were as great as the opportunities, but few Omanis looked back as they embarked on this new adventure. All other parties involved in luring business in Central Asia carried heavy political baggage that prevented them from acting as honest brokers. Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia devoted considerable energies to winning the Kazakh deal, but all invariably brought with them specific political objectives. For Almaty, the Omani approach was the clincher, as Muscat "marketed" its business acumen without wishing to change Central Asia into its own image.

KYRGYZSTAN

Oman and Kyrgyzstan established diplomatic relations in May 1992. Muscat and Bishkek issued a joint statement in Moscow where the two countries' permanent representatives, Dawud bin Hamdan Al-Hamdan and Nalayiv Ahmadbek, pledged to foster friendly relations.[60]

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[57]Steve Coll, "Central Asia's High-Stakes Oil Game: Ex-Soviet Republics Are the Big Prize in a Global Rush to Explore," *The Washington Post*, 9 May 1993, p. A1.

[58]The analyst concluded that he pictured Kazakhs "being where the Saudis were 50 years ago." See Coll, op. cit., pp. A1, A23.

[59]"Nazarbaev Receives Oman Delegation; Treaty Signed," in *FBIS-SOV-93-067*, 9 April 1993, p. 77; see also *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda*, 10 April 1993, p. 1, as cited in *CISME* 18:4, April 1993, p. 44.

[60]"Diplomatic Ties with Kyrgyzstan Formalized," *FBIS-NES-92-098*, 20 May 1992, p. 14.

TAJIKISTAN

The civil war in Tajikistan, certainly one of the most intractable disputes in Central Asia, preoccupied Muscat for the better part of the early 1990s. Although Oman called for a cease-fire between the warring factions, it remained wary of Islamist arguments calling Imomali Rakhmonov's rule illegitimate and, equally important, refused to be dragged into a conflict with religious overtones.[61] True to its nature, Muscat refrained from public statements on sensitive political differences pitting Iran, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia against one another as the latter three attempted to influence developments in Central Asia. The Sultanate sought an end to the conflict before establishing relations with Dushanbe.

TURKMENISTAN

Diplomatic relations between Turkmenistan and Oman were established on 29 May 1992.[62] As in the case of other Central Asian republics, Muscat considered Ashgabat an ideal partner to forge important commercial agreements on joint oil and gas projects. Unlike its experience in Kazakhstan, however, Oman was not as successful as it wished in moving ahead with specifics. Saparmurad Niyazov looked south, but only as far as Iran, and west as far as Turkey. With both Teheran and Ankara, Ashgabat proved a tenacious negotiator, particularly within the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), which energized the relationship between the Northern Tier countries. Because of this heavy competition, Oman maintained a lower profile in dealing with Turkmenistan.

UZBEKISTAN

Because of Uzbekistan's special role on the Arabian Peninsula, Omani officials took immediate steps to seek diplomatic relations with Tashkent.[63] In January 1992, Yusuf bin `Alawi headed a delegation to visit Uzbekistan where he met with Prime Minister Mutalov. The two sides discussed Uzbekistan's important natural resources and its needs for foreign investment and technology. `Alawi

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[61]A noted Russian analyst, Sergei Kurginyan, posited that the essence of the conflict was the polarization between the popular Islam of Tajikistan and Muwahidun-Wahhabi interpretations. Inasmuch as such explanations remained sensitive for most Omani political figures, it came as no surprise that little public effort was made to comment more openly on this issue. See, "Islamic Fundamentalist Activities 'Warning to Russia'," *Foreign Broadcast Information Service-Central Eurasia* [hereafter, *FBIS-USR], 93-117*, 8 September 1993, p. 83.

[62]"Relations with Turkmenia Established 29 May," *FBIS-NES-92-107*, 3 June 1992, p. 14.

[63]Significant numbers of Uzbeks settled throughout the Arabian Peninsula during the past few centuries. It is not unusual to meet Saudis, Bahrainis, and Qataris, for example, who trace their ancestry to Uzbekistan.

pledged that the Sultanate would be forthcoming as soon as legislation was approved to guarantee foreign investments. Naturally, the establishment of formal diplomatic ties was broached, and the two sides exchanged appropriate notes in April 1992 toward that objective.[64] Formal ties were finally established in March 1993. Sultan Qaboos send a telegram to President Islam Karimov to congratulate the Uzbek people on the occasion of the new Islamic year.[65]

AZERBAIJAN

An Azerbaijani delegation headed by then Prime Minister Gasanov visited Oman in January 1992 when "the situation in Azerbaijan and the latest events in the Commonwealth of Independent States" were discussed with senior Omani officials. Qaboos was especially interested in hearing Azeri views on the Karabagh conflict which threatened to engulf the entire region in a protracted war. As discussions with Kazakhstan on oil exports advanced, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia played critical roles as potential "pipeline highways." Despite legitimate Azeri grievances, Qaboos was somewhat disappointed with Baku's unwillingness to work toward a compromise solution insisting on its nonnegotiable positions. Other Omani officials focused on economic cooperation and Muscat agreed to extend a $200 million loan for investment purposes in the exploration and production of oil and gas, the development and administration of oil refineries, and geological prospecting.[66] These initial contacts led to the establishment of formal diplomatic relations on 13 July 1992.[67] Azeri Foreign Minister Tofik Gasymov declared that diplomatic ties would initiate a new phase of cooperation between the two countries and, in October 1992, a business delegation headed by Chamber of Commerce President Yaqub bin Hamad Al-Harthy was in Baku to seek joint ventures. Muscat looked closely at the Azeri State Oil Company, the Council for Foreign Tourism, and the Guinesh Association, among other enterprises, as potential business partners.[68] No concrete measures have been taken since that time because of the continued negative repercussions of the war in Karabagh. Muscat was not about to pour in additional resources at a time when Baku remained highly unstable. These reservations were confirmed after the coup that ousted Azerbaijan's only democratically elected president, Elçibey Abulfez, and ushered into power a

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[64] *Pravda Vostoka*, 2 January 1992, p. 1, as cited in *CISME* 17:2, February 1992, p. 19.

[65] *Pravda Vostoka*, 27 March 1993, p. 1, as cited in *CISME* 18:3, March 1993, p. 17.

[66] "Sultanate and Azerbaijan Agree to Cooperate on Oil," *Oman Daily Observer*, 14 January 1992, p. 1; see also *Bakinskii Rabochii*, 14 January 1992, p. 1, and 21 January 1992, pp. 1–2, as cited in *CISME* 17:1, January 1992, pp. 33–34.

[67] "Diplomatic Ties Established with Azerbaijan," *FBIS-NES-92-135*, 14 July 1992, p. 18.

[68] *Bakinskii Rabochii*, 10 February 1992, p. 2, as cited in *CISME* 17:10, October 1992, p. 28.

former KGB official, Gaidar Aliev. Despite the coup and the escalation of the war in Karabagh, Muscat maintained that it could do business with Azerbaijan at a later date when the crises were resolved.

ARMENIA

The Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Armenia established diplomatic relations on 7 July 1992.[69] Muscat considered its budding relations with Yerevan with the utmost care because of its critical business contacts in Baku. Inasmuch as the construction of pipelines from Central Asia to Europe mattered, Oman took note of Armenia's geographical position at the crossroads between Iran and Turkey and moved accordingly.[70] Still, because Oman never wavered from established principles, ties with Armenia were elevated to a higher plateau. Armenian envoy Eduard Nalbandian carried a confidential note on the Karabagh conflict from President Levon Ter-Petrossian to Sultan Qaboos on 3 May 1994, appealing to the Sultanate's good offices to help achieve a permanent settlement.[71] The effort was not successful, but Qaboos did not flinch from his position that Baku adopt more realistic objectives.

FUTURE TIES BETWEEN OMAN AND THE POST-SOVIET STATES

Throughout Central Asia, and within a very short period of time, Oman was well positioned to play central role in the development of the region's petroleum resources. As discussed above, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan were the first "prizes" in the aftermath of the Soviet Union's demise. Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan, both with sizable proven deposits of oil and gas, invited Western companies to search and market the wealth lying beneath the Caspian Sea. Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan estimated their proven resources at 5 and 4.5 billion barrels of oil, respectively.[72] Moreover, Turkmenistan held more than 350 trillion cubic

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[69]"Diplomatic Relations Established with Armenia," *FBIS-NES-92-131*, 8 July 1992, p. 22.

[70]Artem Aznavuryan, "Oman-Armenia: Prospects for Cooperation" (in Armenian), *Azg* [Yerevan Daily], 25 September 1992, pp. 4–5.

[71]Nalbandian delivered his message to Qais Al-Zawawi, the Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, certainly the person ideally situated to assess future Omani-Armenian ties. See "Armenia Diplomat Visits Oman, Discusses Ties," *FBIS-SOV-94-089*, 9 May 1994, p. 70; and "Armenia-Oman Ties," *The Armenian Observer*, 11 May 1994, p. 4.

[72]Azerbaijan's modern petroleum era dated from the striking of oil by the Nobels and Rothschilds in the 1870s, which set off a drilling boom that turned much of the area into a forest of derricks. Together with local partners, foreign investments flowed into Baku's Art Museum, a Symphony Hall, and a number of mansions, which turned Baku into "the Paris on the Caspian" before the demise of the Tsarist regime. The young Josef Stalin earned his revolutionary stripes by organizing an uprising of Baku's oil workers. After World War I and the subsequent civil war between the Red and White armies, oil production waned. The oil fields were the target of an unsuccessful Nazi military campaign in World War II. Oil production reached an all-time low at the end of 1991 when the

feet of natural gas, which certainly placed Ashgabat high on the world's list of natural-gas-rich countries. An additional 180 trillion cubic feet of natural gas were estimated to lie beneath Uzbekistan, whose oil potential remained undetermined.[73] The potential for exploration and production was, to say the least, immense. When Russia was added to this impressive list of future oil producers, the picture for the entire region was far from being bleak. Rather, one could envisage a situation in which relatively isolated republics in the former Soviet Union were about to embark on an adventure similar to that experienced by the conservative Arab Gulf monarchies in the 1950s and 1960s. Oman was well positioned to help a number of these newly independent states achieve their potential and, in the process, reap the fruits of its eclectic policies.

But there were risks that stemmed from political geography. Although the Caspian Sea basin held an estimated minimum of 15 to 50 billion barrels of oil, its value rested on how much of this "wealth" could be transported profitably and safely to consumer markets in the West or in Asia. Indeed, the basic problem was how to get Central Asia's underground wealth out of its isolated steppes. Eight different export routes were under consideration in late 1994 and Oman played a nonnegligible role in determining which option was chosen.[74] Admittedly, solving the transportation problem required cooperation among the republics, the regional powers that surrounded them, and the Western multinationals whose capital was at risk in developing these fields and pipelines. Iran, Turkey, Armenia, Georgia, Russia, and China all had an interest in how this transportation challenge was met, and they accepted an Omani invitation to discuss the issues involved among themselves.[75] Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, and Turkmenistan concluded that Western aid was crucial if they were to market their proven reserves. Noticeably, this shared perspective fostered a rapid warming in relations between key Muslim republics and Western states.

USSR collapsed—with Baku's dilapidated rigs and near-stagnant refineries producing a mere 3 percent of the union's 10.5 million barrels per day. Azeris blamed the decline on Moscow, asserting that mismanagement and neglect after the discovery of Siberian oil in the 1960s caused much of the decline. See Jill Hamburg, "Azerbaijan Setting Stage for New Oil Boom," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 5 March 1993, p. 16.

[73]"Amoco, Chevron May Team Up: They Need Pipeline to Export Oil from Former Soviet States," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 6 April 1993, p. C4; see also Coll, op. cit., pp. A1, A23.

[74]Alan Friedman, "Chevron Signals Interest in Kazakhstan Pipeline Project," *Financial Times*, 23 June 1992, p. 21.

[75]Iran supported Oman's role in the Chevron deal. See "Oman-Iran Talks on Tie-Ups in Oil Sector," *Oman Daily Observer*, 25 May 1992, p. 3. In addition, Iran was considering a railway project to help facilitate the movement of people and goods. Teheran approached the GCC states and the Islamic Development Bank to finance the project, and the proposal was discussed between Omani Deputy Prime Minister Qais Al Zawawi, then GCC Secretary General `Abdullah Bishara, and the Iranian Finance Minister, Mohsin Bakhsh, in Muscat. See "Talks on Iran Rail Link Help," *Oman Daily Observer*, 24 May 1992, p. 1.

Oman was well positioned to negotiate with Western multinationals on behalf of a number of republics. When negotiations between Chevron and Kazakhstan stalled in late 1991, Oman advised Almaty on its technical and financial options. According to John Deuss, an international oil trader with a long and controversial career,[76] Sultan Qaboos designated Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) as the intermediary ready to undersign whatever issues remained unresolved. Herman T. Franssen, an adviser to the Omani government and a longtime friend of Deuss', claimed that Oman "worked with the Kazakh government to see how they could facilitate discussions between the two parties."[77] Ironically, it was beneath the crystal chandeliers of Blair House in Washington, D.C., and amid the flash of cameras on 18 May 1992, that a remarkable group of political bedfellows announced the initial agreement to develop and export Kazakhstan's Caspian Basin oil reserves. Bankers, government officials, and lawyers courted Nursultan Nazarbaev, the former communist-turned-free-market-nationalist (who was in the United States on an official state visit). Kenneth T. Derr, the Chevron Chief Executive Officer, and Hank Merle, the PDO Managing Director, were present. So was John Deuss. Their discussions led to a unique brokered arrangement that ushered in a slew of projects profitable to all parties. It was also at this meeting that the Omani Ministry of Petroleum and Minerals was chosen to negotiate on Kazakhstan's behalf to ensure that all was in order.[78]

Oman formally became involved in the Central Asian oil transportation question when it joined the Caspian Pipeline Consortium in 1992. The Consortium's other partners, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Azerbaijan, were determined to develop a pipeline that would run across Russia to the Black Sea, bypassing Iran and Turkey. Bechtel was asked to conduct a feasibility study on its behalf.[79] If successfully built, such a pipeline would carry Chevron's production from the Tenghiz field, as well as production from other fields. A number of companies, including Amoco, British Petroleum, and Unocal, expressed just such an interest, given that all three were committed to developing the estimated 1.8-billion-barrel offshore oil fields in the Caspian Sea.[80] Bechtel's feasibility study remained on the drawing boards, however, because of financial and political

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[76]Coll, op. cit., p. A1.

[77]Thomas W. Lippman, "A Twisted Path to a Deal to Tap Kazakh Oil Field," *The Washington Post*, 20 May 1992, p. C9.

[78]"Chevron Signs Multi-billion Dollar Deal," *The Miami Herald*, 19 May 1992, p. C1. This was confirmed by Minister Al-Shanfari in my interview on 20 September 1993.

[79]"Deal Signed for Caucasus Pipeline," *The Los Angeles Times*, 24 October 1992, p. D3.

[80]John N. Maclean, "Caspian Sea Oil Pipeline Could Carry Amoco Deal," *The Chicago Tribune*, 7 July 1992, p. C3. Under the agreement, Oman would assume responsibility for financing the consortium but would only own a third of it. Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan would contribute petroleum to provide credit support.

complications. Disputes arose on the division of profits as Chevron objected to the Omani presence in these arrangements. Besides advising Kazakhstan and joining the pipeline consortium, PDO and the newly established Oman Oil Company secured a lease for exploration on 6,000 acres of Kazakh territory near Chevron's fields, further muddying the water. Muscat surprised Chevron by maneuvering itself so expertly. The broker was now a worthy competitor that intended to seek compensation for its numerous services.

Chapter Seven

OMAN AND THE FAR EAST

Although relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the countries of the Far East have developed markedly since 1970, the presence of established contacts—some going back several centuries before Islam—facilitated the resumption of closer ties. To be sure, the primary motivation for the renewal in almost all instances was economic. Irrespective of political and strategic considerations that may have been present, however, the Far East looked toward the Sultanate of Oman as a gateway to the Arabian Peninsula. Of course, Oman's strategic role in protecting the Straits of Hormuz played an undeniable role in this rapprochement, but it would be a mistake to exaggerate what is obvious. More salient issues, ranging from oil exploration to investments in emerging markets, were equally important to several countries.

Oman was similarly inclined to look toward the Far East because it perceived the need for growing economic contacts with Asian economic powerhouses. Long associated with European and South Asian states, Muscat correctly assessed the need to improve relations with vibrant Asian states. This was in line with the trade-minded Omani approach that recognized the necessity of economic empowerment. Tradesmen par excellence, Omanis traveled the seas in search of new opportunities and, given their legacy, were inevitably inclined to relaunch such efforts to make up for lost time.

Since 1970, several Far Eastern countries, including the People's Republic of China, Taiwan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, the Republic of Korea, Japan, and Australia, have strengthened their ties with the Sultanate of Oman. This chapter sketches evolving relations between these countries and Muscat to highlight the direction that economic contacts have taken as well as to speculate on future trends.

THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Sino-Omani relations may be traced back to the 8th century, when Arab geographers under the `Abbasid Empire in Baghdad encouraged trade over the high

seas. Ibn Khurdadhba described the route to China in about 850 AD and discussed in some detail how "an Omani merchant made the voyage to Canton at about this time."[1] Historical records from a variety of sources confirm that a number of Arab merchants visited Guangzou between the 7th and 12th centuries and Omani commercial ships from Sohar docked in Guangzou at regular intervals. It may be worth recalling that Sohar was then one of the wealthiest cities of the Muslim world even if few Muslims were aware of its existence. Ibn Hauqal claimed that "its traders and commerce c[ould] not be enumerated" and Al-Muqadassi called it the "hallway to China, the storehouse of the East and Iraq, and the stay of the Yemen."[2]

Sohar, and with it Oman, looked east toward the coasts of India and the Far East. With easy access to the hinterland of the Arabian Peninsula, it acted as the ideal entrepôt for both the Arab and non-Arab worlds. This function continued even after the tragic massacres of the foreign community in Canton in 878 AD. No longer able to haul aloes, wood, bamboo, camphor, sandalwood, ivory, tin, and spices of all kinds from China itself, Omani merchants entered into commercial agreements with Chinese seamen who would meet the Omanis in Kalah on the Malay coast.[3] The Chinese brought rare and highly prized chinaware, musk, silk, and jewels. In time, Omani tradesmen diversified and included linen, cotton, and wool—probably originating in Persia—to their inventories. Rugs, metalwork, iron and bullion, and even dates made the voyage east. When Zanzibari merchants added their own diversified wares, the Chinese were exposed to ivory, tortoiseshell, leopard skins, ambergris, and slaves. Admittedly, the sea trade between the Muslim world and China was made possible by the simultaneous existence of great empires at each end. Equally important was the Omani ability to take advantage of this politically stable environment. An 8th century Omani from Sohar, Abu `Ubayda `Abdallah Al-Qasim was the first documented Arab traveler to make the 4,350-mile journey to China; it took about two years.[4] From the 8th to the 16th century, the totality of this trade would stay under Muslim control, only to be overtaken by the Portuguese in 1507 AD. Still, under the Ya`ribah dynasty in the 12th century, Sohar reached a

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[1]Donald Hawley, *Oman and Its Renaissance*, London and New Jersey: Stacey International, 1990, p. 19.

[2]Ibid., p. 181.

[3]Omani mariners displayed remarkable skills in putting to sea. Their ships were nothing more "than yarn spun from the bark of coconut palm and yet they sailed as far as China to the east and to Madagascar to the south." Benefiting from the vast seafaring knowledge of the Persian Sassanid Empire, Omani merchants were soon traveling the seas in large ships, some of which carried 400 men. Still, even before the Persian and Islamic influences shaped their lives, Nestorian Christians who lived in Sohar were well known for their voyages to India and beyond. See Hawley, op. cit., pp. 181–182.

[4]Calvin H. Allen, *Oman: The Modernization of the Sultanate*, Boulder, Colorado, and London: Westview Press and Croom Helm, 1987, p. 29.

rare peak, as horses and frankincense were regularly shipped to faraway markets.[5]

Omanis profited handsomely from this trade but also invested in China to strengthen their relations with the Far East. They helped establish the Huaisheng Mosque and the Qingjing Mosque in Guangzou and in the 15th century, `Abdallah "the Omani" headed a trade mission to Canton. He was received by Emperor Shenzhong of the Song Dynasty, who presented him with a white horse and a saddle on his departure from China.

Prominent Chinese explorers ventured West as well. Zheng He, a famous navigator, ventured to the Dhufar region of Oman on three occasions.[6] In the 13th century, the Chinese historian Zhao Rushi, documenting the achievements of the Song Dynasty, included "Dhufar" and "Sohar" in his *Description of Foreign States.* Remarkably, Zhao Rushi provided a detailed narration of life in Oman, including a complete discussion of daily life on the coast and the hinterland. This was especially enticing as members of the succeeding Tang Dynasty were keenly interested in importing large quantities of aromatic gum from the Dhufar to use in their elaborate personal and religious ceremonies.[7] The interest was mutual and developed intensely over the centuries. Following the overthrow of the nationalist regime in Beijing, and under the revolutionary regime of Mao Zedong, attention toward the Arabian Peninsula changed dramatically. Revolutionary solidarity was the order of the day as Beijing distanced itself from the conservative Arab Gulf monarchies.

China and the 1957 Uprising in the Dhufar

China turned its attention toward the Arabian Peninsula in the wake of several British attempts to suppress the 1957 Dhufar uprising. At the time, Beijing interpreted the insurrection as a struggle for independence worthy of its assistance. In a whirlwind of Maoist rhetoric, it opposed London's alleged "desires" to seize the area's oil reserves, claimed that China "sympathize[d with] and support[ed] all struggles against colonialism, [and] pledge[d its] firm support to the heroic Arabs who [we]re fighting against British enslavement and plunder in Oman."[8] Chinese sympathies and "resolute opposition to British armed intervention" were conveyed to Omani officials in Cairo attempting to lodge grievances with the League of Arab States (LAS). The September 1957 Cairo

[5]Ibid., p. 32.

[6]Lou Linwei, "Omani Cultural Week in China," *Beijing Review*, 12 August 1991, p. 40.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Yitzhak Shichor, *The Middle East in China's Foreign Policy, 1949–1977*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979, p. 75.

meeting between Chen Chia-kang, China's ambassador to Egypt, and Faysal bin `Ali Al-Sa`id, one of the insurrection leaders, paved the way for the latter to visit Beijing a few years later. Chen Chia-kang lodged a formal protest against London with the LAS, in response to a memorandum soliciting support for Oman from the Non-Aligned Movement.[9] In 1959, Faysal bin `Ali visited Beijing where he met Mao Zedong and Prime Minister Zhou En Lai.[10] Unusual both in form and substance, Beijing's diplomatic actions highlighted the keen interest that China expressed toward revolutionary movements and, on the Arabian Peninsula, its open challenge to the established colonial power.

China and the Dhufar War

In several fora, Mao Zedong's government blamed the Soviet Union, Britain, and the United States for much of the tensions in Dhufar. Although this assessment was widely shared in the Middle East, China's relations with Arab governments remained lukewarm. To be sure, Mao's revolutionary "objectives" for the Dhufar uprising translated into Chinese support, both verbal and material. Without this support, local national liberation movements, including the People's Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Arabian Gulf (PFLOAG), would not have fared as well as they did.[11] Because of this assistance, however, Beijing's policies in the Middle East were perceived as radicalist by all of the conservative monarchies. Even when relations with several Arab governments were restored, it was the national liberation movements that preoccupied China. The message was clear because, for Beijing, "the Arab people's mass movement against imperialism and aggression, the Palestinian people's armed struggle and the armed struggle of the people of the Dhufar area [all] converged into a raging storm of revolution striking at imperialism, revisionism, and reaction."[12] In 1970 China appeared to endorse the Dhufar rebellion's wider objective of an "Arab People's Republic" in the Gulf by declaring: "the excellent situation of the victorious developing armed struggle of the Dhufar people is bound to promote and inspire the development of the national liberation struggle of the people of the entire Arabian Gulf region."[13] In reality, nothing could be further from the truth but that was not the perception in Muscat, Riyadh, or Teheran. Mao himself questioned these movements' capabilities, recommending that efforts be made to foster friendly ties with Arab

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[9]Ibid., pp. 75–76.

[10]Linwei, op cit., p. 40.

[11]Shichor, op. cit., p. 147.

[12]Shichor, op. cit., p. 152.

[13]NCNA, quoted in SWB/FE 3338, 21 March 1970, A4 1–3, in Lillian Craig Harris, *China Considers the Middle East*, London and New York: I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 1993, p. 158.

governments in case hot-headed radicals could not be fully controlled. Indeed, Beijing took special care to foster friendly relations with a number of regimes, ranging from Nasser in Egypt to Shah Muhammad Pahlavi in Iran. That was perhaps to satisfy the Chinese revolution's utilitarian tendencies. Still, the policy was sufficiently broad-based to allow cooperation with both governments and liberation movements throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

Mao's reservations notwithstanding, the Chinese resumed their support of, and relations with, the Dhufar Liberation Front (DLF) in Oman. It was during the Cultural Revolution, and especially afterward, that China began to encourage the DLF (which later became the PFLOAG), to take more systematic steps against Muscat. Material and moral support poured in as China provided rebel forces with the know-how to set up a base and headquarters at Hauf just across the Omani border with the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen.[14] Given the close association between the DLF and its Chinese counterpart, it was natural that the organization be patterned after the Chinese model. Starting in 1963, the PRC transferred an undetermined quantity of military equipment and ammunition to the DLF. After that date, DLF delegations visited China on a regular basis, received advanced training, and, almost always, returned to the PDRY with a fresh batch of more-advanced weapons. Given the ease with which the DLF could maneuver in the PDRY, transferring material through Aden never posed any difficulties.

In early 1969, the New China News Agency established an office in Aden, from where it channeled extensive coverage of military operations in the Dhufar. Special correspondents were periodically dispatched to the front to provide eyewitness accounts of the DLF's revolutionary achievements.[15] Unsurprisingly, Chinese press and radio coverage acclaimed Dhufari rebels.

In some sense, this coverage necessitated additional aid that became substantial after 1970. PFLOAG delegation visits to the PRC increased in frequency. Some delegates stayed as long as five weeks, and many visits included the customary calls on Zhou En Lai if not on Mao himself. To say that Beijing approved of the PFLOAG and its activities may be an understatement. Many officials congratulated themselves for providing assistance to rebel forces, insisting that "the excellent situation of the victoriously developing armed struggle of the Dhufar people" was the first step toward the liberation "of the entire Arabian Gulf region."[16]

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[14]Allen, op. cit., p. 71.

[15]Shichor, op. cit., p. 153.

[16]Shichor, op. cit., p. 154.

Despite the rhetoric, China's material support to the PFLOAG remained limited, especially when compared with that deployed to Muscat by Britain. In fact, China's relations with the PFLOAG did not improve until after a PRC embassy was established in Aden in July 1969. Although precise figures are not available, the PRC provided Dhufari rebels no more than a few thousand rifles and machine guns. These were delivered either directly or, more likely, through the PDRY. To be sure, a number of Chinese instructors trained PFLOAG members at the Hauf base, even though their performance could not be judged as a resounding success. By 1971, the PRC had become less interested in the movement and, shortly after establishing diplomatic relations with Kuwait and Iran in 1972, China's aid to the PFLOAG ceased altogether. Beijing's international objectives shifted after the 1972 policy of "détente" was ushered in between Moscow and Washington. As a result, the PRC's legendary support to liberation movements decreased sharply.[17] China's attitude toward the PFLOAG changed dramatically, not only because Beijing revised its political outlook, but also because of significant changes on the ground. After the PFLOAG suffered several defeats at the hands of the Sultan's Armed Forces, its influence declined among ordinary Dhufari. In addition, Arab governments, including the PDRY and Iraq (especially after 1975 when Baghdad signed a series of border and peace agreements with its neighbors) grew wary of the PFLOAG's disruptive actions against the independent states of the Gulf. At any rate, financial and military assistance from the PRC to Oman's rebels ended in 1972.[18]

Political Relations After the Dhufar War

Three years after the Dhufar War ended, Oman and the PRC established diplomatic relations and signed a series of bilateral agreements on cultural, health, and press cooperation programs. The change in attitude was stunning. London and Washington were surprised. Moscow criticized the establishment of diplomatic relations between the PRC and Oman because it perceived it as an effort to form a broader anti-Soviet alliance in the Gulf region. Despite these criticisms, Ambassador Yuan Lulin arrived in Muscat in 1979, and Oman appointed Ibrahim Hamud Al-Subayhi envoy to the PRC.[19] To ingratiate itself with Muscat, Beijing offered to build a textile factory and a porcelain plant and

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[17]In the early 1970s, China attempted to improve its relations with Iraq as well. Little progress was achieved because of Iraq's support of the PFLOAG; see Shichor, op. cit., p. 172, and Mark Katz, *Russia and Arabia: Soviet Foreign Policy Toward the Arabian Peninsula*, Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986, p. 113.

[18]Allen, op. cit., p. 73.

[19]"First PRC Envoy to Oman Arrives in Muscat," *FBIS-MEA-79-081*, 24 April 1979, p. C1; see also Katz, op. cit., p 123.

sent experts to supervise the construction and operation of the two projects in the Sultanate.[20] Normalization of relations with Oman received high priority as China became, almost overnight, the champion of stability in the Persian Gulf region. Few anticipated the changes in the PRC's position toward the Sultanate. Even fewer forecast this striking example of how China transformed its political vision of the Middle East. In fact, the effort was so blatant that Sultan Qaboos was hesitant to push ahead. His reservations aside, Qaboos read the change correctly, assessing the effect of détente on the PRC even though his regional allies cautioned him to move slowly. At the time, Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia had not established diplomatic relations with the PRC and considered Beijing more of a nuisance than a power to be taken seriously. They were not ready to deal with the PRC as a major power and considered its revolutionary agenda threatening and its commercial value negligible. Qaboos' assessments were, in many respects, identical. Oman had fallen prey to PRC-supported revolutionary actions a few years earlier and had experienced the wrath of Beijing's vitriolic condemnations. Furthermore, Muscat realized that its economic needs were far greater than Beijing could satisfy, alone. Thus, endearing China would not, at least in the short term, make much of a difference in the Sultanate's foreign policy. Still, by ignoring such traditional concerns, Qaboos displayed the foresight to place relations with a country representing a quarter of humanity in perspective. Abiding by traditional policies was not a comfortable step and the Sultan did not want to shut out Beijing's potential contributions to regional stability. Moreover, Muscat also understood that a trust-building period was necessary before both sides could forge their ties in the economic and political fields. Although few gains were expected in the late 1970s and early 1980s, a decision was made to forge ahead with the long term in mind. A few short years later, that foresight paid off with the introduction of a number of joint projects, many of which benefited the Sultanate far more than anyone could have anticipated.[21]

The first opportunity for substantive exchanges came in November 1982 when Deputy Prime Minister for Security Affairs Sayyid Fahar bin Taymur visited Beijing. At a state dinner hosted by PLA Chief of Staff General Yang Dezhi, the

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[20]Linwei, op. cit., p. 40.

[21]For example, in January 1981, the Chinese Minister of Water Conservancy signed an agreement with his Omani counterpart, Minister of Electricity and Water Hamoud bin `Abdullah Al-Harthy, to provide the Sultanate technical assistance on irrigation projects. Agreements were also signed between Beijing's Standing Committee of the National People's Congress and Oman's Ministry of Justice. In June 1982, an Omani youth delegation visited Xian, Shanghai, Hangzhou, and Guandzhou, where they interacted with their Chinese counterparts. See "Oman, PRC Sign Technical Cooperation Agreement," *FBIS-MEA-81-012*, 16 January 1981, p. C1; "Tan Zhenlin Receives Omani Justice Minister," *Foreign Broadcast Information Service-China* [hereafter, *FBIS-CHI*], *82-092*, 12 May 1982, p. I1; and "Ji Pengei Meets with Omani Youth Delegation," *FBIS-CHI-82-108*, 4 June 1982, p. I1.

Chinese officer paid tribute to the Omani government for its nonaligned stand and support for Arab unity. To the consternation of those present, Yang Dezhi noted the Omani government's condemnation of hegemonic powers that threatened the security of the Gulf states, and highlighted Muscat's contribution to the defense of peace and stability in the Persian Gulf region. The change in perception could not have been more striking. Yang Dezhi's praise for the Sultanate's Armed Forces and for safeguarding sovereignty and the free flow of traffic through the Straits of Hormuz was as clear as day. Barely a few years had passed since Beijing's acrimonious broadcasts calling these same Armed Forces "hooligans" and "imperialist stooges." Sayyid Fahar, Oman's elder statesman and consummate diplomat, thanked his Chinese host for the kind words, stressing that his visit to China aimed for the long term.[22] He reiterated Muscat's political views on regional security and placed the gains of the past few years in their proper historical perspectives, recalling at one point the early voyages that Omani seafarers undertook to the Far East. In private conversations, Fahar discussed the repercussions of the Iran-Iraq War and, at one point, sought clarification on the PRC's sale of surface-to-surface missiles to both belligerents. At the time, Gulf states were concerned that Teheran and Baghdad were acquiring Silkworm and Scud missiles capable of destroying fixed petroleum facilities or supertankers moving through the Straits. Fahar's interlocutors recognized the touchy problem created by their ongoing sales, promised to re-assess their policies toward Iran and Iraq, and, in an unusual moment of candor, recognized that their short-term gains contradicted their recently articulated long-term objectives. In exchange for Beijing's promises to reassess its policies toward the Iran-Iraq War, Sayyid Fahar promised to seek GCC support in fostering new links between the conservative Arab Gulf monarchies and China. In fact, the Chinese did prove more forthcoming and enhanced their commercial and military ties with the GCC states. This intervention, on behalf of the GCC, paved the way for Chinese-Saudi contacts that resulted in the sale of the long-range CSS-2 missiles to the Kingdom in 1985. Sayyid Fahar returned from his 1982 visit having established a few solid markers in the relationship and demonstrated to the Chinese Oman's strategic value.

This first successful high-level meeting led Yusuf bin `Alawi, Oman's State Minister for Foreign Affairs, to single out China as a country capable of facilitating effective cooperation throughout the developing world. In a noteworthy December 1982 interview on Sino-Omani affairs, `Alawi stressed that Muscat "looked forward to seeing such fruitful relations of cooperation between China and other Gulf states, which will benefit peace and security in the region."

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[22]"Yang Dezhi Dinner for Omani Official," *FBIS-CHI-82-223*, 23 November 1982, p. I1.

Although this comment was made while Omani and U.S. military forces were holding their (irregular in the time period) annual Jade Tiger exercises, it cushioned anticipated PRC criticisms for the U.S. presence in the Sultanate.[23] `Alawi's declarations raised several sensitive questions. Why were Omanis so keen to cater to PRC perceptions? Were there sensitive negotiations under way on economic issues that could have been jeopardized by the U.S.-Omani military exercises?

To be sure, Muscat was amply aware of Beijing's views of Western military exercises on the Arabian Peninsula and, to limit the damage that inaccurate perceptions created, wanted to alleviate whatever concerns existed in China. `Alawi, for his part, was also interested in protecting sensitive negotiations on arms sales to Iran and Iraq. Acting as an intermediary for the GCC states, Muscat did not want to jeopardize the talks, especially when GCC states hoped that their contacts with the PRC would severely limit the sale of advanced weapons to both belligerents. In the event, Beijing's reactions were muted, and the negotiations continued.

Relations between Oman and the PRC were progressing so rapidly that Chinese Foreign Minister Wu Xueqian stopped in Muscat in October 1983 to formally invite Sultan Qaboos to visit China. For a variety of reasons, the visit never occurred. At the time, Wu Xueqian discussed the security of the Gulf, the Iran-Iraq War, and the Middle East problem with Yusuf bin `Alawi, who pronounced the visit "very successful" and their talks on major international issues "useful." The two delegations focused on the means to bolster relations between Oman and the PRC in various fields, particularly in trade and economy. Wu Xueqian also met with Qais Abdul Munim Al-Zawawi, the Deputy Prime Minister for Financial and Economic Affairs, with whom he reached specific agreements on economic issues.[24]

Although Qaboos did not journey to the PRC, high-level contacts between the two countries continued in earnest. In July 1984, the Sultan's personal representative, Thuwayni bin Shihab, toured the PRC during an eight-day visit during which he was received by high-ranking officials eager to foster closer bilateral ties. In Shenzhen, Thuwayni noted the important changes under way in the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone, praised the progress achieved there, and remarked on how much Omanis admired the Chinese government's diligence in ensuring such successes. Like Sayyid Fahar earlier, Sayyid

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[23]For `Alawi's comments, see "Xinhua Interviews Omani Foreign Minister," and "Jade Tiger Military Exercise Ends in Oman," *FBIS-CHI-82-205*, 7 December 1982, p. I1-2.

[24]"Wu Departs for Home," *FBIS-CHI-83-206*, 24 October 1983, p. I1; see also "PRC Foreign Minister Arrives on Official Visit: Meets Deputy Prime Minister," *FBIS-MEA-83-207*, 25 October 1983, p. C2.

Thuwayni reminded his hosts that friendship between the Omani and Chinese peoples could "be traced back into the ancient times."[25]

Other exchanges followed and, in Sayyid Fahar's footsteps, a number of Chinese military delegations arrived in Muscat. In December 1984, the Deputy Chief of Staff of the People's Liberation Army, General He Zhengwen, was received at the Ministry of Defense by the Assistant to the Chief of Staff, Major General Hassan bin Ihsan bin Nasib. During the meeting the two officers discussed bilateral cooperation and means of expanding it in the military field. A number of Omani officers, including Major General Nasib bin Hamad Al-Rawahi, Commander of the Sultan's Ground Forces, Staff Colonel Muhammad bin Mubarak Al-Amiri, Director of Operations at the Sultan's Air Force, Colonel Jum`ah bin Salim Al-Khatiri, Commander of the Training Battalion of the Sultan's Armed Forces, and Major Muhammad bin `Umar Al-Zubaydi, from the Sultan's Navy, attended the meeting. This was an important first contact at the military level, which ushered in several significant accords. Although Oman did not alter the sources of its weapons purchases from Western countries to China, the visits permitted Omani officers to familiarize themselves with what was available in the PRC and, equally important, allowed British-trained Omani officers to broaden their knowledge. It also created new opportunities for Oman to act as an intermediary in military affairs between China and a number of Gulf states. These meetings illustrated the Omani diversification programs and desire to start dealing with as many countries as possible. Finally, they also allowed Muscat to better assess where the PRC stood on the Iran-Iraq War, given that large quantities of Chinese weapons were deployed on the battlefield.[26]

Much has been written on China's role in this long war but little on Oman's intermediary role. Although Chinese President Li Xiannian viewed superpower involvement in the Persian Gulf with "great concern," and sold considerable quantities of weapons to Iran between 1980 and 1988, Beijing did not behave unilaterally.[27] Rather, it almost always used its sales as leverage, never stopped supplying Iraq, and, whenever convenient to do so, agreed—albeit secretly—to sell sophisticated systems to several GCC states, including Saudi Arabia, with which it had no diplomatic relations. Muscat was keenly aware of its unique role in acting as an intermediary and moderating Beijing's behavior whenever possible. Ironically, Western arms sales to both belligerents pursued a strategy identical to that adopted by China, a fact that did not escape Gulf strategists

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[25]"Official Arrives in Beijing," *FBIS-MEA-84-135*, 12 July 1984, p. C3; "Omani Delegation Leaves Shenzhen for Home," *FBIS-CHI-84-139*, 18 July 1984, p. I3.

[26]Dilip Hiro, *The Longest War: The Iran-Iraq Military Conflict*, New York: Routledge, 1991, pp. 163–164.

[27]Ibid., p. 228.

immersed in the decisionmaking process. It is to Muscat's credit that it used whatever leverage it had to attempt to bring the war to an end.

Political Relations After the Iran-Iraq War

In May 1988, Foreign Minister Qian Qichen congratulated Yusuf bin `Alawi on the 10th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Oman. "The establishment of diplomatic relations" declared Qichen,

> has ushered in a new era in the history of friendship between China and Oman. With the kind concern of the leaders of the two countries, satisfactory results have been achieved in the friendly and cooperative relations based on the five principles of peaceful coexistence. China and Oman share identical views on a wide range of international questions and have achieved fruitful results in economic and trade relations.[28]

Whether the two governments shared identical views was far less important than the crucial efforts under way to exercise restraint in massive Chinese arms sales to regional states. When Iran accepted United Nations Security Council Resolution 598, which called for a cease-fire between the two belligerents, Oman expressed a formal appreciation to Beijing for playing a positive role. The recognition was reiterated by the Under Secretary for Political Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sayyid Haitham bin Tariq, during his September 1988 visit to China, where he discussed new steps that could be taken to further reduce tensions in the Persian Gulf area.[29] Sayyid Haitham confirmed this preoccupation, identifying Beijing as "a country that exercised a great deal of influence in the Persian Gulf region."[30]

Omani-Chinese relations moved forward another notch with President Yang Shangkun's December 1989 visit to the Sultanate. The visit followed the Muscat GCC Heads of State Summit when a critical declaration was issued calling on the six conservative Arab Gulf monarchies to recognize the political progress that the world was experiencing.[31] Yang Shangkun was accorded a highly visible public welcome with thousands of Omanis lining city streets waving Chinese and Omani flags. In a statement to the Omani News Agency, Sultan Qaboos noted the significant cooperation between the two countries and called

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[28]"Qian Qichen Greets Omani Counterpart," *FBIS-CHI-88-105*, 1 June 1988, p. 21.

[29]"Omani Official Delegation Arrives in Beijing," *FBIS-CHI-88-183*, 21 September 1988, p. 18; see also "Oman Foreign Ministry Official Meets Wu Xueqian," *FBIS-CHI-88-187*, 27 September 1988, p. 19.

[30]Interview with Sayyid Haitham bin Tariq, Under Secretary for Political Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Muscat, 18 October 1993.

[31]The Muscat Declaration called for a redirection of GCC policies toward democratization.

for closer ties in the future. The Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Yusuf bin `Alawi, announced that President Yang Shangkun was fully briefed on the GCC states' decision to establish a comprehensive settlement of the dispute between Iraq and Iran. This was a significant recognition given the role played by Beijing in the conflict. Qaboos also thanked China for its support of Resolution 598 at the Security Council, further indicating that there was more substance to these remarks than diplomatic protocol required.[32] Even if confidentiality precluded any public discussions of the dialogue between the two parties, the ease with which Qaboos and `Alawi broached China's pivotal role in the region was noteworthy. According to senior Omani policymakers, Qaboos established firm foundations in Oman's ties with China during the many contacts between Omani and Chinese officials, all of which proved their usefulness yet again in 1990.[33]

In the aftermath of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Qaboos dispatched a senior adviser, Omar Al-Zawawi, to Beijing to meet with the Chinese President. During the meeting, President Yang Shangkun reiterated China's total opposition to the Iraqi invasion and called on Baghdad to unequivocally withdraw from Kuwait. Al-Zawawi thanked his host and stated that China was a "true friend of the Arab nation and people" and sincerely supported their just cause.[34] As this cause was multifaceted, and circumstances in 1990 had further polarized the entire Arab world, it was important for Oman to properly assess the role that China might play in any settlement. In the event, Beijing was marginalized at the United Nations but Oman, once again looking at the long term, was not about to abandon its proven foreign policy imperatives. No matter how peripheral Beijing had become, it retained a formidable presence in the region, primarily by continuing to sell arms to Iran and Iraq. True to its long-term foreign policy principles, Muscat focused on the effect of such sales rather than simply on immediate gains.

Relations between Muscat and Beijing entered a new era after the end of the War for Kuwait. During his January 1993 Muscat visit, Foreign Minister Qian Qichen noted that the volume of trade between Oman and China exceeded $400 million in 1991 and that Beijing was ready to continue this expansion. He stressed the need to develop economic and trade ties especially after the

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[32]"Yang Shangkun Continues Visit to Kuwait, Oman: Arrives in Oman," *FBIS-CHI-89-247*, 27 December 1989, p. 6; "Saudi King Fahd Concludes Visit to Manama: Holds Official Talks," *FBIS-NES-89-248*, 28 December 1989, p. 16.

[33]This interpretation was confirmed by three senior cabinet officials. Interviews with Yusuf bin `Alawi, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, `Abdulaziz bin Mohammed Al-Rowas, Minister of Information, and Salim bin `Abdallah Al-Ghazzali, Minister of Communications, Muscat, 16 January, 19 September and 11 October 1993, respectively.

[34]"More on Visit by Omani Foreign Affairs Advisor," *FBIS-CHI-90-198*, 12 October 1990, p. 10.

Sultanate successfully signed border agreements with its neighbors, further strengthening its regional position.[35]

Trade and Cultural Issues

The positive economic record between the PRC and the Sultanate was not achieved overnight. Rather, it was the result of a policy adopted in the late 1970s after the two countries established diplomatic relations. One of the PRC's first agreements with Oman focused on the shortage of water in the Sultanate. In April 1979, the Chinese Chargé d'Affaires, Dai Chera Feng, offered expertise in building several dams and promised to send a mission to study the Sultanate's future water needs.[36] In exchange for this assistance, Muscat increased its shark fin exports to China—which, interestingly, built on an established market.

Cooperation was also forthcoming in the cultural arena, most notably with the 1980 Sinbad Project in which *Shabab Oman* sailed from Muscat to Canton.[37] In July 1991, the Omani Minister of National Heritage and Culture, Faysal bin `Ali Al-Sa`id, visited Beijing to attend the 10th anniversary of the sailing of "Sohar" to China.[38] A few months later, Faysal bin `Ali signed another agreement with Minister of Culture He Jingzhi to increase the exchange of artists and folkloric ensembles.[39] Another agreement was signed in April 1992 to cover the critical health sector. The accord included a provision to encourage exchanges among medical experts and other health officials as a Chinese team visited the Sultanate to report on herbal plants and the possibility of producing a number of them for the pharmaceutical industry in the Sultanate.[40]

In June 1993, China's National Petroleum Vice President, Qiu Zhongjiang, visited Muscat to seek Omani investments for the Tamrin basin oil fields. Earlier, China announced that it would welcome foreign explorers into the basin, located in the western Xingjiang region, preferring to deal with countries like Oman.[41] As China's petroleum needs increased, Oman was well placed to export both petroleum and natural gas and to increase effective cooperation

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[35]"Qian Qichen Hold Talks with Omani Counterpart," *FBIS-CHI-93-006*, 11 January 1993, pp. 8–9.

[36]"PRC Offers Oman Expertise in Building Dams," *FBIS-MEA-79-069*, 5 April 1979, p. C2.

[37]*Shabab Oman* is the tall ship used by the Sultan's Navy for training purposes; see Allen, op. cit., p. 119.

[38]"Omani Cultural Delegation Arrives for 10 Day Tour," *FBIS-CHI-91-132*, 10 July 1991, p. 20.

[39]"He Jingzhi Meets Omani Culture Minister," *FBIS-CHI-87-197*, 10 October 1987, p. 11.

[40]"Agreement Signed with China on Health Sector Cooperation," *Middle East Economic Digest* [hereafter, *MEED*], 36:19, 15 May 1992, p. 28.

[41]"China National Petroleum Vice-President to Visit Oman," *MEED* 37:23, 11 June 1993, p. 29.

between small and medium-sized industries.[42] This was a booming sector that Muscat was eager to pursue, especially after Wang Tao, the chairman of China's National Petroleum Company, concluded his 1993 visit to the interior of Oman by expressing his appreciation for the "technical skills of Omani workers." Tao raised "the possibility of having them seconded to train his employees."[43] The news was welcome in Muscat as Omani officials were keenly interested in improving their commercial ties with as many countries as possible.

In July 1993, Li Lanqing, China's Vice Premier, visited Muscat at the head of a large delegation. Members accompanying Li Lanqing expressed Beijing's interest in importing crude oil directly from Oman to "cut out the oil companies which act as middlemen." This was a novel approach but entirely reflective of China's growing ties with the Sultanate and its aims to improve its balance of trade deficit. Li's attention was focused on such improvements because Muscat enjoyed a balance of trade advantage. In 1992, Oman exported oil, refined copper, and dried dates to Beijing worth around $377 million, and it imported electrical plants and machinery, wooden furniture, and tires worth $16 million.[44]

As this discussion illustrates, frequent Chinese governmental, trade, cultural, and religious delegations to Oman emphasized China's expanding interest in the region. Though Beijing frequently expressed concern that the war between Iran and Iraq threatened turmoil throughout the Gulf, there was no reason not to do business in the interim: "We welcome investment not only by your government, but also by your private companies," Foreign Minister Yao told a forum of businessmen in Abu Dhabi. "We can offer you labor and technology, while you provide us with funds."[45] To be sure, Oman retained a degree of caution about China but, by the early 1980s, Muscat had signed several cultural, public health, and press cooperation agreements and sent a few military delegations to Beijing. China was at pains to demonstrate the well-being of its Muslim citizens and Oman was eager to forge closer ties with one of the world's largest countries.

THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA (TAIWAN)

In May 1991, Oman opened a Trade Bureau in Taipei, after its successful participation in the 1990 China External Trade Development Council Fair. No matter

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[42]"China May Buy Omani Crude Oil," *MEED* 37:30, 30 July 1993, p. 34.

[43]"Oman Invests in China," *Country Report for Oman and Yemen* [hereafter, *CR-OY*], No. 2, London: The Economist Intelligence Unit, 1993, p. 20.

[44]"Meets a Chinese Delegation," *CR-OY 3-93*, p. 13.

[45]"Yao's Gulf Nation Tour Cements Ties," *Beijing Review*, 16 December 1985, p. 9.

what kind of progress was being achieved with the People's Republic of China, Oman was cognizant of Taiwan's intrinsic economic value. Muscat exported $414.1 million worth of products (mostly crude oil and some reexported machinery, meats, and plastics) to Taiwan in 1990 while importing $16.1 million worth of goods from Taipei. Taiwan's major export items included fertilizers, cement, vegetables, and medicines. In November 1993, a high-level Omani delegation headed by the Ministry of Industry Under Secretary Khamis bin Mubarak Al-Kiyumi visited the Republic of China to seek additional investments in the Sultanate. The Under Secretary reported that Taiwan's International Economic Cooperation Development Fund was ready to open a generous line of credit for a 20-year period and sought avenues for new investments.[46] What remained impossible to determine was how Republic of China officials and businessmen would strengthen their ties with Oman as long as Omani entry visas were difficult to obtain. In the absence of full diplomatic relations, Muscat was considering stationing consular officers in Taipei as a reciprocal gesture to alleviate this acute problem, as it was fully aware of the need to facilitate such visits.[47]

Although Muscat recognized the importance of the Republic of China as a critical economic partner, it pursued a multi-pronged policy toward Taipei. At least three reasons existed for this approach. First, and for purely economic justifications, the two countries did not dwell on their poor political contacts. Second, Muscat was keenly aware of Taiwan's economic clout in Asia, rivaling—even surpassing—that of several other countries. In turn, Taipei corporations with Asian subsidiaries required attention as well for their potential indirect investments in the Sultanate. Finally, Taiwan was also aware of Oman's rising influence in the former Soviet Union (FSU). Taipei was keenly interested in Oman's capabilities in the FSU and, with the objective of enhancing its own presence there, saw in the Sultanate an economic partner that would open critical business doors.

INDONESIA

Because of its importance within the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), Indonesia received special attention by Omani officials, eager to foster their relations with the developing world.[48] Given the fact that Indonesia is the world's most populous Muslim state, the relationship was multifaceted as well. Because Jakarta played a significant role within the Muslim world, Indonesia displayed

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[46]"Big Scope for Oman, Taiwan Cooperation," *The Times of Oman*, 2 November 1993, p. 2.

[47]"Oman Representative Office Expected in Taipei," *FBIS-CHI-91-084*, 1 May 1991, pp. 58–59.

[48]Interview with the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Yusuf bin `Alawi bin `Abdallah, Muscat, 14 October 1992.

unique political assets that, for Oman, could not be easily duplicated elsewhere. For example, were Muscat to communicate with a number of Asian states, ranging from Brunei to Sri Lanka, Indonesian mediation efforts would prove to be extremely useful. Similarly, at the United Nations, Oman cast many votes with the NAM, especially on issues dealing with the Muslim world. In these instances, contacts with Indonesia were extremely useful, as well.

Over the past few years, a number of high-level visitors have reassessed the relationship between Oman and Indonesia. In June 1988, Yusuf bin `Alawi visited President Suharto in Jakarta to discuss bilateral relations. `Alawi praised Indonesia's political stand on a variety of subjects, took note of the country's economic development, and expressed interest in fostering relations between Omani and Indonesian businesses. The Foreign Minister visited the Bandung military construction facilities and was impressed by Jakarta's successes in developing a solid strategic industrial base for the country.[49]

More recently, Petroleum and Mineral Affairs Minister Sa`id bin Ahmed Al-Shanfari discussed cooperation efforts between OPEC and non-OPEC producers, during an October 1991 visit to Indonesia. Although the meeting was organized by the Indonesian Mines and Energy Ministry, held during an international energy conference in Jakarta, it provided Al-Shanfari an opportunity to expand his search for new exploration partners.[50] Keen to entertain proposals that would increase Indonesia's investments in the Sultanate, Al-Shanfari was in favor of a vigorous policy that would benefit both countries.

MALAYSIA

Oman and Malaysia established diplomatic relations in January 1982.[51] Shortly thereafter, Prime Minister Mahathir bin Mohamed met with Sultan Qaboos in Muscat, where the two leaders examined their nascent bilateral needs. As this encounter took place in early 1982, when East-West tensions were high and the Iran-Iraq War raging, Qaboos and Mahathir bin Mohamed discussed some of the critical questions facing the Muslim world at the time. Both expressed concern that two Muslim countries were caught in the whirlwind of violence and called for fresh mediation efforts to end hostilities. They called on Iran and Iraq to accept the intervention of the Islamic Conference Organization's Good Offices Committee to reach an acceptable compromise. Although the offer fell

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[49]"Suharto Receives Omani Foreign Minister," *Foreign Broadcast Information Service-East Asia* [hereafter, *FBIS-EAS*], *88-119*, 21 June 1988, p. 40.

[50]"Omani Oil Minister to Hold Talks in Indonesia," *Reuters*, 2 October 1991.

[51]"Diplomatic Relations Established with Malaysia," *FBIS-MEA-82-004*, 7 January 1982, p. C4.

on deaf ears, it set an important precedent and Oman and Malaysia pursued concerted efforts in their foreign policy objectives to bring the senseless conflict to an end. Indeed, Qaboos was cognizant of Malaysia's capabilities and perceived the need for cooperation with fellow Muslim states to exert pressure on both Teheran and Baghdad. The two leaders' impotence in ending the conflict in 1982 notwithstanding, the effort placed another marker in the long road that eventually persuaded Iraq and Iran to accept a UN-imposed cease-fire.

Qaboos and Mahathir bin Mohamed further agreed that the Soviet Union was pursuing hegemonic policies in Asia, which they rejected in toto. Mahathir bin Mohamed agreed with Yusuf bin `Alawi that Malaysia was fighting back "the onslaught of communist influence exported by the Soviet Union" to defend its independence.[52] Similarly, Qaboos understood Malaysia's apprehensions, as he too had faced a Soviet-supported rebellion a decade earlier. Both leaders called on Moscow to end its hegemonic aspirations. Nowhere was this call more applicable than in Afghanistan. Oman and Malaysia condemned the Soviet invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and demanded implementation of all the resolutions adopted by the UN, the ICO, and the NAM. This was a daunting task as the number of anti-Soviet resolutions in several world fora grew each day. Nonetheless, both sides declared their solidarity with the struggle of the Afghan people in defending Islam, as well as Kabul's territorial integrity.[53]

This meeting was unusual in still another way. Oman and Indonesia expressed their concerns over the deterioration of the situation in the Arab-Israeli conflict because of Israel's occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The Joint Communiqué issued at the end of Mahathir's visit expressed the two countries' support for all efforts to ensure the achievements of a just and durable peace, taking into consideration the rights of the Palestinian people and the Arab nation. Muscat and Jakarta agreed that the desired peace could not be achieved without Israeli withdrawal from all of the occupied Arab territories and the exercise by the Palestinian people of their rights, including the establishment of their independent state and the restoration of Jerusalem to Arab and Islamic sovereignty. This was powerful rhetoric emanating from Muscat, when contrasted with earlier pronouncements, but it was a clear indication of changing perceptions and the need to make more decisive, even independent, policies.

In November 1988, Malaysian Information Minister Datuk Mohamed Rahmat visited Muscat, where he discussed bilateral communication ties with his

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[52]"Malaysian Prime Minister Holds Official Talks," *FBIS-MEA-82-044*, 5 March 1982, pp. C3–C4.

[53]"Joint Communiqué Issued," *FBIS-MEA-82-047*, 10 March 1982, pp. C12–C14.

Omani counterpart, `Abdulaziz bin Mohammed Al-Rowas. Al-Rowas placed relations between the Sultanate and Malaysia in their "historical and religious" perspectives.[54] Other visits, including that of Sultan Azian Shah in December 1991, allowed for additional contacts that set in motion permanent technical cooperation activities between the two countries.[55]

THAILAND

In August 1984, a delegation led by Thai Deputy Foreign Minister Praphat Limpaphan visited Oman to discuss bilateral and trade issues. The two sides agreed that their trade between 1981 and 1984 had grown steadily and that the joint Omani-UAE-Thai venture set up to develop the fishing industry in Oman was proving a commercial success. On the labor front, Praphat praised the 1,000 or so Thais working in the Sultanate and recommended that this figure be increased should demand for overseas workers rise. He thanked Omani Deputy Labor Minister Shaykh Al-Husni for praising Thai workers for their diligence and loyalties.[56] Omani-Thai relations were also discussed by Crown Prince Maha Wachirlongkon and Sultan Qaboos when the former visited Muscat in March 1989.[57]

As with other rapidly growing Asian economic powerhouses, Oman examined its relations with Bangkok through the economic prism and concluded that a number of improvements were in order. In April 1992, Muscat took a share-holding interest in Caltex Petroleum Corporation's new refinery in Thailand. This was the Sultanate's first downstream investment overseas and gave it an important foothold in the dynamic and growing Far Eastern market.[58] According to the Chairman of Caltex Oil (Thailand), Sukavich Rangsitpol, Muscat agreed to take a 20 percent interest in the refinery, which was Thailand's fifth. Of note, the commitment was made on condition that the refinery process Omani crude. Located at Mab Ta Phyd, in the Rayong District, the plant was slated to have a 120,000 barrels-per-day capacity when fully completed in 1996. The planned Omani stake in the joint venture followed Caltex's agreement with the Petroleum Authority of Thailand in November 1991. Muscat confirmed its oil refinery investment in Thailand in April 1993, looking forward to marketing its petroleum production more efficiently.[59] Part of the

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[54]"Malaysian Officials Visit Information Ministry," *FBIS-NES-88-232*, 2 December 1988, p. 18.

[55]"Talks Note Amicable Relations," *FBIS-NES-91-235*, 6 December 1991, p. 24.

[56]"Bangkok Reports on Thai Delegation's Visit," *FBIS-MEA-84-168*, 28 August 1984, p. C1.

[57]"Thai Crown Prince Arrives on Visit 8 Mar," *FBIS-NES-89-050*, 16 March 1989, p. 15.

[58]"Oman Oil to Buy Shares in Refinery Project," *FBIS-EAS-92-044*, 6 March 1992, p. 32.

[59]"Oman Government Plans to Take 20% Downstream Stake in Caltex Oil's New Refinery," *MEED* 36:14, 10 April 1992, p. 20; see also "As the Alliance Invests in a Thai Refinery," *CR-OY 3-93*, p. 18.

government's efforts to find overseas investment in the energy sector, the Thai project was another illustration of how Muscat was aligning its foreign and economic policies.[60]

VIETNAM

In April 1992, Vietnamese Deputy Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Nien, special envoy of the Vietnamese State Council President, visited Oman where he was received by Sultan Qaboos. At the conclusion of the meeting, both sides agreed in principle to establish diplomatic relations at ambassadorial levels in the near future. Omani Chamber of Commerce officials were quick to point out that numerous opportunities existed in Vietnam and expressed their readiness to offer whatever cooperation they could muster to create mutually beneficial contacts.[61]

THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

High-level contacts between Omani and Korean officials started in earnest in 1984 when Defense Ministry Under Secretary and Deputy Chief of Staff, Major General Hassan ibn Ihsan Nasib, visited Seoul.[62] Yusuf bin `Alawi paid an official visit in June 1988, during which he announced that Oman was looking at Korea's own five-year economic development plans as a model for the Sultanate. With his Korean counterpart, Foreign Minister Choe Kwang-su, `Alawi examined how the two countries could improve relations and asked the Korean government for additional technical assistance. As was the case with other Asian states, Oman was praised for its role in safeguarding sea traffic through the Straits of Hormuz. In the aftermath of this visit, Seoul encouraged Korean private enterprises to invest in the Sultanate, especially in light industries, fisheries, and agricultural projects. The two ministers agreed to set up a joint economic commission for cooperation on trade and economic development.[63] The commission was entrusted to renew the 1977 agreement that allowed the Korean Overseas Fisheries Company (KOFC) to operate a trawler fleet in Omani waters. When the agreement came up for renewal in January 1989, Muscat demanded a royalty higher than the prevailing 38 percent of its annual catch, which proved difficult for Seoul. KOFC wound down its

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[60]"Oman Government to Invest in Oil Refinery," *MEED* 37:17, 30 April 1993, p. 24.

[61]"Nguyen Duy Nien Visits Kuwait, UAE, Oman," *FBIS-EAS-92-087*, 6 May 1992, pp. 51–52.

[62]"Deputy Chief of Staff Returns from ROK," *FBIS-MEA-84-195*, 5 October 1984, p. C2.

[63]"Choe Kwang-su, Omani Minister Hold Talks," *FBIS-EAS-88-119*, 21 June 1988, pp. 24–25; see also "Invites Investment in Oman," *FBIS-EAS-88-120*, 22 June 1988, pp. 11–12.

operations and transferred its base to Dubai in the UAE.[64] Despite this temporary setback, `Alawi reiterated Oman's pledge that it would not recognize the People's Democratic Republic of Korea (PDRK) unless the latter drastically changed its political system. As this pledge was made after the Sultanate had established diplomatic ties with the Soviet Union, `Alawi left the door ajar for the PDRK. Commenting on potential unification prospects, the Omani Minister of State for Foreign Affairs supported Seoul's recommendation that the two Koreas join the UN simultaneously. This preference pleased Seoul without necessarily offending Pyongyang. Still, Muscat and Seoul were mostly interested in promoting their commercial relations irrespective of their political perceptions. The Republic of Korea was already an active partner on the Omani scene and was likely to occupy a far larger role in the future. Simply stated, Muscat welcomed Seoul's competitive edge for first-rate materials and workmanship.

In December 1992, Korea's Samsung Company won an $11 million contract to supply eight rubber-tired gantries for the modernization of Mina Qaboos, the Sultanate's main port facility in Mutrah. Four of the gantries were delivered to Port Services Corporation in September 1993 and the rest in January 1994. Bids for the dredging work and the supply of gantry cranes were being evaluated, as a full civil engineering study to modernize and expand the port was under way. Given Seoul's record in this area, it was indeed likely that Korean companies would undertake most of the planned expansion.[65]

In June 1993, the Omani Electricity and Water Ministry prequalified companies for substation and transmission line work along the Batinah coast. Korea's Hyundai Corporation was a prequalifier and stood an excellent chance of winning the contract to supply and commission 130 kilometers of 132-kV double-circuit overhead transmission line, install 132-kV and 33-kV switch gears, and erect substation buildings as needed. This was a major construction project, as the transmission line was to run between Muscat, Al-Musana`a, Al-Khabura, and Sohar.[66] In short, Omani-Korean relations hovered around pragmatism, and irrespective of periodic difficulties, stressed long-term economic contacts.

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[64]"The Koreans Pull Out," *Country Report for Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, The Yemens* [hereafter, *CR-BQOY*], No. 4, London: The Economist Intelligence Unit, Ltd., 1989, pp. 25–26.

[65]"Samsung of South Korea to Supply Gantries for Mina Qaboos," *MEED* 37:51, 24 December 1993, p. 29.

[66]"Hyundai, Zubair, Kilpatrick and Others Pre qualify for Batinah Coast Substation Work," *MEED* 37:26, 2 July 1993, p. 33.

AUSTRALIA

Before 1984, Australia played a limited role in Oman. During the past decade, however, relations improved dramatically. Australian businesses endeared themselves to their Omani counterparts by offering quality goods and services at competitive prices. In fact, Australia was well placed to edge out many competitors, in large part because of the legacy of Grindlays Bank.[67] Throughout the 19th century, prominent Omani merchants dealt with Australian bankers through Grindlays' London and Bombay branches. Given the nonpolitical nature of the relationship, it was natural for the two countries to foster important economic ties after the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1984.

In April 1984, Australia's first Ambassador to the Sultanate, Allen Dewana Brown, presented his credentials to Sultan Qaboos as relations entered a new phase with both countries seeking closer commercial contacts.[68] Muscat was especially keen to improve these ties because of the track record demonstrated by Melbourne elsewhere in the Gulf. Indeed, the Australian business community was well known for its even-handedness and refusal to meddle in local affairs. Unlike their European counterparts, Australians brought with them skills adaptable to the region's hot climate, and turned a known work ethic into a model to emulate.

Between 1984 and 1986, a number of modest economic steps were initiated between Melbourne and Muscat. In 1986, Australian Energy and Natural Resources Minister Gareth Evans visited Oman, where he discussed bilateral cooperation. With senior officials, including Omani Petroleum and Minerals Minister Sa`id Ahmad Al-Shanfari, Evans examined several oil projects.[69] In December 1988, Australia's BHP Petroleum spuded its first exploratory well in an offshore concession it won from Petroleum Development Oman.[70] BHP drilled its first well, the Diba 1, in the 49,000-square-kilometer concession off the Batinah coast within record time. A 100-square-kilometer structure was tested, with a recoverable reserve potential estimated at 1.4 billion barrels. These early results were quickly rewarded as BHP Petroleum, as operator, won a

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[67]Grindlays Bank was first set up in 1828 and developed as an international financial institution offering retail and corporate banking services on the Indian subcontinent as well as in Asia. In 1984, Grindlays was acquired by the Melbourne-based Australia and New Zealand Banking Group (ANZ). The new bank, Grindlays Bank ANZ, continued its operations throughout the Gulf from its London regional office. The bank was well represented in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Oman. Its presence in Bahrain, through the commercial Grindlays Bahrain Bank and the offshore banking unit Grindlays International Bank, was and remained significant. See "Analysis—Grindlays Bank," *MEED* 32:32, 12 August 1988, p. 5.

[68]"Envoys' Credentials," *FBIS-MEA-84-087*, 3 May 1984, pp. C1–C2.

[69]"Australian Energy and Natural Resources Minister Gareth Evans Visited Oman," *MEED* 30:36, 11 October 1986, p. 29.

[70]"Australia to Explore for Oil," *MEED* 32:49, 9 December 1988, p. 24.

60 percent interest in production. International Petroleum Corporation (IPC) controlled 32 percent, and Tethys Exploration, a subsidiary of Australia's Arabex, the remaining 8 percent. By all accounts, this was a remarkable achievement in a very short period of time, and one that was noticed in Muscat.

The Omani-Australian relationship was not limited to oil drilling and, over time, animal husbandry and agriculture came to play a central role in bilateral affairs.

In June 1987, for example, Oman purchased a consignment of 8,700 Australian goats.[71] Cooperation agreements in animal husbandry and a variety of agricultural and industrial disciplines were signed in June 1990 between Primary Industries and Energy Minister John Kerin and Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries Mohammed bin `Abdullah bin Zaher Al-Hinai. This agreement called for Australian training in new technology to Omani nationals both in the Sultanate and in Australia.[72] A month later, Aerodata Holdings won a contract to carry out an aeromagnetic survey of the Batinah coast, to identify copper deposits there.[73] And in 1991, Australia's GRM International was awarded a contract to provide consultancy services for the Sultanate's second agricultural census.[74]

Other Australian companies that won lucrative contracts include the Bureau of Mineral Resources, to prepare a series of geological maps in 1989; and Auscon Consultants, for the construction of a sewage treatment plant in Sohar. Planned to serve 380,000 people, the Sohar plant was completed within 18 months and under cost.[75] Many other ventures were successfully initiated during the past decade. The latest was the lease of jet aircraft from Ansett to Oman Air, the Sultanate's new airline.[76]

Perhaps one of the most interesting recent developments in Omani-Australian relations was the August 1988 role played by Grindlays Bank ANZ. Grindlays financed Oman's budget deficit by meeting its short-term balance of payments needs. An estimated $100 million was raised to redress Muscat's cash flow

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[71]The consignment was purchased at an attractive price after Saudi Arabia refused the shipment; see "A Total of 8,700 Australian Goats Were Bought for Slaughter," *MEED* 31:32, 8 August 1987, p. 19.

[72]"Australian Energy Minister in Oman," *Reuters*, 13 June 1990.

[73]"Three Bids Submitted for Aeromagnetic Survey to Identify Copper Deposits," *MEED* 34:36, 14 September 1990, p. 25.

[74]"Seven Consultants Submit Bids for Agricultural Census Work," *MEED* 35:11, 22 March 1991, p. 17.

[75]"Rebids in for Sohar Sewage Plant," *MEED* 33:18, 12 May 1989, p. 20.

[76]In 1993, Ansett was absorbed into Qantas. However, the lease agreement signed in 1992 for a Boeing 737-300 aircraft went through before the Qantas takeover. The Oman Air aircraft, with Australian crews, was flying the internal line to Salalah as well as international routes to Dubai, the UAE, and Trivandrum, India. A second Australian leased-in 737-300 aircraft joined Oman Air in 1994.

problems.[77] Without much fanfare, this commercial relationship was amply rewarded in June 1989 when Grindlays opened a branch at the headquarters of the Royal Guard of Oman. The facility, slated for use by both military and civilian personnel, offered the public all modern banking services, including automated teller machines.[78]

Finally, it is also important to point out that Australia was asked and agreed to assist Oman in military affairs. In November 1990, Australian Minister of Defense Robert Ray and Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Peter Graton visited the Sultanate where they held high-level discussions with Sultan Qaboos, Secretary-General Saif bin Hamad Al-Battashi, and other Omani Defense Ministry officials.[79] Muscat's desire to diversify its traditional sources of weapons acquisition placed Melbourne in a good position. Even on this score, Australia's track record in the Sultanate was impressive. Seconded to British units during the long Dhufar rebellion in the 1960s and 1970s, Australians proved themselves to their Omani counterparts. It should, therefore, come as no surprise that Omani personnel would receive specialized training in Australia.

JAPAN

Political Relations

Contacts between Oman and Japan predated the formal establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 1973. Sultan Taymur bin Faysal, Qaboos' grandfather, spent many years in Tokyo and Kobe in the 1930s, "always traveling under the name T.F.T. Alsaid." Taymur married a Japanese woman in 1936, by whom he fathered a daughter, Buthayma, who later lived in Muscat. "The man who never wanted to be Sultan" found solace in his many travels and considered Japan ideal for a "civilized" lifestyle.[80] Since that time, Muscat and Tokyo have explored many additional avenues to quench their political thirsts. Inasmuch as both nations were seafaring powers in the past, a natural attraction drew them toward each other. Omanis admired the Japanese work ethic and the country's miraculous comeback after World War II, and the Japanese appreciated the Omani tolerance toward outsiders as well as their business savvy.

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[77]Grindlays led a consortium that included the Arab Banking Corporation, Saudi International Bank, Chase Manhattan Bank, Mitsubishi Bank, and Sumitomo Bank. See "Oman Quiet Signing Budget Loan," *MEED* 32:37, 16 September 1988, p. 25.

[78]"Grindlays Opens New Branch," *MEED* 33:21, 2 June 1989, p. 20.

[79]"Australian Defense Minister, Chief of Staff Visit," *FBIS-NES-90-229*, 28 November 1990, p. 10.

[80]J. E. Peterson, *Oman in the Twentieth Century: Political Foundations of an Emerging State*, London and New York: Croom Helm and Barnes and Noble, 1978, pp. 51–52 and 66 (footnote 17).

Tokyo's dependence on oil imports from the Persian Gulf region played an equally important role in attracting Japanese attention. Even though Muscat was a negligible oil producer in the early 1970s, it consciously chose to foster its economic ties with Tokyo. Unlike other regional states, however, Oman did not insist on Japanese political reciprocity, especially on sensitive matters. It reminded Japanese visitors of its contribution to safe navigation in the Straits of Hormuz, drawing attention to the fact that all traffic in the waterway passed though Omani territorial waters. Japanese officials noted with appreciation Oman's serious efforts to secure passage for most of their oil imports from the Persian Gulf region. At no time did Oman demand preferential economic arrangements because of its geographical responsibilities even though the inference was there for all to see. That approach earned the Sultanate goodwill and development assistance at a time when it needed it most. What followed was steady cooperation, with Oman providing crude oil at favorable prices and Japan extending technical cooperation.

A decade after diplomatic ties were established, Sultan Qaboos thanked Japan for its friendly cooperation in the development of water resources and the construction of dams to harness Oman's precious, scarce resource. He also expressed a desire to see cooperation extend to major projects, including the oil industry and the construction of pipelines.[81] In July 1988, Japan signed a protocol to survey and explore copper deposits in the Batinah. The geological survey included core drilling at both sites, estimated to contain 3–4 million tons of copper ore, which compared favorably with the 12 million tons available in the Sohar deposits.[82] In February 1989, Japanese Prime Minister Noboru Takeshita met with the Sultan's Personal Representative, Sayyid Thuwayni bin Shihab Al-Sa`id, in Tokyo. The encounter, held during Emperor Hirohito's state funeral, allowed for a thorough review of bilateral issues at a high level.[83] During the meeting, Sayyid Thuwayni sought Tokyo's assistance in increasing economic aid, and, subsequently a number of new projects were initiated. By the end of the 1980s, political contacts between Omani and Japanese officials had become more frequent and Tokyo's technical assistance more substantial.[84] Omani Minister of Trade and Industry Maqbul bin `Ali bin Sultan sought additional technical aid during his March 1992 visit to Tokyo when Foreign Minister Michio Watanabe reaffirmed Japan's willingness to extend as

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[81]"Sultan Qaboos Interviewed by Japanese Press," *FBIS-MEA-84-211*, 30 October 1984, pp. C2–C3.

[82]"Japanese to Fund Their Own Study of New Copper Sites," *CR-BQOY 3-88*, p. 23.

[83]"Takeshita Meets Oman's Special Envoy," *Kyodo News Service*, 27 February 1989.

[84]Between 1985 and 1989, Japan provided over $17 million in technical cooperation grants to Oman. An additional $3 million was disbursed as grant aid. Although these figures were modest, they represented 14 percent of all Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) to the Sultanate in 1989. Japan ranked second—after the United States—on the ODA bilateral donor list. See *Japan's ODA 1990*, Tokyo: Association for Promotion of International Cooperation, March 1991, p. 202.

much as $15 million over the next four or five years. Watanabe suggested that the two countries should set up a joint bilateral committee to "come up with worthy projects."[85]

Relations During the Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait

Sultan Qaboos asked Japan for a nonmilitary contribution to the world community's efforts to reverse the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. He raised the issue with Deputy Foreign Minister Taro Nakayama in Salalah in mid-August 1990, stating that Japanese contributions would be extremely significant and would further solidify the whole world's resolve against the Ba`athist regime. It was during this meeting that Oman took a clear public stand against Iraqi aggression and announced its support for the deployment of a combined international force to the Gulf region.[86]

A few months later, Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu met with Sultan Qaboos in Salalah, where the two discussed bilateral affairs as well as the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Kaifu pledged additional economic and technical aid to assist Oman in gradually changing its oil-dependent economic structure.[87] At the end of their discussions, Qaboos declared that he appreciated Kaifu's counsel and considered it a demonstration of Japan's permanent interest in the area. "Even if Japan is geographically distant, it is a close friend," asserted Qaboos.[88] His concluding remarks were noteworthy as Qaboos was not given to hyperbole. This was yet another opportunity to confirm the dramatic changes under way in the Sultanate's foreign policy. Non-Western powers received increased attention by a ruler keenly aware of the need to diversify Oman's partnerships. Without neglecting Muscat's traditional alliances, he noted Japan's importance with great care, emphasizing the priorities of the coming decades.

Bilateral Trade Issues

Oman and Japan engaged in trade early in the 20th century. In the 1930s, for example, inexpensive Japanese cotton cloth goods drove some British products out of the Omani market.[89] This diligence meant that Japanese-Omani economic ties improved over time and, by the 1980s, achieved a privileged status.

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[85]"Tokyo Hopes to Extend Technical Aid to Oman," *FBIS-EAS-92-043*, 4 March 1992, p. 8.

[86]"Oman's Sultan Urges Japan's Help in Gulf Crisis," *Kyodo News Service*, 19 August 1990.

[87]"Kaifu Heads for Oman for Talks with Sultan Qaboos," *Kyodo News Service*, 7 October 1990.

[88]"Oman Sultan Says Gulf Crisis May Require Military Action," *Kyodo News Service*, 7 October 1990.

[89]Robert Geran Landen, *Oman Since 1856: Disruptive Modernization in a Traditional Arab Society*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1967, p. 405.

In fact, Tokyo has been very active for the better part of the past two decades in the search for, and development of, new oil fields in Oman, thus fulfilling its obligations as a major trading partner of the Sultanate.

In July 1980, Japan's Mitsui Engineering and Shipbuilding Company signed a $91 million contract with the Omani government to build the Sultanate's first refinery.[90] By October 1980, Mitsui and Nissho Iwai Corporation had agreed to purchase 10,000 barrels of crude a day at $36.50 a barrel in a long-term agreement.[91] A year later, Oman lowered the price of its crude oil for Japan, in exchange for fresh Japanese investments in the Sultanate. Petroleum and Mineral Affairs Minister Sa`id Ahmad Al-Shanfari then requested a yen-dominated loan from Tokyo to start a new irrigation program. Al-Shanfari made the request during a Tokyo meeting with the head of the Ministry for International Trade and Industry (MITI), Sosuke Uno, in November 1983. In the event, the request was rejected because Japanese law prohibited the extension of soft loans to high-per-capita-income states. With a 1983 per-capita income of $5,300, Oman did not qualify, but it did receive an export credit for its irrigation program. Al-Shanfari accepted MITI's offer and signed four additional development projects, which guaranteed a long-term Japanese presence in Oman's burgeoning oil industry.[92] This was a very successful visit in more ways than one. On his return to Muscat, Al-Shanfari revealed that 60 percent of Omani crude oil exports would go to Japan by the end of 1983.[93] Japex Oman Ltd., a Japanese oil exploration and development concern, enhanced the relationship further when, in mid-1984, it discovered natural gas at its second testing well in the Sultanate. Although Japex had struck oil at its first well in February 1984, the gas discovery proved far more attractive.[94] Because of this find, the Japan Export-Import Bank authorized a $200 million untied loan to Oman to help finance the nation's agricultural development and social infrastructure improvement programs. Bank officials described the loan extension as part of the government's policy for safe navigation of the Persian Gulf.[95]

In November 1992, Japan's Mitsui and Company won a $34.5 million contract to upgrade Oman's refinery which involved the installation of a continuous catalyst regeneration (CCR) unit and modification of existing equipment to en-

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[90]"Mitsui of Japan to Build an Oil Refinery for Oman," *The Wall Street Journal*, 7 July 1980, p. 8.

[91]"Oman Oil Deal Cited with Mitsui, Nissho," *The New York Times*, 27 October 1980, p. 24.

[92]"Oman Seeks Extension of Yen-Dominated Loans," *FBIS-EAS-93-223*, 22 November 1983, p. C2.

[93]"Oil Minister on Production, Exports to Japan," *FBIS-MEA-83-230*, 29 November 1983, p. C3.

[94]"Japex Oman Ltd.," *The Wall Street Journal*, 26 June 1984, p. 28.

[95]"Soft Loans Are Made Available," *CR-BQOY 1-88*, p. 24; see also "Ex-Im Bank Extends Untied Loan to China, Oman," *Kyodo News Service*, 3 March 1988.

able the refinery to produce unleaded gasoline. The CCR unit was to rationalize operations and allow the refinery to operate continuously without periodic shutdowns to regenerate its platinum catalyst. The upgrade coincided with the planned construction of a US$9 billion liquefied natural gas (LNG) facility at Bimma, 150 kilometers southeast of Muscat. As the two plants were to be built at the same location to cut cost on infrastructure investment, Japanese companies were well placed to earn the new contract as well.[96] To no one's surprise, Japanese corporations helped establish Oman LNG, in June 1993. Muscat, through the Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Affairs, held 51 percent of the company's shares, with the remainder going to Royal Dutch/Shell (34 percent), France's Total (6 percent), the United States' Partex (2 percent), and Japan's Mitsubishi (3 percent), Mitsui (3 percent), and Itochu (1 percent). Oman LNG will own the 5,000-tons-per-year facility and manage all shipping and marketing activities when the first shipment is exported in mid-1999.[97] This was yet another example of the Japanese successes in Oman's rapidly growing industrial base.

Japan won a US$ 1.8 million contract to draw up Oman's next five-year (1996–2000) industrial development plan for domestic industry in May 1993, further indicating how close the relationship had become. The agreement provided for a full review of Oman's industrial sector and covered infrastructure, legal and supporting programs and policies, as well as recommendations on improving salient aspects. The plan was "to include an industrial investment strategy for incorporation into the five-year plan and programs to stimulate industrial growth rates."[98] True to Omani aspirations, the contract tasked its authors to concentrate on international marketing of local products and the training of Omani nationals.[99]

Thus, Oman's growing closeness with Japan fell within its broader foreign policy initiatives to reach and maintain an "equilibrium" between world powers. This approach was devised to avoid being bound to a single power, or even a single world bloc, and, toward that objective, the Sultanate developed special commercial relations with Japan. It was Tokyo and not Britain—as it is commonly believed—that was Muscat's leading trader partner in the early 1990s. That suited Omanis, who looked to the future of Asia and saw a role in it for themselves.

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[96]"Mitsui Awarded Refinery Job," *MEED* 36:48, 4 December 1992, p. 37.

[97]"Establishment of Oman LNG Is Finalized by Shareholders," *MEED* 37:24, 18 June 1993, p. 21.

[98]"Japan Will Finance Development Plan," *CR-OY 3-93*, p. 23.

[99]"Japan to Finance Drawing Up of Industrial Development Plan for Domestic Industry," *MEED* 37:26, 2 July 1993, p. 33.

In the words of Petroleum and Mineral Affairs Minister Sa`id bin Ahmad Al-Shanfari, "Asia is Oman's natural trading arena, to which [Muscat] will devote considerable attention now and in the future."[100] This assessment was true to the character of astute tradesmen who managed their affairs for the long term. For the Sultanate, the Far East represented opportunities that required careful management, steady investments, and political affiliations. In this arena, Muscat proved that, with relative ease, it could achieve commercial objectives while remaining true to its values, especially when the two coincided.

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[100]Interview with Sa`id bin Ahmad Al-Shanfari, Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Affairs, Muscat, 20 September 1993.

Chapter Eight

OMAN AND SOUTH ASIA

Because of their proximity to Oman as well as their rich and varied legacies, India and Pakistan have played important roles in Omani foreign policy. Geography and trade were the driving forces behind every contact between them. Many of these relationships were strengthened when trade contacts improved. That, in turn, introduced a sense of both rivalry and cooperation. During Oman's imperial period, for example, the subcontinent was a prime target for successive rulers who perceived an economic need to expand beyond their borders. European powers were similarly motivated. With the collapse of the Omani empire, however, a new set of relationships developed between Omanis and the peoples of the subcontinent. Since 1970, a proximity of ideas and kinship was added to established economic interests and alliances. Aware of the Indian subcontinent's potential in the region, Muscat developed specific policies toward India and Pakistan. They, in turn, recognized the Sultanate's unique capabilities in the Indian Ocean region and the Arabian Peninsula.

INDIA

Omanis first came in contact with Indians under the Sumerian and Harrapan civilizations. Early tradesmen in the Indus Valley, who traded in copper and other metals, became interested in Oman because of vast copper deposits in the Sultanate. Although little is known about the early settlements of Indians in Oman, significant contacts were established as far back as 600 AD. Hindu temple ruins in Qalhat, dating to the 15th century, suggest that a number of Indians settled there earlier than generally assumed. Further evidence of this early presence was the recorded plight of Hindu merchants from Khor Fakkhan before the Portuguese sacked the city in 1507. In fact, Indians played a crucial role in the trade that dominated Omani ties with the Portuguese and other foreign powers for much of the 19th and 20th centuries. Commercial life in Muscat and

Mutrah was, for all practical purposes, in the hands of Banyan merchants.[1] That influence was so prevalent that Indian merchants gained strengths and "replaced the Al Bu Sa`id rulers as the paramount economic power in Oman."[2] Because of this presence, and save for the Iranian, Zanzibari, and British involvement in Oman, India played the most crucial role in shaping the Sultanate's modern history. Unfortunately, these ties were neglected for most of the 20th century, even if noticeable improvements were ushered in after 1970. Notwithstanding the Sultanate's limited population, New Delhi perceived the need to improve relations with Muscat and, as the 21st century approached, positioned itself to initiate new economic linkages that promised to benefit both countries.

Historical Ties

Under the Rashidun Caliphate, Omanis joined in the Arab conquest of Persia by volunteering troops and material. Between 600 and 700 AD, Omani seafarers raided Western India, continuing on and off until the early 1700s.[3] In the 11th century, Mahmud Al-Ghazni launched a number of deadly raids on the Indian coastline and subjugated his enemies by forcing them to abandon their warrior heritage in favor of farming and trade. These early successes led to the Omani imperial expansion during the reign of Balarab bin Sultan (1679–1692) and Saif bin Sultan (1692–1711), both in the Ya`ribah Dynasty. Bombay itself was attacked but never conquered by Omanis.[4] Other cities along the coast fared less well. Despite these violent raids, which did not endear attackers to the Indian population, a large number of Indians traveled to Oman, where many settled and started the lucrative business relationship that continued over the years. Not even the British occupation of India could prevent this trade from flourishing, even though Omani-Indian relations became subservient to London after Britain gained control over the subcontinent.

One of the earliest Indian communities to establish roots in Oman was the Bhattias from Sind Province. The Bhattias, who had been settled in Sind and Kutch Provinces since the 11th century, launched commercial contacts with their counterparts throughout the Arabian Peninsula and Africa and, by the

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[1]The term Banyan derives from the Gujarati word Vaniya (plural Vaniyan), "a trading man" and was adapted to mean all Hindu merchants regardless of caste. See Calvin H. Allen, Jr., *Sayyids, Shets and Sultans: Politics and Trade in Masqat Under the Al Bu Sa`id, 1785–1914.* Doctoral Dissertation, Seattle, University of Washington, 1978, p. 128, note 1 [hereafter, *Sayyids and Shets*].

[2]Ibid., p. 99.

[3]Calvin H. Allen, Jr., *Oman: The Modernization of the Sultanate,* Boulder, Colorado, and London: Westview Press and Croom Helm, 1987, pp. 26, 38.

[4]Ibid., p. 37.

17th century, their number had increased in Muscat and along the Batinah coast. In time, especially during the Portuguese occupation of Oman, their unparalleled business skills exponentially enhanced regional trade.[5]

Major towns in Sind Province were linked to the coastal city of Tattha, which played a critical role in providing much needed labor to the myriad of enterprises that were created over a very short period of time. In addition to grain, Tattha encouraged the production of silk products, cotton yarns, opium, ghee, indigo, sugar, and many other items to meet a growing demand in the Arabian, African, and Central Asian markets. Sind Province became a powerhouse in the trade world which, in turn, necessitated the rise of a middle- and upper-class establishment of moneychangers, bankers, shopkeepers, and sellers. For most of these merchants and bankers, Muscat was the key entrepôt, capable of servicing markets within a very large area. The Tattha-Muscat trade, many believed, was so lucrative that any power gaining control over it would inherit commercial as well as strategic advantages. Indeed, this was one reason why the British pursued the Portuguese so fiercely and first broached the idea of defeating Lisbon in Southwest Asia.

For all the political justifications for mobilizing against the Portuguese, including differences in European political affairs, economic interests dictated that Britain oppose Portugal. Business rules prevailed. All parties knew that trade through Muscat brought in generous customs levies that represented a handsome additional income. After all, Muscat was chosen as a favorite entrepôt because successive Sultans granted special concessions, since no poll taxes were levied on Indian merchants. Both Lisbon and London were amply aware of these privileges and sought to endear themselves with all parties before they deployed forces to occupy the area. For the Indians, life in Muscat retained its beneficial aspects, no matter who was in charge. Tolerant `Ibadhi traditions allowed Hindus to built a temple in Muscat after a large number arrived from Basra. However, an anti-Hindu uprising in Basra left many wondering whether they could continue to live there safely. So, to demonstrate their allegiance to Muscat and to cement their sense of belonging in their new land, members of the new temple gave their idol a representation of the deity Govindraj—wearing an Omani dagger in its vestments.[6] This was a monumental act of allegiance that was favorably noticed by Omani rulers.

Although four Hindu temples were established in Muscat by the mid-1760s, and Indians continued to prosper under the Al Bu Sa`id dynasty, Tattha faced an economic collapse in the early 1800s. When a strong challenge emerged from

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[5] *Sayyids and Shets*, op. cit., p. 101.

[6] Ibid., p. 103.

the Hindu community in Kutch, however, the Tatthas entered into a competition with the Sindis. No longer could the Sindis enjoy a monopoly on lucrative trade routes going through Muscat. Indeed, Hindu merchants did not consider Muscat to be just an entrepôt. Rather, many brought their families and established homes in Oman and, in time, several leading merchants played key roles in Omani political life. When an influential Hindu merchant, Narutem, wanted to prevent a Portuguese officer from marrying one of his daughters, for example, he offered his services to sabotage the Portuguese garrison.[7] Sultan bin Saif was successful in defeating the Portuguese partly because of this valuable assistance. Nevertheless, British influence throughout the area meant that the Indian presence was expendable. By the middle of the 19th century, Hindu merchants withdrew from Oman and many returned to India, although dozens of families stayed on.

With the expulsion of the Portuguese from the Indian Ocean area, Tattha experienced a general economic decline, as the British preferred to deal through Surat and Bombay. Nature was equally unkind to the population of Tattha, when the Indus River changed course, stripping the city of its waterway access. To make matters worse, Muslim Talpur dynasty chiefs, who gained control over Sind Province in the 1780s, persecuted Hindus who fled to Karachi.[8] Given their skills, Sindis could well have continued their trade through Karachi were it not for two additional factors. The new rulers in Muscat were not content with customs levies generated through existing firms. Al Bu Sa`id mercantile activities meant that the Sindis had to compete directly with the ruling family. Although no Hindus were expelled from Oman, few were encouraged to remain in such prominent roles and compete with Muscat's leading family. What was even more devastating to the Sindis in Muscat was the rise of another group of Bhattia merchants, the Kutchis.

Semiarid and isolated Kutch, lying to the east of the Indus River mouth, lived by means of the sea. Through the clairvoyant leadership of its ruler, Godji II (1760–1778), Kutchi seafarers launched a massive shipbuilding program, in large measure to seek an alternative source of income. The construction of several dams on the Indus River had a negative effect on Kutchi agriculture, which left many able-bodied persons idle. In addition to the dam, famine and plague descended on Kutch in 1812, followed by an earthquake in 1819. Few would think twice about leaving the inhospitable terrain that Kutch had become. Moreover, unlike the merchants from Sind, the sailors from Kutch relied on a measurable advantage in Muscat: They sold directly to the Al Bu Sa`id ruling family without going through a middleman. Unable to compete, many Sindis

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[7]Ian Skeet, *Muscat and Oman: The End of an Era*, London: Faber and Faber, 1974, pp. 33–34.

[8]Ibid., p. 105.

left for Bahrain, where the pearl trade was flourishing. In Muscat, the Kutchis were ideally placed, as they fulfilled the simple task of carrying goods between India and Oman without establishing permanent roots in the city, and they had the support of the ruling family.

Sayyid Sa`id bin Sultan (1807–1856) hired many Kutchis to act as his agents and brokers. A few were entrusted with important administrative posts in government, and Bhattia Kutchis proved valuable allies when the Sultan expanded his influence in Zanzibar. Sa`id entrusted most of the Muscat trade into the hands of key Kutchi families who ensured that the ruler's coffers were constantly replenished. When Zanzibar produced goods, for example, Kutchis purchased some for the Muscat market, thereby satisfying legal needs and, in the process, increased their own economic clout. By 1840, an estimated 2,000 Kutchis lived in Muscat, unquestionably becoming the "principal mercantile power in the city."[9] Only the accession of Imam Azzan bin Qais, and his desire to impose a fundamentalist `Ibadhi regime disrupted this beneficial relationship. Many Indians left the internecine environment of Muscat and Oman in 1868. This dark period lasted until 1871, but by then the damage was done: Scores of Hindus resettled elsewhere. However, a younger generation replaced those who had left, as Turki bin Sa`id recognized the important commercial role that Banyans played in his country's prosperity. Equally important were the intrafamily disputes in Oman, which caused members of the remaining Indian community to lose existing commercial advantages. After 1871, Indian merchants regained strength, as they became favorite lenders to the ruling family. This prominence earned leading members of the community additional political advantages that persuaded many to overlook periodic setbacks. Unlike in the Azzan bin Qais period, Hindu religious celebrations were once again tolerated and special dietary laws respected. Most important, Kutchi and Gujarati were retained as spoken languages, although many Indians learned Arabic. In the end, however, Hindus in Muscat "made no attempt to assimilate" in Omani society, except to protect their economic situations.[10]

India-Oman relations entered their most difficult period under British rule. In 1875, London decreed that "anyone who had settled in Muscat after the British assumed direct control over his native territory in India, could obtain British protection." The vast majority of Indian merchants qualified.[11] Because of this unique privilege, disputes over jurisdiction in legal matters became more frequent, putting Omani and British officials on opposite sides. Indian merchants took advantage of this rare opportunity and, in doing so, circumvented

[9]Ibid., p. 111.

[10]Ibid., p. 116.

[11]Ibid., p. 124.

Muscati authority over them. It must also be emphasized that the Indian community's association with the British was like a double-edged sword. To be sure, the relationship insulated them from Omani interferences, but it also increased guilt-by-association sentiments that developed among Omanis. There is little doubt that many of the problems Indian merchants encountered with Omanis were directly related to New Delhi's relationship with the British. Many Indian merchants, including those who served Oman well, "were viewed as agents of British designs for Oman."[12] For all the benefits that British protection allegedly ushered in, the privilege undermined the credibility of the ruling family, who were accused by ordinary people of kowtowing to every British desire.[13]

Because of this legacy, official contacts between New Delhi and Muscat were minimal for most of the 20th century, even after Sultan Taymur bin Faysal abdicated his throne in 1932 and retired to Bombay. Taymur, who remained in India until his death in 1965, admired Indian society and felt a particular affinity for its sophistication. His son, Sa`id bin Taymur, was similarly inclined, since he received most of his education in the Chief's College, a British school in Ajmur. Despite this association, the first few decades of the 20th century were characterized by Oman's self-imposed isolation. Yet the Indian Consulate in Muscat played a useful role, since New Delhi did not neglect key contacts that were deemed important for the post-British period. For India, discreet contacts with Omani officials meant that their trade relations could resume after the overwhelming British interferences were removed. Everyone knew that without the significant Indian merchant community, business life in Muscat would come to a halt, because only Indians were considered suitable to run the Sultanate's economic engine.[14] Because of this understanding, no one in New Delhi was under any illusions that the situation could continue indefinitely.

When, in March 1950, London informed New Delhi that Muscat had given a formal notice of termination of its 1939 Treaty of Commerce and Navigation, India took the initiative. It responded positively to Sultan Sa`id bin Taymur's call for a separate agreement and signed a forward-looking Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation in March 1953. The new accord extended political recognition and the establishment of consulates and most-favored-nation treatment in trade.[15] It was distinguished in yet another way.

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[12]Ibid., p. 126.

[13]J. G. Lorimer, *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman, and Central Arabia*, Calcutta, India: Superintendent, Government Printing, 1915, pp. 513–516, 535–536, 553–555.

[14]Skeet, op. cit., pp. 191, 202.

[15]Husain M. Al-Baharna, *The Arabian Gulf States: Their Legal and Political Status and their International Problems*, Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1975, pp. 55–56.

Although Britain enjoyed unprecedented influence in both Muscat and New Delhi (because the treaty buttressed British claims at the United Nations when the "Question of Oman" was in full debate in the world body), it also recognized the importance of bilateral relations between Oman and India. So, no matter how unpleasant British interferences were, India's response to Sultan Sa`id bin Taymur was positive despite the watchful eye of the British Political Agent. New political and economic groundrules were being established, whether London liked it or not, or whether it could control them or not.

Political Ties Since 1970

A large number of Omanis returned to the Sultanate in the early 1970s after Qaboos adopted his "openness" policy. The doors of the country opened to entrepreneurs ready to participate in the building boom, because Oman lacked and needed everything. Since the great majority of Omanis tended to be more interested in commerce than in politics, the Indian merchant community faced its first real competition from the indigenous population. Despite this new element in Omani-Indian relations, the Indian community distinguished itself by providing proven expertise at prices lower than those of Western competitors. Indian firms earned important contracts to rebuild Al-`Alam Palace in Muscat as well as a myriad of significant other projects throughout the country. In addition to contributions made in building the Sultanate's infrastructure, Indians supplied the pool of middle managers. Most of the health care professionals at the Royal Hospital, for example, were Indian. A number of school teachers came from the subcontinent as well.

The political indifference so prevalent in India's outlook towards Oman since the turn of the century was soon replaced by a concerted effort to propel relations to a higher plane. Although India failed to respond to Omani calls for military assistance in the Dhufar War (1960–1975), New Delhi could not remain indifferent to regional security matters after the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in December 1979. A few months after the invasion, Sayyid Fahar bin Taymur, the Deputy Prime Minister for Security Affairs, visited New Delhi to discuss military ties with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. This effort was undertaken despite, perhaps because of, the well-known Indian-Soviet relationship. Fahar sought to strengthen and expand Indo-Omani relations in military training and counterterrorism.[16] Gandhi shared the Omani apprehension because the conflict brought the USSR that much closer to India's borders. Moreover, New Delhi was amply cognizant that the Soviet action led the United States to increase its naval deployments in the Indian Ocean. At a time when India was

[16]"Official Spokesman on Omani Envoy's Visit, *Foreign Broadcast Information Service-South East Asia* [hereafter, *FBIS-SAS*], *90-040*, 27 February 1980, p. S6.

championing nonalignment and rejected involvement of both superpowers in the affairs of developing countries, the Omani position was worth noting. Over time, India came to play a key role in regional negotiations between the conservative Arab Gulf monarchies and the USSR. During the Iran-Iraq War, for example, Yusuf bin `Alawi sought Indian assistance to convey a number of messages from the GCC heads of state to Moscow through New Delhi.[17]

Diplomatic contacts continued in earnest. In November 1985, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi visited Muscat to participate in the Sultanate's 15th National Day anniversary. A number of heads of state were also present, which allowed for several bilateral discussions, including key meetings with Sri Lankan National Security Minister Lalith Athulathmudali (with whom he broached the thorny issue of ethnic tensions on the island), and Pakistani President Zia ul-Haq (to discuss key political disputes affecting Kashmir).[18] With Qaboos, Gandhi held a fruitful meeting, for a full exchange of views on regional affairs. Qaboos expressed his confidence that ties between the two countries would move along and reviewed with Gandhi a variety of security questions then preoccupying the Omani ruler. The two men also discussed sensitive security matters, pledging to foster their relations in this area as well, and signed a Memorandum of Understanding to streamline Indian military assistance. A number of dentists were deputized from the Indian Armed Forces to serve for a two-year period in the Sultan's Armed Forces.[19] Over time, specialized personnel in construction, engineering, and communications were seconded to Omani units as needed. Within four years, significant improvements were noted, and in March 1989 Sayyid Fahar bin Taymur returned to India to conclude agreements on military cooperation between the two governments.[20] These discussions led to a two-day naval exercise (the first joint military activity between India and a Gulf state) off the coast of Oman in January 1993. Three Indian Navy vessels participated in the joint maneuvers, which included Royal Oman Navy and Royal Oman Police forces.[21] Rear-Admiral Madhvendra Singh, the Commander of the Indian Fleet, described the event as "historical," although it was more in line with New Delhi's efforts to demonstrate its technical reliability. Indian ships displayed the latest in naval electronics, helicopter landing pads, and fast patrol boats, all in the hope of winning several contracts from the Sultanate.

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[17]India's critical role during the protracted Iran-Iraq War was confirmed by the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs. Interview with Yusuf bin `Alawi at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Muscat, 16 January 1993.

[18]"Security Minister, India's Gandhi to Meet in Oman," *FBIS-SAS-85-222*, 18 November 1985, p. G1; see also "Zia ul-Haq Holds Talks with Rajiv Gandhi in Oman," *FBIS-SAS-85-223*, 19 November 1985, p. F1.

[19]Interview with H. E. Ranjit Gupta, Ambassador of India to Oman, Muscat, 18 January 1993.

[20]"Deputy Defense Minister Returns from India Visit, *FBIS-NES-89-050*, 16 March 1989, p. 15.

[21]"Naval Exercises with Oman Begin 12 January," *FBIS-NES-93-007*, 12 January 1993, p. 60.

The display pleased Omanis and although no orders for major equipment have yet been announced, Rear-Admiral Hilal bin Muhammad Al-Rashdi, then acting Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman, posited that this exercise "would activate better relationships between the two brotherly countries."[22] A $5 million contract was awarded to the Indian Navy in mid-1993 to carry out hydrographic surveys of the Omani coast, covering the coastline as well as the seabed. The results of this survey were expected to be used for the planned pipeline between India and Oman.[23]

As relations between Oman and India improved, attention once again refocused on economic concerns and, noticeably, was encouraged by Muscat. Omanis embarked on a conscious decision to lure the Indian merchant community back to the Sultanate. One of the most important visits in this vein occurred in April 1985, when Omani Petroleum Minister Sa`id Ahmad Al-Shanfari and his Indian counterpart signed an agreement to expand the development of energy-related enterprises between the two countries.[24] Other agreements followed in the construction, agriculture, and health fields. As agreements increased in number, Oman and India set up a Joint Commission in mid-1992 to manage their economic, trade, and technical accords.[25] The Indian Foreign Minister, Eduardo Faleiro, signed the agreement with his counterpart in Muscat at which time he also revealed that India and Oman would conduct joint naval exercises. Although the unanticipated announcement dwarfed the decision between Faleiro and Yusuf bin `Alawi to establish a Joint Commission, it reaffirmed the fast-paced nature of evolving ties between Muscat and New Delhi. Increasingly, India gained importance in Omani eyes because it represented unique strategic and commercial opportunities.[26] Importantly, the joint commission identified several new areas of cooperation between Muscat and New Delhi that were heretofore exclusively reserved for Western companies.

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[22]"The Sultanate Adds India to Its List of Military Partners," *Country Report for Oman, Yemen* [hereafter, *CR-OY*], No. 1, London: The Economist Intelligence Unit, 1993, p. 12.

[23]"And the Indian Navy Receives $5m Contract," *CR-OY-4-93*, p. 15.

[24]"Petroleum Minister Departs for India 8 April," *FBIS-MEA-85-068*, 9 April 1985, pp. C2–C3. In hindsight, this was probably the agreement that launched the many successive contacts that led to the 1993 decision to build a gas pipeline between the two countries (see below).

[25]Indian Minister of State for External Affairs, R. L. Bhatia, and Omani Under Secretary for Political Affairs, Haitham bin Tariq, signed this agreement. See "Agreement Signed with India to Set Up Joint Commission," *FBIS-NES-93-99*, 25 May 1993, p. 23; see also "Minister Visits Gulf to Counter Pakistani Campaign," *FBIS-NES-93-100*, 26 May 1993, pp. 39–40.

[26]F. J. Khergamvala, "India, Oman Plan Naval Exercises," *The Hindu* (Madras), 3 June 1992, p. 9; see also idem., "Faleiro Winds Up Fruitful Tour," *The Hindu* (Madras), 5 June 1992, p. 7.

The Indian Expatriate Community

With the mini-boom of the early 1970s, the number of Indian workers in Oman grew to over 70,000 by 1980. In addition to the large pool brought in for manual labor, Indian health care professionals came in droves.[27] Inasmuch as this community was growing so quickly, ugly incidents were not uncommon. Some Indian expatriate workers were treated with disdain and deported because of their involvement in unscrupulous businesses (selling forged residence and employment documentation to unsuspecting persons, for example).[28] By 1993, the number of Indian expatriates in the Sultanate reached 300,000, most of whom were employed in the health field. In fact, the majority of physicians practicing in Oman since the mid-1980s have been Indian. A noticeable private-sector presence was also encouraged as the managerial skills of Indian workers were duly noted. Many of the problems of the 1970s and 1980s gave way to a businesslike approach as the community grew in numbers and reputation. Because of their long-term presence in Oman, Indians, unlike other expatriate communities, made a real contribution to the Sultanate's welfare. Theirs was a serious commitment, despite all of the problems encountered along the way, to live and work in a country where many found shelter from persecution. Their debt of gratitude was repaid by their industriousness.

Bilateral Relations

Compared to the mid-1980s, bilateral trade between Oman and India declined slightly in 1990.[29] Despite this trend, New Delhi was involved in several industrial planning and construction programs under study in the Sultanate. In 1991, for example, India's Consulting Engineering Services (CES) served as project consultant on the expansion of Mina Qaboos, the main harbor at Mutrah, as well as the complete refurbishment of Seeb International Airport, where more duty-free shops and service counters were proposed.[30] CES earned contracts to design extensions for three ministries and submitted a bid to build a single-floor extension to the Ministry of Petroleum and Minerals in Ruwi. Blueprints for additions to the Interior and Agriculture and Fisheries Ministries were also submitted. The company won a significant contract to design and supervise

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[27]Allen, op. cit., p. 102.

[28]It must be added that expatriate workers in the Sultanate are protected by the Labor Law. They can, therefore, be deported only for sound reasons. See Liesl Graz, *The Omanis: Sentinels of the Gulf*, London and New York: Longman, 1982, pp. 168–169.

[29]"Trade with the Middle East, 1989–1990 Shows Only Small Rise Due to the Impact of the Gulf War," *MEED* 35:34, 30 August 1991, p. 33.

[30]"Contract Expected Soon for Supply of Cranes to RO 25M Mina Qaboos Project," *MEED* 35:49, 13 December 1991, p. 20; see also "India's Consulting Engineering Services Completes Designs and Tender Documents to Improve Airport Building," *MEED* 35:32, 16 August 1991, p. 19.

construction of the second phase of a sports complex in Salalah, to include a sports hall, swimming pool, and support facilities. Another successful Indian firm was Ballarpur Industries, which earned contracts from the Omani Electricity and Water Ministry to build and operate a power project at Manah. India's National Industries Development Corporation studied the Sultanate's industrial potential for the Commerce and Industry Ministry.[31]

As stated above, Oman and India agreed to develop petroleum and natural gas facilities, starting probably as early as 1985. Over the years, a number of feasibility studies were prepared that allowed both countries to properly assess where they stood. With the thawing of political tensions in the region and, more important, the realization that India's energy requirements were rising faster than available supplies, New Delhi welcomed an Omani proposal to elevate the relationship a few notches. For Muscat, India represented a huge market and was, because of geography if nothing else, the natural candidate. In mid-1991, Essar Gujarat won a four-year contract to provide drilling services to Petroleum Development Oman and, in a reciprocal agreement, the Oman Oil Company (OOC) initiated two joint ventures with the Hindustan Petroleum Company for a refinery in central India (estimated to cost $866 million) and with Bharat Petroleum Corporation for a larger refinery on the west coast.[32] The latter project was slated to include an 85,000-barrel-per-day lubrication oil plant (estimated to cost $1.7 billion).[33]

In March 1993, Oman and India signed a Memorandum of Understanding to build an underwater gas pipeline linking the two countries and to set up a series of joint refining and fertilizer projects in India. This ambitious proposal was awarded to OOC in June 1993, which, in cooperation with American, Italian, and Indian firms, decided to lay a natural gas pipeline 1,450 kilometers long and 1.07 meters in diameter between Oman and India.[34] Estimated to cost $4.5 billion, the pipeline was to be built along the continental shelf passing over Iranian and Pakistani territories, which necessitated agreements with both countries. When completed, the pipeline would carry 50 million cubic meters of gas per day to India's west coast. When the pipeline is fully operational,

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[31]"Consulting Engineering Services Wins Contract to Design and Supervise Construction of Sports Complex," *MEED* 35:42, 25 October 1991, p. 16; see also "Electricity and Water Ministry Invites Proposals to Build-Operate Power Project," *MEED* 35:47, 29 November 1991, p. 31; and "National Industries Development Corp. Awarded Contract to Study Sultanate's Industrial Potential," *MEED* 35:43, 1 November 1991, p. 18.

[32]"Essar Gujarat Wins $20 Contract from Petroleum Development Oman for Drilling Services," *MEED* 35:34, 30 August 1991, p. 26.

[33]"Accords with India for Refineries, Pipeline," *FBIS-NES-93-048*, 15 March 1993, p. 21; see also "Bold Moves to Expand Overseas," *MEED* 37:31, 6 August 1993, p. 15.

[34]"In India," *CR-OY-2-93*, pp. 19–20.

Oman will provide a third of New Delhi's daily needs of 160 million cubic meters per day by the late 1990s.

The agreement to construct the pipeline, an undertaking remarkable in its complexity and expense, was signed in June 1993, during Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao's visit to Muscat. In addition to the Iranian-Pakistani route, authorities considered a route that would cut straight across the Indian Ocean, toward Bombay or Bangalore. It remained to be determined whether the technically complicated direct route to India was feasible with available technology, given the depth of the Arabian Sea.[35] Minister Al-Shanfari and his Indian counterpart signed agreements to conduct feasibility studies for the pipeline as well as for two joint-venture oil refineries.[36]

`Ali bin `Abdallah Al-Tamimi, the adviser to the Omani Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Affairs, announced in November 1993 that OOC had opted for the technically more difficult, but shorter, deep-sea route. The longer alternative route, going through Iranian and Pakistani territories, proved to be fraught with political difficulties. Still, engineers involved in the feasibility study were quite optimistic, declaring that the technical problem of laying the pipeline at a depth of 3,000 meters (against a current record of 600 meters) would be solved by using "an advanced method which needs only one compressor station to be installed in Oman as opposed to the conventional method, which would require several pumping stations along the length of the pipeline."[37] Muscat dropped the natural gas pipeline project in mid-1994, after it concluded that the "bounds of present technology" would be stretched, opting instead to go with the more realistic alternative, namely, the Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) project that goes by ship. Oman LNG announced that it would become operational no later than mid-1999.[38]

In addition to these projects, in early 1993, India and Oman set up a joint venture fertilizer plant in the Sultanate and agreed to boost bilateral trade and

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[35]The American corporations were Bechtel and McDermott; the Italians were represented by Sanprogetti and Saipem; and the Indians, by Engineers India. See Hamish McDonald, "Fuel Injection," *Far Eastern Economic Review,* 19 August 1993, p. 43. See also "Petroleum Minister Describes Pipeline to India," *Joint Publications Research Service-Near East* [hereafter, *JPRS-NEA*], *93-088,* 13 August 1993, pp. 37–38.

[36]"Three Major Deals Signed," *Oman Daily Observer,* 16 June 1993, pp. 1, 3; see also "Oman and India to Boost Co-Operation in Energy Sector," *Oman Daily Observer,* 17 June 1993, p. 1.

[37]"Deep-Sea Route Is Chosen for Gas Pipeline," *CR-OY-1-94,* pp. 16–17.

[38]"But the Pipeline Has Been Put Aside," *CR-OY-3-94,* pp. 15. In late 1994, reports surfaced suggesting that the pipeline could still be constructed if new feasibility studies would provide much needed technical clarification. See "Gas Pipeline Is Resurrected," *CR-OY-4-94,* p. 12. Despite the prevailing optimism, however, technical hurdles proved insurmountable. See "Study Scheduled for Omani-Indian Gas Pipeline," *Oil and Gas Journal* 91:27, 5 July 1993, pp. 22–23; and "Oman Switches Route for Gas Pipeline to India," *Oil and Gas Journal* 92:31, 1 August 1994, pp. 26–27.

economic and technical cooperation. Both sides formalized their agreement on the hydrocarbon projects in a new Memorandum of Understanding, which included details on a $850 million gas-based fertilizer plant, to produce ammonia and urea. OOC and Rashtriya Chemicals and Fertilizers, as well as the Krishak Bharati Cooperative Limited, would undertake all investments and construction.[39]

Trends in Omani-Indian Relations

Although New Delhi was indifferent to Omani affairs during the long and painful period of British influence, it maintained several back-channel lines of communication, especially with Sa`id bin Taymur. India was looked upon with some favor not only because of its historical legacy and its sophisticated political outlook after World War II but also because of its public stands on the polarizing United Nations debates on the Question of Oman. Whereas the majority of Arab states voted against Oman, New Delhi either supported the Sultan in Muscat or abstained. This policy was the result not of what the British High Commissioner "counseled" but of the special relationship that India maintained with the Sultan. The favor was reciprocated by Qaboos in 1971 during the thorny debate over Bangladesh. Unlike the overwhelming number of Arab states, and despite the fact that it was a new member in the world body, Muscat abstained. It voted for its principles and was the only Muslim state not to fully support Pakistan. The Omani vote illustrated how Muscat intended to behave in the international arena.

Rather than let developments set its agenda, Oman adhered to established principles and tried not to deviate from them. It was not reticent and made a conscious decision to state what it believed in even if the consequences were severe.[40] Oman argued that Indian-Pakistani disputes were a bilateral concern and that the two countries should resolve differences without outside interferences. To be sure, Qaboos offered his good offices and opined, on a number of occasions, that all conflicts in the area were detrimental to regional security. He hoped that cooler heads would prevail so that the welfare of all states around the Indian Ocean would be preserved. Still, such statements proved far more useful than belligerent pronouncements or one-sided votes at the UN. They also indicated that Oman would not be party to religious conflicts. A significant characteristic of Omani foreign policy, one that drew

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[39]Robin Allen, "Oman and India Agree $850m Venture," *The Financial Times*, 2 August 1994, p. 5; see also "Outcome of Rao Visit to Oman Reported," *JPRS-NEA-93-103*, 18 October 1993, pp. 6–9.

[40]Oman chose the same approach after Egypt and Israel signed the Camp David Accords. Rather than kowtow to the Baghdad-led rejectionist front, Muscat (along with Morocco and Sudan) stood its ground in support of its principles.

heavily on tolerant `Ibadhi teachings, was Muscat's abhorrence of religious wars. This was unique in the area. For Qaboos, as well as the majority of Omanis, Muslims and Hindus could certainly live in peace as they had done for centuries in the Sultanate without generating internecine warfare.

In the early 1990s, India grew in importance in Omani perceptions as Muscat looked at the vast markets on the subcontinent as a source of investment and viewed India as a country with whom interdependence would generate mutually beneficial results.

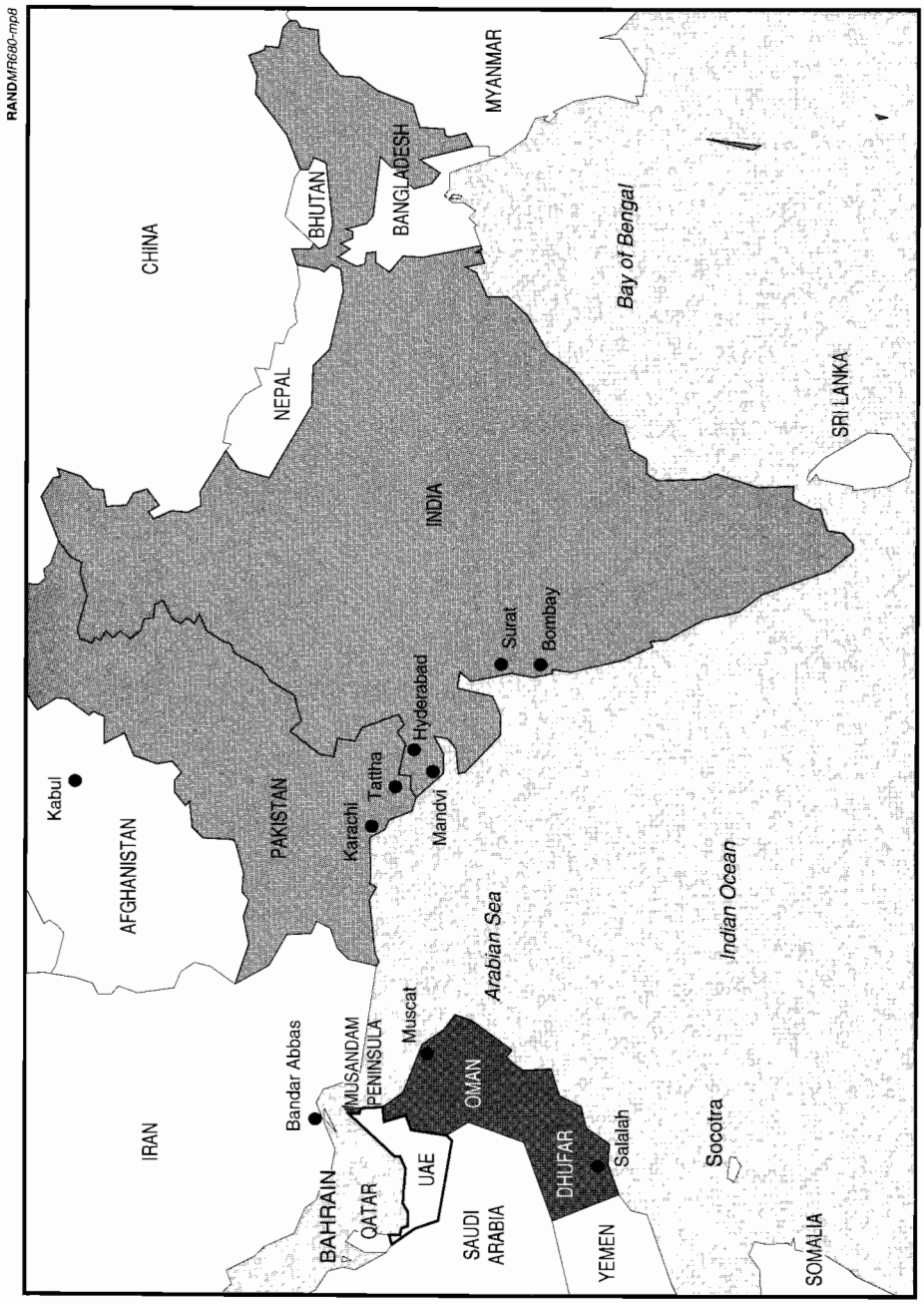
PAKISTAN

Sayyid Sa`id bin Sultan (1807–1856) consolidated the power of the Al Bu Sa`id dynasty by extending his influence throughout the Persian Gulf region and Eastern Africa. He successfully held the Al Sa`ud from Najd at bay, even if he recognized their claims to territories north of Sohar, and occupied Bahrain for a short period of time. His most astute decision, however, was to support Muscati merchants from the Indian subcontinent who buttressed his rule significantly by increasing revenues. He owned dozens of income-generating vessels that plowed the seas between Oman and India, which gave the ruler a personal stake in trade matters. Importantly, Sayyid Sa`id claimed the exclusive right to protect navigation in the Gulf and, in time, all foreign powers opted to deal with him directly. It was under him that Oman ruled both sides of the Straits of Hormuz after he leased Bandar Abbas and Kerman from Persia. He also retained Shah Bahar and Gawadar, "the latter a gift to his grandfather Sa`id bin Ahmad from the Khan of Kalat in 1785."[41] Although Gawadar was the last remnant of the Omani overseas empire, it played a crucial role in inter-Omani disputes and, to a significant degree, ensured that its inhabitants (Baluchis as well as Pakistanis) would have a role in the development of the Sultanate (Map 8).

Historical Ties

The Gawadar enclave in Baluchistan (today in Pakistan) came under direct Omani rule in 1792 when the Sultan dispatched a wali (governor) as well as a small garrison to the Makran coast city. Isolated and desolate, Gawadar lacked the minimum necessary infrastructure, relying on periodic visits from an Indian or a Pakistani physician for medical care. A modest dispensary was set up to care for the population in between these periodic visits. Because of the political

[41]Graz, op. cit., p. 11.



Map 8—Oman—India/Pakistan

Map 8—Oman—India/Pakistan

dispute with India, it was never clear what would happen to Hindus living in Gawadar, which further complicated the territory's status. Still, for Omani rulers, the value of Gawadar lay in its customs revenue, which amounted to far more than any expenditures.[42] Control over Gawadar meant that Omani rulers could move their troops more easily. In 1798, for example, after a rather brief military campaign, Omani forces occupied the customs domain that fell within the Bandar Abbas district, which included the islands of Hormuz, Qishm, Hanjam, and Minab.[43]

When Salim bin Thuwayni acceded to the Omani throne in 1866, his conservative `Ibadhi preferences caused some anxiety among the populations of Muscat and Gawadar. Relations were strained again after the usually peaceful Baluchi tribe of Rinds, who owned and traded slaves, opposed Sultan Turki bin Sa`id's decision to ban the slave trade, which was made on the basis of the 1873 treaty with the British abolishing the slave trade. Coming on the heels of a major shift in policy, the Sultan's decision to free all slaves who took refuge in Gawadar was a rude awakening to the Rinds.[44] Turki further strengthened his rule in Gawadar when the British annexed most of Baluchistan in 1886. Local tribesmen who may have entertained the idea of a reprisal on the port were now neutralized.

Although Gawadar was given to an Omani ruler as a gift, "the Khan of Kalat never relinquished his claim to sovereignty."[45] In fact, he renewed it in 1938 when the possibility that oil might be available in the area was first broached. London was equally interested in Gawadar's fate, albeit for logistical reasons. For a time, an air route was under discussion and the British considered Gawadar an intermediary staging post. The British Political Resident in Muscat proposed the purchase of the territory in 1927 (for merely £135,000), recommending that the Sultan pay 25 percent of this sum to the Khan of Kalat. The Sultan, who wanted to raise funds for his conquests, suggested that the Government of India lease the territory. Before a decision could be reached, World War II broke out and froze the issue. In 1947, India sought the return of Gawadar to Kalat State, although more pressing questions preoccupied officials dealing with the transfer of power in New Delhi. To his credit, the Khan wanted to negotiate directly with the Sultan, but London prohibited him from doing so. When Britain granted independence to both India and Pakistan, the Khan of

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[42]Wendell Phillips, *Oman: A History,* London: Longman, 1967, pp. 69–70.

[43]Allen, op. cit., p. 42; see also Robert G. Landen, *Oman Since 1956: Disruptive Modernization in a Traditional Arab Society,* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1967, p. 218.

[44]Phillips, op. cit., p. 147.

[45]*The Persian Gulf Historical Summaries 1907–1953,* Volume II, Gerrards Cross, England: Archive Editions, 1987, p. 185.

Kalat delayed his accession to Pakistan even as Karachi preempted him by recognizing the Makran Province as an autonomous entity. The Khan lost his claims to Gawadar in the process. Importantly, Pakistan never wavered in its demands to regain full control over Gawadar and, starting in 1948, launched a campaign toward that objective. Britain raised the issue with Sultan Sa`id bin Taymur who, for a variety of reasons, was willing to turn Gawadar over to London but not to Islamabad or New Delhi.

In 1949, Islamabad upped the ante and offered to pay a price for Gawadar "equal to the gross customs revenue for the ten years preceding the war."[46] Islamabad aimed to end all illegal activities in the enclave as well as reclaim hold over a strategic piece of territory. Of course, Pakistan was also apprehensive that Muscat would cede Gawadar to India, creating yet another territorial dispute on the subcontinent. London opined that the sale would be appropriate but Sultan Sa`id bin Taymur refused all advice on this matter. To his credit, the Sultan ignored Pakistani-orchestrated disturbances that aimed to force a decision. He even refused to receive an official Pakistani delegation in 1951 "on the ground that Pakistan was a Dominion and that he had always dealt with British Dominions through His Majesty's Government."[47] To set the matter straight, Sa`id inquired on the applicability of Muscat's 1891 agreement, which forbade the ruler from ceding any territory to a foreign potentate. When London responded in the affirmative, he asked the British Political Agent to convey the message to Islamabad, while recommending that Pakistan consider leasing Gawadar. Pakistani officials became concerned that Sa`id bin Taymur would turn over the territory to India after he signed a Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation with that country in 1953. That was not to occur. Eventually, however, persistence proved effective as the uprising in the Dhufar Province necessitated substantial new resources. Sa`id needed funds to put down the 1957–1959 rebellion and £3 million, Islamabad's latest financial offer for Gawadar, proved acceptable.[48]

Although the Sultan was forced to sell his Baluchi territory, substantial human contacts with Baluchistan continued long after 1958. When the Sultan initiated a reorganization of his Armed Forces in the mid-1950s, he relied primarily on fiercely loyal Baluchi tribesmen to serve him. The tradition was passed on to his successor and, although accurate statistics were not available, Omanis of Baluchi origin continued to serve in the Sultan's Armed Forces in the 1990s.

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[46]Ibid., p. 186.

[47]Ibid.

[48]John E. Peterson, *Oman in the Twentieth Century: Political Foundations of an Emerging State*, London and New York: Croom Helm and Barnes and Noble, 1978, pp. 87–88.

Political Ties Since 1970

Omani-Pakistani relations were at their lowest in the early 1970s over the thorny question of Bangladesh. As discussed above, Muscat was the only Muslim government that did not support Pakistan, preferring to abstain from key votes at the UN. Irrespective of any British advice or recommendations he may have received, Qaboos held to his principles and, not surprisingly, adhered to them even when the decision singled him out. Understandably, the decision not to side with Pakistan hindered the pace of developments between Oman and Pakistan, poisoning the atmosphere. Additional complications were added to the agenda after Islamabad espoused stricter Islamic regulations in dealing with its own population. Although Muscat was far less affected by the direct imposition of Shariah law in Pakistan, the overall trend in Pakistani affairs stood in sharp contradiction to more tolerant `Ibadhi values. Notwithstanding such differences, Oman sought to improve relations with Pakistan if for no other reason than that of maintaining correct relations with all of its neighbors. Moreover, the Gawadar legacy remained and, Muscat was well aware, so did the eventual need to delineate the sea border between the two countries. Because Islamabad had supported Sultan Sa`id bin Taymur (by providing troops for the Dhufar front) Qaboos owed a debt of gratitude. Pakistan was a delicate matter in need of special attention.

Relations between the two countries improved considerably in the late 1970s after Yusuf bin `Alawi visited Islamabad on several occasions. These early contacts prepared the way for high-level meetings between Qaboos and President Zia ul-Haq. The two men met in early 1981 when Zia stopped in Muscat to visit the growing Pakistani expatriate community in the Sultanate.[49] During their private meeting, Qaboos and Zia agreed to cooperate on several bilateral issues, and both emphasized the long-standing cultural and historical ties linking them in the region. Naturally, the crisis in Afghanistan was high on their agenda as well. Qaboos thanked Zia for Pakistan's contribution to regional security, especially the presence of a 10,000-man brigade in Saudi Arabia, and reiterated his appreciation for the commonality of views between the two countries. Although not formally included on their agenda, the two men discussed the Kashmir crisis that threatened to damage improving relations throughout the Indian Ocean states. Neither Islamabad nor New Delhi was ready to address the issue head on and Qaboos' offer to use his good offices between the two countries was premature. His assessment for a potential military escalation in the subcontinent remained intact even if neither Zia nor Gandhi displayed the foresight of the Omani. In any event, the conversation turned to more practical matters when Zia, acting on a suggestion from Pakistani expatriates, proposed

[49]"Pakistani President Arrives in Muscat 18 Jan.," *FBIS-MEA-81-012*, 19 January 1981, p. C3.

that Islamabad and Muscat improve their media links. Toward that objective, the Pakistani Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Raja Zafar ul-Haq, signed an agreement with his Omani counterpart, `Abdulaziz bin Mohammed Al-Rowas, in December 1981.[50] The two countries concluded economic, trade, and technical cooperation, including the establishment of a joint ministerial committee, and agreed to expand their cultural and educational cooperation.

High-level contacts continued throughout the early 1980s. Yusuf bin `Alawi and his Pakistani counterpart, Sahabzadah Yaqub Khan, met on a number of occasions during which international and regional issues, including the Iran-Iraq War and the Soviet presence in Afghanistan, were discussed. The two noted their respective countries' adherence to the principles of nonalignment and expressed their objection to foreign interventions in the Gulf region. Both argued that ultimately the security of the Gulf region was the responsibility of the countries bordering it. Individually, both Oman and Pakistan opposed the Soviet's occupation of Afghanistan and called for its immediate withdrawal. Along with all Islamic Conference Organization (ICO) countries, they voted to condemn Moscow and demanded that the independence of Afghanistan as well as the Afghan people's right to self-determination be respected. They also called for the right of Afghan refugees to return home peacefully and with dignity.

Omani-Pakistani relations focused on defense and security matters in late 1983 and early 1984. In October 1983, Omani Chief of the Armed Forces General Sir Timothy Creasey visited Rawalpindi to meet with Pakistani Joint Chiefs of Staff General Mohammed Iqbal Khan and Air Force Chief Air Marshal Mohammed Anwar Shamim. During his three-day tour, Creasey visited the Pakistani aeronautical complex at Kamra, as well as several ordnance factories at Wah. A few months later, Special Envoy Shabib bin Taymur visited Islamabad, where he delivered a verbal message to President Zia ul-Haq from Sultan Qaboos.[51] A flurry of high-level exchanges occurred in April 1984 when General Farooq Sardar Shaukat Khan delivered a message to Sayyid Fahar bin Taymur, and Yusuf bin `Alawi met with his counterpart, Sahabzadah Yaqub Khan, in Islamabad. The two officials exchanged views on the situation in the Middle East, Afghanistan, South Asia, and the Iran-Iraq War. Foreign Minister Yaqub Khan thanked the Sultanate for its vigorous support of the Pakistani position on the "Afghanistan Question," calling for even closer cooperation among all Islamic states to speak in unison against Moscow. The two ministers also agreed that there should be

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[50]"Information Minister Departs," *FBIS-MEA-81-235*, 8 December 1981, p. C5; see also "Pakistani Minister Comments on Area Issues," *FBIS-MEA-81-012*, 19 January 1981, p. C4.

[51]"Oman Armed Forces Chief Ends Visit 24 Oct.," *FBIS-SAS-83-209*, 27 October 1983, p. F2; see also "Omani Envoy Delivers Message to Zia ul-Haq," *FBIS-SAS-83-242*, 15 December 1983, p. F1.

increased bilateral trade and greater contacts between the private sectors of both countries. Toward that objective, they exchanged views on steps to enhance cooperation in the economic, educational, and cultural fields and discussed provisions for having additional Pakistanis work in Oman. Specific items on their agenda included cooperation in the banking and insurance sectors within the framework of fraternal ties among Islamic countries. In April 1984, an Omani Foreign Ministry delegation, led by Yusuf bin `Alawi, arrived in Islamabad for additional consultations. `Alawi emphasized that "Pakistan ha[d] always been a source of support and assistance" to Muscat, where an estimated 60,000 Pakistani workers lived.[52] By September 1984, Oman and Pakistan had concluded their negotiations, which resulted in an agreement designed to bolster bilateral relations in the field of education, culture, arts, and sports. It also provided a number of scholarships to students in both countries.[53]

Late 1985 proved to be an ideal time for a number of regional officials to gather in Muscat as they helped celebrate the Sultanate's 15th National Day. As Pakistan and India were going through a tense period, the Omani invitation created a useful diplomatic cover for Zia ul-Haq and Rajiv Gandhi to meet in a neutral country for an exchange of views. Key issues on their agendas included Pakistan's proposal for a no-war pact and India's proposal for a friendship treaty. Although Zia ul-Haq and Rajiv Gandhi had met on two previous occasions, their third encounter broke new ground in ongoing negotiations as they publicly renewed their commitments to a peaceful resolution of existing differences between the two countries.[54]

Zia held a long discussion with Qaboos as well and described relations between the two countries as exemplary. Answering questions after his return to Islamabad, he asserted that Pakistanis residing in Oman were playing a laudable role in the development of the Sultanate and, by being constructive, enhanced the prestige of Pakistan. According to Zia, Sultan Qaboos and other Omani leaders lauded the Pakistani work ethic, calling for further cooperation in several service sectors. Zia wished to improve bilateral relations, stating that "there [we]re many possibilities for further promoting these relations in commercial, economic, educational, and other fields."[55] Notwithstanding the sense of optimism about expatriate Pakistanis' contributions, Zia delivered to the Pakistani

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[52]"Call for Strong Pakistan-Oman Ties," *Kuwait Times*, No. 6789, 28 April 1984, p. 7.

[53]"Sultan Qaboos Receives Message from Zia ul-Haq," *FBIS-MEA-84-080*, 24 April 1984, p. C3; see also "Omani Minister Arrives with Sultan's Message," *FBIS-SAS-84-083*, 27 April 1984, pp. F1–F2, and "Bilateral Agreement with Pakistan," in *FBIS-MEA-84-185*, 21 September 1984, p. C3.

[54]"Pakistan's Zia ul-Haq Meets with King Husayn, Yao Yilin," *FBIS-MEA-85-222*, 18 November 1985, p. C3; see also "Zia ul-Haq Holds Talks with Rajiv Gandhi in Oman," *FBIS-SAS-85-223*, 19 November 1985, p. F1.

[55]"Zia ul-Haq Returns Home, Views Ties with Oman," *FBIS-SAS-85-225*, 21 November 1985, p. F1.

community in Oman a "state of the country" address in which he discussed conditions for lifting martial law in Pakistan and, after providing assurances to his loyal supporters, called on workers throughout the region "to boost Pakistan's image as a charitable Islamic state" by projecting a positive image. The implication was clear. Zia wanted fewer problems between Pakistanis and indigenous populations, including Omanis. Other states, including Sri Lanka, India, and the Philippines, faced similar tensions, but Zia mustered enough courage to address the question head on and did so by putting the onus on his own citizens.[56] The pronouncement as well as the decision to utter it in the first place were noted with appreciation in Muscat. Omani officials, who reacted quickly after the 1992 Ayodhya incident in India (when Hindu and Muslim militants clashed after a mosque was ransacked by zealot Hindus), recalled Zia's words when they deported a few dozen Pakistani "demonstrators" who were venting their anger in front of the Indian Embassy. Oman insisted that it would not tolerate such behavior and cautioned all expatriates in the Sultanate to behave as "guest workers" ought to. It was yet another example of how Muscat diffused a potentially explosive situation. Other GCC states fared less well with their expatriate workers from the Indian subcontinent.

Yusuf bin `Alawi, acting as the chairman of the GCC Ministerial Council, discussed GCC-Pakistan relations with Islamabad officials in March 1986. The visit sought assistance to end the Iran-Iraq War, especially to limit third-party arms sales to both belligerents, but failed to achieve its stated objectives. `Alawi did not give up and returned to Pakistan a year later. A positive spin was added to the visit, namely, that Oman and Pakistan had "the closest of relations," but what interested the Sultanate most was Islamabad's cooperation in defusing tensions throughout the region. As this latest visit occurred a few weeks after Iran deployed Silkworm missiles near the Straits of Hormuz, the connection between regional security issues and relations with a key country like Pakistan was evident. Muscat argued that if Islamabad meant to play a positive role in the area, then this was as good a time as ever to help reduce tensions by advocating that both Iran and Iraq restrain their military activities. In this instance as well, `Alawi failed to win a favorable ruling. Although Zia ul-Haq was indeed preoccupied with the Iran-Iraq War, more pressing issues closer to home galvanized his attention. Military assistance to Iran and Iraq were secondary issues, for the Afghanistan debacle meant that Pakistan and Iran shared the burden of housing millions of refugees and this required very close cooperation between Islamabad and Teheran. More than any other reasons, these circumstances prevented Pakistan from responding favorably to the GCC request to remain neutral. Officially, Pakistan was neutral in the war and Zia ul-

[56]"Pakistan's Zia Addresses Pakistanis in Muscat," *FBIS-MEA-85-223*, 19 November 1985, pp. C3–C4.

Haq offered to mediate between the belligerents to end all hostilities. The official position notwithstanding, Zia could not alienate Iran because of the refugee crisis and, equally important, because of the potential spillover into Pakistan of Iran's revolutionary zeal. Moreover, Zia harbored a deep-seated mistrust of Saddam Hussein, after the latter rebuffed Pakistan's peacemaking efforts in late 1980. `Alawi was moving against a strong current but, to his immense credit, he never gave up. Cooperation on the political level remained minimal although it was more successful in the economic arena.

In September 1989, Oman and Pakistan signed a Memorandum of Understanding for cooperation in a number of fields, including agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries, and forestry. A month later, Information Minister Al-Rowas reached an agreement with his Pakistani counterpart to improve bilateral media relations between the two countries.[57] These positive developments were abruptly halted in the aftermath of the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, however.

In contrast to 1986, Pakistani officials initiated contacts with Oman in late 1990 to assess how best to respond to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Foreign Minister Sahabzadah Yaqub Khan arrived in August 1990, carrying a verbal message from President Ghulam Ishaq Khan to Sultan Qaboos. He was followed in September by Prime Minister Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, who briefed Qaboos on the latest Pakistani decisions and sought assistance in securing oil imports should there be disruptions through the Straits of Hormuz. Islamabad was directly affected by the invasion, because Kuwait satisfied approximately 60 percent of its daily needs. In the event, GCC states, led by Saudi Arabia and the UAE, replaced the lost quantities of crude to ensure that the effect was minimal. As was the case for several other countries, this direct impact on Pakistan eased the political decision to join the U.S.-led, UN-sanctioned anti-Iraq coalition. It was a matter of economic survival and Pakistan could not afford to remain on the sidelines. With Qaboos, Pakistani officials discussed military needs and, following consultations in Islamabad, agreed to deploy 5,000 troops to the battlefield in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.[58]

Additional visits took place in late 1990 when Vice Admiral Mansur Al-Haqq, the Director-General of Pakistan's Armed Forces Training Establishment, met with Chief of Staff General Hamad bin Sa`id Al-`Awfi; Assistant Chief of Staff for

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[57]"Agricultural Cooperation Accord Signed with Oman," *FBIS-NES-89-171*, 6 September 1989, p. 72; see also "Information Minister Returns from Pakistan," *FBIS-NES-89-198*, 16 October 1989, p. 24.

[58]"Pakistani Foreign Minister Arrives for Visit," *FBIS-NES-90-167*, 28 August 1990, p. 18; see also "Pakistan's Jatoi Arrives for One-Day Visit: Denies Reinforcing Gulf Troops," *FBIS-NES-90-188*, 27 September 1990, pp. 8-9.

Administration, Air Commodore Yahya bin Rashid Al-Jummah; and Sayf bin Hammad Al-Battashi, the Secretary General of the Omani Ministry of Defense.[59] Much of what transpired during these meetings affected the Pakistani and Omani military contingents deployed in Saudi Arabia to help coalition forces free Kuwait. The visits allowed each side to become familiar with the other's military equipment. Although these exchanges were on a limited scale, they reinforced the Omani perception that Pakistan had a useful role to play in the area, one that was as true in the mid-1980s as it was in 1990. Still, Muscat was not simply seeking Islamabad's military assistance. Rather, it also supported the Pakistani initiative, led by Federal Minister for Planning and Development Hamid Nasir Chatha, to convene an emergency session of the Islamic Conference Organization even if events prevented a peaceful resolution to the conflict.[60]

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait persuaded Sultan Qaboos that Oman ought to secure all of its international boundaries with the best legal agreements that it could reach. Muscat accelerated its discussions with Yemen, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan, having concluded agreements with Iran and six emirates in the UAE. Similarly, Islamabad sought to reach an agreement as well. Although Oman denied that there was a border "dispute" with Pakistan, the Sultanate was eager to demarcate its sea border with Pakistan, to avoid potential conflicts over offshore resources in the Arabian Sea. Dormant contacts were revived to settle the disagreement over Gawadar. The fate of the Pakistani enclave was never settled, as Muscat retained the right to draft its inhabitants whenever needed as well as to benefit from any oil deposits on or near it.[61] Consultations on a final border demarcation between Oman and Pakistan continued during Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's visit in 1994.

The Pakistani Expatriate Community

In late 1993, the Pakistani expatriate community in the Sultanate was estimated to number about 70,000. Of course, unlike the large Indian community, Pakistanis were mostly Muslim but, as stated above, that gave them no significant advantages. Not even the long-established links between Omanis who originated in Pakistan and newcomers helped bridge that gap. For one thing, `Ibadhi Omanis appreciated and respected tolerance far more than any other

[59]"Pakistani Admiral, Military Officials Hold Talks," *FBIS-NES-90-192*, 3 October 1990, pp. 13–14.

[60]"Pakistani Minister Meets Sultan on Gulf Crisis," *FBIS-NES-91-031*, 14 February 1991, p. 13.

[61]"Border Disputes with Iran, Pakistan Denied," *FBIS-NES-93-084*, 4 May 1993, p. 21.

Muslim community and refused to entertain displays of violence to settle differences.[62]

Pakistan provided Oman with a significant Baluchi population, principally from the Huti and Zhidgali tribes. To be sure, the importance of the slave trade from Baluchistan motivated a certain association even as the British made a modest attempt to halt it in 1900.[63] Most Baluchis were brought to Oman, however, to help protect the ruling family. In other words, they were a lot more than mercenaries, and many developed a keen sense of loyalty to successive Sultans. Accordingly, Baluchis lived primarily in the Muscat-Mutrah area, with some along the Batinah coast. A small group, the Bani Balush, settled in Sirr after a failed 18th century military campaign. Still, many failed to assimilate in Omani society, because of their Sunni faith.[64]

Bilateral Relations

Trade ties between Oman and Pakistan have increased considerably during the past few years. Although Pakistan was involved in the Sultanate's industrial planning and construction starting in the early 1970s, the up-front trend was not solidified until the late 1980s. Muscat imported rice, cotton, and assorted other staples from Islamabad and exported repackaged instruments and appliances, ferrous metal, and some oil products.[65]

More recently, as a result of the special economic agreements signed between the two countries, several Pakistani companies, including the National Engineering Services (Nespak), qualified to undertake some consulting tasks. Nespak successfully bid to expand the Nizwa power station and helped rebuild a 26-kilometer stretch of the Liwa-to-Shinas highway. It also submitted bids to develop the fishing harbors at Sur, Qurayat, and Al-Lakbi.[66] These fruitful commercial contacts spilled over in the security arena and Muscat gratefully accepted three Mushback training and light observation aircraft in 1994.[67]

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[62]Graz, op. cit., pp. 168–169.

[63]Landen, op. cit., p. 152.

[64]Allen, op. cit., p. 12.

[65]"Oman-Pakistan Trade Relations Growing," *The Times of Oman*, 14 August 1993, p. 1.

[66]"Electrowatt Engineering, National Engineering Services and Webank Preece Make Nizwa Power Station Bids," *MEED* 35:47, 29 November 1991, p. 32; see also "Communications Ministry Awards Road Construction Contracts to CCC and Qurum Contractors," *MEED* 35:31, 9 August 1991, p. 15; and "Consultants Bid for Fishing Harbors Work," *MEED* 35:29, 26 July 1991, p. 17.

[67]*Air International* 48:4, April 1995, p. 323.

Trends in Omani-Pakistani Relations

Relations between Oman and Pakistan reached a new level in the aftermath of the War for Kuwait when regional security issues, the demarcation of the border, and trade concerns were identified as the areas in need of attention.

Drawing on its established relationship with Islamabad, Muscat acknowledged that Pakistan had a key role to play in regional security by virtue of its immediate presence in the region (as well as its long border with Iran). What preoccupied Omani officials were the political swings that periodically jolted Pakistan and the entire Indian subcontinent, which had serious spillover effects on the Arabian Peninsula. For no matter how insulated GCC states were, the presence of very large expatriate communities from Pakistan and India meant that conflicts on the subcontinent reached the Arabian Peninsula within a matter of hours. Muscat endeavored to protect itself from such effects whenever possible and, when confronted with seemingly impossible situations, to take appropriate measures. This was a reactive policy that aimed to limit confrontation while recognizing value in a major regional power.

Equally important was the border agreement between the two countries. Just as Muscat successfully negotiated border agreements with Iran, six UAE federation members, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen, it aimed to conclude a similar accord with Pakistan. To be sure, the legacy of Gawadar continued to influence whatever proposals were advanced but, despite existing difficulties, there was a determination to bring this issue to a quick close. Oman sought in earnest a border demarcation with Pakistan and was prepared to entertain whatever new ideas Islamabad suggested.

Finally, economic relations were also important because Muscat was eager to strengthen its trade ties with Islamabad, hoping that closer contacts between Omani and Pakistani businessmen would alleviate political differences.

Chapter Nine

OMAN AND AFRICA

When Sayyid Sa`id bin Sultan (1804–1856) ruled over Oman, he expanded the territories under his control and made inroads in Persia and Baluchistan in addition to the Gulf region.[1] His greatest achievement was gaining control over Madagascar and the East Coast of Africa. This impression on Africa left a rich legacy behind.

THE LEGACY OF THE PAST

From 1829, Sa`id bin Sultan devoted most of his time and energy to Zanzibar. First, he secured Mombasa from the Mazrui and decreed that Zanzibar would become his second capital. A man with considerable foresight, Sa`id bin Sultan aimed to extend his influence through a dynastic marriage with Queen Ranavolana of Madagascar in 1833. For Sa`id, Mombasa, with its impregnable Portuguese-built Fort Jesus, was an urgent target for conquest. His strategy led him to seek 2,000 soldiers from Queen Ranavolana in Antananarivo. This, Sa`id thought, would solve his pressing manpower shortages. In the event, Ranavolana rejected the Omani's proposal. Five years later, his interest was rekindled and he offered Queen Seneeko Nossi-Be both his hand as well as his protection. Nossi-Be accepted, signed a treaty, and agreed to pay the Omani treasury MT$ 30,000 a year "to take charge of the fort and protect her and her people."[2] The arrangement lapsed when Sa`id reneged on his side of their agreement, and Queen Seneeko Nossi-Be sought protection from the French in 1840.[3]

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[1]An account of the historical developments is provided in Chapter Two. In this chapter, the focus is on ties with African nation-states, especially Zanzibar and South Africa.

[2]Ian Skeet, *Muscat and Oman: The End of an Era*, London: Faber and Faber, 1974, p. 47.

[3]M. Reda Bhacker, *Trade and Empire in Muscat and Zanzibar: Roots of British Domination*, London and New York: Routledge, 1992, pp. 110–111 and 155–156.

Although Sayyid Sa`id bin Sultan left his mark on recent Omani history, his motives were never fully understood. To be sure, Sa`id was a sailor who traveled extensively to enlarge his empire. Moreover, he sought to increase his financial holdings, add lucrative domains, and compete with the mighty European countries that plowed the oceans. He devised a variety of strategies, entered into several alliances, and fought those who denied him what he claimed to be rightfully his. In short, he was an ambitious individual who dreamed of greatness for himself and his people.

To realize his dual objectives, namely, to enrich and strengthen his empire, Sayyid Sa`id ordered the creation of strong fleets—20 ships for his private trade—and hundreds of vessels, representing a considerable naval force, to protect vital trade routes. He commanded his own flagship, the *Shah Alam*, during his many expeditions and saw to it that King William IV—a fellow seaman—received as a gift a warship that was subsequently christened *Liverpool* when Sa`id entered into an alliance with the British. In return, the Englishman sent a handsome yacht, the *Prince Regent*, to the Omani. In addition to the *Liverpool*, Sa`id bin Sultan presented a grey mare to King William IV as a present for his 1830 coronation and an Arab stallion to Queen Victoria on hers. Whereas the Omani's gifts were practical, the British reciprocated with luxurious items, even if they proved to be highly unpractical. Queen Victoria, for example, sent a state carriage and harness in 1842, perhaps not aware that there were no suitable roads for such carriages in Zanzibar. At times, Sa`id's generosity proved embarrassing. When on 14 July 1854, he signed perpetual rights to the Kuria Muria (today's Shalim wa Juzor Al-Hallaniyaat) Islands over to Queen Victoria, the gesture prompted an awkward response. Lord Clarendon, the Queen's Foreign Secretary, send a snuff box. Sa`id was livid but never let his true views be known in public. The Islands were returned to Oman in 1967, long after Sa`id bin Sultan's rule.[4] What endured, at least during Sa`id bin Sultan's reign, were his many conquests. Over a period of a few decades, Oman extended its hold over the East Coast of Africa, ruled the high seas throughout most of the Indian Ocean, defied both Britain and France and, not surprisingly, drew the ire of several European potentates. His control over Zanzibar was absolute, which in time proved too problematic for both London and Paris. In fact, Sayyid Sa`id bin Sultan agreed to sign the 1798 Treaty with London not because he was in a weak position but because he wanted to protect his commercial network throughout the Indian Ocean. As the British improved their own opportunities on the Indian subcontinent, Oman became a com-

[4]Emily Ruete, *Mémoires d'une Princesse Arabe*, Paris and Nairobi: Karthala and Credu, 1991; see also Donald Hawley, *Oman and Its Renaissance*, London and New Jersey: Stacey International, 1990, pp. 43–45.

petitor that needed to be checked and brought down to size.[5] Playing London against Paris proved equally disastrous because European concerns were far more complicated than the Omani could fathom.

Contacts with the West

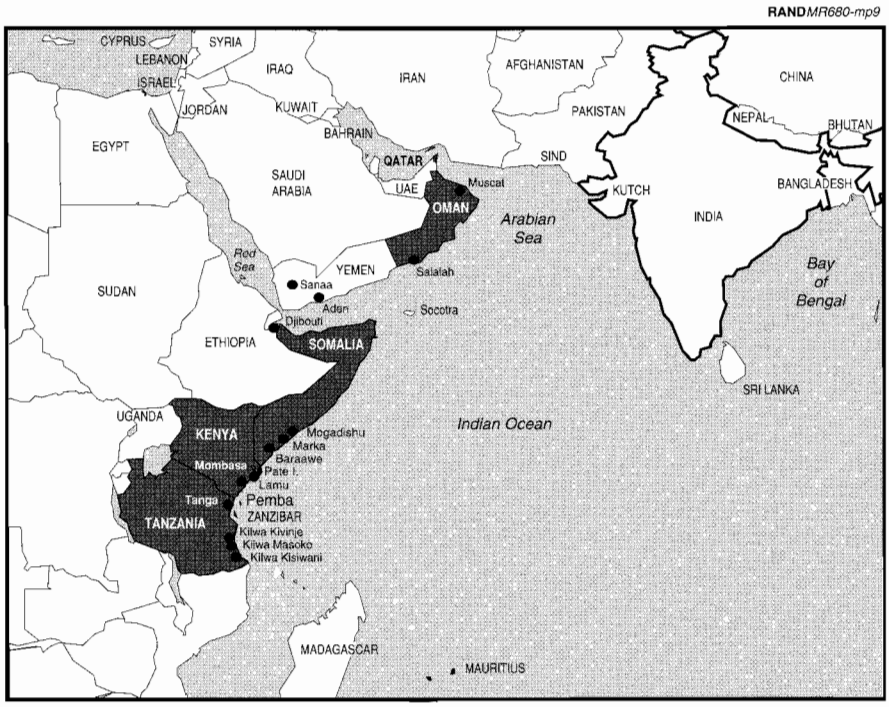
The Omani presence in East Africa dates back to the first century of Islam when "Sulayman and Sa`id fled from the hopeless struggle with the armies of `Abdul Malik."[6] When the Caliphate's troops forced them out of Oman at the end of the 7th century AD, Sulayman and Sa`id went to the "land of the Zanj." The first Portuguese travelers found large colonies of Omanis settled there in flourishing cities, on which Ibn Batuta also commented in the 14th century. Still, the modern dynastic connection can perhaps be dated to Imam Sultan bin Saif, the second Imam of the Ya`ribah dynasty. Arab subjects in Mombasa appealed to him for aid after he expelled the Portuguese from Muscat. Sultan bin Saif arrived in Zanzibar in 1652, regained a long coastal strip from the Portuguese and, having created a more formidable navy, besieged Mombasa eight years later. Although the Portuguese were eventually defeated, it was Sultan's son, the Imam Saif bin Sultan, who captured Mombasa, Pemba, and Kilwa. In fact, Saif bin Sultan drove the Portuguese from all their coastal possessions north of Mozambique, appointed Omani governors (walis) in several cities—a Mazrui at Mombasa, a Nabhani at Pate, and a Hirth at Zanzibar—and established military garrisons at Zanzibar and Pemba (see Map 9).

In 1739 the Mazrui wali of Mombasa threw off his allegiance to the Imamate, which by then had become much weakened by the war on the Arabian Peninsula, and Pate and other states followed suit. Nevertheless, Imam Ahmad bin Sa`id made sure that Zanzibar was well garrisoned, particularly as the Mazruis of Mombasa continued not only to assert their independence but also to attack Zanzibar itself. Zanzibar thus remained subject to the ruler of Oman from the middle of the 17th century until the middle of the 19th century, though it was not until the reign of Sayyid Sa`id bin Sultan that very serious attention was given to developing this part of Oman.

Sayyid Sa`id bin Sultan gave fresh life to the age-old Omani interest in East Africa, particularly by introducing copra, ivory, gum copal, ochella weed and, later, cloves as cash crops for his Zanzibari farms. In addition, the ruler en-

[5]Bhacker, op. cit., p. 35.

[6]Little is known of this early period save for the various successes that Omanis have had against the Portuguese and other European powers entrenching themselves on the African continent. See, James Kirkman, "The Early History of Oman in East Africa," *Journal of Oman Studies* 6:1, 1983, pp. 41–58.



Map 9—Oman—East Africa and Zanzibar

couraged the establishment of rice plantations, thus creating increasing prosperity for thousands. Many of the great European travelers in Africa have left accounts of him and his successors there and Burton, Speke, Livingstone, Grant, and Stanley all had good reason to thank the Al Bu Sa`id rulers for assistance in their African explorations. In the end, Arabs from Oman had penetrated Africa as far as the Congo—albeit in connection with the slave trade—and their knowledge and hospitality greatly assisted all European newcomers. His generosity to explorers notwithstanding, Sa`id bin Sultan's preoccupation with Africa meant that he was in constant conflict with the moralizing, slave-trade-suppressing British who, for more pressing reasons as well, wanted to muzzle his commercial successes.

The Sultanate Divided

When Sa`id died in 1856 at the age of sixty-two on the sea voyage from Muscat, his body was taken back to Zanzibar and buried in the garden of his residence there. Two of his sons, Majid and Barghash, were with him. Majid, who assumed authority in Zanzibar, confirmed all the appointments of key officials

made by his father in his African dominions. Two other of his sons were to play critical roles in how Oman lost its African dominions. Thuwayni was Wali of Muscat and Turki Wali of Sohar at the time of their father's death.

Thuwayni, with the support of a majority of the people in Oman itself, claimed the succession to the whole of the Sultanate, though his brother Turki asserted the same independence that many of the walis of Sohar had done at various times in the past. However, recognition by the people of Zanzibar and the African possessions left Majid in a strong de facto position. Majid reached an amicable arrangement with Thuwayni to pay the latter MT$ 40,000 annually. This settlement, arranged by Lord Canning—the Viceroy and Governor-General of India—and often referred to as the 'Canning Award,' "constituted nothing less than the imposition of the European notion of statehood on the African and Arabian sections of the 'Omani' state."[7] A dispute subsequently arose as to whether this sum was tribute or subsidy, and when in 1859 Majid refused to pay, Thuwayni resorted to arms and assembled an imposing force. Part of Thuwayni's forces were actually on their way to Zanzibar when London intervened, and both parties agreed to submit their dispute to Lord Canning for arbitration.[8]

The Canning Award divided Muscat from Zanzibar and in the process impoverished the Sultanate immeasurably. Were it not for the British assistance, however, chances are that the Al Bu Sa`id dynasty might have suffered considerable damage from the attack of the Al Sa`ud on Oman proper. Although difficult to ascertain, the Al Sa`ud penetration was substantial, but it never threatened the `Ibadhi traditions of Oman. Had the Saudis won, most Omanis would have fled to the Jabal al-Akhdar strongholds and, perhaps when the Al Sa`ud were preoccupied in the Hijaz (as they were in 1871), the Omanis would have regrouped to fight for their land. None of that occurred, of course, but Oman lost its economic independence to the British by accepting a foreign-imposed settlement of what was essentially an internal matter.

To be sure, the rival brothers reluctantly accepted the Canning Award, so masterfully negotiated by Sir William M. Coghlan. Coghlan, then a Brigadier appointed by British authorities as the head of the 1861 Muscat-Zanzibar Commission to investigate and report on the succession dispute, was well-informed on intricate family issues. His arrangement compensated the ruler of Muscat for relinquishing claims to Zanzibar, and adjusted the inequality between the two inheritances, for by this time Zanzibar was by far the richer part

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[7]Bhacker, op. cit., p. 191.

[8]M. Reda Bhacker, "Family Strife and Foreign Intervention: Causes in the Separation of Zanzibar from Oman: A Reappraisal," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 104:2, 1991, pp. 274–276.

of the empire. With this rather unusual, but empirically wise, settlement, the two "Sultanates" went their own separate ways. It was then that a permanent British representation in Muscat was introduced. Bombay felt that Thuwayni had been at something of a disadvantage in the arbitration compared with Majid, who had been advised throughout the award proceedings by Captain A. Hammerton, the British Resident Agent in Zanzibar. International recognition for the creation of the two Sultanates was formally given by a joint declaration made at Paris in 1862 by which the British and French undertook reciprocally to respect the independence of the two sovereign Sultans.

As family developments deteriorated in Muscat and successive rulers rose against each other, cordial relations between Oman and Zanzibar came to an end. In 1893 Hamad bin Thuwayni, who grew up in Oman, succeeded `Ali bin Sa`id in Zanzibar. His many friends in Muscat soon encouraged him to take over the Sultanate. Hamad made a bid for Muscat in 1894 and held it for a while until an accommodation was finalized. Alarmed by the rebellion, Faysal strengthened the physical defenses of both Muscat and Mutrah, even though financial limitations prevented him from isolating them in toto.[9] By intervening in this dispute, Britain "assumed the role of Kingmaker in Zanzibar as well as in Muscat. But barely a decade after the separation of Zanzibar from Oman, one of Britain's more high-ranking officials, Bartle Frere, then Governor of Bombay, was able to comment that Britain had brought about 'the ruin of a flourishing country and Kingdom.'"[10]

THE PROMISE OF THE FUTURE

Over the years, a number of prominent Zanzibari families returned to Oman, where they quickly rose through the ranks because of their skills. The first Omani nurses, police, and customs officers, as well as National Museum employees, were all Zanzibari. They were allowed in these professions because of their experience in Africa where men and women came into contact within the workforce. As Oman opened its doors to the world, both men and women became active in most public and private enterprises without experiencing the difficulties encountered elsewhere among the conservative Arab Gulf monarchies. To some extent, this was due to the early Zanzibari contribution, which assumed a pioneering role with proven results.

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[9]Hawley, op. cit., p. 46.

[10]J. B. Kelly, *Britain and the Persian Gulf*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968, p. 696, as cited in Bhacker (1991), op. cit., p. 280.

Omanis were involved in far more than just the African slave trade, although several contemporary writers have posited otherwise.[11] Their basic contribution consisted in bringing Islam to the continent where they themselves lived, intermarried with natives, and—often forgotten—built sustained local economies through solid trade and commerce. As a result of their successes in Zanzibar, Omanis did indeed benefit from the totality of this trade, including the slave trade. By 1964, however, when European powers abandoned their colonial dominions, many Zanzibaris returned to their homeland. Arabs throughout the Gulf region extended a helping hand to their African brethren as well. Since 1970, in particular, the lot of the Zanzibari population in Oman improved considerably because Sultan Qaboos "consider[ed] it a social and historical obligation to stand with the people of Zanzibar economically, socially and culturally."[12] Indeed, this sentiment has been translated into a special kinship toward Zanzibar, as Muscat's official policy was to encourage development of relations between the two countries. This, however, is easier said than done, because of Zanzibar's economic doldrums. Although Muscat looks to rekindle its past ties with the East African Coast, it must come to terms with existing shortcomings there, including a two-decade-long experimentation with socialism that ruined the area's economy. It is not inconceivable that Zanzibar could flourish once again—and see its clove export grow—but it needs steady financial support from abroad. It remains to be determined whether private sources in the Sultanate will invest in East Africa.[13]

Irrespective of any actions taken by the private sector, the Sultanate of Oman has been strengthening its commercial links with Zanzibar by participating in several modest development projects on the Island. Gulf Air, the regional airline jointly owned by Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, and the UAE, opened an air route to Zanzibar in 1992 to further encourage commercial, diplomatic, and political contacts. Moreover, Muscat has shepherded the Zanzibari application for membership into the Islamic Conference Organization (ICO), further illustrating its long-term strategy toward the area. Interestingly, the move came during the organization's 1992 sixth emergency ministerial session in Saudi Arabia, when Muscat pointed out that ICO states were obligated to take care of fellow

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[11]Ibid.; see also Jean-Louis Miege, "L'Oman et l'Afrique Orientale au XIXe Siècle," in Paul Bonnenfant (ed.), *La Péninsule Arabique d'Aujourd'hui*, Vol. 2, Paris: Centre Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique, 1982, pp. 293–318.

[12]Ahmed Hamoud Al-Maamiry, *Omani Sultans in Zanzibar, 1832–1964*, New Delhi: Lancers Books, 1988, pp. 79–80.

[13]Jonathan Clayton, "Zanzibar Dreams of Economic Boom," *Times of Oman*, 24 January 1994, p. 6.

Muslim states. Oman's effort was duly acknowledged by President Salmin Jum`a `Amur during the latter's visit to the Sultanate in January 1993.[14]

Somalia

Oman linked the 1991 UN deployment in Somalia to its earlier efforts in the War for Kuwait when it was argued that the international community's legitimacy was on the line. Perhaps because of its special ties to East Africa, Muscat proclaimed the necessity for consistent foreign policy initiatives. It strongly objected to a display of preferential policies and frowned on what it perceived as double standards in the responses toward Kuwait versus toward Somalia. In an unusual display of candor, a leading essay published in *`Uman* stated that such "international legitimacy . . . should be repeated in similar cases without any discrimination." "And the crisis in Somalia," asserted the paper, "desperately needs to benefit from this legitimacy to save the lives of citizens, whose only hope now is to remain alive." The paper closed by cautioning that "any effort to settle the crisis by exploiting the international military presence could cause any achieved peace to be blemished by compulsion, and thus no settlement of that kind would succeed."[15] This unique public statement on this highly charged question was surpassed only by similarly worded commentaries on developments in Bosnia-Herzegovina but, in both instances, they reflected the maturation of Omani foreign policy. Still, in the case of Somalia, the repercussions were far greater because of proximity and long-term interests in East Africa. Muscat was keen on standing its ground, developing closer ties with all area states and, whenever possible, championing their causes in international fora. A new chapter was opened, one that recognized shortcomings, without shying away from opportunities.

South Africa

Without waiting for a common League of Arab States decision on the matter, Oman became the first Arab country to lift all trade restrictions on South Africa, in late 1992. The announcement was not surprising given the clandestine legacy that existed between Muscat and both Johannesburg and Harare. In a display of pragmatism in the 1980s, the government purchased some weapons from South Africa and hired air force pilots from Rhodesia. Momentous events in Southern Africa changed both regimes there as Nelson Mandela and Robert

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[14]"Oman's Role in Securing Zanzibar's Entry into the ICO Is Recognized," *Country Report for Oman and Yemen*, No. 1, London: Economist Intelligence Unit, 1993, p. 11.

[15]"What Are the Aims and Limits of the International Forces' Presence in Somalia?" *`Uman*, 7 December 1992, p. 7.

Mugabe came into power in South Africa and Zimbabwe. Because of Muscat's past ties, the Sultanate was well placed to benefit from these changes and, while covert in nature, the relationships proved effective. In early 1993, Muscat confirmed that South African export documents would be accepted and letters of credit opened when the first purchasing mission arrived in Johannesburg.[16] Since then, Oman has pursued a rather enterprising approach to its ties with the Republic of South Africa, and toward that objective, ensured that both Durban and Johannesburg were added to Gulf Air's growing route network in Africa. Commercial contacts increased both in quantity and quality, leading to several high-ranking exchanges in 1994.

A round of official Omani-South African talks was held in October 1994 between Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Yusuf bin `Alawi bin `Abdallah and his South African counterpart, Alfred Nzo. The two men agreed to establish a joint working group—to meet once a year alternatively in Oman and South Africa—to enhance existing political and economic relations. In May 1994, Oman placed an order for up to 24 long-range G6 155mm self-propelled artillery systems from Denel, part of a larger program to upgrade the army.[17] The year 1994 closed on a positive note when a variety of contracts were finalized, ushering in a period of enhanced cooperation between the two emerging trading centers.

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[16]"Omani Buyers to Arrive on 'Purchasing Mission,'" *Foreign Broadcast Information Service-Africa, 93-026*, 10 February 1993, pp. 16–17.

[17]Stephane Bothma, "Missile Order Placed to Help Upgrade Omani Armed Forces," *Business Day* (Johannesburg), 11 May 1994, p. 3.

Chapter Ten

TRENDS IN OMANI FOREIGN POLICY

In the years between 1970 and 1994, the foreign policy of the Sultanate of Oman has evolved through four major phases: consolidation, transition, maturity, and progress. Much as in comparable countries in the developing world, this evolving foreign policy was determined by the interactions between domestic and external factors.

Although the country faced severe internal political unrest in the first period (1970–1975), especially in the south, Muscat had a capable Prime Minister who acted quickly to end the country's isolation from the rest of the world. Compared with its neighbors, the Sultanate was not developed and certainly qualified for the label "poor." Consequently, it needed urgent assistance from other Arab and non-Arab Gulf states to face the burden of the Dhufar War and, upon a successful conclusion of that conflict, massive economic assistance to improve the population's standard of living. Still, the resignation of Tariq bin Sa`id, the country's first Prime Minister, left a political vacuum. Sultan Qaboos filled Tariq's cabinet portfolios (Prime Minister and Foreign Minister) but, because of his concentration on the southern crisis, could not devote the attention that relations with fellow conservative Arab Gulf monarchies required.

The second period (1976–1980) witnessed progress on several fronts. Oman slowly freed itself from intrinsic internal problems, by devoting much needed financial attention to domestic needs. Simultaneously, it actively sought closer ties with neighboring countries and entered a crucial transition period within the region. To be sure, the Iran-Iraq War galvanized cooperation efforts, even if the six conservative Arab Gulf governments could not reach an agreement on how best to respond to this putative threat. Coordination of whatever security measures were considered was placed on the back burner. Undeterred by this level of indecision, Oman maintained solid relations with both Iran and Iraq on the one hand and the conservative monarchies on the other.

The third phase (1981–1985) proved to be sobering for all of the countries on and near the Arabian Peninsula. In addition to the raging war between the two

largest states, internal tensions surfaced, necessitating urgent actions. Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates finally agreed to unite in a regional alliance by creating the Gulf Cooperation Council. This was a significant accomplishment because GCC leaders were always reluctant to undertake risky security measures. Muscat participated in all regional security activities but succeeded in remaining neutral during the Iran-Iraq War, pursued its special security relationships with several Western countries, and supported the Camp David Accords as the framework to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The fourth phase (1985–1994) allowed Qaboos to emerge as a unique political figure in the region. On matters of security, Qaboos earned his fellow rulers' utmost confidence and, at the appropriate time, saw his proposals germinate. He helped defuse the Bahrain-Qatar disputes over the Hawar Islands and the Fasht Al-Dibal reef in 1986, and he diligently worked to bring the Iraqi and Iranian leaders around the negotiating table in 1987. Qaboos offered to host a meeting between Saddam Hussein and Hojatolislam Hashemi Rafsanjani in Muscat, but that was not to be. In any event, Ayatollah Khumayni finally accepted the UN-brokered cease-fire in 1988, but Muscat was keenly aware of how that war stopped. From 1988 to 1990, the Omani ruler attempted to heal the festering wounds of the war, cognizant that a final settlement was not reached between the two belligerent parties. He also sought to woo Egypt back into the Arab fold in the aftermath of the Egyptian-Israeli peace accords. Not only did Oman not attend the ill-fated 1978 Baghdad Rejectionist Summit, but Qaboos also cautioned others about its devastating long-term effect on the entire Arab world. Unfortunately, perhaps because of the Sultanate's truncated contacts within the Arab world throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Qaboos' words fell on deaf ears. History proved him right, however, when Iraq invaded Kuwait in mid-1990.

Even before the War for Kuwait, Qaboos correctly surmised that currents were shifting dramatically on the international scene, with unknown consequences for all. At the 1989 GCC Muscat Summit, he issued a bold "Declaration" that called for enhancing political participation, strengthening the Oman-U.S.-U.K. axis while improving Muscat's ties with both Teheran and Baghdad. More important, he moved expeditiously to improve relations with his neighbors and signed border agreements with Saudi Arabia and Yemen, which, in effect, crowned a decade-long effort to improve the Sultanate's foreign relations. Oman dilligently pursued an independent foreign policy that stood in stark contrast to the regional fare.

THE EFFECTS OF THE WAR FOR KUWAIT

The War for Kuwait was a watershed in Arab and Muslim politics. It provided several countries unique opportunities to improve relations both within the region and between regional and Western powers. Washington's status rose dramatically in 1991, allowing for a reinvigorated push to restart the stalled Arab-Israeli peace talks. Iran was poised to earn credit for supporting the restoration of the Kuwaiti monarchy to power. Conservative GCC states were equally well placed to act generously toward their Arab brethren who were given the impression that serious investments would be forthcoming in exchange for the flexing of their military muscles. Toward that end, the "Damascus Declaration" was meant to rectify past miscalculations, allowing Arab leaders to finally address the genuine concerns of their peoples. Finally, the disintegration of the Soviet Union created regional strategic opportunities for several GCC states, including Saudi Arabia, which emerged as a serious contender for the role of regional security provider.

GCC states, especially the smaller Shaykhdoms, were both elated and overwhelmed by these events. With both Iran and Iraq cut down to size by Western powers, the scramble for dominance in the Gulf region now pitted the GCC/Western coalition against whoever pretended to challenge them. Whether that was Iran or, in the longer term, Iraq or even Yemen, GCC states were in the middle of a prolonged political confrontation. Inasmuch as this struggle was fought on the larger world arena, pitting vital Western interests against equally vital regional hegemonic aspirations, the smaller Gulf Shaykhdoms, including Oman, stood to lose much if they did not manage their affairs well. Muscat, in particular, drew many important lessons in the aftermath of the War for Kuwait, reasserting its determination to look after its own interests irrespective of what other regional powers intended.

Muscat condemned the invasion and chastised the Iraqi leadership for failing to come to terms with the realities on the battlefield. It nevertheless extended a friendly hand to Baghdad by not breaking diplomatic ties—indeed, Oman has not broken diplomatic relations with any country since 1970. It also facilitated the orderly evacuation of Kuwaiti citizens stranded in Iraq. Qaboos contributed more than a token force to the war but he never flinched from his independent policies: He received both Kuwaiti and Iraqi delegations, listened to their views, attended all regional gatherings on the crisis, celebrated the National Day Anniversary (18 November 1990) as usual, and conducted his annual "Meet the People" tour as if Oman was completely outside of the war zone. While Muscat allowed Western military deployments in and out of the Sultanate, it also criticized both anti- and pro-Saddam Hussein forces throughout the Arab world for their polarizing rhetoric. That Oman appeared to be an odd entity in the regional political arena was not new. Although it took GCC rulers the better part

of two decades to understand what Qaboos was contemplating and applying, the Sultanate reaped the results of its many diplomatic initiatives. The Omani ruler was correct in assessing that neither Iran nor Israel posed the most immediate threats to the security of the Gulf region. He was also vindicated by granting the United States access to Omani facilities without which Washington and its allies simply could not have fought the War for Kuwait the way they eventually did. Muscat was wise in allowing its military facilities to be upgraded as needed, all of which served the GCC states in toto rather well during the war. Qaboos was also right in pushing for the full reintegration of Egypt into the Arab fold as Cairo's leadership helped isolate Saddam Hussein in Iraq. Finally, Qaboos was right in pressing for the establishment of close internal security and military cooperation between the conservative Arab Gulf monarchies, which—in a subtle but effective way—proved vital on several occasions.

At the 1991 GCC Doha Summit, Arab Gulf rulers elected Qaboos to head the GCC Higher Committee for Security Arrangements in the Gulf, which proposed the establishment of a 100,000-man force to defend the area from potential hegemons. Muscat argued that the War for Kuwait should in fact be the last military war fought in the area, preferring to concentrate all available resources to fight the war against poverty but, given existing regional threats, argued for a boost in GCC states' defenses against all foes. His initiatives fell on deaf ears because Qaboos called on his fellow rulers to assume responsibilities far greater than many were ready to do. Still, Muscat persisted in its efforts, cognizant of its two-decade-long record on such matters.

AN INDEPENDENT LEGACY

The legacy of the past 25 years clearly indicates that Sultan Qaboos has not espoused many "causes." Rather, he has distinguished himself throughout the Arab world, perhaps throughout the developing world, by being his own person, capable of judging the Sultanate's long-term interests. At times, the ruler may have made critical mistakes (i.e., his difficult relationship with his uncle); at other times he surprised allies and foes alike in being convincing. He opposed and fought a communist-inspired rebellion against his rule in Dhufar but decided to establish diplomatic relations with Moscow in 1985. He chastised his foes throughout the Arab world, especially in the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, but demonstrated extreme magnanimity toward that Republic. He maintained close ties with Britain but diversified arms purchases from that traditional patron. Perhaps Muscat's most important contribution to the stability of the Persian Gulf area was the carefully managed intra-GCC ties that brought six wary regimes to perceive joint concerns from a common perspective. Although Saudi Arabia and Kuwait played vital roles in the creation of the GCC, it was Oman that contributed a significant perspective in

the security field, one that was openly acknowledged by King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, Shaykh Zayed of the UAE, Shaykh Khalifah of Qatar, Shaykh `Isa of Bahrain, and Shaykh Jabir of Kuwait. By asking Qaboos to head the GCC's Security Committee, Arab Gulf monarchs have recognized the Omani's leadership qualities and expert knowledge of strategic issues. Even on the most controversial issues facing the conservative Arab Gulf monarchies, Muscat has taken the lead, where other GCC states preferred to remain behind.

BOLD INITIATIVES

For all intents and purposes, Oman took the initiative among GCC states in developing relations with Israel, certainly one of the most difficult quests for any Arab state. In 1993 and 1994, unofficial contacts between representatives of the two countries have taken place at the UN Headquarters in New York. In February 1994, the Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister, Yosi Beilin, met with a special Omani envoy to further discuss contacts between the two countries. These initial contacts were followed by the Omani decision to host the April 1994 meeting of the Middle East multilateral working group on water resources. Because Israel was a member of that group, Oman encouraged it to send its representatives to Muscat. It was the first-ever official visit to an Arab Gulf state by Israeli delegates.

Although hosting the talks meant that the Sultanate was exploring alternative technical avenues—to solve its critical water problems—it also indicated some cautious readiness to modify its policy toward Israel. After such a long conflict as that between Israel and the Arab states, even small events indicating a possible thaw were important. Qaboos recognized that no Arab leader could champion the Palestinian cause better than Yasser Arafat. He further reasoned that all ought to consider individual long-term interests, as the Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization did in late 1993. Since Arafat reached a peace accord with Israel, an Israeli attendance at a conference in a Gulf state was no longer unique. After all, Qaboos welcomed Arafat in Muscat after the Oslo Talks—when the entire Arab world shunned the Palestinian—and was not about to allow anyone to dictate what policies the Sultanate ought to pursue. In any event, the Israeli contacts proved useful to both sides. They further thawed existing tensions and, since Oman hoped to join the UN Security Council as one of the ten nonpermanent members, the Israeli support was appreciated. This was all part of the normalization of relations between Israel and the Arab World.

Beilin returned to Muscat in early November 1994 ostensibly to follow up on the water conference. In fact, the Deputy Foreign Minister held discussions with Yusuf bin `Alawi and other Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials on a far more important issue. The two men and their delegations put the final touches on

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's visit to the Sultanate on 27 December 1994. Rabin stayed less than 24 hours, but this was the first public visit by an Israeli leader to an Arab Gulf state. Not surprisingly, it drew the ire of several opponents, including underground movements throughout the Persian Gulf region. In the event, the watershed visit broke a deadlock, further illustrating Sultan Qaboos' appetite for independent foreign policy measures.

The discussions with Israeli officials indicated that Oman was a step ahead of the GCC's general policy on Israel. By late 1994, the GCC states had endorsed the Israeli-Palestine peace process but had made no collective move toward any sort of relations with Israel. Neither have other individual GCC states given any indications of moving in that direction. All agreed that the matter was to be decided by the League of Arab States, especially as such a decision would affect the Arab boycott in place since the 1950s. While Israel claimed that an agreement was to be signed on gas supplies with Qatar, little progress was made on that front, and Doha formally denied assertions to the contrary. GCC Secretary-General Shaykh Fahim Al-Qassimi was even more straightforward when he declared that the Arab Gulf monarchies "should not rush for ending the boycott because no progress has been made on other peace tracks." Muscat was in full agreement with other GCC countries on this subject, its limited diplomatic initiatives notwithstanding, but it once again reserved the right to disagree when Omani interests were at stake. The two parties agreed to open Omani airspace to Israeli civilian air traffic in March 1995 and, according to several press reports, are preparing for the establishment of interest sections as a step toward the establishment of formal and full diplomatic relations as soon as concrete initiatives are introduced into the peace process.

What those moves indicated was that Sultan Qaboos' government was ready to make cautious moves on its own, in the direction of a thaw in relations with Israel, independently of its GCC partners. For the time being, it may stop far short of the rapprochement that Israel has sought. Still, Oman was ready to go a little further than other Arab Gulf states, and this readiness might be attributed by some to the Sultanate's close links with the West. That could well be the view of Iran, Oman's neighbor across the Straits of Hormuz, but the explanation may be found elsewhere. For years, Oman has consistently favored reconciliation and resolution of disputes and has been ready to act independently in such matters.

Equally bold in its long-term inplications was Muscat's decision to help settle the 1994 Yemen civil war, which pitted rival northern and southern forces against each other. The Sultan hosted both President `Ali `Abdallah Salih and Vice President `Ali Salim Al-Baydh on several occasions to mediate, if possible, and to settle existing political differences, if feasible. In the event, the Yemeni leadership failed to compromise, which, unfortunately, ended in a bloody war

that further scarred the Yemeni population. Alone on the Arabian Peninsula, the Sultanate of Oman refused to distance itself from Sanaa, arguing that the Republic of Yemen was a legitimate entity and that internal disputes did not warrant its break-up. Simultaneously, Muscat extended asylum to fleeing southern leaders—an act, ironically, that was made possible by Oman's steadfastedness on Yemeni unity.

Much has been written about Omani motives in taking these initiatives on Yemen. Although its motives may have had strategic implications—that Oman needed Yemen's strategic depth on its southern border—Muscat adopted pragmatic policies toward Sanaa. Its task was to keep its long-term interests—to maintain close and friendly ties with Yemen—intact and, if possible, to prevent other regional powers from using internal Yemeni upheavals to further destabilize the Arabian Peninsula. By holding both parties responsible for all of their actions, Muscat earned unparalleled credibility in Sanaa, where a new understanding emerged on how critical Oman had become to long-term Yemeni interests.

DOMESTIC POISE

Beyond his expertise in foreign policy, Sultan Qaboos has also devoted considerable attention to internal affairs, starting with the country's economic needs. Muscat was very much aware of the critical water and manpower shortages that it faced which, in effect, kept the Sultanate's economy hostage and denied the country a prosperous future. If the ultimate objective of Oman was to reach self-sufficiency, then there were few choices but to tackle these two threats assertively. And because oil and gas resources have been rather limited, Muscat has encouraged the development of other industrial sectors. Whatever policies the government pursued, this much was certain: Muscat needed to improve its economy.

Historically, the Al Bu Sa`id dynasty has not encouraged dialogue with its subjects, and while Qaboos reversed the trend by projecting a "new image," many Omanis alternated between seeing the government as a cornucopia of benefits or a source of potential danger. Still, the country's relative internal political stability has enabled the administration to work on sound foreign policy goals. As a result of rapid changes that have swept East European countries and the government's desire to involve the educated elite in its policymaking apparatus, Qaboos has initiated a vital institution-building phase in modern Omani history by establishing first the State Consultative Council (SCC) and, in 1992, the Majlis al-Shura. The SCC's main accomplishment was to simply exist and function for a limited period of time. Indeed, early assessments that the Council was the first step toward democracy proved premature. At the time,

Qaboos declared that the SCC was a "political experiment" and a "first step" in the process of Oman's political development. At one time, he confided that it would suit just him fine if more Omanis assumed governmental responsibilities. The implications were clear. Oman would not experiment with "packaged" systems. Rather, the hope was that the Sultanate would follow its own political modernization pace without feeling the need to rush into premature enterprises. In time, the SCC evolved into a more formal Majlis al-Shura that enjoyed renewed attention and, more important, proved to be a critical learning institution. This decision was a concrete example not only of Qaboos' desire to widen the parameters of decisionmaking in the Sultanate, but also his keen awareness that autocratic rule was on its way out. Based on the legacy of the past 25 years, the Majlis al-Shura could indeed evolve into a popularly elected body, governing with full representative legitimacy.

Despite these positive steps, power-sharing was moving too slowly for some. In mid-1994, Muscat foiled what it called a seditious plot by militants bent on radically changing the system. High-ranking government officials, policemen, and military officers were involved—a broad melange of players with divergent motives. An estimated 400 Omanis were detained and over 100 were later tried and sentenced to varying prison terms. Several death sentences were handed down, although these were commuted by the Sultan. Several militant islamists were deported in November following extensive investigations.

Unlike the leftist threat that dominated the Omani political scene through most of the 1970s, the new challenge focused on religious sensibilities, which affected the ideas, values, and practices shared by all Omanis. Many young Omanis, who benefited from the mass education programs introduced after 1970, hungered for added political rights. Qaboos was well aware of Islamic trends in Oman and, to head off potential problems in the not-too-distant future, aimed to address some of the more important ones. What to do about declining oil revenues, rapidly depleting water resources, underfunded military pension schemes, the need for taxation, and the rapidly increasing number of school and university graduates with no employment prospects preoccupied government officials. Although these issues lacked the specificity of tracking insurgencies, they nevertheless remained crucial to Oman's future and, importantly, were addressed by Sultan Qaboos in his 1994 National Day address to the nation.

Qaboos condemned militant Islamist planks, arguing that the root cause was the stagnation of laws that were promulgated in the 7th century. He called for fresh legal interpretations to suit modern-day life, urging Omanis to close the door to religious fanaticism and the violence that it has spawned. The ruler called on his brethren to ensure that "alien ideas masquerading as beneficial promises" did not jeopardize Oman's security and stability. This was vintage

Omani in character and substance. Far from ducking the issue of fanaticism and backwardness, the Sultan accepted the challenge and spoke with foresight to his subjects, calling on them to shoulder their fair share of responsibilities and, whenever possible, leading by example.

QABOOS AND THE IDEA OF OMAN

Oman has become a key country in Middle Eastern and global diplomacy. This was not due to its size, though it is the second GCC state in area and third in population. Nor was it because of its oil production; that remained small by gulf standards at 800,000 barrels per day, and Oman was not even a member of OPEC or OAPEC. The reason for the Sultanate's importance was its geography, the strategic considerations of Western powers, and, more important, its government's unrelenting pursuit of an independent foreign policy.

London, Paris, and Washington, among others, have attached great importance to Oman as an ally, because of its position on the southern shore of the Straits of Hormuz. That vital waterway is only 30 miles wide where the Musandam Peninsula juts out into the Persian Gulf. For the industrialized world, its security remains critical. For Oman, the Straits offer unique strategic and political opportunities. Relations between Oman and Western powers have been cemented by a large degree of military cooperation, including assistance in suppression of two rebellions against the Sultan's rule in the 1950s and the 1970s, and key allies have helped to develop and expand the Sultan's Armed Forces over several decades. More recently, since 1980, cooperation between Oman and the United States has become very important. His Arab credentials aside, Sultan Qaboos looked West for long-term security, as Oman became the main balancer on the Arabian Peninsula. Muscat was increasingly called upon to limit regional tensions, check expansionist tendencies by several regional states, act as a go-between for Saudi Arabia and Yemen (in the latter's simmering conflicts), and protect the United Arab Emirates.

Muscat was able to achieve these objectives because it created the circumstances to act in a decisive way. The Sultanate defined most of its borders, adopted pragmatic policies, and entered into alliances without neglecting its regional responsibilities. In other words, Oman forged a role for itself, replacing a fledgling state with a secure one. Even though Omani foreign policy was not fully articulated from the outset of Sultan Qaboos' rule, the "Idea of Oman" as a key regional power was well understood. There was a realization that the country must survive and forge a stable life for its citizens, an awareness that the government ought to regain full control over its destiny, and a desire to adopt independent measures as soon as possible to restore its standing on the Arabian Peninsula.

Appendix A

INTERVIEWS

(Unless otherwise stated, all interviews were held in Muscat; names are listed according to protocol order, March 1995.)

AL BU SA`ID RULING FAMILY

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Sa`id Al Bu Sa`id
18 January 1993

H. H. Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud Al Bu Sa`id, Deputy Prime Minister for Cabinet Affairs
14 October 1992, 25 September 1993

H. H. Sayyid Haitham bin Tariq Al Bu Sa`id, Secretary-General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
10, 13, and 18 October 1992, 18 January and 20 September 1993, 22 March 1995

OTHER OMANI OFFICIALS

Qais bin `Abdul Munim Al-Zawawi, Deputy Prime Minister for Financial and Economic Affairs
27 September 1993

`Abdallah bin `Ali bin Mohammed Al-Qatabi, President, Majlis al-Shura (State Consultative Council)
13 October 1993

Sa`id bin Ahmad Al-Shanfari, Minister of Petroleum and Minerals
11 October 1992, 18 January and 20 September 1993

`Abdulaziz bin Mohammed Al-Rowas, Minister of Information
7 and 10 October 1992, 16 January, 19 and 27 September 1993, 25 March 1995

Yusuf bin `Alawi bin `Abdallah, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs
14 October 1992, 16 and 29 January 1993

Salim bin `Abdallah Al-Ghazzali, Minister of Communications
11 October 1993

Ahmad bin Suwaidan Al-Balushi, Minister of Posts, Telegrams and Telephones
11 October 1993

Ahmed bin `Abd Al-Nabi Macki, Minister of Civil Service
17 October 1992, 27 January and 21 September 1993, 21 March 1995

Amir bin Shuwayn Al-Hosni, Minister for Regional Municipalities and Environment
7 October 1992

Muhammad bin Musa Al-Yousef, Minister of State for Development Affairs
20 October 1992

Lt. General Khamis Al-Kalbani, Chief of Staff, Sultan's Armed Forces
21 September 1993

Lt. General Sa`id bin Rashid Al-Kalbani, Advisor for National Security
25 January 1993

Hassan bin Sa`id bin Mohamed, Under Secretary for Administrative Affairs, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for Cabinet Affairs
12 and 13 October 1993

Hamad bin Mohamed bin Mohsin Al-Rashdi, Under Secretary for Information Affairs, Ministry of Information
3 and 21 October 1992, 24 January, 21 and 25 September 1993

Saif bin Hashil Al-Maskari, Under Secretary for Tourism, Ministry of Commerce and Industry (former Assistant Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council, 1981–1992)
25, 27, and 29 September 1993, 22 and 25 March 1995

`Abd Al-Qader Al-Dhahab, Secretary-General, State Consultative Council
29 April 1992 and 13 October 1993

Awadh Al-Shanfari, former Ambassador to the United States (in Washington, D.C.)
19 November 1992 and 12 January 1993

Ahmad bin Yusuf Al-Harthi, Head of the Arabian Affairs Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
13 October 1993

Fuad Al-Hinai, Deputy Chief, International Organizations Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
27 January 1993, 29 September 1993, and 21 March 1995

Dr. Mohammed `Ali Masoud Al-Hinai, Director of Studies and Research, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
21 and 26 September 1993, 22 and 25 March 1995

Mansour Al-Amri, Head of Public Affairs and Information, Petroleum Development Oman
20 October 1992

NON-OMANI OFFICIALS (ALPHABETICAL ORDER)

`Abdul Mohsin Saleh Al-Ballaa, Ambassador of Saudi Arabia
19 October 1992, 24 January and 29 September 1993

Mahmoud Hussein `Abd Al-Nabi, Ambassador of Egypt
28 September 1993, 23 March 1995

Anthony Ashworth, Consultant to the Minister, Omani Ministry of Information
3 and 4 October 1992

Ian Bailey, former Information Officer, Embassy of the United Kingdom
20 October 1992

Jacques Champagne de la Briolle, former Deputy Chief of Mission of France
25 January 1993 and 22 September 1993

Sir Terence Joseph Clark, former Ambassador of the United Kingdom
20 October 1992 and 25 January 1993

David J. Dunford, Ambassador of the United States
19 and 30 January 1993, 25 September 1993, 26 March 1995

Dr. Mohammed Ahmed Garhoum, Minister of Information, Republic of Yemen (in Sanaa)
26 October 1992

Ranjit Gupta, former Ambassador of India
30 January 1993, 25 January, 25 and 26 September 1993

Dr. `Abd Al-Karim Al-Iryani, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Yemen (in Sanaa)
26 October 1992

Michel Jobert, former Foreign Minister of France (in Paris)
1 February 1993, 21 March 1994, 17 March 1995

Regis Koetschet, Ambassador of France
25 January 1993 and 22 September 1993

Elizabeth McKune, Deputy Chief of Mission of the United States
24 January 1993, 25 September 1993, and 26 March 1995

Dr. Isam Al-Rawas, Professor of History, Department of History, Sultan Qaboos University
18 October 1992

Dr. Mohammed A. Zabarah, Professor of Political Science, University of Yemen (Sanaa)
28 October 1993

Appendix B

CHRONOLOGY

B.C.	
c. 4200	Stone age civilization in northern Oman and Shisur in Dhufar
c. 3000	Earliest pottery—Jemdet Nasr period
c. 2350	Magan ships trading with Sargon of Agade in Sumer
c. 2275	Magan conquered by Naram-Sin of Agade
c. 2025	Shipwrights mentioned in Sumerian tablets
c. 2025	Magan trading with Ibbi-Sin of Ur
c. 2000	Rise of Dilmun
c. 1400–1300	Connections between Oman and Luristan in Iraq
c. 800–700	Invasion from South Arabia by Ya`rub, whose brother may have been appointed Governor
c. 700	Trading with Gulf and Babylon resumed
c. 563	Oman conquered by Cyrus the Great of Persia; *Falaj* system developed
A.D.	
c. 50	Oman mentioned by Roman author Pliny
c. 200	Azd migration into Oman led by Malik bin Fahm
c. 230	Ardashir I, founder of Persian Sasanid dynasty, regained firm control of Oman
c. 520	Khosrau I of Persia dominated Oman in rivalry with Axumites of Ethiopia for control of Arabia
c. 400–700	Christian bishopric at Sohar
c. 600–700	Omani seafarers raid Western India
630	Amr bin Al-`As arrived in Oman with letter from Prophet Muhammad; Conversion of Oman to Islam
c. 690	Apogee of Azd (of Oman) power in Basra [Iraq]
c. 720	Fall of Azd from power and return to Oman

c. 700–800	Sulayman and Sa`id, joint rulers of Oman, moved to the "land of Zanj" (East Africa) when Caliphate troops occupied Oman
	Omani voyages to China
751	Election of first "rightful Imam" of the `Ibadhis, Juland ibn Masud
893	Oman overrun by Caliphate troops led by Muhammad bin Nur
c. 929	Carmathian conquest of Oman
c. 950	Sohar the greatest sea port of Islam
971	Sohar devastated by the Buyids
1064	Oman invaded by the Seljuks
c. 1153–1435	Oman without Imams and ruled by the Maliks of the Nabhar
c. 1100–1300	Omani dynasty ruled Qays, then the center of Gulf trade
1250	Hormuzi suzerainty established over Omani coast
1400–1500	First Indian expatriate workers in Oman
1435	Imamate restored
1497	Omani pilot, Ahmad bin Majid, navigated Vasco da Gama from Malindi in East Africa to Calicut in India
1507	Albuquerque brought Oman under Portuguese domination
1550	Muscat attacked by Piri Rais, Captain-General of the Turkish fleet
1581	Muscat again attacked by Turks under `Ali Beg
1587–88	Forts Mirani and Jalali completed in Muscat by Portuguese
1624	Nasir bin Murshid elected first Imam of the Ya`ribah dynasty
1646	Treaty of Commerce between the Imam and Philip Wylde of the English East India Company
c. 1650	Imam Sultan bin Saif recovered Muscat from Portuguese
1659	Treaty between the Imam and Colonel Rainsford of the East India Company about British trading in Muscat
c. 1660–70	Imam Sultan bin Saif built Fort Nizwa
1670	Dutch East India Company rented office in Muscat
c. 1650	Oman controlled much of East African coast
1694–98	Omanis attacked Portuguese in Bombay and East Africa
c. 1675	Imam Bil`arab built fort at Jabrin
1708	Imam Sultan bin Saif II built fort at Al-Hazm
1718–47	Omani civil war

1748	Ahmad bin Sa`id elected first Imam of Al Bu Sa`id dynasty
	Persians involved in civil war expelled from Oman
1756–1804	Ottoman Sultan paid *kharaj* as friendly gesture to Imams through *Wali* of Basra
1760	Treaty between Imam and Mogul Emperor
	Establishment of Mogul mission in Muscat in "Nawab's House"
1775	Death of Imam Sa`id at Rostaq
1790	*Commerce*, a U.S. vessel, in Muscat
1794	Sayyid Sultan obtained Hormuz, Qishm, Henjam, Bandar Abbas, Chahbar, and Gawadar; all of these except Gawadar reverted to Persia in mid-19th century
1798	Tready negotiated between British Government in Bombay and Sayyid Sultan by Murza Mahdi `Ali Khan
1799	Napoleon addressed letter to Sayyid Sultan bin Ahmad as Imam
1800	Captain (later General Sir John) Malcolm signed treaty between Oman and Britain
	Al Sa`ud [Saudi Arabia] captured Buraymi and began series of incursions into Oman lasting until 1860s
1804–56	Reign of Sayyid Sa`id bin Sultan
1807	Treaty of Amity and Commerce between France and Oman
1809	Sayyid Sa`id joined with British in attack on Ras Al-Khaymah and British and Omani troops attacked Al Sa`ud at Shinas
1819	Sayyid Sa`id joined with British in further attack on Ras al-Khaymah against Qawasim pirates
1820	Eclipse of Qasimi power and treaties signed with Trucial States
1820–21	Omani/British expeditions against Bani Bu `Ali
1829	Sayyid Sa`id took Mombassa from Omani Maz`ari and, making Zanzibar his second capital, concentrated on East African Empire
1833	Treaty of Amity and Commerce signed with the United States
1840	*Sultana*, an Omani vessel, in New York
	Mission of Ahmad bin Nu`aman to U.S., sent by Sayyid Sa`id
1856	Sultanates of Oman and Zanzibar divided—confirmed by Canning award of 1862
1856–66	Reign of Sayyid Thuwayni bin Sa`id in Oman

1862	British and French agreed to mutually respect independence of Oman and Zanzibar
1868–71	Reign of Imam `Azzan bin Qais
1869	Fort at Al-Hazm taken from Ya`ribah family by `Azzan and Ibrahim bin Qais
1871–88	Reign of Sayyid Turki bin Sa`id
1877	Commercial declaration between Holland and Muscat
1879	Dhufar reoccupied by Sayyid Turki's troops after 50-year interlude
1888–1913	Reign of Sayyid Faysal bin Turki
1895	Muscat occupied by dissidents led by Shaykh Salih bin `Ali of Sharqiyah Hirth
1901	Muscat telegraphic cable installed (earlier cable via Suez, Aden, and Muscat to Karachi had failed in mid-19th century)
1913–32	Reign of Sayyid Taymur bin Faysal
1913	Salim bin Rashid Al-Kharusi elected Imam
1915	U.S. Embassy operations in Muscat suspended
1920	Agreement at Seeb between Sultan Taymur and tribes of the interior
	Muhammad bin `Abdullah Al-Khalili elected Imam
1925	Exploration license granted to d'Arcy Exploration Company
1932–70	Reign of Sayyid Sa`id bin Taymur
1934	U.S. contacts with Muscat reestablished
1937	Concession awarded to Iraq Petroleum Company Group in the name of Petroleum Concessions Limited (later Petroleum Development [Oman and Dhufar] Limited)
1938	Sayyid Sa`id bin Taymur visits U.S.
1952	Saudi Arabia occupies Buraymi
1954–59	Rebellion of Imam Ghalib bin `Ali
1955	Buraymi reoccupied by Oman
1958	Gawadar ceded to Pakistan by purchase
	Treaty of Amity, Economic Relations and Consular Rights signed with U.S.
1959	Faysal bin `Ali Al-Sa`id meeting with Mao Zedong in PRC
1960	"Question of Oman" first debated at UN

1962	First commercial quality and quantity oil discoveries at Yibal and Natih
1964	Oil is discovered in commercial quantities at Fahud
1965–75	Rebellion in Dhufar
1967	Oil first produced and exported in commercial quantities
	Six-Day Arab-Israeli War
	Civil war in Yemen
1970	Accession of Sultan Qaboos bin Sa`id
	Qaboos pledges to set Oman on a new course
	To foster national unity, the country's name is changed from the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman to the Sultanate of Oman
	The country's plain red flag is replaced with the red, white and green
	First Cabinet convenes under Prime Minister Tariq bin Taymur (July)
	Shaykh Zayed of Abu Dhabi visits Muscat (August) [First Head of State Visit]
1971	Qaboos dispatches delegates to most Arab states
	Oman admitted to United Nations and League of Arab States
	End of the "Question of Oman" debates at United Nations
	Diplomatic relations established with Britain, India, Pakistan
	Qaboos visits Riyadh (16 December)
	Qaboos visits Teheran (22 December)
	Qaboos creates the Dhufar Development Department
1972	Death of Sayyid Sa`id bin Taymur in London
	Oman joins the Islamic Conference Organization
	Diplomatic relations established with the United States, Iran, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, France, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Bahrain
	Saudi military delegation visits Dhufar (15 May)
1973	Seeb International Airport opened
	Defense Minister Col. H.R.D. Oldman, a British citizen, resigns; Qaboos assumes posts of Prime Minister, Ministers of Defense, Foreign Affairs and Finance
	October Arab-Israeli war
	OPEC oil embargo against United States and Netherlands

1974	Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry established
	Diplomatic relations established with Bangladesh, Qatar, North Yemen, the Republic of Korea, and others
	Port Qaboos opened
	Tariq bin Taymur appointed Chairman of Central Bank
1975	End of Dhufar rebellion
	Qaboos visits United States
	Iran-Iraq Shatt Al-`Arab border agreement
1976	First Five Year Development Plan initiated
1977	Oman supports Egypt's peace efforts with Israel
1978	Oman supports the Camp David Accords
	Gulf Air established with Bahrain, Qatar, and Abu Dhabi
1979	Oman Mining Company begins production
	Public Authority for Water Resources established
	White Oryx Project launched in the Jiddat al-Harasis
	Shah of Iran overthrown by Ayatollah Khumayni (11 February)
	Oman proposes a $100 million "security package" to protect Straits of Hormuz
	USSR invasion and occupation of Afghanistan (25 December)
1980	Facilities Access Agreement signed with the United States (4 June)
	Iran-Iraq War starts (20 September)
1981	Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) constitutional experts meet in Muscat (7–8 March)
	GCC information ministers meet in Muscat (9–10 March)
	GCC established in Abu Dhabi (25–26 May); Oman is founding member; Qaboos presents a "security" paper at summit
	Majlis al-Ishtishari (Consultative Council) founded
	PDRY, Ethiopia, and Libya establish Tripartite Treaty
	Second Five Year Development Plan initiated
	Bright Star 81 military exercises held with U.S.
1982	Bilateral security agreement signed with Saudi Arabia
	Agreement to normalize relations with PDRY signed on 27 October following talks in Kuwait
	Office of the National Security Advisor (held by a British national) is dissolved

	Rima oilfields and Mina al-Fahal terminal refinery open
	Bright Star 82 military exercises held with United States
1983	Agreement to receive and resettle Omani citizens from the PDRY until 30 April 1983
	Participation in the GCC *Dar` al-Jazirah* (Peninsula Shield) military exercises in October near Abu Dhabi
	Diplomatic ties established with PDRY (27 October)
	Qaboos visits United States
	Leonid Brezhnev dies. Yuri Andropov becomes Communist Party First Secretary in USSR. First contacts with USSR
1984	Andropov dies. Oman sends condolences to USSR
	Participation in the second GCC *Dar` al-Jazirah* (Peninsula Shield) exercises in Saudi Arabia (October)
	Joint air and naval exercises with Saudi Arabia
	Joint air exercises with the UAE
	GCC Chiefs of Staff recommend a $2 billion defense package for Oman and Bahrain
	Oman Technical and Industrial College opens
1985	Naval exercises with Qatar
	Call for direct Israeli-Palestinian talks
	Sixth GCC Heads of State Summit Conference hosted by Oman
	15th National Day celebrations held in November
	Diplomatic relations established with USSR
	Joint air exercises with Kuwait
1986	Third Five Year Development Plan initiated
	Nimr oil fields opened
	Sultan Qaboos University inaugurated for first academic year
	Mikhail Gorbachev becomes Soviet Communist Party First Secretary
	Bright Star 86 military exercises with United States
	Voyage of the *Shabab Oman* [tall ship] to New York for U.S. bicentennial
1987	Royal Hospital at Al-Ghubrah opened
	Sa`id bin Sultan naval base in Wudam opened
	Swift Sword military exercises with United Kingdom
1988	Negotiations with Kazakhstan on joint oil exploration

1989	Muscat Stock Exchange opened
	Biggest gas find in 22 years at Saith Nihayda
	Tenth GCC Heads of State Summit Conference hosted by Oman
1990	Twentieth anniversary of Qaboos' accession to the throne
	Border Agreement with Saudi Arabia
	Majlis al-Shura (Consultative Council) established
	Facilities Access Agreement with United States renewed
	Iraqi invasion of Kuwait (1 August)
1991	Kuwait liberated by UN-backed international coalition forces
	Call to end Arab boycott of Israel
	USSR abolished (25 December); relations established with Russia
1992	Oman establishes diplomatic relations with most former Soviet republics
	Negotiations with Kazakhstan on oil extraction successful
	Oman joins Caspian Pipeline Consortium
	Border clash with United Arab Emirates forces
	Border Agreement with Yemen
1993	British Prime Minister John Major visits Oman
	Joint naval exercises with India
	Indian Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao in Muscat
	Accords on gas pipeline and refineries signed with India
1994	Oman hosts Arab-Israeli Multilateral Talks on Water Issues—Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister, Yossi Beilin, attends
	Omani-UAE Joint Commission meets
	Establishment of diplomatic ties with Kazakhstan—Oman agrees to participate in Kazakhstan–Black Sea pipeline
	Majlis al-Shura membership increased to eighty (twenty-one of fifty-nine Wilayats have two representatives) and first two women members are chosen
	Formal UN protest against the 1974 Saudi-UAE border accord
	First public purchase of military hardware from South Africa
	Omani Ambassador to Algiers is kidnapped, released
	Yemeni Vice President Al-Baydh seeks and is given refuge
	Reconciliation efforts between Yemeni factions fail

Establishment of Omani-British investment fund

Accord with India for natural gas deliveries

India Deep-Sea Pipeline Agreement is signed

Several hundred extremists are arrested and tried; 105 are sentenced and an undetermined number are deported; the ruler commutes death sentences to terms of life in prison

Israeli team attends water desalinization talks

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin meets Qaboos in Muscat

SOURCE: Sir Donald Hawley, *Oman and Its Renaissance.* London: Stacey International, 1990, pp. 246–247 [Updated]; *FBIS-Middle East and Africa, 1977–1987*; *FBIS-Near East and South Asia, 1987–1994*, Office of the Secretary-General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Muscat; Office of the Minister, Ministry of Information, Muscat.

Appendix C

THE 1920 TREATY OF SEEB

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

This is what has been agreed upon in the settlement between the Government of the Sultan, Sayyid Taymur bin Faisal, and Shaykh `Isa bin Salah `Ali Al-Harthi on behalf of the Omanis who sign their names here through the mediation of Mr. Wingate, I.C.S., Political Agent and His Britannic Majesty's Consul, Muscat, who is authorized by his Government in this respect to be a mediator between them. The conditions are stated as follows. Four of them concern the Government of the Sultan and four of them concern the Omanis. What concerns the Omanis are these:

Firstly—On all commodities brought from Oman of all kinds to Muscat, Mutrah, Sur, and all the coast towns nothing more should be taken than five percent.

Secondly—For all the Omanis there should be safety and freedom in all the coast towns.

Thirdly—All restrictions on entry to and exit from Muscat, Mutrah and all the coast towns will be removed.

Fourthly—The Sultan's Government should not protect criminals who flee from the justice of the Omanis and that they may be returned to them if asked for and that the Sultan's Government should not interfere in their internal affairs.

The four which concern the Government of the Sultan are stated as follows:

Firstly—All the tribes and Shaykhs should remain in peace and amity with the Government of the Sultan and that they should not attack the coast towns and should not interfere in his Government.

Secondly—All travelers to Oman on their lawful business should be free and there should be no restrictions on trade and travelers should be safe.

Thirdly—All criminals and evil men who flee to them should be turned out and should not be protected.

Fourthly—The claims of merchants and others against the Omanis should be heard and decided as is just according to the Shariah.

Written at Seeb on the eleventh day of Moharram one thousand three hundred and thirty-nine Hijrah, corresponding to twenty-fifth day of September, one thousand nine hundred and twenty.

I have completed what was completed by Shaykh `Isa bin Salah on my behalf in these conditions. Written by Imam Al-Muslimin Mohammed bin `Abdullah with his own hand.

I on behalf of the Imam Al-Muslimin Mohammed bin `Abdullah Al-Khalili and on my own behalf agree to the conditions written here with the authorization of the Imam Al-Muslimin. Written by `Isa bin Salah with his own hand.

(Signed) Sulayman bin Hamyar an-Nabhani (with his own hand).
Zahair bin Ghusn Al-Hinawi (with his own hand).
Mohsin bin Zahran as-Siyabi (with his own hand).
Hamaid bin Mussullam an-Nidabi (with his own hand).
Saif bin Salim bin Amir Al-Habasi (with his own hand).
Khalaf bin Nasir bin Mohammed Al-Monwali (with his own hand).

Thumb impression of Mohammed bin Sultan bin Mansur Al-Wahaibi.

(Signed) Mohammed bin Saif bin Sa`id Al-Jabri (with his own hand).
Sultan bin Salim ar-Rahbi (with his own hand).
Khalfan bin Mohammed bin Salaiman Al-Hibabi (with his own hand).
Thani bin Harith Al-Jabri (with his own hand).
Hamdan bin Sulaiman bin Saif an-Nabhani (with his own hand).
Muhanna bin Hamad bin Mohsin Al-`Ibri (with his own hand).
Nasir bin Hamaid bin Rashid Al-Ghafiri and his son Mohammed bin Nasir (with his own hand).
`Abdullah bin Hilal bin Zahar Al-Hanai (with his own hand).

This official document of agreement was brought to me which is the best sort of settlement between Shaykh `Isa bin Salah on our behalf as written above and the Government of Sultan Sayyid Taymur through the mediation of Mr. Wingate, I.C.S., His Britannic Majesty's Consul at Muscat, as is written also with

special authorization. I write these lines with my own hand and thank God for it. Written by Saif bin `Ali bin `Amr Al Maskari with his own hand.

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

Seal

SOURCE: *The Persian Gulf Historical Summaries, 1907–1953, Historical Summary of Events in the Persian Gulf Shaikhdoms and the Sultanate of Oman, 1928–1953*, Gerrards Cross, England: Archive Editions, 1987, pp. 287–288.

Appendix D

STATEMENT BY SULTAN QABOOS BIN SA`ID: BROADCAST TO THE PEOPLE OF OMAN—27 JULY 1970

I address you in my capacity as the Sultan of Muscat and Oman, having succeeded my father to the throne on the 23rd July, 1970, 18th Jamadi Al-Awal, 1390 A.H.

I observed with mounting concern and intense indignation my father's inability to govern. My family and my armed forces have vowed their obedience and sincerity. The former Sultan has left the Sultanate. I promise you to dedicate myself to the speedy establishment of a modern government in no time. My first aim will be the abolition of all unnecessary restrictions that overburdened you.

My people, I shall work as promptly as possible to ensure a better life in a better future. Each and every one of you should participate in that duty. Our country in the past had the glory and the might, and if we work in co-operation and unity we shall be able to restore our past glory and to obtain our prominent place in the Arab world. I will take the necessary legal steps to ensure the recognition of foreign powers, and I am looking forward to the immediate support and the long-range cordial cooperation with all nations, especially with our neighbors, with whom we will conduct consultations for the future of our area.

My friends, I urge you to continue your everyday activities and I shall reach Muscat in the next few days, and my main goal is the following.

My people, I and my government hope to achieve our mutual goal.

My people and brothers, yesterday we were completely in the dark, but with the aid of God, tomorrow a new dawn will arise for Muscat and Oman and its people.

May God preserve us and crown our efforts with success.

SOURCE: Attia Abdel Moneim Attia, "Oman," in Blaustein and Flanz (eds.), *Constitutions of the Countries of the World,* Dobbs Ferry, New York: Oceana, 1974, p. 4.

Appendix E

AGREEMENT CONCERNING DELIMITATION OF THE CONTINENTAL SHELF BETWEEN IRAN AND OMAN

The Imperial Government of Iran
and
The Government of the Sultanate of Oman

Desirous of establishing in a just, equitable and precise manner the boundary line between the respective areas of the continental shelf over which they have sovereign rights in accordance with international law, and after having exchanged credentials, found in good and due form, have agreed as follows:

Article 1

The line dividing the continental shelf lying between the territory of Iran on the one side and the territory of Oman on the other side shall consist of geodetic lines between the following points in the sequence hereinafter set out:

Point (1) is the most western point which is the intersection of the geodetic line drawn between point (0) having the coordinates of 55° 42′ 15" E 26° 14′ 45" N and point (2) having the coordinates of 55° 47′ 45" E 26° 16′ 35" N with the lateral offshore boundary line between Oman and Ras al-Khaymah.

	Longitude East			Latitude North			
Point (2)	55	47	45	26	16	35	
Point (3)	55	52	15	26	18	50	
Point (4)	56	06	45	26	28	40	
Point (5)	56	08	35	26	31	05	
Point (6)	56	10	25	26	32	50	
Point (7)	56	14	30	26	35	25	
Point (8)	56	16	30	26	35	35	
Point (9)	56	19	40	26	37	00 W.	Intersect of Larac 12m.
Point (10)	56	33	00	26	42	15 E.	Intersect of Larac 12m.
Point (11)	56	41	00	26	44	15	
Point (12)	56	44	00	26	41	35	
Point (13)	56	45	15	26	39	40	
Point (14)	56	47	45	26	35	15	
Point (15)	56	47	30	26	25	15	
Point (16)	56	48	05	26	22	00	
Point (17)	56	47	50	26	16	30	
Point (18)	56	48	00	26	11	35	
Point (19)	56	50	15	26	03	05	
Point (20)	56	49	50	25	58	05	
Point (21)	56	51	30	25	45	20	

Point (22) is the most southern point located at the intersection of the geodetic demarcation line drawn from point (21) (specified above) at an azimuth angle of 190° 00: 00′ and of the lateral offshore boundary line between Oman and Sharjah.

Article 2

If any single geological petroleum structure or petroleum field, or any single geological structure or field of any other mineral extends across the boundary line set out in Article l of this Agreement and the part of such structure or field which is situated on one side of that boundary line could be exploited wholly or in part by directional drilling from the other side of the boundary line then:

(a) No well shall be drilled on either side of the boundary line as set out in Article l so that any producing section thereof is less than 125 meters from the said boundary line except by mutual agreement between the two contracting Parties.

(b) If the circumstances considered in this Article shall arise both Parties hereto shall use their best endeavors to reach agreement as to the manner in which

the operations on both sides of the boundary line could be coordinated or unitized.

Article 3

The Boundary line referred to in Article 1 herein has been illustrated on the British Admiralty Chart No. 2888, 1962 edition with small corrections through 1974, and with the ellipsoid used in said chart, which is annexed to this Agreement.

The said Chart has been made in duplicate and signed by the representatives of both Parties each of whom has retained one copy thereof.

Article 4

Nothing in this Agreement shall affect the status of the superjacent waters or airspace above any part of the Continental shelf.

Article 5

(a) This Agreement shall be ratified and the instruments of ratification shall be exchanged at Muscat.

(b) This Agreement shall enter into force on the date of the exchange of instruments of ratification.

In witness thereof the undersigned, being duly authorized, have signed this Agreement.

Done in duplicate at Tehran the 25th day of July, 1974, corresponding to the 3rd day of Mordad 1853, corresponding to the 5th day of Rajab 1394, in Persian, Arabic, and English languages, all texts being equally authoritative.

FOR THE IMPERIAL GOVERNMENT
OF IRAN
Bahman Zand
[Ambassador of Iran in Oman]

FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF
THE SULTANATE OF OMAN
Qais Al-Zawawi
[Minister of State for Foreign
Affairs]

Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Office of the Minister

Procés-Verbal
On the exchange of the instrument of ratification of the
Agreement concerning Delimitation of the Continental Shelf between
Oman and Iran

The undersigned Qais Al-Zawawi, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Oman, and Bahman Zand, Ambassador of Iran in Oman, met at this day at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Muscat, in order to exchange the instruments of ratification of the Agreement concerning Delimitation of the Continental Shelf between Iran and Oman signed at Tehran on the 25th day of July 1974.

And having examined and compared the texts of the said instruments of ratification which were found in good and due form, proceeded to their exchange.

In Witness Thereof, the present Procés-Verbal was signed in duplicate.

Done at Muscat on the twenty-eighth day of May of the year one thousand nine hundred and seventy-five.

For Oman	For Iran
[Qais Al-Zawawi]	[Bahman Zand]

SOURCE: Office of the Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Muscat (translated from the Arabic).

INTERNATIONAL BORDER AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA AND THE SULTANATE OF OMAN

The High Contracting Parties,

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Fahd bin `Abdulaziz Al Sa`ud, King of Saudi Arabia, and His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Sa`id, Sultan of Oman,

Acting in accordance with the principles of Islamic Law professed by the Islamic community,

Proceeding from a desire to strengthen the existing bonds of fraternity among the States of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf,

Relying on the ties of affection, the links of brotherliness and the neighborly relationship existing between the two sister countries,

And having regard for the desire of each of the two States to fix the boundaries between them in a definitive manner in a spirit of Islamic and Arab fraternity,

Have agreed as follows:

Article 1

The boundary separating the territory of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the territory of the Sultanate of Oman shall be that described in article 2 of this Agreement.

Article 2

The boundary between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Sultanate of Oman shall consist of straight lines joining the following major frontier points:

1. Umm az Zumul, at the geographical coordinates of 22 degrees, 42 minutes, 30 seconds north latitude and 55 degrees, 12 minutes, 30 seconds east longitude.

2. The point of intersection of coordinates 22 degrees north latitude and 55 degrees, 40 minutes east longitude.
3. The point of intersection of coordinates 20 degrees north latitude and 55 degrees east longitude.
4. The point of intersection of coordinates 19 degrees north latitude and 52 degrees east longitude.

Article 3

A duly qualified international company, to be selected by the two countries, shall survey and establish on the ground the frontier points and the boundary line set forth in article 2 above and shall prepare the detailed maps and other related data necessary for that purpose. Such maps, after signature by representatives of the two Parties, shall be the official maps showing the frontier between the two countries and shall be appended to this Treaty as an integral part thereof.

Article 4

A Joint Technical Commission consisting of four members from each of the two countries shall be formed to prepare the terms of reference for the work required of the aforesaid company, to supervise the execution of that work, and to scrutinize its results.

Article 5

Under the supervision of the Joint Technical Commission, markers shall be placed along the agreed frontier separating the territories of the two countries, and the Commission shall agree on what distance shall separate one marker from another.

Article 6

Issues arising out of the demarcation of the frontier or emerging thereafter shall be settled by friendly means and through direct contacts between the two Parties on the basis of the principles of equality, mutual advantage and the eschewal of prejudice to the interests of either Party.

Article 7

Frontier authorities, and the rights to grazing, movement and the use of water sources in the frontier zone, shall be regulated in accordance with the two Annexes appended to this Agreement.

Article 8

This Agreement was drawn up in two original copies in the Arabic language, each State retaining one copy.

Article 9

This Agreement shall enter into force immediately on signature, and the exchange of instruments of ratification by the two Governments shall take place subsequently.

Article 10

Done at Hafr al Batin on the fourth day of Sha`ban A.H. 1410, corresponding to the twenty-first day of March A.D. 1990.

Qaboos bin Sa`id
Sultan of Oman

Fahd Bin `Abdulaziz Al Sa`ud
King of Saudi Arabia

Annex I to the International Border Agreement Between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Sultanate of Oman Concerning the Organization of Frontier Authorities

The Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Government of the Sultanate of Oman,

In implementation of article 5 of the International Border Agreement between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Sultanate of Oman, signed on 24 Sha`ban A.H. 1410, corresponding to 21 March A.D. 1990,

And desiring to arrange the terms of reference of the frontier authorities,

Have agreed as follows:

Article 1

The two Parties have agreed that disputes, violations and incidents occurring in the frontier zone covered by this Annex shall be resolved in accordance with the provisions contained herein.

Article 2

1. For the purpose of the implementation of this Annex, the frontier zone shall be regarded as the area extending from the boundary line between the two countries to a depth of 5 kilometers inside the territory of each Party.
2. With the exception of installations of official agencies and installations of the frontier forces, neither Party may erect any installations, encampments or the like within the limits of the zone indicated in paragraph 1 of this article.

Article 3

1. Each of the Parties shall appoint the frontier authorities set forth hereunder in order to effect the implementation of the provisions of this Annex.

   (a) First-level frontier authorities

   For the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia:

   Director-General of the Border Guard

For the Sultanate of Oman:
Inspector-General of Police and Customs

(b) Higher-level frontier authorities
For the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia:
Minister of the Interior
For the Sultanate of Oman:
Minister of the Interior

2. The frontier authorities mentioned in paragraph 1 of this article may be changed or other authorities introduced by agreement of the Parties through the diplomatic channel.

Article 4

The Parties shall, within one month of the entry into force of this Annex, provide each other with the full names and functional titles of the members of the frontier authorities and a copy of their letters of appointment. The letter of appointment shall contain a photograph of the incumbent and his signature. Any changes subsequently made in this regard shall be communicated in the same matter.

Article 5

Each authorized member of the frontier authorities shall be entitled to appoint the assistants that he requires, and he shall provide their names, functional titles and letters of appointment to the frontier authorities of the other Party.

Article 6

Frontier "violations" and "incidents" included within the scope of the provisions of this Annex shall mean:

1. Interference with or destruction of boundary markers or destruction of buildings or other installations directly relating to the frontier.
2. Shooting at control posts and frontier guards, or at persons, or at boundary markers, or at frontier installations located in the territory of the other Party.
3. Flight by those charged with committing a crime in accordance with the laws and regulations of the country to which they belong into the frontier zone in order to take refuge in the frontier zone of the other Party.
4. Incidents of robbery and theft involving nationals of one of the Parties in the frontier zone of the other Party.

5. Smuggling by a person or persons from the territory of one of the Parties to the territory of the other Party.
6. Hunting of wild animals within the frontier zone.
7. Misuse or pollution of well water or anything which may impair its use.

Article 7

The frontier authorities of each of the Parties shall, in the frontier zone, have the terms of reference set forth hereunder:

1. To take necessary measures to prevent the occurrence of incidents.
2. To take the necessary measures, and to inform the frontier authorities of the other Party, in order to preclude the commission of crimes, smuggling and infiltration by persons in the frontier zone of the other Party, to prevent such persons from crossing the frontier, to intercept them as required and to pursue them in order to arrest them. Any such pursuit shall halt at the furthermost point of the frontier zone described in article 3, paragraph 1 of this Annex, and the frontier authorities concerned shall notify the frontier authorities of the other Party, which shall take the necessary measures to arrest such persons and hand them over to the frontier authorities of the former Party.
3. To take the necessary measures to combat smuggling and infiltration between the two countries, and to exchange information on such activities with the other frontier authorities with a view to their suppression.
4. To exchange information in the event of disasters in the frontier zone and to cooperate in containing them.
5. To take preventive measures against the spread of livestock diseases or epidemics or agricultural parasites into the territory of the other Party. For this purpose, the frontier authorities of the Party in whose territory the livestock disease or epidemic has appeared shall notify the frontier authorities of the other Party accordingly. In the event that there is a suspicion of disease in livestock that must cross the frontier of the two Parties, the necessary measures shall be taken to prevent the spread of such disease in accordance with the hygiene and veterinary inspection regulations of each of the two Parties.
6. To investigate all frontier incidents.
7. To settle such conflicts that may arise in connection with the violations and incidents mentioned in article 6 of this Annex, and to consider, within the limits of their powers, applications for compensation consequent on a fron-

tier incident that may be submitted by one of the Parties or by persons present in the frontier zone that comes under their jurisdiction.

Article 8

1. Should a national of one of the Parties take refuge in the frontier zone of the other Party after committing a crime under the law of the Party to which he belongs in the frontier zone of that Party, the frontier authorities of the Party in whose territory the crime was committed may request that the suspect be arrested. The frontier authorities of the other Party shall do all in their power to apprehend the person being sought and, on apprehending him, shall inform the frontier authorities of the Party making the request.
2. The frontier authorities of a Party which are requested to make an arrest may return the suspect within a period of not more than 10 days from the date of his arrest.
3. Should the frontier authorities to which the request is made be prevented for any reason from handing over the suspect within a 10-day period, they shall keep him under arrest until such time as the documents relating to his return are delivered through the diplomatic channel. The period for which the criminal is detained may not, in any circumstances, exceed two months.

Article 9

The frontier authorities may, by prior agreement, undertake the joint on-site investigation of a frontier incident with a view to establishing the facts. In such case, and if required, they may bring with them experts and witnesses. The investigation shall be supervised by the Party in whose territory it takes place. A report on the investigation shall be drawn up and signed by the competent authorities in the two countries. It shall contain a summary of the evidence and deliberations and of the results reached by the investigation and shall be transmitted to the competent judicial authorities.

Article 10

The frontier authorities of the two Parties shall, by common accord, designate points for meetings and the exchange of letters, points for the transferal of persons and property and crossing-points.

Article 11

The members of the frontier authorities shall, in the exercise of their functions, enjoy the immunity necessary for them to perform their duties, and the materials that they require for that purpose shall not be subject to taxes or customs duties.

Article 12

While present in the frontier zone of one of the Parties, the persons mentioned in article 9 of this Annex shall be provided with the necessary assistance.

Article 13

1. The frontier authorities for which provision is made in paragraph 1 (a) of article 3 of this Annex shall meet, in rotation, in the territory of each of the Parties once every six months, or whenever there is need for a meeting, with the approval of the two Parties, to settle outstanding issues within their competence. If the said authorities do not succeed in resolving such issues, they shall be submitted for settlement to the authorities for which provision is made in paragraph 1 (b) of article 3 of this Annex.
2. The frontier authorities for which provision is made in paragraph 1 (b) of article 3 of this Annex shall meet, in rotation, in the territory of each of the Parties once a year, or if the frontier authorities for which provision is made in paragraph 1 (a) of article 3 of this Annex should otherwise propose that a special meeting be held, for consultation and the resolution of outstanding issues.

Article 14

1. For the purpose of keeping border markers in position and for their maintenance, the frontier authorities of the two countries for which provision is made in paragraph 1 (a) of article 3 of this Annex shall exchange information relating thereto and shall undertake an on-site inspection thereof prior to their semi-annual meeting, referred to in article 13, paragraph 1, of this Annex, so that they may discuss the matter and submit the necessary reports to the frontier authorities for which provision is made in paragraph 1 (b) of article 3 of this Annex.
2. Should it appear to the frontier authorities for which provision is made in paragraph 1 (b) of article 3 of this Annex that the positions of markers have been changed or that their condition requires maintenance or repair as a re-

sult of damage by natural or non-natural causes, those authorities shall notify the competent agencies of the two Parties so that the necessary technical arrangements may be made to restore the markers to their positions, or maintain, or repair them in accordance with the technical specifications agreed upon by the two Parties, as set forth in the reports of the Joint Saudi-Omani Commission established under the terms of the International Border Agreement between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Sultanate of Oman.

Article 15

This Annex shall remain in force for a five-year period with effect from the date of its entry into force and shall be renewed automatically for the same term unless one of the Parties notifies the other through the diplomatic channel of its desire to amend it within six months of the date of expiry of the aforementioned term.

Article 16

This Annex shall enter into force immediately on signature, and instruments of ratification shall be exchanged by the two Governments subsequently.

Done in two original copies in the Arabic language, each copy being equally authentic, and signed at Hafr al Batin this twenty-fourth day of Sha`ban A.H. 1410, corresponding to the twenty-first day of March A.D. 1990.

For the Government of the
Sultanate of Oman:

Badr bin Sa`ud Bin Hareb Al-Busa`idi
Minister of the Interior

For the Government of the
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia:

Nayif Bin `Abdulaziz Al Sa`ud
Minister of the Interior

Annex II to the International Border Agreement Between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Sultanate of Oman Concerning the Regulation of Rights to Grazing, Movement and the Use of Water Sources in the Frontier Zone

The Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Government of the Sultanate of Oman,

In implementation of article 5 of the International Border Agreement between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Sultanate of Oman signed on 4 Sha`ban A.H. 1410, corresponding to 21 March A.D. 1990,

Desiring to lay down specific principles to ensure that their nationals may make use of the range lands and waters located in the frontier zone of their two countries,

And desiring to regulate matters relating to grazing and sources of water,

Have agreed as follows:

Article 1

The frontier zone is the area extending from the boundary line to a depth of 5 kilometers inside the territory of each of the Parties, and grazing and residence shall not be permitted in this zone.

Article 2

For the purposes of this Annex, the grazing zone shall be defined as a depth of 20 kilometers from the furthermost part of the frontier zone indicated in article 1 of this Annex into the territory of each of the two countries.

Article 3

Herdsmen who are nationals of the two Parties and who reside in the vicinity of the frontier zones may make use of the range lands and water sources in the grazing zone defined in article 2 of this Annex.

Article 4

The frontier authorities of the two Parties shall establish the crossing-points that may be used for the purposes of this Annex through consultation, on an annual basis, in the light of grazing requirements.

Article 5

Without prejudice to the provisions contained in article 3 of this Annex, when permitted by the competent frontier authorities to pasture and to make use of water sources in the grazing zones, nationals of the two Parties shall be exempt from:

1. The laws and regulations in force relating to residence and passports. They shall be issued with a transit document by the frontier authorities of the Party of which they are nationals permitting them to cross the frontier.
2. Taxes and duties on their livestock, tents and related equipment, customarily necessary household articles and the foodstuffs and consumer goods that they carry with them, without prejudice to the rights of each Party to impose customs duties on livestock or goods destined for trade in the territory of the other Party.

Article 6

Each Party reserves the right to limit the number of such vehicles as herdsmen may wish to bring into its territory and the number and types of firearms that they are permitted to carry. Such weapons as may be brought in must be officially licensed by the relevant authorities in the two countries by virtue of official documents establishing the identity of the owner, and the frontier authorities shall issue to owners documents permitting them to carry their weapons. Should the number of firearms exceed that permitted, they shall hand them over, in exchange for a receipt, to the responsible authorities at the crossing-point, which shall restore the firearms to them on their return.

Article 7

Should a contagious livestock disease, an epidemic or the like break out, each Party may impose the necessary veterinary or sanitary measures and invoke orders prohibiting importation and exportation. The competent authorities in each of the two countries shall cooperate in this field.

Article 8

The persons indicated in this Annex shall, in the territory of the receiving country, have the right to make use of the health services and shall be permitted to provide themselves with the necessary foodstuffs and consumer goods within the boundaries of the area in which they are permitted to pasture. Should there be no health center in the grazing zone, however, emergency cases shall be transferred to the nearest health center through the crossing-point authorities.

Article 9

This Annex shall remain in force for a period of five years with effect from the date of its entry into force, and it shall be renewed automatically for the same term unless one of the parties informs the other through the diplomatic channel of its desire to amend it within six months of the date of expiry of the aforesaid period.

Article 10

This Annex shall enter into force immediately on signature, and the exchange of instruments of ratification by the two Governments shall take place subsequently.

Done in two original copies in the Arabic language, each copy being equally authentic, and signed at Hafr al Batin on the fourth day of Sha`ban A.H. 1410, corresponding to the twenty-first day of March A.D. 1990.

For the Government of the
Sultanate of Oman:

Badr bin Sa`ud bin Hareb Al-Busa`idi
Minister of the Interior

For the Government of the
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia:

Nayif bin `Abdulaziz Al Sa`ud
Minister of the Interior

MINUTES

Today, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in Riyadh, his Royal Highness Prince Sa`ud Al-Faysal, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and His Excellency Mr. Yusuf bin `Alawi bin `Abdallah, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of the Sultanate of Oman, exchanged instruments of ratification of the International Border Agreement between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Sultanate of Oman, of Annex I to the Agreement, concerning the regulation of frontier authorities, and of Annex II to the Agreement, concerning the regulation of rights to pasture, movement and the use of water sources in the frontier zone between the two countries, signed by the two countries on 24 Sha`ban A.H. 1410, corresponding to 21 March A.D. 1990.

Signed accordingly.

Sultanate of Oman
Yusuf bin `Alawi bin `Abdallah
Minister of State for Foreign Affairs

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Sa`ud Al-Faysal
Minister of Foreign Affairs

Riyadh:
Tuesday, 7 Dhulqadah A.H. 1411
Corresponding to 21 May A.D. 1991

SULTANATE OF OMAN
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
MUSCAT

Instrument of Ratification

No: 100/021010/320005
Date: 5 Dhulqadah A.H. 1411
Corresponding to 20 May A.D. 1991

Instrument of Ratification of the International Border Agreement Between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Signed by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Sa`id, and of the Two Annexes to the Agreement

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs attests to the fact that, in accordance with article 3 of the Law Regulating the Administrative Apparatus of the State, promulgated by Decree of the Sultan No. 26/75, agreements signed by His Majesty the Sultan are, by virtue of their mere signature, considered to be part of the law of the land without need for the promulgation of a Decree of the Sultan ratifying them.

The foregoing applies to the International Border Agreement between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, signed by His Majesty (may God preserve him) on 24 Sha`ban A.H. 1410, corresponding to 21 March A.D. 1990.

This instrument has been issued in order to attest to the foregoing in accordance with article 9 of the said Agreement.

Decree of the Sultan No. 44/91, of 3 Dhulqadah A.H. 1411, corresponding to 18 May A.D. 1991, has been promulgated to ratify Annex I to the aforesaid Agreement, concerning the organization of frontier authorities, and Annex II to the Agreement, concerning the regulation of rights to pasture, movement and the use of water sources in the frontier zone, both signed at Hafr al Batin on 24 Sha`ban A.H. 1410, corresponding to 21 March A.D. 1990.

Yusuf bin `Alawi bin `Abdallah
Minister of State for Foreign Affairs

Sultanate of Oman
Decree of the Sultan Number 44/91
Ratifying the Two Annexes to the International Border Agreement Between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

We, Qaboos bin Sa`id, Sultan of Oman,

Having reviewed Decree of the Sultan No. 26/75, promulgating the Law Regulating the Administrative Apparatus of the State, and the amendments thereto,

The International Border Agreement between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, signed by us on 24 Sha`ban A.H. 1410, corresponding to 21 March A.D. 1990,

Annex I to the aforesaid Agreement, concerning the organization of frontier authorities, and its Annex II, concerning the regulation of rights to pasture, movement and the use of water sources in the frontier zone, both signed at Hafr al Batin on 24 Sha`ban A.H. 1410, corresponding to 21 March A.D. 1990,

And in accordance with the requirements of the general interest,

Have decreed as follows:

Article 1:

The ratification of Annex I to the aforesaid International Border Agreement between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, concerning the organization of frontier authorities, and Annex II to the Agreement, concerning the regulation of rights to pasture, movement and the use of water sources in the frontier zone, both signed at Hafr al Batin on 24 Sha`ban A.H. 1410, corresponding to 21 March A.D. 1990.

Article 2:

This Decree shall be published in the Official Gazette, and it shall enter into force as of the date of its promulgation.

Promulgated on 3 Dhulqadah A.H. 1411
Corresponding to 18 May A.D. 1991

Qaboos bin Sa`id
Sultan of Oman

The King

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Instrument of Ratification

With the help of Almighty God:

We, Fahd bin `Abdulaziz Al Sa`ud, King of Saudi Arabia,

Having taken cognizance of the International Border Agreement between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Sultanate of Oman and of the two Annexes appended thereto, signed at Hafr al Batin on the twenty-fourth day of Sha`ban A.H. 1410, corresponding to the twenty-first day of March A.D. 1990, which have been approved by Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 155 of 29 Shaban A.H. 1410 and with regard to which Royal Decree Number M/23 of 5 Ramadan A.H. 1410 has been promulgated,

Having given careful consideration to the Agreement and to the two Annexes appended thereto,

Have found them to be acceptable and have approved them as a whole and in their particulars, and we declare, by virtue of this instrument, that we have ratified them and endorsed them and that we undertake, God willing, to implement their provisions in all faith and sincerity.

In witness whereof, we have affixed our signature to this instrument.

Fahd bin `Abdulaziz Al Sa`ud

Promulgated from the Yamamah Palace, Riyadh, on the twenty-third day of Shawwal A.H. 1411, corresponding to the fourth day of May A.D. 1991.

SOURCE: Office of the Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Muscat (translated from the Arabic).

Appendix G

INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE SULTANATE OF OMAN AND THE REPUBLIC OF YEMEN

The Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Yemen, proceeding from the fraternal links and the common interest that unite their two countries and peoples, in pursuance of the noble Islamic Shariah, prompted by the desire to strengthen the existing bonds of brotherhood and the relationship of neighborliness between the two fraternal countries,

And in view of the desire of each of the two countries to delineate the boundaries between them in a definitive manner, have agreed as follows:

Article 1

The boundary line separating the territory of the Sultanate of Oman and the territory of the Republic of Yemen shall be described in article 2 of this Agreement and based on geodesic system 84.

Article 2

The boundary line between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Yemen begins from the principal point at Ras Darbat `Ali (the Rock), numbered at point No. 1, at the intersection of the geographical coordinates of parallel 16 degrees, 39 minutes, 3.83 seconds north and meridian 53 degrees, 6 minutes, 30.88 seconds east, and ends at the principal point numbered as point 8 at the geographical alignment of the intersection of parallel 19 degrees north with meridian 52 degrees east, and the boundary line extends between the two principal points whose coordinates are set forth above passing through points 2, 3, 4, 4a, 4b, 5, 6, and 7, in accordance with the following coordinates:

Point No. 2 is at the intersection of parallel 17 minutes, 7.91 seconds north with meridian 52 degrees, 48 minutes, 44.22 seconds east.

Point No. 3 is at the intersection of parallel 17 degrees, 17 minutes, 40 seconds north with meridian 52 degrees, 44 minutes, 45 seconds east.

Point No. 4 is at the intersection of parallel 17 degrees, 18 minutes, 6.93 seconds north with meridian 52 degrees, 44 minutes, 33.50 seconds east.

Point No. 4a, ancillary to point number 4, is at the intersection of parallel 17 degrees, 18 minutes, 8.87 seconds north with meridian 52 degrees, 44 minutes, 34.24 seconds east.

Point No. 4b, ancillary to point number 4, is at the intersection of parallel 17 degrees, 18 minutes, 8.42 seconds north with meridian 52 degrees, 44 minutes, 35.57 seconds east.

Point No. 5 is at the intersection of parallel 17 degrees, 18 minutes, 15 seconds north with meridian 52 degrees, 45 minutes, 5 seconds east.

Point No. 6 is at the intersection of parallel 17 degrees, 18 minutes, 21 seconds north with meridian 52 degrees, 45 minutes, 2 seconds east.

Point No. 7 is at the intersection of parallel 17 degrees, 20 minutes, 59.04 seconds north with meridian 52 degrees, 46 minutes, 55.83 seconds east.

Article 3

The extension of the separating boundary line continues from the extremity of the principal point on the shore (Ras Darbat `Ali) in the direction of the territorial waters until the limit of the economic zone. This extension shall be demarcated in accordance with the rules of international law and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

This demarcation of the land and maritime boundary line separating the two countries shall be considered final and definitive.

Article 4

A Joint Technical Commission shall be formed of the survey authorities of the two countries and its task shall be:

(a) To survey and establish on the ground the boundary points and the boundary line set forth in article 2 and to prepare in a definitive manner the detailed maps and related data necessary for that purpose so that those maps—after signature by representatives of the two parties—shall be the official maps showing the boundaries between the two countries and shall be annexed to this Agreement as an integral part hereof.

(b) To supervise the emplacement of markers (pillars) along the agreed boundary line separating the territories of the two countries, and to reach agreement on what distance shall separate one marker (pillar) from another.

Article 5

All issues arising out of the demarcation of the boundary line and any issues emerging thereafter shall be settled by amicable means through direct contact between the two Parties on the basis of the principles of equality, mutual advantage and the absence of prejudice to the interests of either Party.

Article 6

In the event of the discovery of common natural resources, agreement shall be reached on the manner of their exploitation and division in accordance with the established international norms and customs and the principles of justice and fairness.

Article 7

The border authorities and rights to grazing, movement and the use of water resources in the boundary zone shall be regulated in accordance with the two Annexes appended to this Agreement. Use of the property of residents in the border zone shall also be regulated in accordance with a special annex to be agreed upon by the two Parties. All of the annexes mentioned in this article shall be considered an integral part of this Agreement.

Article 8

This Agreement and its Annexes were drawn up in two original copies in the Arabic language, each State retaining one copy.

Article 9

This Agreement shall enter into force after ratification in accordance with the procedures followed in each of the contracting countries and the exchange of instruments of ratification by the two States.

Article 10

This Agreement was done at Sanaa on 3 Rabi` II A.H. 1413, corresponding to 1 October A.D. 1992.

For the Government of the
Republic of Yemen:

Haider Abu Bakr Al-Attas
Prime Minister

For the Government of the
Sultanate of Oman:

Thuwayni bin Shihab Al Sa`id
Special Representative of His
Majesty the Sultan

Annex I to the International Boundary Agreement Between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Yemen, Concerning the Organization of Border Authorities

The government of the Sultanate of Oman and the Government of the Republic of Yemen, in implementation of article 7 of the International Boundary Agreement between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Yemen signed on 3 Rabi` II A.H. 1413 corresponding to 1 October A.D. 1992, and in their desire to arrange the terms of reference of the border authorities, have agreed as follows:

Article 1

The two Parties have agreed that disputes, violations and incidents occurring in the border zone covered by this Annex shall be resolved in accordance with the provisions contained herein.

Article 2

1. The border zone shall be regarded as the area extending from the common boundary line between the two countries to a depth of 5 kilometers inside the territory of each of the two Parties.
2. With the exception of installations of official crossing points and border force installations, neither Party may erect or maintain any fortifications, installations, military camps or the like within the limits of the zone indicated in paragraph 1 of this article. Immediately on the entry into force of the International Boundary Agreement between them, the two Parties shall take the necessary measures for the implementation of the provisions of this paragraph, within a period of time to be agreed upon, with regard to existing fortifications, installations and military camps.

Article 3

1. Each of the Contracting Parties shall appoint the border authorities set forth hereunder in order to effect the implementation of the provisions of this Annex.
   (a) First-level border authorities:

For the Sultanate of Oman:
Inspector-General of Police and Customs
For the Republic of Yemen:
Governor of the relevant Governorate

(b) Second-level border authorities:
For the Sultanate of Oman:
Minister of the Interior
For the Republic of Yemen:
Minister of the Interior and Security

2. The border authorities mentioned in paragraph 1 of this article may be changed or other authorities introduced by agreement of the Contracting Parties through the diplomatic channel.

Article 4

The Parties shall, within one month of the entry into force of this Annex, communicate to each other through the diplomatic channel the full names of the members of the border authorities, their functional titles and copies of their letters of appointment. The letter of appointment shall contain a photograph of the bearer and his signature. Any changes subsequently made in this regard shall be communicated in the same manner.

Article 5

Each authorized member of the border authorities shall be entitled to appoint assistants, and he shall provide their names, functional titles and letters of appointment to the border authorities of the other Party.

Article 6

The violations and incidents relating to the boundaries that are included within the scope of the provisions of this Annex are:

(a) Interference with or destruction of boundary pillars or destruction of buildings or other installations directly relating to the boundaries;

(b) Shooting at border posts and border guards, or at persons, or at boundary pillars or boundary installations located in the territory of the other Party;

(c) Flight by those charged with committing a crime under the law of the Contracting Party to which they belong into the border zone in order to take refuge in the border zone of the other Contracting Party;

(d) Incidents of robbery and theft involving nationals of one of the Contracting Parties in the border zone of the other Party;

(e) Smuggling by a person or persons from the territory of the Contracting Parties to the territory of the other Party;

(f) Hunting of wild animals within the border zone;

(g) Misuse or contamination of water resources and anything which may impair their use.

Article 7

The border authorities of each of the Contracting Parties shall, in the border zone, have the powers set forth hereunder:

(a) To take the necessary measures to prevent the occurrence of incidents;

(b) To take the necessary measures, and to notify the border authorities of the other Party accordingly, in order to preclude the commission of crimes, smuggling and infiltration by persons in the border zone of the other Party, to prevent such persons from crossing the boundaries and to intercept them as required or pursue them in order to arrest them. In the event that such persons should cross the boundary line from the border zone of one of the Contracting Parties into the border zone of the other Party, pursuit must halt and the border authority concerned shall notify the border authority of the other Party, which shall take the necessary measures to arrest them and hand them over to the border authorities of the former Party;

(c) To take the necessary measures to combat smuggling and infiltration between the two countries, and to exchange information on such activities with the other border authorities with a view to their suppression;

(d) To exchange information in the event of disasters in the border zone and to cooperate in containing them;

(e) To take preventive measures against the spread of livestock diseases or epidemics or agricultural parasites into the territory of the other Party. For this purpose, the border authority of the Party in whose territory a livestock disease or epidemic has appeared shall notify the authority of the other Party. In the event that there is suspicion of disease in livestock that must cross the boundaries of the two Parties, the necessary measures shall be taken to prevent the spread of such disease in accordance with the hygiene and veterinary inspection regulations of each of the two Parties;

(f) To investigate all border incidents;

(g) To settle such disputes as may arise in connection with the violations and incidents mentioned in article 6 of this Annex and to consider, within the limits of their powers, applications for compensation submitted following a border incident by one of the Parties or by persons present in the border zone that comes under their jurisdiction.

Article 8

1. Should a national of one of the Parties take refuge in the border zone of the other Party after committing a crime under the law of the Party to which he belongs in the border zone of that Party, the border authority of the Party in whose territory the crime was committed may request that the suspect be arrested. The border authority of the other Party shall do all in its power to apprehend the person being sought and, on apprehending him, shall notify the border authority of the Party making the request.
2. The border authority of a Party which is requested to arrest the suspect may return him within a period of not more than 10 days from the date of his arrest.
3. Should the border authority requested to arrest the suspect refrain for any reason from handing him over within a 10-day period, it shall keep him under arrest until such time as the documents relating to his return are delivered through diplomatic channels. The period for which the suspect is detained shall not, in any event, exceed 60 days.

Article 9

The border authorities may, by prior agreement, undertake the joint on-site investigation of a border incident with a view to establishing the facts. In such a case, and if required, they may bring with them experts and witnesses. The investigation shall be supervised by the Party in whose territory it takes place. A report of the investigation shall be drawn up and signed by the competent authorities in the two countries. It shall contain a summary of the facts and deliberation and of the conclusions reached by the investigation and shall be transmitted to the competent judicial authorities.

Article 10

The border authorities of the two Parties shall, by common accord, designate points for meetings and the exchange of correspondence and points for the hand-over of persons and property as well as official crossing points.

Article 11

The members of the border authorities, their assistants and experts may cross the boundaries in exercise of the functions arising out of the provisions of this Annex. Members of the border authorities and their assistants shall cross the boundaries on production of the letters of appointment mentioned in articles 4 and 5 of this Annex after notifying the competent authorities of the other Contracting Party and with their agreement.

Article 12

The closest border post of the other Contracting Party shall be notified of the day and time of crossing of those persons required to cross the boundaries in accordance with the provisions of this Annex at least 24 hours before the time requested. This period may be reduced in cases of extreme necessity by agreement between the Contracting Parties.

Article 13

The members of the border authorities shall, in the exercise of their functions, enjoy the necessary immunity for the performance of their duties, and the materials that they require for that purpose shall not be subject to taxes or customs duties.

Article 14

While present in the border zone of one of the two Parties, the persons mentioned in article 9 of this Annex shall be provided with the necessary assistance.

Article 15

1. The border authorities mentioned in paragraph 1 (a) of article 3 of this Annex shall meet alternately in the territory of each of the Contracting Parties once every six months or whenever there is need for a meeting, by agreement of the two Parties, in order to settle outstanding issues within their competence. Should the aforesaid authorities fail to reach agreement on the settlement of such issues, they shall be submitted to the border authorities mentioned in paragraph 1 (b) of article 3 of this Annex for the decision to decide upon them as they deem appropriate.
2. The border authorities for which provision is made in paragraph 1 (b) of article 3 of this Annex shall meet alternately in the territory of each of the Contracting Parties once a year or if the border authorities for which

provision is made in paragraph 1 (a) of article 3 of this Annex should otherwise propose that a special meeting be held for consultation and the resolution of outstanding issues.

Article 16

1. For the purposes of keeping the boundary markers (pillars) in position and of their maintenance, the border authorities of the two countries mentioned in paragraph 1 (a) of article 3 of this Annex shall exchange information relating thereto and shall undertake an on-site inspection thereof prior to the convening of the semi-annual meeting, referred to in paragraph 1 of article 15 of this Annex, so that they may discuss the matter and submit the necessary report on the markers (pillars) to the border authorities mentioned in paragraph 1 (b) of article 3 of this Annex.
2. Should it appear to the border authorities mentioned in paragraph 1 (b) of article 3 of this Annex that the locations of the markers (pillars) have been changed or that their condition requires maintenance or repair as a result of damage, those authorities shall notify the competent agencies of the two Parties so that the necessary technical arrangements may be made to restore the markers (pillars) to their positions or maintain or repair them in accordance with the technical specifications agreed upon by the two Parties in the reports of the Technical Commission referred to in article 4 of the International Boundary Agreement between the two countries and endorsed thereby.

Article 17

This Annex shall remain in force for a five-year period from the date of the entry in force of the Agreement. This Annex shall be renewed automatically for the same term unless one of the Parties notifies the other through the diplomatic channel of its desire to amend it six months before the date of expiry of the appointed term.

Article 18

This Annex shall enter into force after ratification in accordance with the procedures followed in each of the two countries and the exchange of instruments of ratification hereof by the two Governments.

Done at Sanaa this third day of Rabi` II A.H. 1413, corresponding to the first day of October A.D. 1992.

For the Government of the
Republic of Yemen:

Haydar Abu Bakr Al-Attas
Prime Minister

For the Government of the
Sultanate of Oman:

Thuwayni bin Shihab Al-Sa`id
Special Representative of
His Majesty the Sultan

Annex II to the International Boundary Agreement Between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Yemen, Concerning the Regulation of Rights to Grazing, Movement and the Use of Water Resources in the Border Zone

The Government of the Sultanate of Oman and the Government of the Republic of Yemen, in implementation of article 7 of the International Boundary Agreement between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Yemen signed on 3 Rabi` II A.H. 1413, corresponding to 1 October A.D. 1992,

And desiring to regulate rights to grazing, movement and the use of water resources in the border zone, have agreed as follows:

Article 1

For the purpose of this Annex, the grazing zone shall be defined as extending to a maximum depth of 25 kilometers from the common boundary line in the territory of each of the two countries.

Article 2

Herdsmen who are nationals of the two Parties and who are in the border zones and their vicinity may make use of the range lands and the water resources in the grazing zone defined in article 1 of this Annex in accordance with the tribal customs prevailing in the area.

Article 3

The border authorities of the two Parties shall establish the range of grazing and the crossing-points that may be used for the purposes of this Annex through annual consultation and in the light of grazing requirements.

Article 4

Without prejudice to the provisions contained in article 2 of this Annex, when permitted by the border authorities concerned to pasture and to make use of the water resources in the grazing zones, nationals of the two Parties shall be exempt from:

(a) The laws and regulations in force relating to residence and passports. They shall be issued with a transit document by the border authorities of the Party of which they are nationals permitting them to cross the boundary;

(b) Taxes and duties on their livestock, tents and related equipment, customarily necessary household articles and the foodstuffs and consumption goods that they carry with them, without prejudice to the rights of the Parties to levy customs duties on livestock or goods destined for trade in the territory of the other Party.

Article 5

Each party reserves the right to limit the number of such vehicles as herdsmen may wish to bring into its territory and the number and types of firearms that they are permitted to carry. Such weapons as may be brought in must be officially licensed by the relevant authorities in the two countries by virtue of official documents establishing the identity of the owner, and the border authorities shall issue to owners documents permitting them to carry their weapons. Should the number of firearms exceed that permitted, they shall be handed over against receipt to the responsible agency at the crossing-point and shall be returned to their owners on their return.

Article 6

Should a contagious livestock disease, epidemic or the like break out, each Party may impose the necessary veterinary or sanitary measures and invoke the orders in force prohibiting importation and exportation. The competent authorities in both countries shall cooperate in this regard.

Article 7

The persons indicated in this Annex shall, in the territory of the receiving country, be entitled to benefit from the health services. They shall be permitted to provide themselves with the necessary foodstuffs and consumption goods within the boundaries of the zone in which they are permitted to pasture. Should there be no health center in the grazing zone, however, emergency cases shall be referred to the nearest health center through the crossing-point authorities.

Article 8

This Annex shall remain in force for a term of five years from the date of entry into force of the Agreement. This Annex shall be renewed automatically for the same term unless one of the Parties informs the other through the diplomatic channel of its desire to amend it six months before the date of expiry of the appointed term.

Article 9

This Annex shall enter into force after ratification in accordance with the procedures followed in each of the two countries and the exchange of instruments of ratification by the two Governments.

Done at Sanaa this third day of Rabi` II A.H. 1413, corresponding to the first day of October A.D. 1992.

For the Government of the
Republic of Yemen:

Haydar Abu Bakr Al-Attas
Prime Minister

For the Government of the
Sultanate of Oman:

Thuwayni bin Shihab Al-Sa`id
Special Representative of
His Majesty the Sultan

Protocol of the Exchange of the Instruments of Ratification of the Boundary Agreement and its Two Annexes Between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Yemen

Today, Sunday, the third of Rajab 1413 A.H., corresponding to 27 December 1992 A.D., at the Foreign Ministry of the Sultanate of Oman in Muscat, H.E. Yusuf bin `Alawi bin `Abdallah, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of the Sultanate of Oman, and H.E. Dr. `Abd Al-Karim Al-Iryani, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Yemen, exchanged the instruments of ratification of the International Boundary Agreement between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Yemen and of the First Annex thereto, concerning the Regulation of the Border Authorities and the Second Annex concerning the Regulation of Rights to Grazing, Movement and the Use of Water Resources in the Border Zone, annexed to the Agreement, signed by the two countries on 3 Rabi II 1413 A.H., corresponding to 1 October 1992 A.D.

In witness thereof, this protocol has been signed.

For the Sultanate of Oman:

Yusuf bin `Alawi bin `Abdallah
Minister of State for
Foreign Affairs

For the Republic of Yemen:

`Abd Al-Karim Al-Iryani
Minister for Foreign Affairs

Protocol of the Exchange of Instruments of Ratification of the International Boundary Agreement Between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Yemen and of the Two Annexes Thereto

There took place today, Sunday, 3 Rajab A.H. 1413, corresponding to 27 December A.D. 1992, at the premises of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Sultanate of Oman at Muscat and between His Excellency Mr. Yusuf bin `Alawi bin `Abdallah, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of the Sultanate of Oman, and His Excellency Dr. `Abd Al-Karim Al-Iryani, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Yemen, the exchange of instruments of ratification of the International Boundary Agreement between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Yemen and of Annex I, concerning the organization of the border authorities, and Annex II, concerning rights to Grazing, Movement and the Use of Water Resources in the boundary zone between the two countries, to the Agreement, as signed by the two countries on 3 Rabi` II A.H. 1413, corresponding to 1 October A.D. 1992.

In witness whereof, this record was signed.

For the Sultanate of Oman:

Yusuf bin `Alawi bin `Abdallah
Minister of State for
Foreign Affairs

For the Republic of Yemen:

`Abd Al-Karim Al-Iryani
Minister for Foreign Affairs

Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Muscat

Instrument of Ratification

No: 1301/21070/120004/38032
25 Jumada II A.H. 1413
20 December A.D. 1992

I, Yusuf bin `Alawi bin `Abdallah, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of the Sultanate of Oman,

By virtue of the powers vested in me and on the basis of the Sultan's Decree No. 75/92 promulgated on 5 Jumada I A.H. 1413, corresponding to 31 October A.D. 1992,

Do declare by virtue of this instrument the ratification by the Government of the Sultanate of Oman of the International Boundary Agreement between the Government of the Sultanate of Oman and the Government of the Republic of Yemen and the two Annexes thereto signed at Sanaa on 1 October A.D. 1992.

In witness whereof, I have signed this instrument today, Sunday 25 Jumada II A.H. 1413, corresponding to 20 December A.D. 1992.

Yusuf bin `Alawi bin `Abdallah
Minister of State for Foreign Affairs

Republic of Yemen
Ministry of Legal Affairs
Sanaa

Instrument of Ratification

The Chairman of the Presidential Council:

Having examined the International Boundary Agreement between the Republic of Yemen and the Sultanate of Oman—attached to this Law—signed at Sanaa on 3 Rabi` II A.H. 1413, corresponding to 1 October A.D. 1992, and comprising 10 articles and two Annexes, concerning the organization of border authorities and concerning the regulation of rights to Grazing, Movement and the Use of Water Resources in the border zone,

And the documents and instruments relating to all the constitutional measures necessary for the ratification of this Agreement by the executive and legislative authorities in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Yemen,

We have promulgated law No. 44 of 1992 concerning the ratification of the said Agreement and its two Annexes.

On the basis of the mutual confidence between the Parties to this Agreement, and being fully convinced of the beneficial consequences and the close cooperation that will arise out of the entry into force of this Agreement,

We hereby declare our definitive approval and our ratification of the Agreement and its Annexes heretofore referred to and our commitment to all of its provisions.

Accordingly, and in witness to the foregoing, we affix to this instrument our signature and the official seal of State.

Recorded at the Presidency of the Republic, Sanaa.

Date: 6 Jumada I A.H. 1413 corresponding to 31 October A.D. 1992.

`Ali `Abdallah Salih
Chairman of the Presidential Council

SOURCE: Office of the Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Muscat (translated from the Arabic); see also `Abd al-Rahman Al-Haydari, "Al-Hayah Publishes Text of Yemeni-Omani Border Agreement," *Al-Hayah*, 20 October 1992, pp. 1, 4, 7 in "Text, Appendix of Yemen-Oman Border Agreement," *FBIS-NES-92-242*, 16 December 1992, pp. 21–24.

Appendix H

COUNTRIES WITH WHICH OMAN HAS DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

Country	Date Ties Established
Republic of Albania	7 December 1992
Democratic and Popular Republic of Algeria	1971
Republic of Argentina	25 April 1978
Republic of Armenia	7 July 1992
Commonwealth of Australia	1981
Republic of Austria	1975
Republic of Azerbaijan	13 July 1992
State of Bahrain	13 June 1972
People's Republic of Bangladesh	1974
Republic of Belarus	23 July 1992
Kingdom of Belgium	1978
Republic of Bolivia	16 December 1986
Republic of Brazil	1975
Darussalam State of Brunei	24 March 1984
Republic of Bulgaria	17 June 1990
Republic of Burkina Faso	15 October 1981
Republic of Burundi	28 February 1975
Canada	1978
Czech Republic	1 March 1993
Republic of Chad	21 January 1989
Republic of Chile	1978
People's Republic of China	25 May 1978
Republic of Columbia	25 July 1985
Federal Islamic Republic of the Comoros	9 January 1981
Republic of Cote D'Ivoire	28 January 1991
Republic of Cuba	23 May 1994
Republic of Cyprus	1978
Kingdom of Denmark	7 September 1979
Republic of Djibouti	1977
Republic of Ecuador	NA

Arab Republic of Egypt	1972
Republic of Estonia	23 September 1992
Republic of Ethiopia	7 February 1995
Republic of Finland	10 April 1979
Republic of France	1972
Republic of Gabon	20 March 1981
Republic of Gambia	4 February 1980
Germany	26 April 1974
Republic of Ghana	1 March 1989
Hellenic Republic of Greece	NA
Republic of Guinea	17 February 1981
Republic of Guinea-Bissau	5 August 1992
Republic of Hungary	19 June 1990
Republic of Iceland	27 February 1992
Republic of India	1971
Republic of Indonesia	5 December 1977
Islamic Republic of Iran	9 June 1972
Republic of Iraq	7 January 1976
Republic of Ireland	8 July 1987
Republic of Italy	19 February 1974
Jamaica	27 May 1986
Japan	1973
Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan	1972
Republic of Kazakhstan	27 April 1992
Republic of Kenya	28 December 1976
Democratic People's Republic of North Korea	25 May 1992
Republic of South Korea	28 March 1974
State of Kuwait	1 January 1972
Republic of Kyrgysztan	18 May 1992
Republic of Latvia	5 February 1993
Republic of Lebanon	1973
Republic of Lithuania	22 September 1992
Grand Duchy of Luxembourg	15 September 1980
Republic of Malaysia	15 January 1982
Republic of Maldives	20 February 1981
Republic of Mali	2 March 1979
Republic of Malta	NA
Islamic Republic of Mauritania	1977
Mauritius	31 January 1991
United States of Mexico	1978
Republic of Moldova	25 June 1992
People's Republic of Mongolia	27 April 1992

Kingdom of Morocco	1973
Republic of Mozambique	4 May 1993
Kingdom of Nepal	21 January 1977
Kingdom of the Netherlands	1 January 1972
New Zealand	15 September 1985
Republic of Nicaragua	26 December 1991
Republic of Niger	13 September 1980
Federal Republic of Nigeria	18 January 1981
Kingdom of Norway	15 April 1980
Islamic Republic of Pakistan	1971
Republic of Peru	14 May 1986
Republic of Philippines	6 October 1980
Republic of Poland	24 January 1990
Republic of Portugal	26 October 1976
State of Qatar	1974
Romania	1 May 1974
Russian Federation (formerly, USSR)	26 September 1985
Republic of Rwanda	1 May 1982
Saint Lucia	NA
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	1972
Republic of Senegal	28 November 1978
Republic of Seychelles	16 April 1983
Republic of Sierra Leone	24 March 1983
Republic of Singapore	1985
Republic of Slovakia	3 March 1993
Democratic Republic of Somalia	1980
Kingdom of Spain	1973
Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka	17 February 1981
Republic of Sudan	1977
Kingdom of Sweden	NA
Confederation of Switzerland	NA
Arab Republic of Syria	19 December 1987
United Republic of Tanzania	19 January 1981
Kingdom of Thailand	1980
Republic of Tunisia	December 1971
Republic of Turkey	August 1976
Republic of Turkmenistan	29 May 1992
Republic of Uganda	1987
Ukraine	19 May 1992
United Arab Emirates	1972
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	2 May 1971

United States of America	1972
Republic of Uruguay	6 April 1987
Republic of Uzbekistan	22 April 1992
Republic of Venezuela	29 September 1986
Socialist Republic of Vietnam	9 June 1992
Republic of Yemen	1974
Republic of Yugoslavia [Serbia in 1993]	1975
Republic of Zaire	1978
Republic of Zambia	1 June 1982
Republic of Zimbabwe	1982

SOURCE: Office of the Secretary-General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sultanate of Oman, 1993, and *FBIS-Middle East and Africa, 1977–1987; FBIS-Near East and South Asia, 1987–1995.*

NA = Not Available

MEMBERS OF THE MAJLIS AL-SHURA
1 DECEMBER 1994–30 NOVEMBER 1997

President:	Shaykh `Abdallah bin `Ali Al-Qatabi
Governorate of Muscat	
Wilayat Muscat:	Dr. Hamed bin `Abdallah bin Nasser Al-Riyami
	Ms. Shukur bint Mohammed bin Salim Al-Ghamari
Wilayat Mutrah:	Mr. Aflah bin Hamed bin Salim Al-Ruwahi
	Mr. Mahmoud bin `Abdallah bin Mohammed Al-Khanji
Wilayat Bousher:	Mr. Nasser bin Mansoor bin Saif Al-Salti
	Mr. Saif bin Suleiman bin Humaid Al-Hasni
Wilayat Seeb:	Mr. Hamoud bin Ahmed bin Mohammed Al-Hinai
	Ms. Tiyba bint Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Ma`awali
Wilayat Al-Amerat:	Mr. Mohammed bin Hamoud bin Mohammed Al-Wahaibi
	Mr. Salim bin Sa`id bin Salim Al-Wahaibi
Wilayat Quriyat:	Mr. Mohammed bin Saif bin Mohammed Al-Jahdhami
Interior Region	
Wilayat Nizwa:	Mr. Al-Khattab bin Ahmed bin Soud Al-Kindi
	Mr. Nasser bin Rashid bin Marhoon Al-Toobi
Wilayat Sumail:	Mr. Hilal bin Soud bin Nasser Al-Busa`idi
	Mr. Mohammed bin Nasser bin Humaid Al-Naddabi
Wilayat Izki:	Mr. `Abdullah bin Mohammed bin Gaith Al-Darmaki
Wilayat Bidbid:	Mr. Mohammed bin Hamed bin Zuhair Al-Farsi
Wilayat Al-Hamra:	Mr. Salim bin Mohammed bin Ahmed Al-`Abri
Wilayat Bahlah:	Mr. Mohammed bin `Abdallah bin Sa`id Al-Adwi
	Mr. Samah bin Suleiman bin Saif Al-Shakaili
Wilayat Manah:	Mr. Zahran bin Sa`id bin Nasser Al-Hadrami
Wilayat Adam:	Mr. Mohammed bin Sultan bin Hamed Al-Mahrooqi

Al-Batinah Region

Wilayat Sohar:	Mr. Rashid bin Hamdan bin `Ali Al-Maqbali
	Mr. Khalfan bin Salim bin Masoud Al-Ka`abi
Wilayat Shanas:	Mr. `Ali bin Mohammed bin `Ali Al-Ka`abi
	Mr. Mohammed bin `Abdallah bin Ahmed Al-Khousaibi
Wilayat Saham:	Mr. Saif bin Marhoon bin `Ali Al-Ma`amari
	Mr. `Ali bin `Abdallah bin `Ali Al-Badi
Wilayat Lewa:	Mr. Ahmed bin Khalfan bin Ahmed Al-Ghafeeli
Wilayat Rustaq:	Mr. Khalid bin Saif bin Nasser Al-Ghafri
	Mr. `Abdulwahed bin Suleiman bin Zahran Al-Harasi
Wilayat Al-Khabourah:	Mr. Qais bin Zahran bin Saif Al-Hosni
	Mr. `Abdallah bin Mohammed bin Sa`id Al-Sa`aidi
Wilayat Al-Suwaiq:	Mr. Rashid bin Hamdan bin Saba`a Al-Sa`aidi
	Mr. Mohammed bin `Ali bin Nasser Al-Kiyoumi
Wilayat Al-Musana`ah:	Mr. Salim bin M. bin Sa`id Al-Mardoof Al-Sa`aidi
	Mr. Khalifa bin Salim bin Mohammed Al-Nasri
Wilayat Barka:	Mr. `Ali Hamoud bin `Ali Al-Busaidi
	Mr. Salim bin M. bin Khuwaidam Al-Mashaifri
Wilayat Al-Awabi:	Mr. `Abdul Rahman bin Saif bin Hammad Al-Kharousi
Wilayat Nakhal:	Mr. Mohammed bin Nasser bin Suleiman Al-Habaishi
Wilayat Wadi Al-Ma`awal:	Mr. Saleh bin Soud bin Khalil Al-Mawli

Al-Sharqiyah Region

Wilayat Sur:	Mr. Mohammed bin Nasser bin Mohammed Al-Araimi
	Mr. `Ali bin Musallam bin Juma Al-`Alawi
Wilayat Al-Mudhaibi:	Mr. Hilal bin `Ali bin Soud Al-Habsi
	Mr. Mubarak bin `Abdallah bin Hamid Al-Rashdi
Wilayat Dima Wata`een:	Mr. Saif bin Mohsin bin Hilal Al-Ma`amari
Wilayat Jalan Bani Bu `Ali:	Mr. Juma bin Hamed bin Salim Al-Ghilani
	Mr. `Abdallah bin Khalid bin `Ali Al-Hamouda
Wilayat Jalan Bani Bu Hassan:	Mr. Sa`id bin Mohammed bin `Abdallah Al-Suwa`i
Wilayat Ibra:	Mr. `Abdallah bin Hashel bin Rashid Al-Maskeri
Wilayat Bidiya:	Mr. Amer bin Mohammed bin Shamis Al-Hajri
Wilayat Al-Qabil:	Mr. `Abdallah bin Hamdoon bin Humaid Al-Harthi
Wilayat Al-Kamil Wal-Wafi:	Mr. Khamis bin Halis bin Khadim Al-Hashmi

Wilayat Wadi Bani Khaloid:	Mr. Hamoud bin Rashid bin Saif Al-Sha`aibi
Wilayat Masirah:	Mr. Mohammed bin Khamis bin Hilal Al-Majali

Dhahirah Region

Wilayat Al-Buraymi:	Mr. Ahmed bin Rashid bin Hamed Al-Shamsi
Wilayat Ibri:	Mr. Hamed bin Mohammed bin Hamed Al-Jasasi
	Mr. Saif bin `Ali bin Sa`id Al-Ghafri
Wilayat Mahddah:	Mr. Ahmed bin Obaid bin Juma Al-Ka`abi
Wilayat Dhank:	Mr. `Ali bin Sa`id bin Khalifa Al-Yahyai
Wilayat Yanqul:	Mr. Sa`id bin Amer bin Saif Al-`Alawi

Al-Wustah Region

Wilayat Himah:	Mr. Al-`Abd bin Al-Sharqi bin Aks Al-Harsoosi
Wilayat Mahoot:	Mr. `Ali bin Suwaidan bin Suwi`wid Al-Amri
Wilayat Duqm:	Mr. `Abdallah bin Mabkhout bin `Ali Al-Janaibi
Wilayat Al-Jazir:	Mr. Ghareeb bin Sa`ad bin Musallam Al-Janaidi

Governorate of Dhufar

Salalah Towns:	Mr. Daris bin Khadim bin Fatah Bu Shaham
Wilayat Salalah (al-Jabal al-Awsat):	Mr. Salim bin Ahmed bin Sabah Na`awm Al-Kathiri
Wilayat Taqah:	Mr. `Ali bin Sahal bin `Ali Al-Hafeed
Wilayat Mirbat:	Mr. Khalid bin Ahmed bin Sa`id Al-Amri
Wilayat Sadah:	Mr. Salim bin Khalfan bin Rashid Al-Shukaili
Wilayat Shalim Wa Juzir al-Halaniyat:	Mr. `Abdulaziz bin Salim bin Sa`id Al-Mahri
Wilayat Rakhyout:	Mr. `Abdallah bin Mustahail bin Salim Shammas
Wilayat Dhalkout:	Mr. Ahmed bin Suhail bin Ajaham Hardan
Wilayat Thumrait:	Mr. Sa`id bin Sa`ad bin Mohammed Ghawas
Wilayat Maghshan:	Mr. Musallam bin Salim bin Sa`id Al-Sha`ash`i

Musandam Governorate

Wilayat Khasab:	Mr. Juma bin Hamdan bin Hasan Al-Malik Al-Shahi
Wilayat Bukha:	Mr. Ahmed bin `Abdallah bin M. Al-Malik Al-Shahi
Wilayat Diba Al-Bai`a:	Mr. Mohammed bin Al Bu Rashid Al-Shahi
Wilayat Madha:	Mr. Ahmed bin `Abdallah bin Khalfan Al-Madhani

SOURCE: Information Attaché, Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman, Washington, D.C., December 1994.

Appendix J

SPEECH BY HIS MAJESTY SULTAN QABOOS BIN SA`ID AL BU SA`ID ON THE OCCASION OF THE OPENING OF THE SECOND TERM OF THE MAJLIS AL-SHURA

In the Name of God, the Compassionate and Merciful

"Praise be to God and blessings and peace be upon His Prophet and His Companions and His Followers."

Honorable Members of the Majlis al-Shura:

In the Name of Almighty God we open this blessed day, with God's help and assistance, the Second Term of the Majlis al-Shura which was established three years ago to consolidate the Islamic path that we follow, and to re-affirm the Omani heritage which inspires us, and to support the constructive, fruitful co-operation between the government and the people for a better future, full of light and hope.

With God's blessing, the Majlis has succeeded in enabling our people to participate, patiently and fruitfully in the building of our Nation, and in serving their local communities. The Majlis has proved during its past term that it is well capable of undertaking the tasks for which it is responsible, conscientiously and effectively. This has been demonstrated by the recommendations that have resulted from its deliberations.

We appreciate the efforts that have been made, and the coordination that has been achieved, and we reaffirm the necessity to develop this process, which is integrated into Omani society, in order to enrich the path of our blessed Renaissance, and provide a deeper role for our citizens to maintain their achievements. Your principal duty in the coming Term is the achievement of this goal. In performing this duty you will be demonstrating the excellence of your work and establishing the principle of making people aware of our dear Country's great goals.

Honorable Members of the Majlis:

The Second Term of the Majlis is characterized by three elements:

First, broader representation of the people that has resulted in the increase in the membership to eighty. This will produce, with God's permission, a greater variety of ideas, opinions and deliberations, resulting in the nourishment and enrichment of the Majlis' recommendations.

Second, the combination of experienced Members, who will be sitting for this Second Term, with the new Members who are looking forward to expressing their views to enrich the debates on the subjects to be discussed. We hope that this combination will result in a more developed view, characterized by reality and objectivity, and place under consideration the priorities of the national development in the often unpredictably changing economic circumstances.

Third, a new type of participation and entrance of women for the first time in the Majlis al-Shura. It should cause no surprise, since we provided them with full opportunities of education, work and social activities, in accordance with our religious principles and customs that conform with these principles, that we have recognized that it is their right (in this era of our Omani Renaissance) to participate with their thoughts and views in their country's affairs. They now have a great national responsibility to prove, through their constant efforts and sustained work, their capabilities to carry out their duties effectively. We wish them all success, and we declare that the right of women to candidacy to the Majlis al-Shura will not be confined in the future to the Muscat Governorate, but will gradually be extended in accordance with circumstances in other Governorates and Wilayats. The bases of women's candidacy will be the same as those for men, which are the trust of the people and the people's choice of their representatives in the Majlis. This will not be an honor confined to women alone, but to the whole community, and will be a correction to some wrong understanding which belittles the status which Islam accords to women. Women and men are companions. The Prophet, praise and peace be upon him, has instructed us as to the role of women. This role was very significant in the early period of Islam. On this occasion, we call upon Omani women everywhere, in the villages and in the cities, in both urban and bedu communities, in the hills and mountains, to roll up their sleeves and contribute to the process of economic and social development—everyone, according to their capabilities, experience, skills and their position in life. The country needs every pair of hands for the progress of its development, stability and prosperity. We particularly call upon women to be frugal and to distance themselves from the extravagance which is appearing among developing countries, to depend on themselves in running their family affairs, and to teach their children the habit of saving as a contribution to the national economy. Women's associations throughout Oman are requested to intensify their efforts to spread enlightenment among their countrywomen and initiate programs for literacy, and the care of the disabled, children, and the development of their local communities

and women's traditional crafts and all other fields of social work that are in need of the support of these associations. We have great faith in the educated young Omani women to work devotedly to assist their sisters in their local communities to develop their skills and abilities, both practically and intellectually, in order to contribute to our Omani Renaissance which demands the utilization of our entire national genius, for the realization of our country's glory and prosperity.

We call upon Omani women to shoulder this vital role in the community, and we are confident that they will respond to this call.

Honorable Members of the Majlis:

We look to your Majlis as a partner with the Government in the work to build this country and serve the people through the available resources, which must be utilized according to studied priorities in order to meet the increasing needs and requirements at a time that is characterized by evolution and unlimited aspirations. However, the resources are not unlimited, so they cannot entirely satisfy these requirements and aspirations. Therefore it is imperative that we integrate and coordinate our efforts to achieve better results for the development plan and its programs, in order to enhance the life of the community and improve the living standards of our people. This will bring profound benefits to our dear country, so that economic prosperity will increase, social stability will be consolidated and the role of the country in the international political field be further strengthened, with Almighty God's help.

Honorable Members of the Majlis:

The responsibility is great and the road is hard and long, but we are confident in your ability to perform the role to which you have been called. We take this occasion to congratulate you. We call upon Almighty God to make your steps successful and to bless your work and grant Oman continued progress in its contribution to civilization. We believe the Almighty God will hear our prayer.

SOURCE: Sultanate of Oman, Ministry of Information, December 1994.

Appendix K

MEETINGS OF HEADS OF STATE WITH SULTAN QABOOS, 1970–1994

(Unless stated, all meetings were held in Muscat)

1970	October	Shaykh Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahayyan (United Arab Emirates)
1971	October	Muhammad Pahlavi (Iran) in Persopolis
	December	Faysal bin `Abdulaziz (Saudi Arabia) in Riyadh
1972	May	Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahayyan (UAE)
	July	`Isa bin Salman Al-Khalifah (Bahrain) in Manama
	December	Muhammad Anwar Al-Sadat (Egypt) in Cairo
		Faysal bin `Abdulaziz (Saudi Arabia) in Riyadh
1973	March	Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahayyan (UAE) in Abu Dhabi
		Khalifah bin Hamad Al-Thani (Qatar) in Doha
	September	Non-Aligned Movement (Algiers)
	November	League of Arab States (Algiers)
1974	February	Islamic Conference Organization (Lahore)
	May	Husayn bin Talal (Jordan) in Amman
	December	Valéry Giscard d'Estaing (France) in Paris
1975	January	Gerald Ford (United States) in Washington, D.C.
	March	Khalid bin `Abdulaziz (Saudi Arabia) in Riyadh
		Giovanni Liubi (Italy)
	April	Husayn bin Talal (Jordan) in Amman
	June	Khalid bin `Abdulaziz (Saudi Arabia) in Riyadh
	August	Muhammad Pahlavi (Iran) in Teheran
	December	Khalifah bin Hamad Al-Thani (Qatar)
1976	March	Khalid bin `Abdulaziz (Saudi Arabia)
	April	Ibrahim Muhammad Al-Hamdi (YAR)
	May	Husayn bin Talal (Jordan) in Amman
	June	Muhammad Pahlavi (Iran)
	July	Indira Ghandi (India)

	August	Muhammad Anwar Al-Sadat (Egypt)
		Husayn bin Talal (Jordan)
	November	Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahayyan (UAE)
1977	March	Jaafar Muhammad Numayri (Sudan)
	May	Muhammad Anwar Al-Sadat (Egypt) in Alexandria
		Husayn bin Talal (Jordan) in Amman
		Khalid bin `Abdulaziz (Saudi Arabia) in Riyadh
	June	Muhammad Pahlavi (Iran) in Teheran
	November	Husayn bin Talal (Jordan)
	December	Muhammad Pahlavi (Iran)
1978	January	Muhammad Siad Barre (Somalia)
		Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahayyan (UAE)
		Hassan Jawlad (Djibouti)
	June	Muhammad Jaafar Al-Numayri (Sudan)
	October	Husayn bin Talal (Jordan)
	December	`Ali `Abdallah Salih (YAR)
1979	January	[Former President] Gerald Ford (USA)
	February	Elizabeth II (United Kingdom)
	September	Mohammed Siad Barre (Somalia)
		Rashid bin Sa`id Al-Makhtum (Dubai)
1980	January	Husayn bin Talal (Jordan)
1981	January	Zia ul-Haq (Pakistan)
	April	Margaret Thatcher (United Kingdom)
	May	Husayn bin Talal (Jordan)
	May	Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Summit in Abu Dhabi
		`Isa bin Salman Al-Khalifah (Bahrain)
		Jabir Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah (Kuwait)
		Khalifah bin Hamad Al-Thani (Qatar)
		Khaled bin `Abdulaziz (Saudi Arabia)
		Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahayyan (UAE)
	September	Birandar Birbikram (Nepal)
	October	Husayn bin Talal (Jordan)
	November	GCC Summit 2 in Riyadh
		`Isa bin Salman Al-Khalifah (Bahrain)
		Jabir Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah (Kuwait)
		Khalifah bin Hamad Al-Thani (Qatar)
		Khaled bin `Abdulaziz (Saudi Arabia)
		Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahayyan (UAE)
1982	March	Mahathir bin Mohamed (Malaysia)
		Elizabeth II (United Kingdom) in London
	April	Abdou Diouf (Senegal)
	November	GCC Summit 3 in Manama
		`Isa bin Salman Al-Khalifah (Bahrain)

		Jabir Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah (Kuwait)
		Khalifah bin Hamad Al-Thani (Qatar)
		Fahd bin `Abdulaziz (Saudi Arabia)
		Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahayyan (UAE)
1983	January	Husayn bin Talal (Jordan)
	March	Husayn bin Talal (Jordan) in Amman
	April	Ronald Reagan (United States) in Washington, D.C.
	May	Muhammad Husni Mubarak (Egypt) in Cairo
	August	Muhammad Husni Mubarak (Egypt)
	September	Husayn bin Talal (Jordan)
	November	GCC Summit 4 in Doha
		`Isa bin Salman Al-Khalifah (Bahrain)
		Jabir Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah (Kuwait)
		Khalifah bin Hamad Al-Thani (Qatar)
		Fahd bin `Abdulaziz (Saudi Arabia)
		Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahayyan (UAE)
1984	March	Sultan bin Muhammad Al-Qasimi (Sharjah) in Salalah
	May	[Vice-President] George Bush (USA)
	June	Husayn bin Talal (Jordan)
	August	[Vice-President] Izat Ibrahim Al-Duri (Iraq) in Salalah
	November	GCC Summit 5 in Kuwait
		`Isa bin Salman Al-Khalifah (Bahrain)
		Jabir Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah (Kuwait)
		Khalifah bin Hamad Al-Thani (Qatar)
		Fahd bin `Abdulaziz (Saudi Arabia)
		Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahayyan (UAE)
	December	Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahayyan (UAE) in Abu Dhabi
		Sultan Hassan Al-Bulaqiah (Brunei)
1985	January	Husayn bin Talal (Jordan)
		Julius Nyerere (Tanzania)
	February	Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahayyan (UAE)
		Shaykh Makhtum bin Rashid Al-Makhtum (Dubai)
	April	`Isa bin Salman Al-Khalifah (Bahrain) in Manama
		Husayn bin Talal (Jordan)
		Muhammad Husni Mubarak (Egypt) in Cairo
	November	GCC Summit 6
		`Isa bin Salman Al-Khalifah (Bahrain)
		Jabir Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah (Kuwait)
		Khalifah bin Hamad Al-Thani (Qatar)
		Fahd bin `Abdulaziz (Saudi Arabia)
		Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahayyan (UAE)
		Husayn bin Talal (Jordan)
		Zia ul-Haq (Pakistan)
		Muhammad Husni Mubarak (Egypt)
		Sultan Hassan Al-Bulaqiah (Brunei)

		`Abdulrahman Muhammad Hassan Suar Al-Dhahab (Sudan)
		Ma`moun Abdal-Qiyum (Maldives)
		Rajiv Gandhi (India)
1986	January	Sultan bin Muhammad Al-Qasimi (Sharjah) in Sohar
	March	Duke Jean (Luxembourg)
	April	[Vice President] George Bush (USA) in Salalah
	June	Amin Gemayel (Lebanon)
		Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahayyan (UAE) in Abu Dhabi
	July	Husayn bin Talal (Jordan)
		Muhammad Husni Mubarak (Egypt) in Cairo
	September	Birandar Birbikram (Nepal)
	November	Turgut Ozal (Turkey)
		GCC Summit 7 in Abu Dhabi
		`Isa bin Salman Al-Khalifah (Bahrain)
		Jabir Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah (Kuwait)
		Khalifah bin Hamad Al-Thani (Qatar)
		Fahd bin `Abdulaziz (Saudi Arabia)
		Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahayyan (UAE)
1987	June	Zayed bin Salman Al-Nahayyan (UAE) in Al-Ain
	September	Muhammad Husni Mubarak (Egypt)
	December	Husayn bin Talal (Jordan)
		GCC Summit 8 in Riyadh
		`Isa bin Salman Al-Khalifah (Bahrain)
		Jabir Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah (Kuwait)
		Khalifah bin Hamad Al-Thani (Qatar)
		Fahd bin `Abdulaziz (Saudi Arabia)
		Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahayyan (UAE)
1988	January	Muhammad Husni Mubarak (Egypt)
	October	Haydar Abu Bakr Al-Attas (PDRY)
	December	Fahd bin `Abdulaziz (Saudi Arabia) in Riyadh
		Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahayyan (UAE) in Abu Dhabi
		GCC Summit 8 in Manama
		`Isa bin Salman Al-Khalifah (Bahrain)
		Jabir Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah (Kuwait)
		Khalifah bin Hamad Al-Thani (Qatar)
		Fahd bin `Abdulaziz (Saudi Arabia)
		Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahayyan (UAE)
1989	January	Yasser Arafat (PLO)
	May	Jabir Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah (Kuwait) in Kuwait
		Husayn bin Talal (Jordan) in Amman
		Muhammad Husni Mubarak (Egypt) in Cairo
		François Mitterand (France) in Paris
		Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahayyan (UAE)

	June	Juan Carlos (Spain) in Madrid
	August	Fahd bin `Abdulaziz (Saudi Arabia) in Riyadh
	October	Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahayyan (UAE) in Abu Dhabi
	December	Shaykh Rashid bin Sa`id Al-Makhtum (Dubai)
		GCC Summit 10
		`Isa bin Salman Al-Khalifah (Bahrain)
		Jabir Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah (Kuwait)
		Khalifah bin Hamad Al-Thani (Qatar)
		Fahd bin `Abdulaziz (Saudi Arabia)
		Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahayyan (UAE)
		Yang Shangkun (China-PRC)
1990	January	Yasser Arafat (PLO)
	February	Jabir Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah (Kuwait)
	March	Fahd bin `Abdulaziz (Saudi Arabia) in Riyadh
	May	Muhammad Husni Mubarak (Egypt)
		Abdou Diouf (Senegal)
	September	Hamad bin Khalifah Al-Thani (Qatar)
	October	Husayn bin Talal (Jordan)
		Toshiku Kaifu (Japan)
	December	GCC Summit 11 in Doha
		`Isa bin Salman Al-Khalifah (Bahrain)
		Jabir Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah (Kuwait)
		Khalifah bin Hamad Al-Thani (Qatar)
		Fahd bin `Abdulaziz (Saudi Arabia)
		Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahayyan (UAE)
		Chadli bin Jadid (Algeria)
1991	January	Kurt Waldheim (Austria)
		John Major (UK)
	March	Muhammad Husni Mubarak (Egypt) in Cairo
	May	Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahayyan (UAE)
		Fahd bin `Abdulaziz (Saudi Arabia) in Riyadh
	November	Sulaiman Amr Jamaa (Tanzania)
		Khalifah bin Hamad Al-Thani (Qatar)
	December	Sultan Aslan Shah (Malaysia)
		GCC Summit 12 in Kuwait
		`Isa bin Salman Al-Khalifah (Bahrain)
		Jabir Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah (Kuwait)
		Khalifah bin Hamad Al-Thani (Qatar)
		Fahd bin `Abdulaziz (Saudi Arabia)
		Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahayyan (UAE)
1992	January	Husayn bin Talal (Jordan)
		Mario Suarez (Portugal)
		François Mitterand (France)
	April	Hafez Al-Asad (Syria)
	May	Sulaiman Amr Jamaa (Tanzania)

	June	Fahd bin `Abdulaziz (Saudi Arabia) in Riyadh
		Muhammad Husni Mubarak (Egypt) in Cairo
	December	GCC Summit 13 in Abu Dhabi
		`Isa bin Salman Al-Khalifah (Bahrain)
		Jabir Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah (Kuwait)
		Khalifah bin Hamad Al-Thani (Qatar)
		Fahd bin `Abdulaziz (Saudi Arabia)
		Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahayyan (UAE)
1993	January	Husayn bin Talal (Jordan)
		Muhammad Husni Mubarak (Egypt)
		John Major (UK)
	April	Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahayyan (UAE) in Abu Dhabi
	June	P.V. Narasimha Rao (India)
	September	Jabir Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah (Kuwait)
	October	`Ali `Abdallah Salih (Yemen) in Sanaa
	December	GCC Summit 14 in Riyadh
		`Isa bin Salman Al-Khalifah (Bahrain)
		Jabir Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah (Kuwait)
		Khalifah bin Hamad Al-Thani (Qatar)
		Fahd bin `Abdulaziz (Saudi Arabia)
		Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahayan (UAE)
1994	February	`Ali `Abdallah Salih (Yemen) in Salalah
	March	Husayn bin Talal (Jordan)
		Benazir Bhutto (Pakistan)
		[Vice-President] Al Gore (USA)
	April	`Ali `Abdallah Salih (Yemen) in Salalah
		Muhammad Husni Mubarak (Egypt)
	September	`Ali `Abdallah Salih (Yemen)
	December	GCC Summit 15 in Bahrain
		`Isa bin Salman Al-Khalifah (Bahrain)
		Jabir Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah (Kuwait)
		Khalifah bin Hamad Al-Thani (Qatar)
		Fahd bin `Abdulaziz (Saudi Arabia)
		Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahayyan (UAE)
		Yitzhaq Rabin (Israel)

SOURCE: Office of the Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sultanate of Oman, 1993. Office of the Minister, Ministry of Information, Sultanate of Oman, 1993. *FBIS-MEA and -NES, 1970–1994.*

NATIONAL DAY SPEECH BY HIS MAJESTY SULTAN QABOOS BIN SA`ID AL BU SA`ID ON 14TH JUMADA AL AKHAR 1415 A. H. (18TH NOVEMBER 1994)

In the Name of God, the Compassionate and Merciful

"Praise be to God, Who hath sent to His Servant The Book, and hath allowed therein no deviation. And peace be upon His Prophet and His devoted Followers."

Dear Countrymen,

Fulfilling the promise we made at the same time last year, we consequently meet in the City of history, learning and heritage. In the citadel where the glory of our country originated—the City of Nizwa. The City which has played a distinguished role in the progress of Omani civilization; the City that still illuminates with its grace and eminence. The City which has been the home of great leaders and the sanctuary of intellectuals, scholars, poets and men of literature. This great City has a special place in the hearts of our Omani people. Notwithstanding the era of stagnation in the past, this great City is now rising to the heights of its ancient splendor through the achievements of recent years. We hope that our decision to celebrate this Year of Heritage on its soil marks a turning point that will put it on the path to another stage in its continuing evolution in various fields of life.

The celebration of the 24th Anniversary of Oman's Renaissance in this historic City commemorates the renewal of its civilizing role in the life of our great and precious country, in its drive to realize, with God's help, the hopes and aspirations of our people.

We commenced the process of development and evolution comparatively recently. Our weapons in the fight against backwardness, and the challenges we have encountered, have been the stern and wholehearted determination that our people have displayed.

Through this hard work and support to the leadership by all our people the successful development of our country is to be seen everywhere. These achieve-

ments justify our faith in a glorious future for our country. We thank God for His generosity and guidance in our efforts. We call upon Him to continue to extend His grace to us.

Countrymen,

Oman, throughout its very long history, has contributed to the building of human civilization, a contribution that is universally acknowledged and renowned. The strategic location of this country, the lively spirit which took Omanis to all corners of the world—sailing the seas, facing the dangers, exploring new horizons, and reaching out to other peoples with their traditions and cultures—all these factors had a lasting effect on the civilization that was built by our forefathers and succeeding generations. This civilization is now a living heritage embodying and reflecting the saga of our history, and the deep-rooted richness of the Omani experience.

If we are, Countrymen, to take pride in the great heritage that we have received from our ancestors, this pride must not be our ultimate aim. We should not live in the past. That is the character of those who have no determined attitude towards the future. And that is certainly not the character of the Omani. He possesses the vibrant energy and active spirit that can carry him forward to the furthest horizons. Nothing can deter him. It was therefore our duty to our forefathers to emulate and surpass their achievements. Those achievements act as the stimulus to attain more development, in harmony with modern life and scientific evolution. Otherwise, our destiny would certainly be the shameful backwardness of those who have lost their strength and courage, and are mentally paralyzed and apathetic in their attitude to life.

There is no doubt that history has proved that nations do not advance and develop without the continuous renewal of their ideas. This also applies to individuals and peoples. Failure in this respect results in fatal consequences. Therefore, we have determined, from the first day of our Renaissance, not to succumb to this disease.

We have maintained and preserved our identity and intellectual inheritance, and we have adopted every means for development and modernization. It has been very clear to us that our heritage is not only represented by forts, castles and ancient buildings, but by spiritual customs and traditions, by science, art and literature, transmitted by one generation to another. The real preservation of heritage will not be accomplished unless we understand this, and cherish it. With God's help we have succeeded in the past years in achieving the greater part of this noble national goal. Our decision to celebrate this year as the Year of National Heritage is a means to emphasise the value of our inheritance and to preserve the knowledge and the feeling on the part of our people that the present is indissolubly linked with the past, and that their future will be the re-

sult of their work both in that past and the present. If everyone contributes to the fullest extent of his knowledge and personal resources to our country, the future stability and prosperity of our country will be safely assured.

There was a high purpose in our efforts to prepare the Omani people in order to dedicate themselves to the servive of their country. To do so, it was essential to provide comprehensive education for all, and to link this education with our culture and historic traditions, on the one hand and with all elements of modern life on the other. Therefore, schools and institutes have been established everywhere in Oman, and they are increasing in quantity and quality according to community requirements and the policy designed to meet them. From this base and since the teaching of Islamic studies at university level is currently being conducted by several different Government bodies, with different curriculi, which could result in anomalies in graduates' levels of educational knowledge and thought, it is our desire to unite the responsibility for this teaching in one establishment in order to improve and enhance this education. We have therefore issued our orders to study the establishment of a new College of Jurisprudence and Law in Muscat that will produce graduates in all branches of these disciplines. This will provide Oman with the qualified persons it needs. In addition, a study is now being pursued for the establishment of a Higher Institution in Nizwa which will provide members of the Judiciary for the courts. The entrants to this Institution will be university graduates in Jurisprudence and Law. On graduation they will be awarded a Higher Diploma as members of the Judiciary.

The challenges of the future are enormous. Enlightened mentality, comprehensive knowledge and high technical skills are the essentials to meet them. Therefore, it is necessary for the education system to work hard to provide these requirements in good time in order to achieve these goals in the development of the community, so the community may keep pace with those in other fields. This is the task that the education system must shoulder. It is the duty of everyone of us to work for its success.

Dear Countrymen,

Security and stability for all nations comes from God's grace. Under their protection the nations can be free to progress and flourish, and utilise their capabilities to the full. The talents of the individual cannot blossom unless he and his family feel secure. Therefore it is one of the prime duties of the State at all times to guarantee this security. If this security is removed then destruction and anarchy will result. It follows that it is the duty of every citizen to be the guardian of all the nation's achievements that were won by the devotion and sacrifice of our people. It is also their duty not to allow alien ideas, masquerading as beneficial promises, to jeopardize the security and stability of this coun-

try. They must be cautious—and impress upon others to be so—to reject such approaches. They must hold fast to the principles of Islam that call upon us to have a spirit of tolerance, intimacy and love.

Extremism, under whatever guise, fanaticism of whatever kind, factionalism of whatever persuasion would be hateful poisonous plants in the soil of our country which will not be allowed to flourish.

Almighty God has sent down the Holy Quran with wisdom and clarity. He set out in it the general principles and Laws of Jurisprudence, but he did not express these in details which might differe from place to place and time to time. He did so to enable us to interpret the Law of Islam according to its basic principles and the requirements of life. When Islam spread following the time of the Prophet, new questions arose when Muslims needed to know Islamic answers to these questions. What did they do? They resorted to interpretation in an attempt to find suitable answers. As a result, they proved that Islamic Law was capable of dealing with any situation. Unfortunately, the backwardness of Muslims in recent times rendered them incapable of making use of their inheritance, and they did not even try to renew it, by reference to the original principles and bases, in order to solve the problems that arose in their lives. The last thing we can mention about this stagnation, which the Muslims themselves accepted, does not accord with the nature of Islam which calls upon us to adopt intellectual development and face the challenges that confront us at any time and in any environment, by drawing correct logic and suitable solutions from Islamic teachings of the past. It is really sad that this stagnation resulted in a weakness of the Muslim nation, which, in recent years, has brought about fanaticism based on a lack of knowledge among the Muslim youth about the correct facts of their religion. This was exploited by some to perpetrate violence and propagate cases of difference that led to discord and hatred. Therefore, in order that Muslims should not remain backward, while others advance, they are required by the Law of Islam to rectify this situation, and renew and revise their thinking, so they can apply the right solutions to modern problems that are facing the Islamic community. Thus they can show the world the reality of Islam, and its principles which are applicable to all times and places.

Obstinacy in religious understanding leads to backwardness in Muslims, prevalence of violence and intolerance. This, as a matter of fact, is far removed from Islam which rejects exaggeration and bigotry, because it is the religion of liberality.

Countrymen,

Our world that we live in has become interlinked, in many of its economic, social and political concerns. On that account, our firm position that we have always adopted will remain the basic principle for our foreign policy and our as-

sessment of our dealings with the countries that pursue the same or a similar principle. Our observance of the world in the past few years has given us reason for optimism. Countries have become convinced, more than at any time before, that armed conflicts are no longer justifiable, but obstruct development and endanger international peace and security. Human logic and feelings are supporting this tendency as a historic phenomenon the world has never seen before. However, on the other hand, we have seen with regret that the propensity of mankind to violence towards himself has increased, embodied in the aggression of one group against others within communities. It has become clear that all countries must co-operate to put an end to this internal violence which is jeopardizing the fabric of communities in the world. The results of this could extend to many places if international efforts are not made to help nations and peoples who are suffering from this phenomenon to find the right solution.

Dear People,

Peace is the principle in which we believe and a goal which we are striving to achieve without ceasing and without excess in accordance with what Almighty God has said: "But if the enemy incline towards peace, Do thou also incline towards peace, and trust in God." We have observed all paths of peace processes in the Middle East, and what has been achieved in making important steps on the Palestinian and Jordanian sides has given the world an excellent example that deserves the full support and acclaim of all of us.

Israel is required today, more than at any time before, to take steps on the Syrian and Lebanese side to bring about a full withdrawal from the Golan Heights and southern Lebanon.

On this occasion, we hail the role played by Jordan and his Majesty King Husayn, to support the peace process and all positive results from it.

Countrymen,

We take the opportunity on this great occasion to greet you on this anniversary of this Glorious Day. We call upon Almighty and All-Powerful God to grant that we shall meet on the 25th Anniversary, having achieved the goals for which we have striven. We extend a special greeting to our vigilant Armed Forces and all security organizations for their unceasing work to guarantee stability to our Omani community and protect the achievements of our blessed Renaissance. While we take pride in their efforts, we re-affirm our continued support for them in increasing their high efficiency and competence, and in facilitating the fulfillment of their noble national duty.

We ask Almighty God to protect our beloved Oman from all evils and enemies. We pray to the Almighty to grant us all the success we need on our long road towards glory, honor and achievement.

SOURCE: Muscat: Ministry of Information, November 1994. Reprinted in *Middle East Policy* 3:4, April 1995, pp. 149–152.

Appendix M

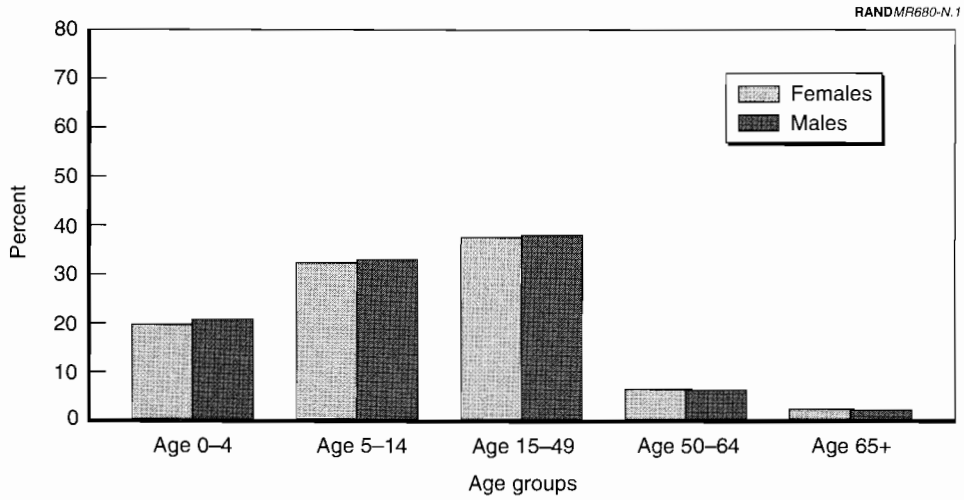
LETTER OF ACCESSION OF SA`ID BIN TAYMUR (1932)

I acknowledge with pleasure the receipt of your honored letter dated 9th January 1932 in which you informed me that my father has abdicated the throne of his State and has appointed me as his successor. You state that you have informed His Majesty's Government of this and that the High Government have been pleased to recognize me as Sultan of Muscat and Oman. I would request you to convey my thanks to the High Government. I am writing to inform you that I have in conformity with the orders issued by my father ascended the throne of the Sultanate today and have intimated to the members of my family the decision of my father to succeed him. They have approved of that and have accepted me as Ruler of the State. I would request you to inform the High Government that it is not hidden from me that I shall endure in my rule by the continuance of their help and assistance to me and my Government in the same manner as my ancestors were helped by them. And it is hoped that you will assure the aforesaid Government that I have accepted all the obligations to the High Government descending to me from my father and that I am determined to follow his policy in all my relations with the Government and that I rely on the help of the Government and declare that in accordance with the wishes of my father I will be guided by its views in important matters, as I am assured that the Government will not be pleased except in what profits my State and desires the maintenance of independence of our Government and Sultanate. And since nowadays there are no other representatives of those powers in Muscat with whom we are in treaty relations we would request His Majesty's Government to inform the Governments of the United States, France and Holland of our accession.

SOURCE: Sa`id bin Taymur to Political Resident Persian Gulf H. V. Biscoe, 2 Shawwal 1350/10 February 1932. This letter was amended from that given by Taymur bin Faysal on his accession in 1913 and follows the draft prepared by Political Agent Muscat T. C. Fowle as contained in India Office Records,

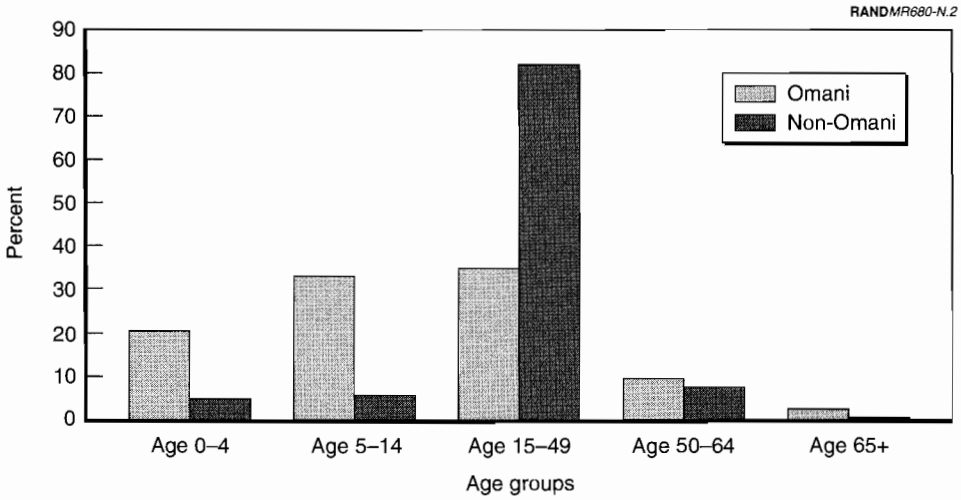
R/15/3/54; Fowle to Biscoe, Number C-284, 15 December 1931, in J. E. Peterson, *Oman in the Twentieth Century: Political Foundations of an Emerging State*, London and New York: Croom Helm and Barnes and Noble, 1978, p. 224.

STATISTICAL CHARTS



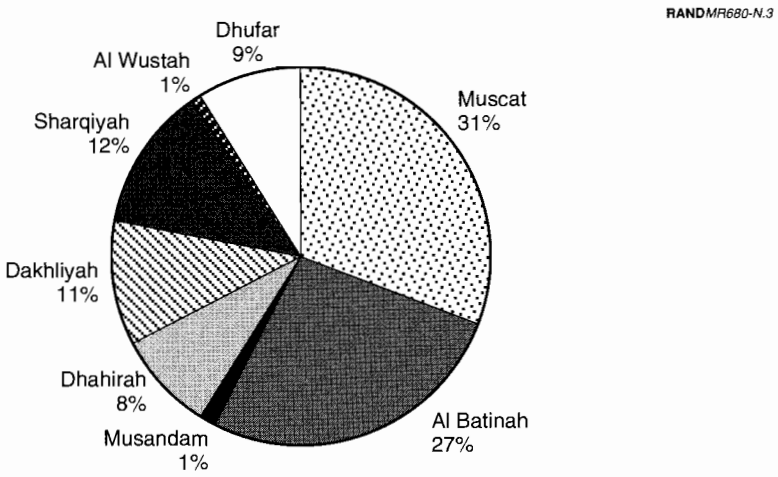
SOURCE: *Statistical Year Book, 1992*, Muscat, Oman: Directorate General of National Statistics, July 1993, p. 51.

Figure N.1—Omani Population by Age, 1990 (in percent)



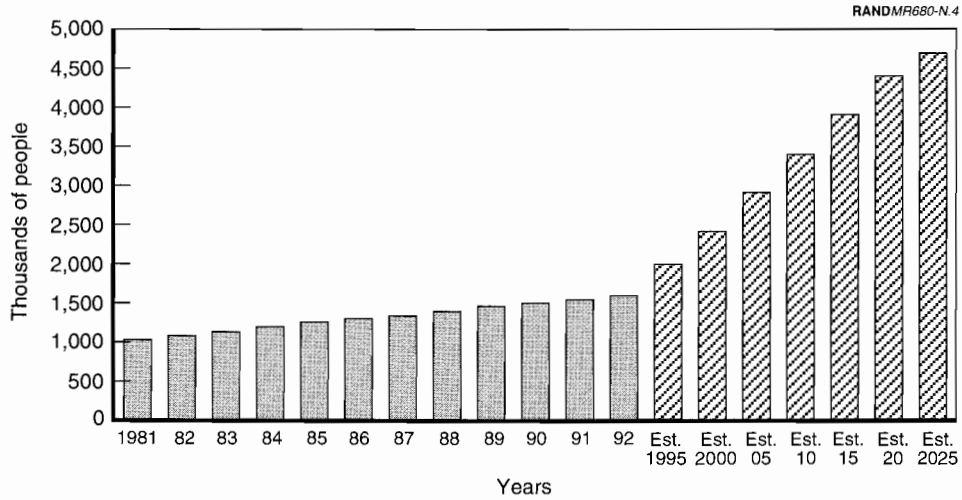
SOURCE: *Statistical Year Book, 1992*, Muscat, Oman: Directorate General of National Statistics, July 1993, p. 52.

Figure N.2—Omani/Non-Omani Population by Age, 1990 (in percent)



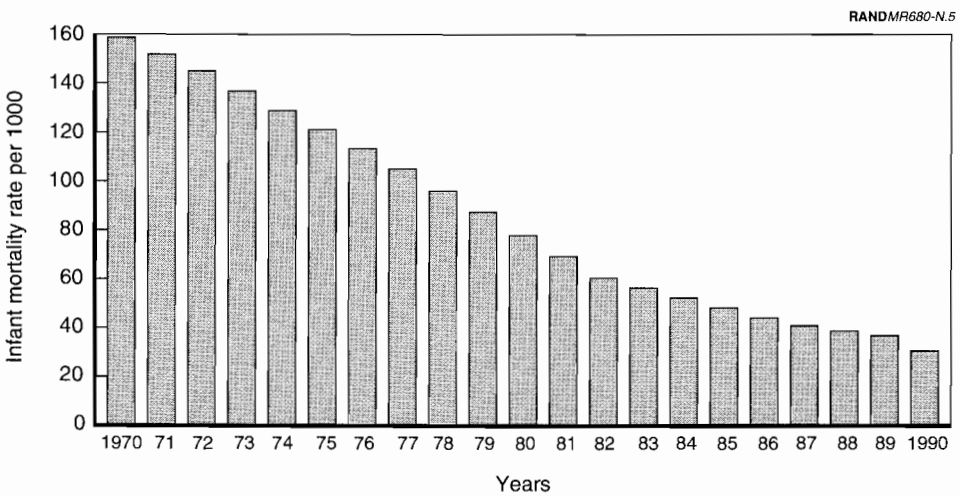
SOURCE: Sultanate of Oman Development Council–General Secretariat, *Preliminary Results of the General Census of Population, Housing and Establishments*, Muscat, Oman: December 1993, p. 5.

Figure N.3—Omani Total Population by Region, 1993 (in percent)



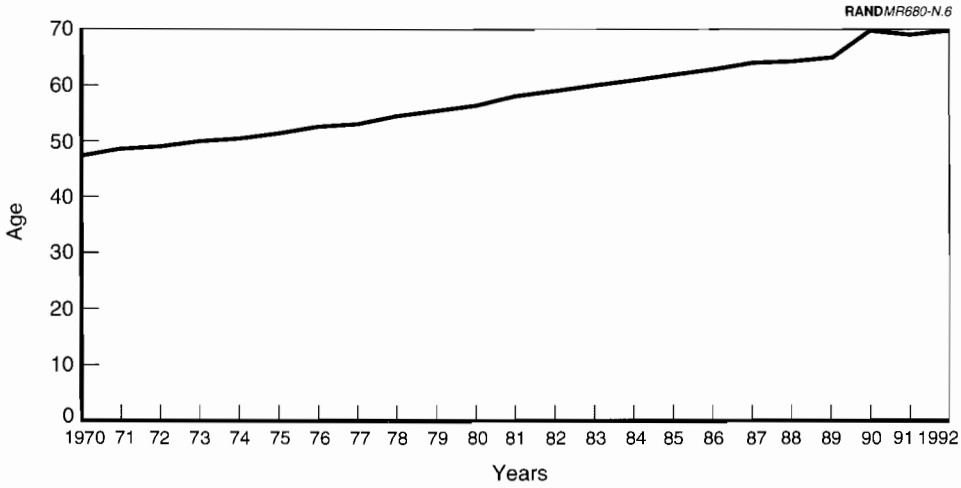
SOURCE: *Demographic Year Book*, New York: United Nations, 1992, p. 168; *The State of World Population, 1993*, New York: United Nations Population Fund, 1993; discussions with U.S. Commerce Department and U.S. State Department officials.

Figure N.4—Estimated Population in Oman, 1981–2025 (excludes foreign workers)



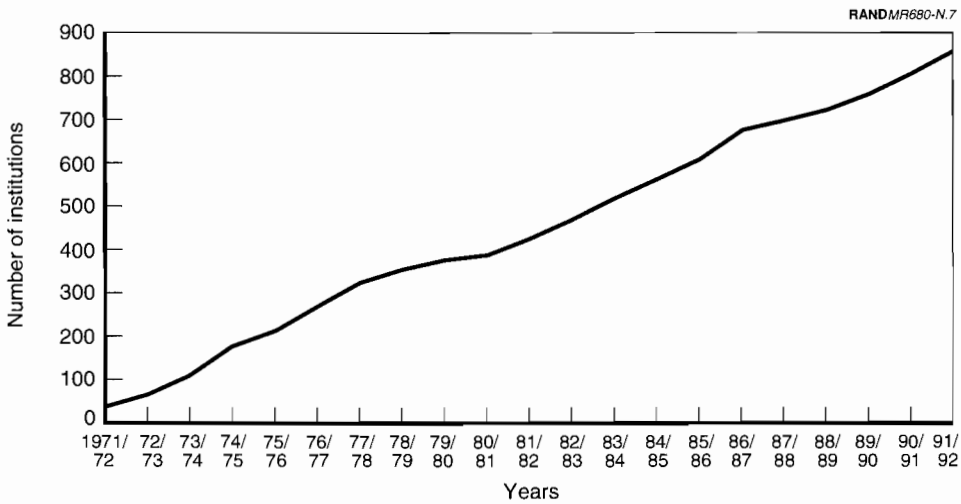
SOURCE: *World Tables 1991*, Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991, pp. 446–447; *The State of World Population 1993*, New York: United Nations Population Fund, 1993, p. 49.

Figure N.5—Omani Infant Mortality Rate, 1970–1990 (per 1000)



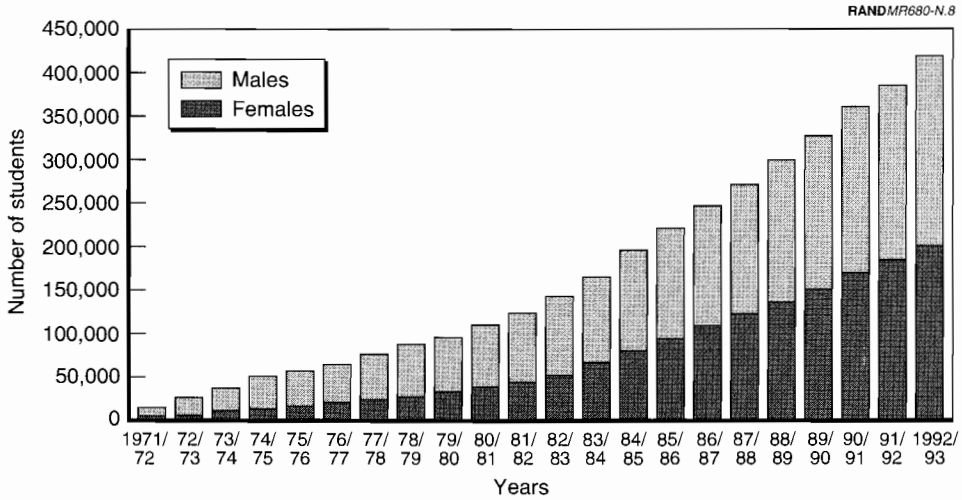
SOURCE: *World Tables 1991*, Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991, pp. 446–447; *World Development Report 1993 and 1994*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993 and 1994, p. 239 and p. 163.

Figure N.6—Omani Life Expectancy at Birth, 1970–1992



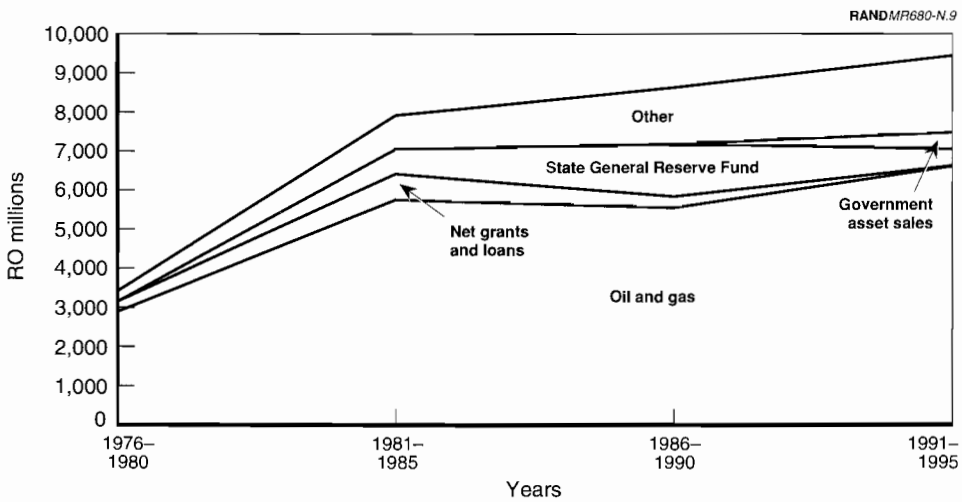
SOURCE: *Statistical Year Book, 1992*, Muscat, Oman: Directorate General of National Statistics, July 1992, p. 577.

Figure N.7—Omani Educational Institutional Growth, 1971–1992



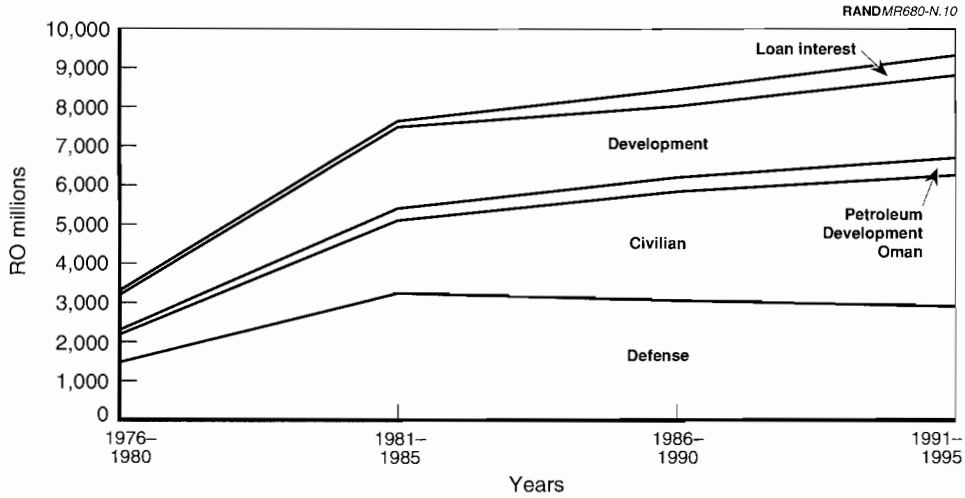
SOURCE: *Statistical Year Book, 1990*, Muscat, Oman: Directorate General of National Statistics, July 1990, p. 565; *Statistical Year Book, 1992*, Muscat, Oman: Directorate General of National Statistics, July 1993, p. 577.

Figure N.8—Omani Males and Females in Educational Institutions, 1971–1993



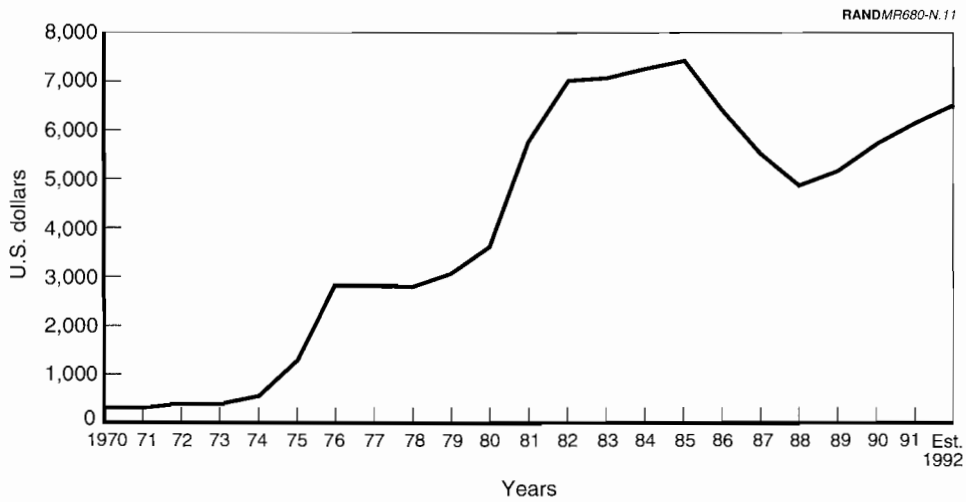
SOURCE: Duncan R. Miller, *Economic Development Planning in the Sultanate of Oman*, Ruwi, Oman: United Media Services, 1991, p. 70.

Figure N.9—Estimated Cumulative Omani Resources of Government Funds, 1976–1995 (in RO millions)



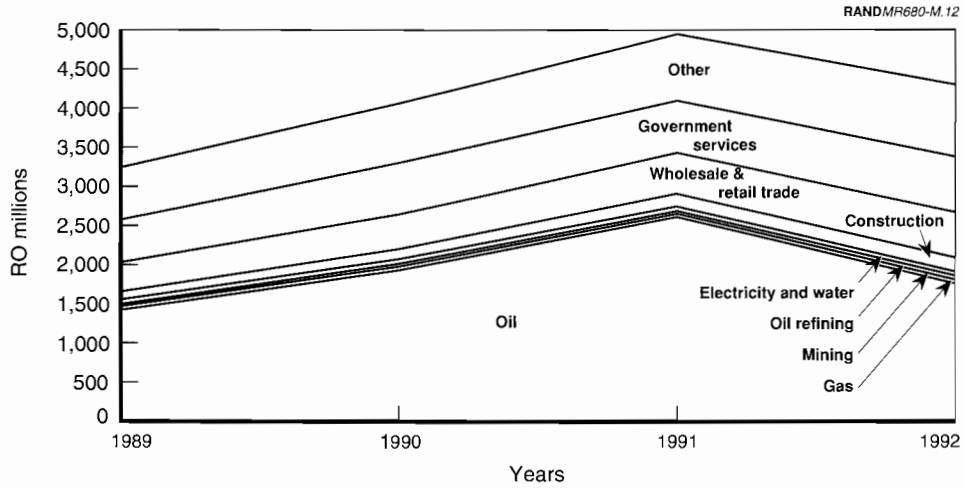
SOURCE: Duncan R. Miller, *Economic Development Planning in the Sultanate of Oman*, Ruwi, Oman: United Media Services, 1991, p. 70.

Figure N.10—Estimated Cumulative Omani Uses of Government Funds, 1976–1995 (in RO millions)



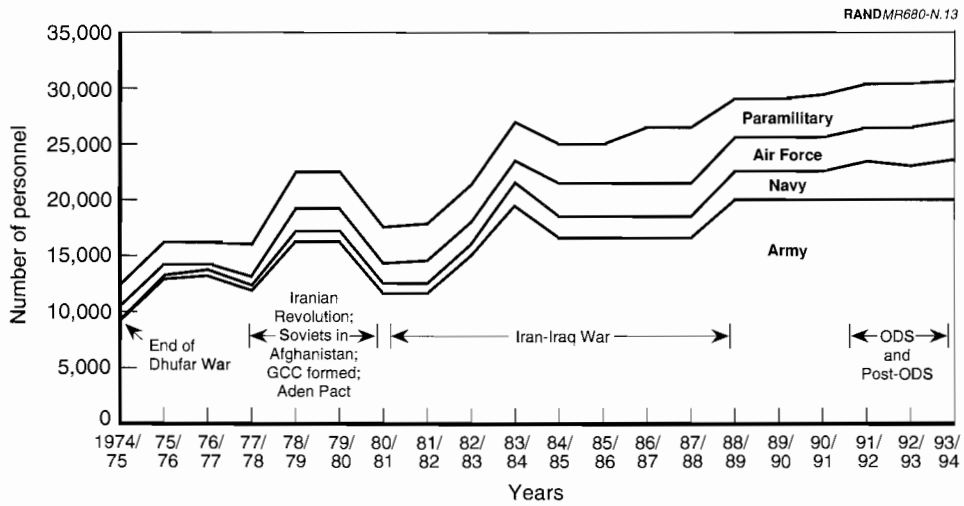
SOURCE: *World Tables 1991 and 1994*, Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991 and 1994, pp. 444–445 and 508–509.

Figure N.11—Omani GNP per Capita, 1970–1992 (in U.S. dollars)



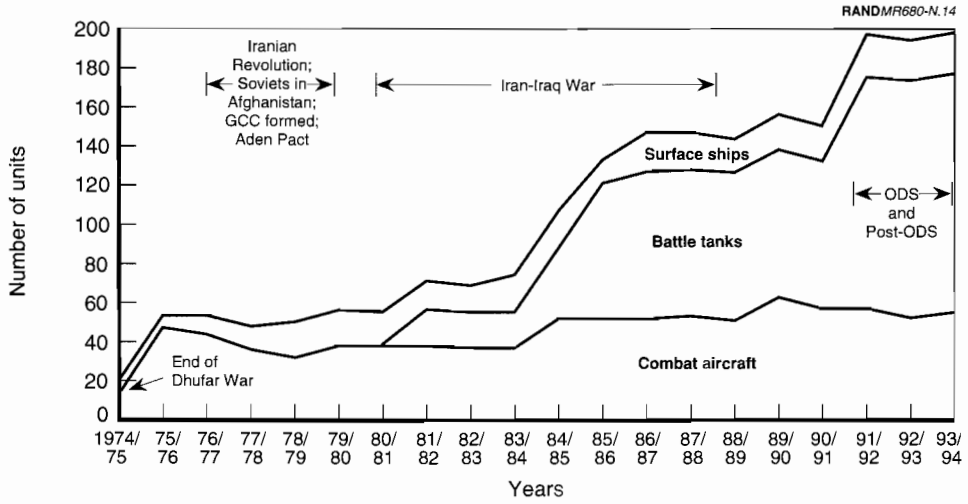
SOURCE: "Oman Secures Broad Growth," *Middle East Monitor*, October 1993, p. 407.

Figure N.12—Omani GDP by Sector, 1989–1992



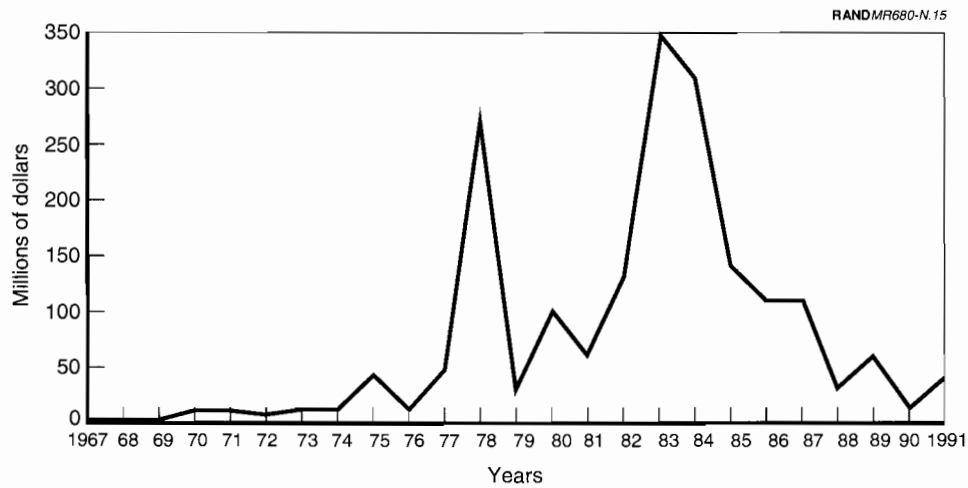
SOURCE: Based on *The Military Balance*, 1974/75 to 1993/94, London, England: The International Institute for Strategic Studies.

Figure N.13—Total Omani Military Personnel, 1972–1994



SOURCE: Based on *The Military Balance*, 1974/75 to 1993/94, London, England: The International Institute for Strategic Studies.

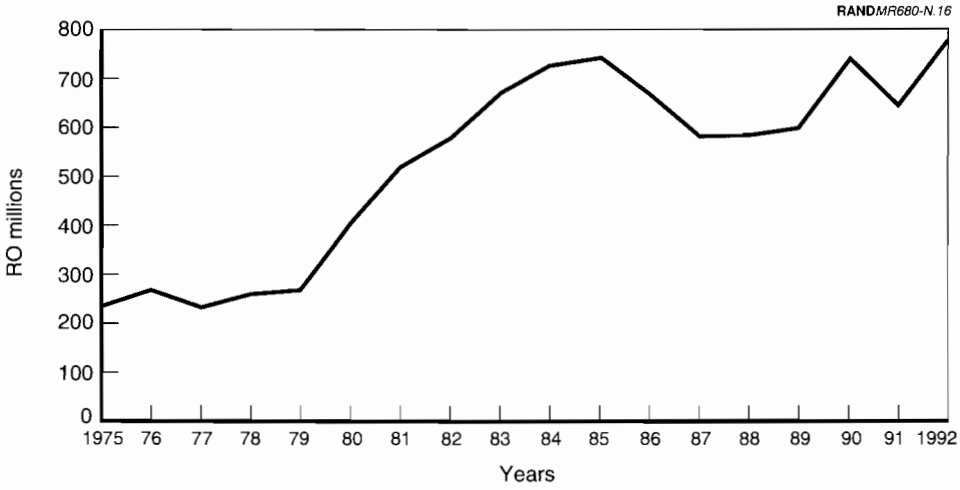
Figure N.14—Omani Major Military Hardware, 1972–1994



SOURCE: Various Editions of *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers, 1967–1991/1992*, United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency.

NOTE: Constant dollars adjusted according to publication base years.

Figure N.15—Omani Arms Imports, 1967–1991 (in constant U.S. dollars)



SOURCE: *Statistical Year Books, 1982, 1989, and 1992*, Muscat, Oman: Directorate General of National Statistics, November, 1983, September 1989, July 1991, and July 1993, pp. 163, 429, 321, and 436.

Figure N.16—Omani Defense and National Security Expenditures, 1975–1992 (in RO millions)

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