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## British Hegemony over Iraq and the Persian Gulf in the Late Nineteenth Century: The Case of Müşir Nusret Pasha's Report <sup>(\*)</sup>

On Dokuzuncu Yüzyıl Sonunda Irak ve Basra Körfezi Üzerinde İngiliz  
Hegemonyası: Müşir Nusret Paşa'nın Raporu

Erhan BEKTAŞ <sup>(\*\*)</sup>

### Abstract

*This article examines the Great Britain's political and economic intervention into the Ottoman Iraqi region and the Persian Gulf in the late nineteenth century. It aims to show how Britain's political and economic hegemony imposed towards the Iraqi region and Persian Gulf militarily and politically. There is a large literature of academic study on the British policy towards Iraqi region and the Persian Gulf in the nineteenth century. To contribute to this considerable literature, this article will examine the factors of the growth of British economic and political hegemony in Iraqi region and the Persian Gulf by referring to the report of Müşir Nusret Pasha who had served long years in Iraqi region as the Honorary Inspector of the Sixth Army. The principal point of this article is to investigate various aspects of Britain's expanding penetration into the Persian Gulf and Iraqi region given the detailed report of Müşir Nusret Pasha. Another focal point of this article is to show how the British penetration into Persian Gulf and Iraqi region was perceived by the Ottoman official Nusret Pasha. Müşir Nusret Pasha pointed out that Britain's growing influence in these regions is a potential*

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<sup>(\*\*)</sup>Dr. Öğretim Üyesi, Üsküdar Üniversitesi, İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Fakültesi, Atatürk İlkeleri ve İnkılap Tarihi Bölümü, İstanbul, [erhan.bektas@uskudar.edu.tr](mailto:erhan.bektas@uskudar.edu.tr)

**ORCID ID:** <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7808-2825>

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*threat and security risk for the Ottoman Empire in the near future. For this reason, Nusret Pasha warned the Ottoman central administration to take immediate action against Britain's political and economic penetration. However, Ottoman Empire did not take necessary measures due to the lack of Ottoman military and administrative capacity.*

**Keywords:** Persian Gulf, Iraq, Müşir Nusret Pasha, British Hegemony, Late Ottoman Empire.

### Öz

Bu makale, Büyük Britanya'nın on dokuzuncu yüzyılın sonlarında Osmanlı Irak vilayetine ve Basra Körfezi'ne siyasi ve ekonomik müdahalesini incelemektedir. İngiltere'nin siyasi ve ekonomik hegemonyasını Irak bölgesi ve Basra Körfezi'ne askeri ve siyasi olarak nasıl dayattığını göstermeyi amaçlamaktadır. On dokuzuncu yüzyılda Britanya'nın Irak ve Basra Körfezi'ne yönelik politikaları üzerine çok sayıda akademik makale vardır. Bu akademik literatüre katkıda bulunmak için, bu makale, Irak'ta Altıncı Ordu Onursal Müfettişi olarak uzun yıllar görev yapan Müşir Nusret Paşa'nın raporuna bakarak Britanya'nın Basra Körfezi ve Irak'taki artan hegemonyasını inceleyecektir. Bu makalenin temel amacı, Müşir Nusret Paşa'nın ayrıntılı raporuna dayanarak, İngiltere'nin Basra Körfezi ve Irak bölgesine genişlemesinin çeşitli yönlerini incelemektir. Bu makalenin bir diğer odak noktası da İngiltere'nin İran Körfezi ve Irak bölgesine girmesinin Osmanlı yetkilisi Nusret Paşa tarafından nasıl algılandığıdır. Müşir Nusret Paşa, Britanya'nın bu bölgelerde artan nüfuzunun Osmanlı açısından yakın gelecek için potansiyel bir tehdit ve güvenlik riski olduğuna işaret etti. Bu sebeple, Osmanlı merkezi yönetimini İngiliz siyasi ve ekonomik nüfuzuna karşı gerekli tedbirleri almaları için uyardı. Ancak, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, Osmanlı askeri ve idari kapasitesinin yetersizliğinden dolayı gerekli tedbirleri almadı.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Basra Körfezi, Irak, Müşir Nusret Paşa, İngiliz Hegemonyası, Son Dönem Osmanlı İmparatorluğu.

### Introduction

In the nineteenth century, the Persian Gulf (also known as the Arabian Gulf) and Iraqi region of the Ottoman Empire were mainly under great pressure from European colonial powers, notably Great Britain. In this century, the British Empire began to enlarge its domain over these areas

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for enhancing its political and economic power. To cope with the threat of colonialist Britain, the Ottoman central government prioritized initiatives that would benefit directly from official reports (*layiha*). These regular reports were mostly prepared by the regional officers and bureaucrats regarding the internal and external affairs of the provinces. These reports by the central bureaucrats or provincial leaders were so valuable source throughout the state's decision-making procedures. In this respect, the report of Ottoman official Müşir (Field Marshal) Nusret Pasha<sup>1</sup>, which was entitled *Mazi ve Müstakbel Irak'ın Ahvaline Dair Layiha*<sup>2</sup>, describes the political affairs in the Persian Gulf and Ottoman Iraqi region.<sup>3</sup>

The report of Müşir Nusret Pasha could be perceived as a precious reference for the analysis and descriptions on power relations between the Britain and Ottoman Empire in Iraq and the Persian Gulf during the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II.<sup>4</sup> The report of Müşir Nusret Pasha as an

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<sup>1</sup> "Müşir Nusret Pasha, whose nickname was "mad" had come to Baghdad as an 'honorary exile' in 1888. He was a circassian by birth, and one of the last surviving statesmen from the era of Mahmud II. He was appointed to Baghdad as the Honorary Inspector of the 6th Army." Gökhan Çetinsaya, "Sultan Abdulhamid II's Officials: The Case of Nusret Paşa at Baghdad, 1888-1896," *The Journal of Ottoman Studies* XXI, (2001): 258.

<sup>2</sup> BOA. Y.EE, 11/ 3. 6 Rabiülahir 1327/ 27 April 1909. "Mazi ve Müstakbel Irak'ın Ahvaline Dair Layihadır" Müşir Nusret Pasha wrote this report in 1896 when he was in the Baghdad as the Honorary Inspector of the Sixth Army. This official report is divided into two main parts. First part consists of forty- five pages and includes many articles about historical background and current affairs of Iraqi region and Persian Gulf. The second part constitutes seven pages and deals with demographic and social information about regional tribes and sects in the Iraqi region.

<sup>3</sup> Throughout this article, the term 'Iraq or Iraqi region' refers to the area that three territories- Mosul, Baghdad and Basra; each one was administered independently. In the archival documents, the term "Ottoman Iraqi region" was named as "*Hıttı-i Irakiyye*".

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed study about the reports on Ottoman Iraq, see Selda Kılıç, "Nusret Paşa'nın Irak'ta Islahat Önerileri," *XIV Uluslararası Türk Tarih Kongresi*, Ankara, 2002; Ebubekir Ceylan, "Abdurrahman Nureddin Paşa'nın Osmanlı Irak'ına Dair 1880 Tarihli Layihası Üzerine," *Divan Disiplinlerarası Çalışmalar Dergisi* 19, no. 37 (2014/2): 85-115; Burcu

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official observer and researcher is a great source to trace power struggle and internal affairs in the Iraqi region and the Persian Gulf. Analyzing the Ottoman official Nusret Pasha and learning about his mentality could help to comprehend the relations between Ottoman Empire and Britain in these lands in a historical perspective. In this respect, there are various important topics about the Iraqi region and the Persian Gulf in the report of Nusret Pasha such as the weakness of Ottoman administrative order, the lack of well-equipped and trained Ottoman military force, tribal unrest, missionary activities, Shia threat, the increasing role of autonomous leaders and the Britain's power struggle for dominance. Although Nusret Pasha mentions many events and occurrences, he mostly focuses on the British intervention in the Iraq and the Persian Gulf in a broader perspective. As the Honorary Inspector of the Sixth Army in Baghdad, he made interesting observations on the British Empire's penetration policies over the lands of the Persian Gulf and Iraq and possible effects of British hegemony over the future of Ottoman Empire in the region. In this regard, the main theme of this article is about British policy towards Iraqi region and Gulf in the nineteenth century.

Throughout my article, taking into consideration the critiques of Nusret Pasha in his report, answers will be sought to the following questions; why was the attention of Britain drawn to Iraqi region and the coasts of the Persian Gulf in the late nineteenth century, what was the nature of Ottoman Empire's relationship with Britain from an Ottoman official, what were the primary reasons for the interest conflict between the British and Ottoman Empires, what kind of counter policies did Ottoman administrators undertake to break the influence of Great Britain? In the light of these questions, this study attempts to draw a wide-ranging panorama about the transformation process of Ottoman sovereignty over Iraqi region and the

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Kurt, "Irak'ta "Muktedir" ve "Müşteki" Bir İttihatçı: Süleyman Nazif Bey'in Basra Valiliği," *Akademik İncelemeler Dergisi* 7, no. 2 (2012): 155-179.

Persian Gulf in the late nineteenth century. When searching for answers to these questions, Britain's position in the Gulf and Iraqi region cannot be explained only by reference to the Nusret Pasha's report, but this report provides new light on the role played by the British in these lands from an Ottoman officer's perspective. Therefore, these questions will be tried to be answered with the help of some secondary sources apart from Müşir Nusret Pasha's report as a primary source.

### **The Background of British Intervention to the Persian Gulf and Iraqi Region**

Great Britain became more effective and dominant power of the nineteenth century than other European powers (Russia, Germany, and France) in many parts of Asia and Europe and its influence on the Ottoman Empire was a determining factor for the Ottoman administrators while shaping its own foreign policy. In this century, Britain actively developed its economy with overseas trade. Compared to the other countries, Britain reached the highest level as the great sea power in the world.<sup>5</sup> This British economic rise all over the world had accompanied by political hegemony to become stronger in the political area in the beginning of nineteenth century.

With the overseas trade became the principal monopoly of British ships and merchants, Britain directed its economic and political interests in the Iraqi region. In fact, there were many factors that contributed to draw attention of the British Empire to Iraqi region and the surrounding countries due to Iraq's strategic location on the India- European trade routes in the nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup> In 1862, the British Shipping Lunch

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<sup>5</sup> Robert C. Allen, *The British Industrial Revolution in Global Perspective (New Approaches to Economic and Social History)* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 92.

<sup>6</sup> Tom Nieuwenhuis, *Politics and Society in Early Modern Iraq: Mamluk Pashas, Tribal Shayks and Local Rule between 1802 and 1831* (Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2004), 82.

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Company which was one of the branches of British East Indian Company<sup>7</sup> in Iraq was established to serve on the Tigris to carry Indian and Iraqi goods and raw materials from Bombay, Baghdad and Basra to London. British Indian commodities and Iraqi goods were carried rapidly and efficiently to Europe by using transit trade route of the Shatt al-Arab waterway (located in southern Iraq), which was a vital commercial network for the distribution of goods by the British Shipping Lunch Company.<sup>8</sup> At this point, both having trade roads and the sea transportation facilities of Iraq for their trade were the biggest advantages for becoming an economic attraction center for Britain and other European powers.<sup>9</sup>

The other factor that resulted in the interest conflict between the Britain and Ottoman Empire could be related to the growing strategic importance of the Iraqi economy with the development of foreign trade and transportation along Iraqi routes through the rivers of Euphrates and Tigris in the nineteenth century. The Suez Canal which was inaugurated in 1869 had a striking impact on the economy of the Persian Gulf and Iraq.<sup>10</sup> With the inauguration of Suez Canal, the old trade routes changed and lost their importance in external trade. The British Lunch Company began to use the Tigris to reach the interior agricultural goods in Iraqi region. The new trade routes which were chiefly used by the European powers delivered Britain a shorter and cheaper way of reaching its southeastern

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<sup>7</sup> "East India Company, British." *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, 6th Edition. Retrieved July 21, 2019 from *Encyclopedia.com*: <https://www.encyclopedia.com/reference/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/east-india-company-british>

<sup>8</sup> Hala Fattah, *The Politics of Regional Trade in Iraq, Arabia and the Gulf 1745-1900* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1997), 159.

<sup>9</sup> Mohammad Salman Hasan, *The Role of Foreign Trade in the Economic Development of Iraq 1864-1964: A Study in the Growth of a Dependent Economy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 348.

<sup>10</sup> Charles Issawi, *The Economic History of the Middle East, 1800-1914* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966), 132.

colonies like British India, the jewel of crown.<sup>11</sup> This trade route was used to transport Indian and Iraqi goods to Europe. The Suez Canal increased the strategically critical position of Iraq and the total trade ratio of Iraq had reached at 70 percent due to the British commodities.<sup>12</sup> The Suez Canal directly affected the economic and strategic capacity of the Persian Gulf and Iraq and marine transportation. In this situation, Iraq has become closer to Europe which opened the door and gave the opportunity for more practical international trade and profit in the long term.

### **Persian Gulf and Iraqi Region under the British Threat**

The vital geographical location of Iraq and Persian Gulf on the international trade routes had a great importance for both the Ottoman Empire and Britain. From the second half of the nineteenth century, foreign trade in the Iraqi region had become the primary monopoly of British ships and merchants. These British merchants created an essential, profitable network for the distribution of goods coming from Shatt al-Arab to Basra and Baghdad, and from there to the Persian border towns. The Britain was made marine transportation of the commodities from India by using the Shatt al-Arab waterway, which was located in southern Iraq. This marine transportation line between Bombay and Basra further accelerated the foreign trade in the Persian Gulf and Iraq and the trade of Basra gradually developed with the rise of British shipping in Masqat

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<sup>11</sup> J.E Peterson, "Britain and the Gulf: at the Periphery of Empire," in *The Persian Gulf in the History*, edited by Lawrence G. Potter, (Palgrave Macmillan,2009), 277.

<sup>12</sup> Hasan, *The Role of Foreign Trade in the Economic Development of Iraq 1864-1964: A Study of a Dependent Economy*, 151, 347. Salman Hasan also reveals about foreign trade in the development of the Iraqi economy that "The nineteenth century secular growth in world, and especially European, income and demand for foodstuffs and raw materials, facilitated by the development of modern transport (especially the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and the launching of steam navigation in the Tigris in 1861) widened market for Iraqi produce."



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fleet.<sup>13</sup> Iraq began to gain a significant income due to Tigris and Euphrates which were the center of the Bombay-London trade. In this regard, holding of Iraqi region's control was a priority for Britain to protect its colonial transportation roads, provide the continuous income and maintain its primary position in trading power.<sup>14</sup> However, this increasing British economic involvement in the transit trade routes in Iraq and the Persian Gulf disturbed the Ottoman central authority and gained the problematic situation for damaging the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>15</sup>

At the same time, the economic importance of Iraq and the Persian Gulf for the Ottoman Empire derived from its vital strategic location because Iraq was close to the Persian lands, Arabian Peninsula and far Eastern roads.<sup>16</sup> Iraq was one of the most important transition centers of the merchants between the European markets and Eastern producers. Ottoman economy had obtained a powerful income from this transition center.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, the Ottoman Empire wanted to increase military and civil presence and influence in the Persian Gulf and Iraq to keep controlling the trade routes, eliminate British influences from these regions and

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<sup>13</sup> Fattah, *The Politics of Regional Trade in Iraq, and the Gulf 1745-1900*, 70.

<sup>14</sup> Frederick Anscombe, *The Ottoman Gulf: The Creation of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar* (New York: Colombia University Press, 1997), 20; Gökhan Çetinsaya, "Challenges of a Frontier Region: The Case of Ottoman Iraq in the Nineteenth Century." in *The Frontiers of the Ottoman World*, edited by A.C.S. Peacock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009): 271-287; E. Caesar Farah, *The Sultans' Yemen: Nineteenth century Challenges to Ottoman Rule* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2002), XIV; Soli Shahvar, "Tribes and Telegraphs in Lower Iraq: The Muntefiq and the Baghdad-Basrah Telegraph Line of 1863-65," *Middle Eastern Studies* 39, (2003), London: Routledge, 93.

<sup>15</sup> Gökhan Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq: 1890-1908* (London: Routledge, 2006), 120; Jane Hathaway, *The Arab Lands under Ottoman Rule: 1516-1800* with contributions by Karl Barbir (New York: Pearson Longman, 2008), 183.

<sup>16</sup> Hathaway, *The Arab Lands under Ottoman Rule: 1516-1800*, 91.

<sup>17</sup> Alan Palmer, *The Decline and Fall of the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 2009), 88.



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prevent occurrence of future expansion of European powers.<sup>18</sup> These similar aims of Britain and Ottoman governments on Iraqi geography had encouraged them to struggle for the obtaining permanent hegemony over these areas.

In this manner, the report of Müşir Nusret Pasha deserves special attention to understand the growing penetration of Britain into the Persian Gulf and Iraqi region and the social and political activities of the British Empire in those areas. Although Müşir Nusret Pasha touched on many issues in his report, he mostly concentrated on the growing penetration of the British Empire on the societies of the Persian Gulf and the Iraqi region as well as incapable administration of Ottoman Empire in these areas. He also addressed Britain's long-term plans for the Arabian Peninsula and Africa in his report, arguing that Britain tried to put the Arabian Peninsula and Africa under its sovereignty and intended to divide them into two different governments by separating them from Caliphate. However, Müşir Nusret Pasha reported that Ottoman provincial authorities did not pay enough attention to avoid this imminent British threat.<sup>19</sup>

In his report, Nusret Pasha listed many reasons to justify his accounts about British threat. He emphasized that the British supremacy over the region was not limited to commercial influence but they had also a powerful army in the region. The British Empire pursued the military policy throughout the coasts of the Persian Gulf to control its commercial shipping roads and to protect its fleets via British patrol vessels that traveled in these areas.<sup>20</sup> He also pointed out that The Sixth Army of the Ottoman Empire in Iraq lacked military resources and equipment and

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<sup>18</sup> Anscombe, *The Ottoman Gulf: The Creation of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar*, 25.

<sup>19</sup> BOA. Y.EE. 11/ 3. 6 Rabiyyülahir 1327/ 27 April 1909.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

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enough vessels to defend their territories from pirates.<sup>21</sup> The existence of pirates in Gulf region legitimized Britain's intervention and allowed Britain to establish a naval force to protect Persian Gulf seabords because Ottoman rulers had difficulty in maintaining order and needed the military assistance of Britain.<sup>22</sup>

Within the context of British military policy over the coasts of the Persian Gulf, Nusret Pasha informed the Ottoman center that Britain had invaded the cities of Muhammara and Shatt al-Arab and the southern part of Tigris River to control trade routes. Two British steamers were permanently placed on the Tigris and the Euphrates up to Baghdad and Shatt al-Arab for their trade without permission from the Ottoman central administration.<sup>23</sup> These British steamers navigated informally in the Persian Gulf coasts like Omani to show its domination to population living in these areas. Additionally, a significant number of merchant ships were accompanied by British warships that frequently navigated in the Gulf coasts including Oman, Qatar and Kuwait to transport the properties between London and Basra. These military ships served like British military guard post to provide the security of the commercial ships which were used as transporting supplies for Britain. On the contrary to British military and commercial ships, there were not any commercial or military ships belonging to the Ottoman Empire to protect its subjects in these areas.<sup>24</sup> This situation led Britain to expand its military presence in these lands.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid. "Evvela altıncı ordu yu hümayunlarının yalnız ismi ve çerçevesi mevcut olup ordu kelimesinin müstelzem olduğu kaffe-i levazımat ve edevat ve emakin-i askeriye ile mevaki-i müstahkeme ve dar-ı mühimmat ve mükemmel cephane-i umumi ve eslihanane gibi bir çok şeyleri mefkut bulunmuştur."

<sup>22</sup> Peter Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq 1914-1932* (London: Ithaca Press, 1976), 2.

<sup>23</sup> BOA. Y.EE. 11/ 3. 6 Rabiyyülahir 1327/ 27 April 1909.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

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Müşir Nusret Pasha was aware of the British superiority in the Gulf region and he explained in detail that Britain benefited from the Ottoman Empire's lack of military naval power on the Persian Gulf and started to dominate the region.<sup>25</sup> Britain invaded the cities of Muhammara and Shatt al-Arab and the southern part of Tigris River to control trade routes by taking advantage of the administrative gap in the region. Nusret Pasha also observed that the Arabian Peninsula and the coasts of Persian Gulf were ruled by the Britain and seemed to be left to Britain.<sup>26</sup> The Ottoman imperial center did not claim a right over in these regions because the Ottoman government did not have any provincial administration, fortresses and police forces.<sup>27</sup> His report claimed that the Ottoman naval presence in the Persian Gulf was far away from eliminating the British threats from these lands. In other words, there was no evidence for claiming sovereignty for Ottomans in the Persian Gulf and Iraq due to military inadequacy.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, for the security of those frontier regions from the encroachment of Britain and its future expansion, Müşir Nusret Pasha proposed to take necessary military measure. He advised to central government for continuing and dynamic Ottoman military and civil presence in the coasts of Persian Gulf, from Basra to Qatar to protect from future expansion of Britain and could claim a right over their properties in these regions.<sup>29</sup>

Furthermore, the conflict of interest between the Ottoman Empire and Britain over the Iraqi region made religious identities of provincial persons more important both for the Ottoman Empire and Britain. In this century, religion could be used by European powers as a vehicle to

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

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mobilize large numbers of society in the Muslim world.<sup>30</sup> On this topic, Müşir Nusret Pasha touched upon the distribution of Christian books to indigenous people by the British missionaries. He explained that Arabic books named as “the true religion of Protestantism” and “the incorrectness of Islam” were secretly given to persons living in the Iraqi region by British missionaries. For preventing the propagation of British missionaries, Nusret Pasha demanded from the Sultan the protection of Ottoman subjects living in Iraq.<sup>31</sup>

It is also important to note what the report mentioned about the growing consular activity of Britain in the coasts of Persian Gulf and Iraqi region. British authorities sent spies and consul officers to understand the political dynamics of the region and to gain support of the people and to create hostility against the Ottoman state. These British consuls were constantly seeking ways to gain the political support of the tribal chiefs and tried to establish strong ties with public in Baghdad and Mosul.<sup>32</sup> The report illustrated the British authorities’ gifts and financial support for tribal leaders with the aim of overthrowing the influence of the Ottoman Empire through British consul officers. The British consular officers visited tribal people for the sake of constructing relationships in the Iraqi region and these officers made all kinds of sacrifices on behalf of Britain to

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<sup>30</sup> Many of countries competed with each other about their spread of their religious doctrines in the Islamic areas. The United States, Britain, France, Germany, Russia, and Italy were some of countries that managed the greatest missionary activities in the Middle Eastern countries. For a detailed study about the missionary activities in the Middle Eastern countries, see Sabri Ateş, *Empires at the Margin: Towards a History of the Ottoman-Iranian Borderland and the Borderland Peoples, 1843-1881* (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

<sup>31</sup> BOA. Y.EE. 11/ 3. 6 Rabiyyülahir 1327/ 27 April 1909.

<sup>32</sup> David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2009), 123.

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maintain the close contact with the regional leaders.<sup>33</sup> Those officers who could speak both Arabic and Persian language fluently with the people consistently travelled throughout the Arabian and Persian lands to be able to make more contact with the public. Additionally, they actively provided financial assistance to the Persian prominent ulema and poor Shiite<sup>34</sup> people to build the social and political ties with Shiite people living in the Iraqi region.<sup>35</sup> In response to this, Nusret Pasha recommended Ottoman Empire to enforce Sunni<sup>36</sup> ulema's authority and position.<sup>37</sup> Apart from that, Nusret Pasha reported that some British officers even declared themselves as Wahhabis<sup>38</sup> to have an influence on the Wahhabi tribes. He

<sup>33</sup> BOA. Y.EE. 11/ 3. 6 Rabiyyülahir 1327/ 27 April 1909.

<sup>34</sup> For the definition of Shiites, see Jane Hathaway, *The Arab Land under Ottoman Rule, 1516-1800* (New York: Pearson Longman, 2008), 307. Shiites: "*adherents of the minority sect of Islam who believe that Muhammad designated Ali ibn Abi Talib to succeed him as leader of the Muslim community on his death and that subsequent caliphs, or imams, should be descendants of Ali and Muhammad's daughter Fatima. Major subjects are the Imamis, or Twelvers; Ismailis, or Seveners; and Zaydis.*"

<sup>35</sup> For the support of Shiite people by the British officers, see also the report of Governor Ahmad Said Efendi of Najaf. BOA. Y.PRK. UM 41/ 117. 23 Zilhicce 1315/ 15 May 1898. Ahmed Said examined the money to the Shiite ulema by British officers for winning the support of Shiite population. He repeatedly referred to British supremacy over the regional and tribal leaders in Iraq due to the actions of British missionaries and Britain's troops in Persian Gulf and Iraqi region.

<sup>36</sup> For the definition of Sunnis, see Hathaway, *The Arab Land under Ottoman Rule, 1516-1800*, 309. Sunnis: "*adherents of the majority sect of Islam who believe that the caliph should be chosen by community consensus, which is thought to be part of the sunna, or custom of the prophet Muhammad.*"

<sup>37</sup> BOA. Y.EE. 11/ 3. 6 Rabiyyülahir 1327/ 27 April 1909.

<sup>38</sup> For the definition of Wahhabi, see Hathaway, *The Arab Land under Ottoman Rule, 1516-1800*, 309. Wahhabi: "*Puritanical Sunni sect which emerged in the Arabian Peninsula during the eighteenth century and allied with the Saudis against Ottoman government They opposed all innovations to the Sunna of the prophet Muhammad, including Sufism and using community consensus or logical analogy to reach a legal decision.*"

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warned the Ottoman center that Britain constructed a great network on the coasts of Persian Gulf due to British officers' such activities.<sup>39</sup>

In another report from the governor of Baghdad, Esad Bey, a similar issue was addressed. Esad Bey's report clearly indicated that Britain had increased its influence in Iraqi region from day to day and most of the tribal units in Iraq were armed by Britain. Also, Esad Bey told that the inhabitants of Iraq were tried to be removed from the caliphate's authority due to the British consul officers' activities. The Ottoman governor did not take notice of these important actions of British officers.<sup>40</sup> In this regard, the establishment of close relations British agents with regional powers and tribes undermined the Ottoman authority over these lands.

### Conclusion

This article aimed to establish a better understanding of the presence and position of the Ottoman Empire and Britain in Iraq and the Persian Gulf regions in the late nineteenth century through the Müşir Nusret Pasha's detailed report within their historical links. Nusret Pasha's ultimate aim in his report was to demonstrate that the Ottoman Empire did not impose a direct rule in practice in the Persian Gulf and Iraqi region, and they did not maintain control of these regions in the face of the increasing supremacy of Britain. In this sense, this article aimed to depict the British penetration into Persian Gulf and Iraqi region and inadequate policies of the Ottoman Empire against this British hegemony within the context of Nusret Pasha's report.

Britain became more permanent due to its economic and military power and expanded its penetration policy in the Persian Gulf and Iraqi region in the nineteenth century. Persian Gulf and Iraqi region's basic importance behind the colonialist British Empire came from its economic

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<sup>39</sup> BOA. Y.EE. 11/ 3. 6 Rabiülahir 1327/ 27 April 1909.

<sup>40</sup> BOA. Y.PRK.UM. 23 Zilhicce 1315/ 15 May 1898.

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capacity and geopolitical position. The major considerations of Britain in these areas were commercial; so it tried to protect its trade routes over the region by ignoring the sovereignty of Ottomans. Britain first established the British Shipping Lunch Company in 1862 to transport Indian and Iraqi goods and raw materials from Baghdad, Basra, and Bombay to London. Second, British economy experienced a turning point with the inauguration of Suez Canal in 1869. The British Lunch Company started to use the Tigris to transport the Indian and Iraqi commercial goods thanks to this canal. Britain could achieve faster and cheaper trade with the opening of Suez Canal. Lastly, Britain connected with the prominent leaders to increase its expansionist policy and grow the trade through the British officers or spies in Persian Gulf and Iraq. Britain's presence was regarded as one of the foremost threats to position of the Ottoman Empire in these lands.

From the perspective of Müşir Nusret Pasha, the authority of Ottoman Empire rested on its powerful administration and military in Iraqi region and Persian Gulf in the face of Britain's interventionist policy. However, Ottoman government could not afford the necessary measures to preserve the security of these regions and it remained incapable to develop restrictive policies against Britain. The Ottoman Empire failed to eradicate the British influence and was compelled to withdraw from Persian Gulf and Iraqi region towards the end of the nineteenth century.

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