

The Issue of Aqaba in 1906 Through Archive Documents and Ottoman Sources

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Abstract

This study deals with an essential historical topic represented in the issue of Aqaba in 1906, about the border dispute between the Ottoman Empire, colonial Britain, and Khedive Egypt. This issue was also known in historical sources as the Taba incident or the border dispute over the Sinai Peninsula, and it was also known as the Egyptian border dispute. Although this issue is mainly due to the lack of clarity of the borders between the Ottoman states of Hejaz and Khedive Egypt, the Egyptian side was not as influential in it as the influence of the Ottoman

Empire and colonial Britain.

Keywords: The issue of Aqaba, The Ottoman Empire, Colonial Britain, Khedive Egypt.

قضية العقبة عام 1906 من خلال وثائق أرشيفية ومصادر عثمانية

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ملخص

تتناول هذه الدراسة موضوعاً تاريخياً مهماً تمثل في مسألة العقبة عام 1906م، في إشارة إلى النزاع الحدودي بين الدولة العثمانية وبريطانيا الاستعمارية ومصر الخديوية. وكذلك عُرفت هذه المسألة في المصادر التاريخية بحادثة طابا، أو بالنزاع الحدودي حول شبه جزيرة سيناء، وعُرفت أيضاً بالنزاع الحدودي المصري. وبالرغم من أنّ مرّة هذه المسألة أساساً عدم وضوح الحدود بين ولايتي الحجاز العثمانية ومصر الخديوية، فإنّ الطرف المصري لم يكن مؤثراً فيها بقدر تأثير كلاً من الدولة العثمانية، وبريطانيا الاستعمارية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مسألة العقبة، الدولة العثمانية، بريطانيا الاستعمارية، مصر الخديوية.

Introduction :

This study presents a historical topic that received a great deal of attention, known as the Aqaba issue. It was represented in the border dispute between the Ottoman Empire, colonial Britain, and Khedive Egypt. Historically, it has been called the Taba incident, the border dispute over the Sinai Peninsula, or the Egyptian border dispute. This conflict was mainly the lack of demarcation of the borders between the Ottoman provinces of Hejaz and Khedive Egypt, away from the Egyptian side; his influence on it was not as much as that of the Ottoman Empire and colonial Britain. This study aims to understand the nature of the issue of Aqaba, its historical background, and its results at the level of the entire Middle East region, including the statement of the British plan seeking to control the East in general and the Arab East in particular, and the relationship of this expansion

project to the issue of Aqaba, as well as knowledge of the anti-Ottoman projects and the policies it followed to keep colonial Britain away from this region.

The importance of the study is to address the issue of Aqaba based on Ottoman historical sources, especially the documents of the Ottoman archives. This is considered an objective scientific precedent, away from the tendentious readings distorted by the ideologies of colonial historical schools.

To achieve this, this study adopted the methods of historical writing, descriptive research, collecting qualitative data, classifying the results qualitatively, analyzing historical events according to the historical analytical method, and comparing different sources to each other by linking the correct information together.

In this context, both primary and secondary sources will be used in the research process. The information and documents included in the study will be presented within the framework of ethical rules, up to evaluations and results drawn from this information following scientific ethics and citing the work contained in the study in an appropriate scientific manner.

The documents of the Ottoman archives are the main source on which the study was based, by making use of them to know the Ottoman Empire's view of the events and their course. The Ottoman documents and sources give an accurate description of the events related to the subject of the study

One of the sources on which the study relied was the book "History of Sinai" by its author, Naoum Shucair. The importance of this book comes from the fact that it is considered one of the most important historical sources for the history of Sinai. The author lived through the most important decisive events in the Sinai Peninsula.

The book also touched on the conflict between the Egyptian country and the Ottoman Empire over the demarcation of the eastern borders of the Sinai Peninsula, and the intervention of Britain at that time. The importance of the book is due to the position of its author, who held several positions in the Egyptian intelligence at the time.

Among the sources of the study is the book Modern Egypt, written by Cromer, the British Consul General in Egypt until 1907, as the author provides a

description of the important historical events that took place in Egypt from 1876 until his departure from Egypt.

The study was also based on many foreign references, which dealt with some aspects that serve the subject of the study.

Before addressing the subject of the study, we find that it is necessary to present a geographical definition of the region that witnessed the historical events related to the study.

The Gulf of Aqaba is located to the east of the Sinai Peninsula. Its length from Ras Muhammad to Aqaba Castle is about one hundred miles, and its width ranges from seven to fourteen miles (see appendix III) .

As for the Sinai Peninsula, it is that land link between the continents of Africa and Asia, in other words, it is that desert that connects the Egyptian country with the two countries of Syria and Hijaz at that time.

The Sinai Peninsula took the shape of a triangle, its base on the Mediterranean Sea, and its top was divided into two parts, the Gulf of Aqaba and the Gulf of Suez (see appendix III) .

As for Taba, it is located at the head of the Gulf of Aqaba, between a mountain range and plateaus on one side, and the waters of the Gulf of Aqaba on the other(see appendix II) .

1. The issue of Aqaba and its relationship to Egypt:

This issue was known in Ottoman history and sources as the issue of Aqaba, while British sources referred to it as the eastern borders of Egypt, the borders of the Sinai Peninsula, and it was also known as the Taba issue¹. Before we proceed to clarify the meaning of the issue of Aqaba, we must define the geography of the Egyptian lands at that time and identify the privileges enjoyed by Khedive Egypt (Rüştü 1910 :4; see appendix III) .

The roots of this issue go back to the days of the Grand Vizier Hussein Hilmi Pasha,² Who, during his second prestige, asked for information on an emerging issue related to the Egyptian borders, the administrators of the Sublime Porte responded by saying:“It is not possible to give correct information regarding the borders as long as

we do not have in our hands the map related to the firman presented to Muhammad Ali Pasha” (Kemal 1940 VOL.3:1682) . We will discuss the development of the Ottoman-British khedive relations based on the first map related to the firman presented to Muhammad Ali Pasha in 1841(Biger1978 : 323-325) .

In the second half of the nineteenth century A.D., the British intended to transfer the Islamic caliphate from Istanbul to Egypt and to include it in their influence. However, after establishing an Armenian state in eastern Anatolia, Britain formed a weak government in the remaining part of Anatolia. Meanwhile, after the governor of Egypt, Ismail Pasha granted the title of Khedive, Egyptian-Ottoman relations entered a sensitive and critical phase, in light of the shining star of Egypt, especially after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 (Uçarol1976:166).

However, the acceleration and aggravation of events during the reign of Khedive Ismail Pasha led to his dismissal, and the situation worsened after the transfer of power to Khedive Tawfiq Pasha, so colonial Britain tried to exploit this situation for its benefit, taking over the rebellion of Orabi Pasha (Deringil 1988: 3-24; Burns N.D: 11-13) as a pretext to interfere in Egyptian affairs; It sent its warships to Alexandria on May 19, 1882, to impose a new reality after coordinating with colonial France in this regard (Hurewitz 1957 VOL.1: 54-58; Anderson1982: 101-109; Labib1921:5-11; Kamel 2014: 7-12; Khalil 2016: 11-30), It took unilateral measures to resolve the Egyptian issue in its interest, and this was represented in landing its war forces in Port Said on August 20, 1882, and the entry of these forces into Cairo on September 15, 1882, under the pretext of protecting its colonial interests in the Middle East and the Far East, and sponsoring them (Uçarol 1976:260-270).

2. The changes in the borders of the Sinai Peninsula:

The borderline (Rafah-Suez) was drawn up by a firman in 1841 AD, and this was guaranteed and supervised by the major European countries. During the time of Khedive Ismail Pasha, specifically in 1886, Aqaba and some areas on the Red Sea were included in the Sinai Peninsula, then came the confirmation of the Sublime Porte in the firman sent to Egypt on Sha'ban 27, 1309 AH (March 27,

1892) that all the lands west of this borderline belong to Khedive Egypt, which the Egyptian Official Gazette also mentioned in its version issued on April 14, 1892.

It seems that the Ottomans saw this borderline as a basis for resolving the issue of the Egyptian borders. The Sublime Porte confirmed the subordination of Aqaba and Qaeda Al Wajh to the Ottoman province of Hijaz. However, colonial Britain was quick to find a foothold in this problem by opposing the Ottoman proposal to resolve this issue of borders.

In the course of the political disputes between the two parties in this regard, it is noted that there are many correspondences related to this issue, including what was mentioned by the Ottoman Plenipotentiary Extraordinary Representative for Egypt, Ghazi Ahmed Mukhtar Pasha; ³He said: "... *the official concession line is that straight line extending from Al-Arish to Suez, and the lands found outside this line have entered the possession of Egypt illegally and unofficially and that the Ottoman Empire will not allow the establishment of military bases in these areas...*".(Ottoman Archives, BOA, BOA Archives of the Prime Minister's Office. YEE. Res. No: 134-94, 1323 Hicrî)According to the argument of the Ottoman side, the Egyptian side was allowed to join Aqaba and Qadha Al Wajh to secure the Egyptian pilgrims' route when sending the honorable bearer by land with the pilgrims riding,⁴Emphasizing that the areas mentioned above must be re-incorporated into the Ottoman province of Hejaz, the protection of the borders, and the preservation of the border situation as it was during the reign of Khedive Ismail Pasha and Khedive Tawfiq Pasha (BOA. Yıldız Sadâret tasnifi Sadaret hususi marz. evrakı, cilt 4, D. N. 256, s. n. 97) .Colonial Britain was keen between 1840 and 1906 to consolidate its influence in Egypt; To ensure the safety of the road linking London and India, and this was evident after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869; Britain resorted to using several strategies to maintain the safety of this road, including putting pressure on the Ottoman Empire in various aspects to ensure its dominance over Egypt (Hurewitz 1975: 267-268) ,This pressure increased when the Ottoman Empire tried to strengthen its rule and influence in the Middle East by establishing a railway between Baghdad and Hejaz.

It is evident from the preceding that colonial Britain endeavored to occupy Egypt; Due to its strategic location, which is no less important than that of Cyprus and Tunisia. The British pressure reached the point of harming the interests and sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire. What made the latter think of declaring war on Britain (Kemal 1940 VOL.2 : 1012) .

Amid these developments, the Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid II wanted to dismiss Khedive Tawfiq Pasha and appoint his uncle Halim Pasha, who resides in Istanbul, as his successor. After that, Sultan Abdul Hamid thought of sending a commission to Egypt to find out the details of the events there. Colonial Britain and France saw this as a threat to the privileges that each of them had gained in Egypt, which prompted them to send a threatening message to the Sublime Porte, and they sent military fleets to Alexandria; What made Sultan Abdul Hamid II think about sending the Ottoman fleet to it were it not for the objection of the Grand Vizier Muhammad Said Pasha to that, justifying his opposition that this step would open the door wide to foreign interventions in the Ottoman Empire (Kurşun 1991: 40-42) .

After the arrival of the British and French fleets to Alexandria, Britain, and France sent a letter to the Sublime Porte that obligated the Ottoman Empire to accept negotiations with them, and a conference was held in Istanbul. Although the Porte agreed to conduct negotiations and hold the conference in Istanbul, the British and French fleets bombed Alexandria (BOA, YEE., Sadâret Resmî Maruzât Evrakı, No: 68/3, Ayrıca BOA. BEO. Mümtaze Kalemî, Mısır 5/A, 135, İç sıra no. 9). The Porte made strenuous efforts to liberate Egypt from these forces, including sending Minister of Justice Hassan Fahmy Pasha (BOA. YEE. Kısım 14, Evrak 88130, Zarf 88, Karton kutu: 12) to London to understand and negotiate its withdrawal, but these efforts were unsuccessful (BOA, YEE., Sadâret Resmî Maruzât Evrakı, No: 68/3, Ayrıca BOA. BEO. Mümtaze Kalemî, Mısır 5/A, 135, İç sıra no. 9). As a result, Sultan Abdul Hamid II established a council of agents whose task was to determine the policy to be followed in managing the Egyptian issue, one of the issues that occupied most of his thinking. This council included Yaver-i Ekrem Şakir Paşa and Ahmet Cevdet,

former Grand Vizier Said Pasha, Shura Council Speaker Shakir Pasha, and Grand Vizier Kamel Pasha. Sultan Abdul Hamid II saw that the solution to this issue would be to confront the colonial powers (France and Britain) in the Mediterranean. Accordingly, the Ottoman Council of Procurators (ENCÜMEN-İ MAHSUS) approved a plan to deal with the Egyptian issue; its first stage was Sultan Abdul Hamid II's issuance of an order to expel the British from Egypt; This will preserve the rights of the Ottoman Empire in Egypt so that the necessary measures will be taken to expel Britain from Egypt. Despite the support and acceptance of this plan by decision-makers in the Ottoman Empire, the latter saw a military solution as the best option. Based on this, Shakir Pasha (BOA. YEE. 39/2465/121/122, s. 35-36) Moreover, Said Pasha presented a proposal calling for the co-optation of the countries bordering the Mediterranean, especially France, before sending military forces to Egypt (BOA. YEE. 39/2465/121/122, s. 35-36).

3. Negotiations seeking to liberate Egypt from British colonialism:

The Grand Vizier Kamel Pasha (Kemal1940 Vol.1: 196) Supported finding a solution to the Egyptian issue by adopting a more moderate policy, but this position quickly caused his dismissal from the supreme leadership. Subsequently, Sultan Abdul Hamid II commissioned Shakir Pasha to assume this sensitive position; However, the latter apologized for accepting this assignment, so the Sultan recommended the appointment of Jawdat Pasha instead (Kemal1940 Vol.3: 1473). The British government had agreed to hold a dialogue with the Ottoman Empire regarding the Egyptian issue, and negotiations between them began in 1885.

Britain's goal in negotiating with the Ottoman Empire was to get rid of the pressures of European countries and to keep them away from this issue to gain more time and perks at the same time (Uçarol1976:269). Meanwhile, Lord Salisbury, who had come to power in Britain (Grenville 1964: 5-10; Lowe 1965: 8-15), decided to send Sir Henry Dummond Wolff to Istanbul and Cairo to settle the case; Wolf asked the Ottoman government in Istanbul to show more cooperation to find a solution to the Egyptian issue; This paved the way for the

British government to consolidate the pillars of the regime in Sudan (Uçarol1976: 259-270) .

At the end of the negotiations that began with the arrival of Sir Henry Wolfe to Istanbul on August 22, 1885, the Ottoman and British governments sent a High Commissioner to begin the necessary reforms in the Egyptian army and administration after concluding an agreement with the Khedive in this regard. As soon as the reasons for security for the British soldiers were available within the borders of this region, Britain made promises to work on concluding an agreement regulating the withdrawal of its soldiers from Egypt. With this agreement, the Ottoman Empire had temporarily accepted the British invasion of Egypt, which earned the British presence the legitimacy recognized by the Ottoman government. Sultan Abdul Hamid II's acceptance of this agreement was due to the guarantee that Britain would not interfere in his foreign policy. In addition to his fear of losing Palestine or Iraq if he insisted on his position on the Egyptian issue, which is based mainly on a military solution (Paşa 1931: 23, 52, 62, 107, 187-188, 283).

In the official letter to his government about this treaty, Sir Henry Wolfe said, "The treaty calmed the Ottoman Empire, and he hoped to reach a consensus on the original treaty in the future." He noted the necessity of investing in the influence of the Ottoman Empire in this region.

In accordance with the terms of the Treaty of October 24, 1885, the Ottoman government took measures to appoint an exceptional commissioner to administer the files of the Egyptian case, and to negotiate with the British. After extensive consultations, Ghazi Ahmed Mukhtar Pasha was appointed High Commissioner for Egypt, and his main task was to provide the Ottoman Empire with detailed reports on the Egyptian army after the rearrangement of its ranks, the necessary adjustments related to the Egyptian issue, and the necessity of restoring public order in Sudan. As soon as the British commissioner left Egypt, the Ottoman commission changed its policy, becoming an authority based on protecting and representing the interests of the state between Istanbul, the Khedive, and the British.

According to the Ottoman Empire, the main reason for Britain's interference in the issue of the border between Egypt and the Ottoman province of Hejaz was

due to the importance of the Suez Canal located along the road to India. Recognizing the sensitivity of Britain's position towards the Suez Canal and its interests in the Red Sea, The Sublime Porte saw that the Attic State should provide guarantees to Britain in this regard and assign the Ottoman ambassador in Athens to transfer these guarantees to the British Foreign Office (BOA, DUİT, Akabe Dosyası I).

Referring to the documents of the Humayun's writing presidency of Yildiz Palace, it was found that some correspondences and discussions took place at different times and revolved around the areas located at the entrance to the Gulf of Aqaba, the Sinai Peninsula, and whether they were belonged to Egypt or the Ottoman province of Hejaz.

Among those documents is the written correspondence to Ahmed Ayyub Pasha, which was sent from the Great Precipice on the 3rd of Dhu al-Qa'dah 1319 AH (February 11, 1902) (BOA. Mısır İrade Defteri Evrak No: 1478-1479) ,In addition to the existence of many documents that indicate information about the conditions of Arab tribes and clans in Aqaba and its surrounding areas, especially those affiliated to Al Wajh district in the Ottoman state of Hijaz (BOA. DUİT Akabe Dosyası I) .

4. British foreign policy and the Issue of the Aqaba until 1906 :

Britain was preoccupied with the conflict with France, Russia, and the Ottoman Empire until 1904, and this conflict led to its exposure to diplomatic crises related to its presence in Egypt. Then came the accelerated events that followed the Mahdi revolution and the Omdurman war in Sudan, which resulted in the 1904 treaty that excluded France from this conflict (Debidoru 1924: 292-295) ; Britain and France had to end their long disputes in various fields and search for ways to maintain their influence in the East in general. While Britain continued its tireless quest to lay the foundations of its colonial project in Egypt and Sudan and was able to occupy the Nile Basin, What made it the holder of the upper hand in this region compared to France. The treaty mentioned above gave France legitimacy to occupy Marrakesh (Kingdom of Morocco) in return for its ceding of Egypt to Britain (Owen 2004: 376-378).

In 1906, British officials became upset after the Ottoman Empire's dispute with Egypt over the area that represented its western borders with Syria and the Ottoman province of Hejaz; Britain saw this border dispute as a threat to its strategic interests in Egypt, and in its area of influence in Syria linked to Palestine, which historians of British diplomacy called the Aqaba issue; This could make the situation worse, and lead to strained Egypt's relationship with Britain after a few years. To avoid the dangers arising from the issue of an obstacle, The policy led by the British Consul General in Egypt and diplomatic agents Drummond Wolff, Sir Eveleyn Baring, Lord Cromer, and Minister of Eastern Affairs Harry Boyle involved measures aimed at regulating Egypt's internal affairs. And the consolidation of British hegemony in it, and the first of these measures was the deployment of young English university graduates among the Egyptians by appointing them to the sensitive institutions of the state and facilitating their access to various departments (Cromer 2015 VOL.2: 357-361) , Some of them took the helm of the Egyptian press. Lord Cromer was one of the most prominent Englishmen who made a remarkable impact on the Egyptian scene (Sayyid 1969: 115) .

The strategic importance of the issue of Aqaba led to strained relations between Britain and the Ottoman Empire after it was its ally in the face of the Russian encroachment on its straits in 1890. This alliance made Egypt an essential and central base for Britain in the eastern Mediterranean basin and prevented its participation with any other country, even if it was an ally (Morder 1940: 159-160)

The Aqaba incident of 1906 fueled the fourteen-year conflict; it made the border issue again high on the agenda of British diplomacy; The British side considered that the Ottoman decree issued during the reign of Khedive Abbas Hilmi Pasha played an active role at the beginning of the issue. This means that the eastern border of traditional Egypt - which is also the Holy Land of Egypt - extends from Suez to the Mediterranean Sea and ends at the Rafah area.

In 1841, despite the withdrawal of the Egyptians from the Hijaz, their control over the Sinai desert and the regions of Aqaba and Al-Wajh on both sides

of the Red Sea continued from the border until 1890, which represents the ancient Egyptian pilgrimage route of from Sinai to Hijaz, Mecca and Medina.

In this regard, the Ottoman Empire asked Egypt to help prevent the Bedouins from attacking their caravans. However, not a few years passed until the Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid II ordered the consolidation of the Ottoman Empire's rulership and authority over the Hejaz. He asked the Egyptians to withdraw the garrisons they had built to ensure the country's security from the Egyptian side, but they did not respond to his request until 1892.

According to the Ottomans, the situation in Sinai was similar to that of the Hejaz, Which means that both regions represent the territory of the Ottoman Empire. In addition, the Ottoman government's demand to return to its former borders made it place this issue at the top of its agenda (Gooch N.D: 1926-1938) .

Cromer rejected the Ottomans' request without hesitation; He met the British ambassador in Istanbul and went to the Sublime Porte, claiming that Sinai belonged to the areas ruled by the Khedive. After rounds of negotiations, Grand Vizier Jawdat Pasha sent a telegram to the Khedive, asking him to be the interlocutor in the conflict between the Ottomans and the British. Then a telegram was sent on April 8, 1892, stating that the Hejaz side of the Sinai was outside Egypt. Five days later, Krumer intervened by sending a note to Tigrane Paşa⁵ In it, he asserted that the line passing around Al-Arish reached the beginning of the Gulf of Aqaba, which the Ottomans rejected at the military and civil levels. At the same time, he indicated that this line, which also demarcates the Palestinian borders, will be put on the agenda after 14 years; to determine the current situation.

In 1906, the commander of the Egyptian camel forces, Jennings Bramly, was sent to this area after he was in Cairo (Shukair 2017: 688) .he demanded that he administratively supervise the nomadic Bedouins in the Sinai. Accordingly, an institution has established that bore the name of the New Inspectorate of the Sinai Peninsula, and Bramley was appointed as its head. At that time, the differences between the Bedouins were not widespread but were limited to the Al-Tura tribe and the followers of Saint Catherine (Khalidi 1980: 19) .However, Bramley's establishment of a command center for him in the Nakhil area to resolve issues in

the Sinai and his attempt to build small military points along the border; angered the Ottomans and led to their intervention.

5. The Hejaz Railway and its relation to the Aqaba issue:

The first idea to establish a branch line linking the Hejaz Railway with the Gulf of Aqaba came from Mahmoud Shakir Pasha's Military Staff in 1891. In the report prepared by Ahmed Izzat Effendi on constructing a railway from Damascus to the Hijaz, the Basha stated that the sideline would be built in the Gulf of Aqaba from Aqaba al-Sham, or any other suitable location would bring great benefits (BOA., Y. Mtv., or. 59/64) .

According to the Pasha, this line will consolidate the dominance of the Ottoman Empire in the Red Sea and increase the commercial capacity of the Hejaz Railway (BOA., Y. Mtv., or. 59/64).

In May of the year 1900, while preparing studies for the route of the Hejaz Railway, the same subject was discussed again. The discussions ended with an agreement to establish a branch line to Aqaba in the future (BOA., Hd. Layiha, Ekler 3). It was not long before work began on this project, and the construction and construction process was completed, although it was not announced at all.

In fact, the Aqaba Line was of great strategic importance to the Ottoman state. The establishment of this line will save the state treasury thousands of pounds that will be paid to the Suez Canal Company to ship troops, supplies, and equipment to the Hijaz and Yemen every year. Perhaps most important of all, all military and civilian transportation will depend shortly on the Hejaz Railway (BOA., Y. A. Res., 122/142), It was expected that the ease and speed of transporting equipment and soldiers would naturally increase the military effectiveness of the Ottoman Empire in the Red Sea and Yemen (BOA., Mümtaze-i Mısır, nr. 16-B/134 [21. 9. 1322]). In addition, the Aqaba line will provide comfort for the Ottoman state employees appointed in the state of Yemen and motivate other employees to work in this area after they did not want to move there; Due to its distance from the center of the country. By establishing this line, the ease of access to Yemen will allow many civil servants to take their families with them (BOA., M. Mısır, 16-B/134) .

It is reported that the Aqaba Line, was able to rival the Suez Canal somewhat when its construction was completed (BOA., M. Mısır, 16-B/134) . was also to be used in the construction of the (Ma'an-Madina) section of the Hejaz Railway and in transporting materials(BOA., Y. A. Res. 122/142) ,in any case, the apparent main reason for establishing this line was to facilitate the process of transporting construction equipment from the Gulf of Aqaba to Ma'an, especially since the best place to unload railway equipment from the sea is Taba in the Gulf of Aqaba, which was easily accessible, and contained many tanks (BOA. YA-Res, nr. 134/39; YA-Res,122/142 - 126/24) .Meanwhile, the cost of constructing this line began to be calculated. At the end of 1905, the Ottoman Empire allocated an amount of 260,000 Ottoman liras to build the railway between Aqaba and Ma'an, which will extend approximately 80 kilometers (BOA., YA-Res, 122/142 ve 126/27), It was agreed initially that the military units would be tasked with constructing the line. If the project's completion requires more workforce, it will be possible to seek the assistance of those assigned to work in the Al-Quds Brigade and the Wilayat of Syria(F.O., 371/156, 39619, İstanbul 1931).

On the other hand, it turned out that the British had hatched intrigues and had been involved in secret activities aimed at obstructing the construction of the railway project since its early beginnings; They showed their discontent and discomfort with the idea of establishing the Hejaz Railway, and then - during the construction of the railway - they began inciting some Bedouin tribes to stand against this project, claiming that it would harm them and their interests: "*Your old traditions and customs will be corrupted by the railways, the revenues that came to you from the treasury of the Ottoman Empire every year will be cut off, the journeys you will take with camels and horses will be disrupted, and the caravan trade will be abolished.*" Another major reason for the British opposition to the establishment of the Hejaz Railway was the concern over the arrival of the Germans to this region; They had good relations with the Ottomans, and Britain feared that these railways would establish a foothold for them in the Arabian Peninsula. The basis of this concern is that the planning for constructing the Hejaz railway with the Baghdad line was with German investment and capital (Paşa 1931: 285).

Sultan Abdul Hamid II aimed from this project to extend to the Hijaz to provide the state with a path that would facilitate it to provide services to the areas that the project would pass through and to strengthen and consolidate the position of the caliphate, as well as the strategic importance of this line by linking these areas to the Ottoman Empire especially if an outsider attacks it. When Sultan Abdul Hamid II was thinking of facilitating the means for Egyptian pilgrims to connect with the Hejaz by linking the line that connected Maan in the fall of 1904 with Aqaba, Britain forced him to abandon this idea by pressuring him. Nevertheless, the Hejaz Railway was a sovereign initiative that demonstrated the power of Islam (Abdülhamid 1973: 123), it was an indication of the Ottoman government's determination to establish a railway as long as it had financial and technical support (BOA., YMD, nr. 13815; see appendix IV).

6. Sultan Abdul Hamid II and the issue of Aqaba:

One of the main reasons why the Porte's bureaucrats and diplomats showed great sensitivity to the border dispute issue in and around Aqaba was Sultan Abdülhamid II's special interest in this particular subject. The Sultan has always been a diligent and confident follower of his policy in this regard. He expected from the beginning that Britain would obstruct the implementation of the Hejaz railway project, which was planned from the office of Izzat Pasha in Yildiz Palace, so he thought about the preventive measures that could be implemented, including following a systematic policy from the moment the issue of the obstacle arose (Paşa 1931:23).

The main objective of Sultan Abdul Hamid II was to impose a reality on the ground that would not hinder the implementation of the Hejaz Railway project, primarily as it would provide security for Palestine and Syria (Paşa 1931:187; see appendix I). But in the short term, what is important for him is to establish a railway between Damascus and Mecca as soon as possible. In this way, Ottoman forces could be quickly dispatched to the region in the event of unrest and revolution (Abdülhamid 1973:145; see appendix I). According to Sultan Abdul Hamid II, if Britain did not sabotage the Hejaz Railway in Aqaba, "it will

strengthen the bond between Muslims to the point that British treachery and deception will collide with this solid rock and be broken "(Abdülhamid 1973:145) .Sultan Abdul Hamid II's intuition was true when the threat of Britain in Kuwait began to hang over the Baghdad railway project (Abdülhamid 1973:152). However, Sultan Abdul Hamid was suffering from difficult conditions in Egypt, despite his alliance with the Germans. Khedive Egypt was indeed considered a province subject to the Ottomans by a decree in 1892, but British activities obstructing the projects of the Ottoman Empire continued in this region. At the same time, it met with firmness and resistance from the Ottoman Sultan. Therefore, it is not surprising that the issue of the borders of the Sinai Peninsula was one of the most prominent issues that the Sultan worked hard to solve all along.⁶

It has already been said that Sultan Abdul Hamid II sent Mahmud Shawkat Pasha (Kemal 1940 vol.3 :1872) to the Hejaz, Egypt, and Syria with a special mission; after raising the issue of Aqaba in 1906 (Kemal 1940 vol.3 :1872), He collected information about hostile British activities in the region, and the Sultan also commissioned him to monitor the telegraph lines linking the Hejaz with Syria (Paşa 1931:285).

Mahmud Shaukat Pasha began evaluating the news and opinions he had collected from the local population and civil servants in the area, aided by his excellent knowledge of the Arabic language. The Sultan directed the policy he would shape in the region, but he also attached great importance to the intelligence transmitted. It should be noted that the High Commissioner of the Ottoman Empire in Egypt, Ghazi Ahmed Mukhtar Pasha, was one of the most active officers of Sultan Abdul Hamid in the region (BOA., YEE, No. 2096, Kutu 87).

During his stay in Egypt, Ghazi Ahmed Mukhtar Pasha reported on the situation there or in the Sinai-Aqaba region during the events of 1906 and conveyed his views on almost the entire Middle East to Istanbul. These opinions were very useful to the Council of Ministers and the Sultan in determining future Ottoman policy (BOA., YEE, No. 372, Kutu 13).

On the other hand, Sultan Abdul Hamid II sometimes expressed his thoughts by conveying his views to Pasha Ghazi Ahmed Mukhtar; He said in one of his

perceptions that he was looking forward to the future and that *"the final goal of the British is to abolish the caliphate, or transfer it to Egypt, as well as the establishment of independent Armenia and the small state of Anatolia "* (BOA., YEE, No. 2125, Kutu 117) .

Conclusion:

The issue of Aqaba is an issue that arose between the Ottoman Empire and Britain in 1906 during the demarcation of the eastern borders of the Sinai. In fact, the two parties directly involved in this issue were Khedive Egypt and the Ottoman Empire. However, Britain inserted itself between the two sides to preserve its vital interests in the region. The issue of the obstacle was not only a border dispute but a struggle for regional hegemony and an example of international competition.

In the decree of 1841 and the decree of 1892, the eastern borders of the Sinai were under the joint control of the Ottoman Empire and Egypt. Although the straight line that extends from Suez to Rafah was identified in the first map of the region, many locations were left to Egypt to secure the Sinai region because the pilgrimage route was located there. To ensure security in the desert, Egypt established police stations in some areas east of the Suez-Rafah line with the permission of the Ottoman Empire. The Porte allowed this situation because it still saw Egypt as its own territory. Therefore, it was not necessary to him that some points in the desert were connected to Egypt or the Hijaz. However, the entry of British imperialism into this region completely changed the situation.

The Aqaba question exposed the Ottoman-British rivalry over many areas of the Middle East. Aware of the consequences of the loss of Aden (the most strategic place at the entrance to the Red Sea for the British), the Ottoman Empire; was keen to keep Aqaba (the most strategic area at the end of the Red Sea) under Ottoman control.

The Ottomans felt the importance of defining the eastern borders of the Sinai Peninsula, Given the geopolitical advantage, it represents to them in controlling the Gulf of Aqaba. If they control this gulf, the Hejaz Railway, which previously

reached Ma'an, will be connected to Aqaba, and the Sinai-Suez-Egypt line will be connected to the Hejaz.

Britain was ready to do anything to keep the Suez Canal under its control; Therefore, its attempts to keep the Ottoman soldiers away from Suez - as much as possible - was a significant objective of British policy. Moreover, if Britain was able to land its forces in Aqaba, as it did in Suez, Jerusalem and Palestine would come under its control, beginning with Wadi Araba, which happened when it tried to control Yemen from its control of the Hijaz Province.

Therefore, the Ottoman Empire and Britain fought - in the context of the Eastern Question - a struggle to consolidate influence in Anatolia, Mesopotamia, Kuwait, Basra, Yemen, Hijaz, Egypt, and the Mediterranean to control all the roads leading to India. The Ottoman Empire had moved earlier and invaded Taba in January 1906 after British forces deployed their forces near this area. However, Britain took this step for the aforementioned strategic reasons. From that moment on, a political-diplomatic conflict began between the two parties, and it started getting more and more complicated from time to time. Finally, Britain forced its opponent to retreat, using the language of threats and threats. As a result of the conflict that lasted for several months; Britain sent the Mediterranean Fleet to the region and risked a military operation there, issuing a stern warning to the Ottoman Empire demanding that it evacuate Taba from the Ottoman army immediately and declaring - at the same time - that diplomatic routes were closed and that the military operation was about to begin.

In conclusion, the policy adopted by Sultan Abdul Hamid II, who personally supervised its implementation, was to try to preserve the most strategic place in the Gulf of Aqaba, which is the Port and castle of Aqaba. Therefore, Taba was classified within the areas under the control of Egypt.

While part of the Sinai was de facto left to Egypt, the rule of the Ottomans over the area continued de jure, and the geopolitical importance of the Gulf of Aqaba was manifested - at a later time - in the First World War and the Arab-Israeli conflict. The 1906 A.D. line remained the dividing line between Egypt, Jordan, and the Israeli occupation entity.

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Margins:

- (1) To find out more about the archival documents in the Ottoman archives that relate mainly to the issue of the border dispute between the Ottoman Empire and Britain over the area between Aqaba and Tur Sinai, these documents include intelligence papers and reports. See Ottoman Archives, BOA Archives, Section No.: 39, Folio No.: 2134, Envelope No.: 161, Box No., 119.
- (2) Hussein Helmy Pasha was appointed to the top position for the second time after the resignation of Tawfiq Pasha in 1909, and in turn, resigned from the position of leadership in 1910.
- (3) Ghazi Ahmed Mukhtar Pasha: He was born in the city of Bursa in 1839. He held several positions in the Ottoman Empire. In 1885 AD, he was appointed extraordinary commissioner in Egypt to separate from this task in 1890. He was appointed to a significant leadership position in 1912 to resign in the same year. He died in Istanbul and was buried there in 1919. For more information about Ghazi Ahmed Mukhtar Pasha, see(Uçarol 1976:175; Deringil 2010:35-42).

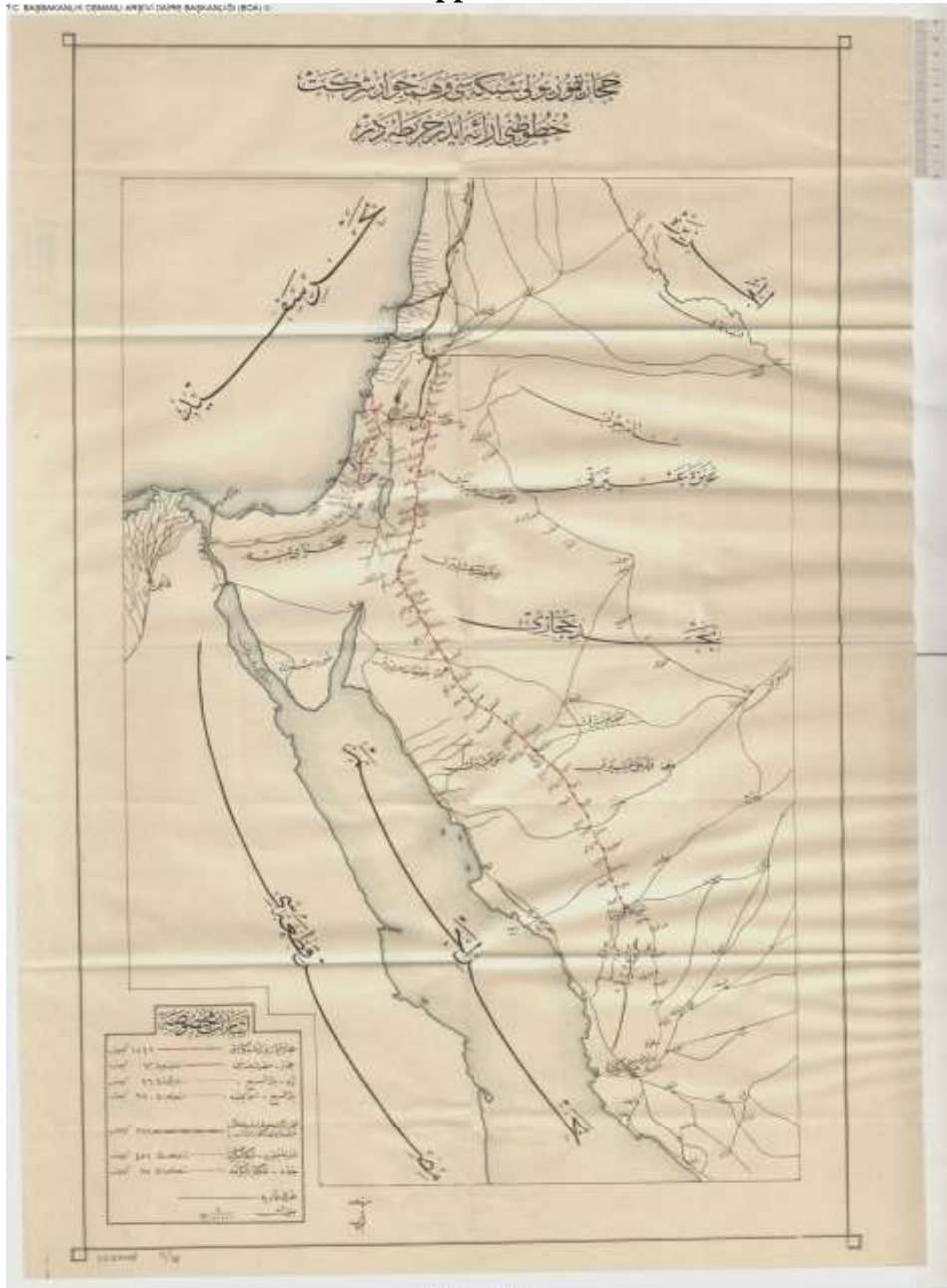
- (4) The Prophet's honorable mahal is a howitzer covered with several pieces of cloth decorated with Quranic verses. It was carried on a particular camel in a procession with the pilgrimage caravan. This loader contains the curtains of the Kaaba (the covering), gifts of high value to the Two Holy Mosques, and a large bowl (a quantity of money) containing many gold coins and precious jewels, distributed to the people of the Hijaz, and spent on repairing pilgrimage routes, water resources, and the reconstruction of Makkah and Madinah. And the facilities of the Prophet's Mosque. It was called the honorable Prophet because it was a gift of the caliphs to the city of the Prophet. May God bless him and grant him peace in Medina and his Muslim followers in the Hijaz, especially in the Two Holy Mosques, and the pilgrims and pilgrims benefit from it. In order to ensure the safe arrival of the sack, the money given to the tribes was called "Urban Surrey." For more, see(Pacalin 1993 vol.2:375).
- (5) Tigran Pasha was the Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs and is of Armenian descent.
- (6) We find that Sultan Abdul Hamid II was very upset with the domination imposed by Britain in many lands of Islam. The Sultan described this situation by saying, "The influence of England in the Arab countries has become so strong that it comes out against our state in Yemen, Aden, Sudan, and Hijaz.". See:**Abdülhamid 1973:144**

Appendices

The appendices are maps showing the line dividing the Ottoman province of Hejaz and Khedive Egypt and also showing the Hejaz Railway and the line that was to be connected to this railway from Aqaba.

The appendices also include documents showing the importance of the railways in facilitating Muslims and defending their lands. As well as telegraph correspondence related to the Aqaba issue, along with intelligence reports and important decisions on this issue. The source of these maps and documents is the Ottoman Archives in Istanbul, noting that the symbol (code) for the documents is located below them.

Appendix I



Appendix II



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Appendix III



Appendix IV

