

The Visit of Najd Delegation to London, (October - November 1919): A Documentary Study

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Abstract

Objectives: The study aims to analyze the Saudi and British documents to understand the historical context that led to Prince Faisal's visit to London in 1919, and the reasons and aims that prompted Britain to invite Ibn Saud to this visit and was this related to Britain's global perspective after WWI or was this related to its strategic interests and the internal situation in Arabia at the time.

Methods: The study is mainly based on the analysis of Saudi and British documents, especially those of the British *Foreign Office*, the *Indian Office Records*, the information available in British newspapers, and primary and secondary sources.

Results: The turbulent political and military situation in Arabia prompted Britain to invite Ibn Saud for a settlement with Sharif Hussein. The apparent British bias reflected in the difficulties faced by the delegation, which were not compatible with the usual diplomatic norms, and ultimately led to the failure of the visit to achieve tangible results for either party.

Conclusions: Both the British and Saudi sides had their goals from the visit, but because the British negotiator - despite his pretense of neutrality - linked reaching a settlement of the border dispute through a direct meeting between Sharif Hussein and Ibn Saud with the fulfillment of the delegation's demands, namely the renewal of the British Treaty, the increase of British financial aid, and the issue of the Najdi pilgrims, the Najdis refrained from making any binding or conclusive promises regarding the approval of the British request.

Keywords: Najd, Sultan Abdulaziz, Prince Faisal, Najd Delegation, London, Diplomatic Mission, Sharif Hussein .

زيارة وفد نجد إلى لندن (أكتوبر-نوفمبر 1919م)- دراسة وثائقية

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ملخص

الأهداف: يهدف البحث إلى تحليل الوثائق السعودية والبريطانية لفهم السياق التاريخي الذي أدى إلى زيارة الأمير فيصل للندن عام 1919م، والأسباب والأهداف التي دفعت بريطانيا لدعوة ابن سعود لزيارة لندن، وهل كان ذلك متصلاً بمتنظورها العالمي بعد نهاية الحرب العالمية الأولى، أم كان أكثر ارتباطاً بمصالحها الاستراتيجية والوضع الداخلي في شبه الجزيرة العربية وقتذاك .
المنهجية: يركز البحث على نحو أساسي على تحليل الوثائق السعودية والبريطانية المتصلة بهذه الزيارة، خصوصاً وثائق وزارة الخارجية البريطانية وسجلات المكتب الهندي بلندن، وما ورد بالصحف البريطانية، والمعلومات المتوفرة باللغتين الإنجليزية والعربية في المصادر الأولية والثانوية .

النتائج: إن الأوضاع السياسية والعسكرية المضطربة في الجزيرة العربية دعت بريطانيا إلى توجيه هذه الدعوة للضغط على ابن سعود من أجل عقد تسوية مع الشريف حسين. وأن الانحياز البريطاني الواضح إلى جانب الأخير انعكس على المصاعب التي واجهها الوفد النجدي خلال الزيارة، والتي لم تكن تمت للأعراف الدبلوماسية بصلة، وأدى في النهاية إلى عدم تمخضها عن نتائج ملموسة لأي من الطرفين .

الخلاصة: كان لكل من الجانبين البريطاني والسعودي أهدافه الخاصة من المفاوضات التي تخللت هذه الزيارة، لكن لأن المفاوضات البريطاني -رغم تظاهره بالحياد- ربط الوصول إلى تسوية للنزاع الحدودي من خلال لقاء مباشر بين الشريف حسين وابن سعود بتحقيق مطالب الوفد، وهي تجديد معاهدة نجد البريطانية، وزيادة المساعدات المالية البريطانية، وقضية الحجاج النجدين، فقد امتنع النجديون عن تقديم أي وعود ملزمة أو قاطعة فيما يتعلق بالموافقة على الطلب البريطاني.

الكلمات الدالة: نجد، السلطان عبدالعزيز، الأمير فيصل، وفد نجد، لندن، البعثة الدبلوماسية، الشريف حسين.



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Introduction:

The important role played by the Arabian Peninsula in supporting the Allies during the First World War prompted the British government after the end of this war to invite leaders of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Bahrain to an official visit to London. Abdulaziz Ibn Saud, the Sultan of Najd, was at the head of these invitees, but he preferred not to go himself, or to send his heir, Prince Saud, as his representative on this visit. Rather, he decided to send his second son, Prince Faisal, who was about only fourteen years old.

This research is based on the analysis of Saudi and British documents to understand the historical context that led to this visit, the reasons and aims that prompted the British government to invite Ibn Saud to visit London in 1919, and whether this was related to the British global perspective after the end of World War I, or was more related to the British strategic interests and the internal situation in the Arabian Peninsula at the time. The research also discusses Ibn Saud's position on the British invitation, and the reasons why he did not go himself and was satisfied with sending his young son, to head the Saudi delegation, and whether the British invitation and the Saudi response to it were consistent with the diplomatic norms followed between states and governments at the time, and what was the task entrusted to such a delegation and this level of diplomatic representation. In addition, the research seeks to describe the stations that this visit went through and evaluate the results that achieved. It is mainly based on documents of the British *Foreign Office* (FO) and the *Indian Office Records* (IOR) in London, as well as on what reported in British newspapers, and information available in English and Arabic in primary and secondary sources.

I. Historical Context:

Pieces of evidence indicate that the British in the period before World War I (1914-1918) avoided direct contact with Ibn Saud and did not show a desire to interfere in the affairs of central Arabia. The main reason for this was that the British-Ottoman agreement of 1913, which defined the areas of sovereignty and influence for both parties in the Arabian Peninsula, made most of the territories controlled by Ibn Saud within the areas of Ottoman influence (IOR: L/PS/18/B381/1, July 29, 1913; Busch, 1967, pp.322-47). Some kind of contact occurred between the two parties after Ibn Saud managed to annex Hasa in 1913. In the Foreign Office's communications with the Ottoman Sublime Porte, the British had to explain that "Ibn Saud, by occupying the Hasa coast-line, entered into the sphere of British interests. We must have relations with someone in *de-facto* control of Hasa" (Goldberg, 1986, p.81). However, the British government realized that it could not come to terms with Ibn Saud behind the back of the Ottomans (Goldberg, 1986, pp.86-7), and remained careful not to develop this contact into any kind of specific commitment or formal agreement (Almutari, 2018, pp124f).

However, Ibn Saud's extension to the Gulf drew the attention of British politicians to him as a potential ally (McLoughlin, 1993, p.36). In 1914, the Political Agent at Kuwait, Captain William Shakespear, could report to the Political Department of the India Office that: "The Arabs have now found a leader who stands head and shoulders above any other chief and in whose star all have implicit faith. The other Sheikhs of the Arab alliance refer all kinds of matters to Bin Sa'ud for his advice, more especially those affecting their relations with the Porte." (Helms, 1981, p.289; Winstone, 1982, p.103)

The course of the war between the Ottomans and the British prompted both sides to seek Ibn Saud's side. On December 26, 1915, in accordance with the Anglo-Saudi treaty signed with the Political Resident, Percy Zacharia Cox, Britain recognized Najd and Hasa as "the countries of Ibn Saud and his fathers before him", and of his descendants (Leatherdale, 1983, p.372f). The British committed themselves to coming to the aid of Ibn Saud in the event of aggression while Ibn Saud undertook not to enter into relations with foreign powers (Silverfarb, 1980, pp.167-177; Goldberg, 1986, pp.196-7). According to Modern Scholars, this treaty was the first legitimate document to recognize the new international status of the Saudi state. Through it, Ibn Saud achieved two long-terms goals, the first is the recognition of his hereditary rule of Najd, and the second is Britain's commitment to support him (Howarth, 1964, pp.85-89; Troeller, 1976, pp.55f; Wahba, 2000, pp.248-249; al-Saud, 2000, pp.28-30).

However, Ibn Saud began to suspect the contradiction of the British policy, which at the same time sought to support his great opponent, the Sharif Hussein ibn Ali, in the Hijaz. Ibn Saud was keen to confirm his position on this opponent in his conversations with Harry St John Philby, the envoy of Cox to Riyadh in September 1918, by saying: "Remember, we

are fighting Ibn Rashid for your sake only, ... The real enemy of Nejd, high and low, is the Sherif.” (Sicker, 2001, p.92). This suspicion increased with the end of the war and the withdrawal of the Ottomans from the region, especially when the border dispute erupted between Najd and Hejaz over the Khurma oasis¹, a conflict that soon took on a bloody military character with the slaughter of the forces of the Sharif at Turaba² in May 1919 (Troeller, 1976, pp.127f; Alangari, 1998, pp.191f).

The British support for Hussein became abundantly clear when the British Government sent to Ibn Saud asking him to return to Najd and leave Khurma a neutral area until the demarcation of the border between them. The British threatened him that if he did not withdraw, they would consider their treaty with him null and take all necessary measures against him (Silverfarb, 1979, pp.37-72). Britain was not satisfied with this, but responded to Hussein's request and sent warships carrying a quantity of equipment and aircraft (Al-Khatib, 1951, p.34). Therefore, Ibn Saud decided to withdraw from Khurma, leaving a garrison there (Wahba, 2001, p.55). Relations with Britain reached a degree of tension that prompted Hafiz Wahba, the Sultan's advisor for political affairs, to comment, saying: “The British government sent an ultimatum to the Sultan of Najd on June 4, 1919, and warned him of the consequences of his advance in the Hejaz lands. The Sultan had no choice but to return to Najd because he, as a wise and far-sighted man, did not see it in his interest to enter into conflict with the British government.” (Wahba, 1948, p.208)

Under these turbulent circumstances, the growing discord between the two British allies, Ibn Saud and Hussein ibn Ali, and the possible consequences for the stability of the peninsula and British influence in it, Britain invited Ibn Saud to visit London. Accordingly, this invitation can be addressed in the context of Britain's political interest, which would not have sacrificed a strategic ally with as wide influence in the Arabian Peninsula. As L. McLoughlin has pointed out, this invitation “had an increasingly serious purpose since after much petty skirmishing between Hashimites and forces loyal to Ibn Saud a full-blown engagement had been fought and the forces of Hussein bin Ali had been massacred.” (McLoughlin, 1993, p.61)

II. British invitation and Saudi Response:

British documents indicate that pre-arrangements began about eight months before the visit, with direct supervision and contacts between the Foreign Office and the Political Department of the India Office during the period from April to May 1919. On April 28, the Foreign Office sent a telegram to the India Office requesting that the necessary preparations be made to receive the delegation of the Sheikhs of Najd, Kuwait and Bahrain (FO 371/4210, July 12, 1919a). Edwin Montagu, Secretary of State for India, assured that this visit would be under the general supervision of the Palace and that the British Government would undertake all accommodation, hospitality and other expenses necessary to provide high care to the visitors as royal guests (FO 371/4210, July 12, 1919a).

The first stage of British preparations was a formal invitation to Ibn Saud. British documents indicate that this invitation transmitted from London to Riyadh via Baghdad and Bahrain (IOR: L/PS/10/843, May 13, 1919). On May 13, the British Government sent a telegram to the High Commissioner of Iraq, Colonel Arnold Wilson, who in turn sent to the Political Agent at Bahrain, Siddiq Hassan, informing him of the British Government's approval to invite the leaders of the Arabian Peninsula, led by Ibn Saud, for an official visit to Britain with the aim of strengthening relations between the two parties (IOR:L/PS/10/843, May 13, 1919; Ibrahim, 1976, vol.1, p.ii). The British High Commissioner of Iraq confirmed to the British government in London that Siddiq Hassan handed over the invitation to Ibn Saud on May 15 (FO 371/4210, July 12, 1919b).

Ibn Saud responded quickly in a telegram he sent to Siddiq Hassan on May 16. In it, he confirmed the arrival of the British government's invitation to send a delegation headed by him or one of his sons to visit London as soon as possible, in order to “strengthen friendly relations and confirm the good ties between us.” (IOR: L/PS/10/843, June 16, 1919). Ibn Saud welcomed the invitation of His Majesty the King of Britain, expressing his happiness with it as a great opportunity to

¹ Al-Khurma is an important strategic oasis on the road between Najd and Hejaz. The settlements of Khurma and Turaba were of particular importance, consisting of several oases, and inhabited by members of the Utayba, Subay, Baqum and Shakwa tribes. (Abedin, 2002, p.139)

² Turaba is an oasis some eighty miles away from Khurma, and about seventy or eighty miles distant from Taif to the east. (El-Shafy, 1967, p.268)

strengthen joint relations (FO. 371/4210, July 12, 1919b). However, he apologized for not accepting the invitation now, justifying that he would not be able to leave the country under the unstable conditions in the Arabian Peninsula (FO 371/4210, July 12, 1919a). Ibn Saud clearly identified the internal problems that prevent him from accepting the invitation. According to him, these are his preoccupation with the advance of Sharif Hussein in the Hijaz over some areas of Najd and his aggression against some of the tribes affiliated with him, as well as his preoccupation with the confrontations with Ibn al-Rashid in Hail³ (IOR: L/PS/10/843, June 16, 1919).

Although the justifications for the Ibn Saud's apology for not going to London himself are reasonable and reflect the tense situation in the Arabian Peninsula, it should take into consideration that the invitation came at a time when relations between the British government and Ibn Saud were not at their best. It is certain that the latter was not satisfied with the British position regarding his dispute with Sharif Hussein. British documents relating to the invitation point to a kind of British arrogance inappropriate to diplomatic mores, possibly stemming from a sense of superiority toward a people hitherto seen as a desert-dwelling tribal community. The method of the invitation, the persons who transmitted it, as well as its form, clearly indicate such a sense. It was conveyed to Ibn Saud through a telegram from the Political Agent in Bahrain, and contained the wording of the "British Government's approval" of the sultan's official visit to Britain with the aim of strengthening relations (IOR: L/PS/10/843, May 13, 1919), without any reference to its true purpose. It is to resolve the differences between the two parties regarding Sharif Hussein.

III. Formation of the delegation:

It is evident that Ibn Saud found that the internal conditions of the Arabian Peninsula, as well as the state of relations with Britain, make the time inappropriate for a visit. He therefore sent to the High Commissioner of Iraq, through Siddiq Hassan, requesting a postponement (IOR: R/15/2/35, July 12, 1919). It seems that the British government saw that these conditions do not allow any delay. The High Commissioner of Iraq sent a telegram to Siddiq Hassan informing him that August 19 had been set for the delegation's departure from Bahrain. He also explained that it was supposed to be accompanied by St. John Philby, but his presence in London led to the selection of another prominent British officer familiar with the Arabic language and the Arabian affairs. Philby, quite familiar in Riyadh, was commissioned to accompany the delegation in London (IOR: L/PS/10/843, October 8, 1919).

Due to lack of time, Siddiq Hassan handed a letter to the Sultan's agent in Bahrain, Abdulaziz Al-Qusaibi, to pass it on to him as soon as possible, in which he assured Ibn Saud that this visit would be of a high degree of importance and benefit (IOR: R/15/2/35, August 4, 1919). Undoubtedly, the insistence and keenness of the British to the speedy arrival of the delegation to London reflected the strong position of Ibn Saud in the Arabian Peninsula after the Battle of Turaba, and Britain's desire to complete a quick settlement of the dispute between Ibn Saud and Sharif Hussein without losing one of the two allies.

It is worth noting that the British documents do not make any direct reference to this primary purpose, as well as only mention general terms about strengthening relations and "Paying homage to His Majesty and congratulating him on the successful issue of the war." (IOR/L/PS/10/843, October 20, 1919a). However, a report prepared on October 20, 1919 by the Political Department of the India Office, titled "Note on Central Arabia", clearly indicated that "The relations between our two allies, the King of Hejaz and Ibn Saud, have never been very cordial and were becoming increasingly strained during the last months of the war... After the war matters rapidly grew more serious until they culminated in open hostilities last May, in the course of which Ibn Saud's forces made a surprise attack on the king [Hussein]'s camp, and captured all their guns, machine guns, ammunition and other impediments. So far as can be ascertained only 150 men of the King's regular army escaped from the slaughter, in which between 4000 and 5000 men are said to have perished." (IOR/L/PS/10/843, October 20, 1919a)

It is likely that all these considerations were present in Ibn Saud's mind when deciding to form the delegation. However, there were other considerations related to affiliation to the royal family and experience in managing foreign relations,

³ For a summary of all major battles as well as many minor conflicts between Ibn Saud and his long-time rival Ibn Rashid, who controlled the formerly Saudi dominated region of Najd until it was brought under Saudi control, see: (Eden, 2018, pp.6-8).

whether politically or economically. British politicians were aware that the influenza epidemic of early 1919 “penetrating into the heart of Arabia, carried off three of Ibn Saud’s sons, including the eldest, Turki, a lad of 19”, and that “the heir to the throne of Najd is Saud, the second and eldest surviving son of the ruler” (IOR/L/PS/10/843, October 20, 1919a; Philby, 1922, pp.96-97; Steffoff, p.45). However, for reasons not expressly stated in the documents, the Sultan did not choose his heir to head the delegation, preferring “his second surviving son, Faisal, a boy of 14, who took part in the military operations against Ibn Rashid in 1918” (IOR/L/PS/10/843, October 20, 1919a). H.S. Abedin suggests that Ibn Saud would not have sent his surviving eldest son, Saud, on this mission. In addition to being groomed for leadership; taught the ways of the desert including raiding and falconry, he was also next in seniority to his full brother Turki, the heir who died in the epidemic, and thus “it is perhaps understandable that there was a reluctance to send him away so soon after Turki’s death” (Abedin, 2002, p.146).

In any case, Prince Faisal’s leadership of the delegation was symbolic, as he was a descendant of the Sultan and a representative of his royal status. Ibn Saud had planned from the start that his fourteen-year-old son would not be the main negotiator in meetings with British officials. He arranged for Ahmad Ibn Thunayan to accompany him as political adviser (IOR/L/PS/10/843, October 20, 1919a), and to engage in discussions on his behalf with the British Government. The letters exchanged between Sultan Abdulaziz and the British King George V (1910-1936) (Nicolson, 1952, pp.13-18; Rose, 1983, pp.106-169) indicate that Ibn Thunayan was the sole negotiator and the actual head of the delegation. According to a letter dated August 1, 1919 (English version), the Sultan wrote: “At the summons of Your Majesty and at the invitation of Your Majesty’s Glorious Government to give ourselves the pleasure of visiting your prosperous Capital and the honour of being received by Your Majesty, we have sent our son Faisal ibn Abdulaziz and with him a suite of our household, the house of Saud, namely Ahmad Ibn Thunayan, who is our senior and trusted delegate, and his companions, in the hope that their visit may be crowned with success in so far as concerns the affirmation of the excellent relations and the strengthening of the bonds of friendship which bind the Empire of Your Glorious Majesty and our State of Najd.” (IOR: L/PS/10/843, August 1st, 1919). (See the Arabic version in Appendix 1).

King George V’s response to this letter (November 24, 1919) also shows the importance of Ibn Thunayan and his key role in the delegation, to the extent that he has been described as the sole “delegate”. According to this response, “It was a great pleasure to me to receive your son Sheikh Faisal ibn Abdulaziz and your delegate Sheik Ahmad Ibn Thunayan and to hear from them of your well-being” (IOR: L/PS/10/391, November 26, 1919). (See Appendix 2). Certainly, the selection of Ibn Thunayan as a “delegate” was not random or without justification. In addition to being, as mentioned in the Sultan’s letter above, a suite of Ibn Saud’s household and the Sultan’s trusted man (IOR: L/PS/10/843, August 1st, 1919), he also had a number of qualifications suitable for the mission. As pointed out McLoughlin (1993, p.61), in addition to being a descendant of a collateral branch of the Ibn Saud, he “stood out as having a knowledge of the great world since he had been brought up in Constantinople where he had even learned French”. Ibn Thunayan was also an English-speaking politician with experience in relations with Britain (Al-Rīḥānī, 1988, p.207; Winder, 1956, p.266). He was among Ibn Saud’s companions when he visited Philby, who would be responsible for escorting the delegation in London, in his guest quarters in Riyadh in 1917 (IOR: R/15/2/38).

IV. The problem of the number of delegation:

Although the correspondence between the British King and the Sultan did not name a third delegate in charge of economic and commercial affairs, the Sultan apparently planned from the outset to entrust this task to a prominent Najdi merchant fluent in English, Abdullah Hasan al-Qusaibi (IOR: L/PS/10/843; Gaury, 1966, p.22), with a brief to import the new technology to Najd in the shape of motor cars (McLoughlin 1993, p.61). According to the abovementioned British report, entitled “Note on Central Arabia”, he was “a partner of a flourishing firm of pearl and general merchants at Bahrain” (IOR/L/PS/10/843, October 20, 1919a). It seems that he was destined to join the Prince Faisal and Ibn Thunayan as soon as they arrived from Hasa to Bahrain.

Telegrams were exchanged between the Sultan and Siddiq Hassan, the agent of Bahrain, since the delegation left Riyadh until its arrival in Bahrain via Hasa and its disembarkation in the hospitality of the Sheikh of Bahrain, Isa Ibn Ali (IOR:

R/15/2/35, August 11, 1919; IOR: R/15/2/35, August 18, 1919a; IOR: R/15/2/35, August 19, 1919). The delegation was scheduled to arrive in Bahrain before the arrival of the Royal India Marine Ship (RIMS) *Lawrence* on August 26 (IOR: R/15/1/712, 1919; Lacy, p.153). Before the arrival of the delegation, the Sultan was surprised by a telegram sent by Siddiq Hassan on August 14, stressing that the delegation should be limited to Prince Faisal, Ibn Thunayan and two attendants (IOR: R/15/2/35, August 14, 1919a; IOR: R/15/2/35, August 14, 1919b).

Undoubtedly, this was a source of indignation for Ibn Saud, who responded with a telegram sent to Siddiq Hassan, in which he indicated that the delegation sent should include Prince Faisal, Ibn Thunayan, Abdullah Hassan Al-Qusaibi and six attendants (. He justified this figure by the fact that the young prince is facing alienation for the first time, and therefore he desperately needs those attendants. He also stressed that if an escort refused, this would be seen as a derogation, which neither he nor the British government would accept. Finally, He expressed his thanks in advance to the British state for bearing all the expenses of the visit (IOR: R/15/2/35, August 18, 1919b).

The Sultan's request was under consideration by British officials in both Bahrain and Baghdad. However, telegrams related to this request were later exchanged with Prince Faisal himself in Bahrain, and not with the Sultan in Riyadh, perhaps to shorten the time and as the emir represented his father. On August 20, the Prince received from Siddiq Hassan a telegram sent by the British High Commissioner in Baghdad apologizing for accepting the Sultan's request, and stressing that the number of the delegation could not exceed five people, namely: Prince Faisal, Ibn Thunayan and three attendants, justifying this by the fact that the ship cannot accommodate more than this number, and that is the wish of the British Government (IOR: R/15/35, August 20, 1919).

Prince Faisal had no choice but to respond to Siddiq Hassan with a telegram in which he reminded him of his previous exchanges with the Sultan in this regard. He emphasized that he could not violate the Sultan's instructions, which emphasized the necessity of accompanying "our indispensable agent, Sheikh Abdullah Hassan Al-Qusaibi, and with him six attendants." He also made it clear that the time had become short to refer to the Sultan in this matter, and that in the event that the British Government was unable to bear the burden of the costs of this number of escorts, he - the Prince - would be ready to do so (IOR: R/15/2/35, August 21, 1919).

In the face of this telegram, British officials sought to settle the issue and reach a compromise that satisfies both parties. In a telegram dated August 22, sent by the British High Commissioner in Baghdad to Prince Faisal through Siddiq Hassan, it was announced that the British Government had agreed to accompany Al-Qusaibi to the delegation with only three attendants. This was once again justified by the inability of the British ship to carry more than this number. It seems that the High Commissioner wanted to excuse the emir, who could not violate his father's orders, so he told him that he would send a telegram to the sultan to give his orders to the emir to suffice with this number.

However, is the issue of the number of escorts of the delegation worth all these discussions and correspondence? Why did not the British government, which is inviting to the visit, accept six attendants instead of three? The British documents recorded two different justifications for the British intransigence, a British one related to the ship's inability to carry a large number, and a Najdi one related to expenses. While the first justification appears diplomatic, the other appears realistic. The British documents include dozens of British correspondence and receipts exchanged between Baghdad, India and London regarding the visit's expenses, dated from 1919 to 1924, and reveal difficulties in settling the funding of the costs of the visit (IOR: L/PS/10/843).

Although this evidence supports the plausibility of the Najdi justification, there is another valid justification revealed by British documents. It relates to the diplomatic norm regarding the number of attendants accompanying other Arab delegations. There is a telegram sent by the British High Commissioner in Baghdad to Siddiq Hassan requesting the following to be clarified to the authorities of Najd: (1)The Sheikh of Bahrain, Abdullah, took only two attendants with him to London. (2)The Sheikh of Kuwait, Ahmad, took with him to London one companion and two attendants. (3)Sharif Faisal ibn Hussein, when he went to Paris, took only three attendants. When he reached London, a fourth was added to them out of necessity (IOR: R/15/2/35, August 22, 1919).

After this lengthy correspondence, the Najd authorities found no hope of further negotiation on the matter, or perhaps

found the compromise proposed by the British authorities reasonable. Therefore, Prince Faisal sent a telegram on August 13 to the High Commissioner in Baghdad, through Siddiq Hassan, thanking him and the King of Britain for their acceptance to accompany Al-Qusaibi and the three attendants, stressing that this was a source of happiness for him (IOR: R/15/2/35, August 23, 1919).

V. The difficulties of hosting in London:

Although the RIMS Lawrence was scheduled to arrive in Bahrain on August 26 or 27 (IOR: 15/2/35, August 14, 1919a; IOR: 15/2/35, August 14, 1919b; IOR: R/15/2/35, August 20, 1919), it did not set sail for Bombay until August 30 (IOR: 15/2/35, August 30, 1919a). Humphrey Ernest Bowman (1879-1965), Director of Education and a member of the British Politburo in Baghdad, and D.P.G. Karach, were tasked with accompanying and looking after the Prince throughout the journey (IOR: L/PS/10/843, August 30, 1919; IOR: R/15/2/35, August 30, 1919b).

The telegrams exchanged between Bowman and the political Agency in Bombay and the India Office in London show that he was the link between Baghdad and London to secure the appropriate hotel to host the delegation in Bombay (R/15/2/35, August 30, 1919c), and to supervise their sailing aboard the troop ship SS Kigoma from Bombay until they reached the port of Plymouth⁴ on October 13 (IOR: L/PS/10/843, September 18, 1919; IOR: L/PS/10/843, October 13, 1919; IOR: L/PS/10/843, October 20, 1919b).

Throughout this period, many other correspondences were exchanged between Sultan Abdulaziz and the High Commissioner in Baghdad, through the Bahraini agent Siddiq Hassan, to check on the Emir and to thank the British authorities for the care and attention provided to the delegation (IOR: R/15/2/35, September 1st, 1919; IOR: R/15/2/35, September 11, 1919; IOR: R/15/2/35, September.19, 1919; IOR: R/15/2/35, October 7, 1919). The last of these telegrams was on October 14, sent by the India Office to Baghdad to inform the Sultan of the safe arrival of the Prince and his mission to London (IOR: R/15/2/35, October 14, 1919).

The British documents do not indicate any logistical difficulties faced by the delegation during this stage of its journey. It seems that these difficulties began since its arrival in London. According to Philby, who was responsible for escorting the delegation in London, the Prince and his companions stayed at the Queen Hotel in Upper Norwood on the night of October 14, but the next morning Philby was warned by the hotel manager, Mr. Conway Davies, to leave the hotel because it had only been booked for one night (FO: 371/4210, October 1919; Gaury, 1966, p.25). Philby continues that he tried with the hotel manager who insisted that the delegation should leave, and that, after failing to secure the prince's accommodation in more than one hotel, he contacted the Indian office in London for assistance. The result was that Philby took his guests late into the night and housed them in the Indian Army Orderly Officers, on Georges Road, Victoria⁵ (FO: 371/4210, October 1919).

The nature of this administrative and military headquarters was not conducive to receiving or hosting royal guests. The members of the delegation, including the Prince, had to walk a long way, in rainy weather, to eat at the Grosvenor Hotel. There appears to have been a failure on the part of the British government to make the necessary advance arrangements for the visit of a royal delegation. Whether intentionally or unintentionally, housing the delegation in this way was not appropriate either for the British or for the Najdi delegation. Perhaps this is what prompted Philby to take the problem to a broader level by contacting British newspapers, including the Daily Mail, the Evening Standard, the Dairy Chronicle, the Daily Gravy and The Times (FO: 371/4210, October 1919).

Undoubtedly, this move on the part of Philby was a source of great embarrassment to the British government, and even to the King himself, before public opinion at home and abroad. British documents indicate that King George V was deeply disturbed by what The Times published on October 17 under the headline "Our Guests from Arabia", and the Daily Graph

⁴ Plymouth is a port city and unitary authority in South West England.

⁵ Queen's Gurkha Orderly Officers (QGOO), or Members of Victorian Order (MVO) originated dates back to the British Empire period in India when Queen Victoria in 1876 established this position comprising six Indian Army Orderly Officers. This number was reduced to four Orderly Officers when King Edward VII was crowned in 1901. The QGOO are the best selected Officers from their Regiments. Their primary role is to attend Investiture duties held in Buckingham Palace for the Queen and any other Royal State occasions required which is normally coordinated by The Royal Household. At the end of their tenure as QGOO, the Queens invests them as Members of the Victorian Order (MVO) for their loyal service to the Crown. (Visram, 2002, pp.48-9)

under the headline "A Government Bungle. Wandering Arabs and the Hospitality Committee" (The Times, Oct. 17, 1919, p.11; IOR: L/PS/10/843, October 22, 1919a; IOR: L/PS/10/843, October 22, 1919b).

The predicament of the British government appears in the confusion of its responses, between its denial and acknowledgment of negligence, and the exchange of accusations between its departments. On October 18, Lord Cromer of Sandringham Palace and the Government Hospitality Fund sent telegrams to the Political Department of the India Office inquiring about the difficulties encountered by the delegation and asking for an explanation of the reasons why the visit had not gone well, especially regarding hotel reservation and meals (IOR: L/PS/10/843, October 27, 1919a; IOR: L/PS/10/843, October 22, 1919a).

The response of the Indian Office was confused and contradictory. On October 22, While it accused the Government Office of failing to make the necessary preparations for the Najdi delegation's visit (IOR: L/PS/10/843, October 22, 1919c), it also claimed that what The Times published was inaccurate and that the newspaper confused the visits of the Najdi and Bahraini delegations (IOR: L/PS/10/843, October 22, 1919b). The next day, 23 October, Sir James Dunlop Smith of the Indian Office acknowledged the difficulties faced by the Najdi delegation in London, chief among them being hotel reservations (IOR: L/PS/10/843, October 23, 1919). Thereafter, further telegrams from Lord Cromer and the Government Hospitality Fund were sent to the India Office to address the causes of the misunderstanding and to satisfy the King's wish that it should not be repeated in the future (IOR: L/PS/10/843, October 25, 1919; IOR: L/PS/10/843, October 27, 1919a).

VI. The delegation at Buckingham Palace:

Whatever the reasons for what the British authorities described as a "misunderstanding", if we put the difficulties of accommodating the delegation along with the problem that arose about the number of its members, as well as the method of the invitation and the officials who transmitted it, all this would constitute evidence that the British did not take the delegation's visit seriously. However, it seems that the problem of accommodation, and the embarrassment it caused for the British government in front of public opinion, prompted the royal palace to try to improve its image and satisfy the Najdi delegation by preparing well for its meeting with the king. The evidence for this is that the preparations for the ceremony of this meeting began very late, and after the crisis caused by the problem of the hotel.

Preparations for the reception ceremony began on 27 October with a telegram sent by Lord Cromer from Sandringham Palace⁶ to the India Office containing details of the reception, the gifts exchanged and the personalities of the attendees (IOR: L/PS/10/843, October 27, 1919b). Accordingly, the latter sent a telegram to the War Department in London to select representatives to attend the reception ceremony of the King, Queen and Princess Mary of the three senior members of the Najdi delegation in the Throne Room of the Royal Palace in Buckingham, and with them, Mr. Philby, to introduce them to the royal presence (IOR: R/15/2/35, November 10, 1919; The Times, November 11, 1919, p.16). It was decided that the afternoon of Thursday, October 30, will be the date for the royal reception (IOR: R/15/2/35, November 10, 1919).

For the first time, the British appreciation for the status of the Najdi delegation appears in receiving it before the Kuwaiti delegation concurrent with it. According to British documents, the reception included the traditional ceremonies expected on such official occasions: the king welcomed the delegation and asked the prince about the sultan's condition; the prince handed over his father's letter and gift to the king, which are two gilded swords. After that, Ahmad Ibn Thunayan approached to salute the king and express their happiness with the honor of appearing in his hands, his gratitude for the royal hospitality and his congratulations on Britain's victory in World War I (IOR: L/PS/10/843, 1919a).

On the part of King George V, there were the traditional expressions of keenness to establish friendly relations and the continuation of alliance and friendship between the two sides, and congratulations to Najd for standing on the side of the victorious party in the war, and conveying sincere royal greetings to the Sultan (IOR: L/PS/10/843, October 1919; IOR: L/PS/10/843, October 20, 1919a; Steffoff, 1989, p.45; Gaury, 1966, p.26). It seems that the India office found it appropriate for the King to respond to Sultan Abdulaziz's letter, dated August 1st. Therefore, it sent to Lord Stamfordham at the royal court a telegram proposing to deliver Prince Faisal a draft letter from King George V to the Sultan of Najd (IOR:

⁶ Sandringham House in Norfolk has been the private home of four generations of Sovereigns since 1862. The Royal Family regularly spent Christmas at it and make it their official base until February each year. (Hanilton Media, 2011, pp.74-5)

L/PS/10/843, 1919b; IOR: L/PS/10/391/1, November 26, 1919. see Appendix II).

VII. The delegation's talks with the British Foreign Office:

Although the King's reception of the delegation could have been a proper diplomatic outcome for the Najdi delegation's visit in London, the indifference with which the British officials persisted after this reception would have led to a real crisis. The Lebanese poet Paul Salameh (1902-1979) wrote a poem in which he expressed the anger of Prince Faisal and his companions at the British officials' neglect of them and their treatment as children (Salameh, 1965). According to the Arabic sources, it seems that the delegation's stay in London for more than a month and a half, spent on informal recreational visits to the metro, zoo and other London landmarks without any real attempt to start discussing political affairs, aroused the delegation's discontent. Perhaps this explains the delegation's sudden decision to leave London for Paris (Al-Ajalani, 1968, p.62-63; Al-Tahawi, 2002, p.17; Gaury, 1966, pp.26-27; McLoughin, 1993, p.62).

There is no doubt that the departure of the Najdi delegation in this way was the result of the accumulation of many British shortcomings. It was certainly also the most embarrassing moment for British officials. The British government sought to deal with the matter by sending Philby, of high standing among the Najdis, to appease the members of the delegation and return them to London with the promise of preparing an integrated program to visit Britain's landmarks and hold official talks between them. Philby succeeded in persuading the delegation to return, and after official visits to Wales and Ireland, talks between the two sides began (Al-Ajalani, 1968, p.62-63; Gaury, 1966, pp.26-27).

British documents reveal that talks with the Najdi delegation began on November 26, headed by the British Foreign Secretary, Lord George Curzon (1859-1925), after receiving the Prince and Ahmad ibn Thunayan at the ministry headquarters (IOR: L/PS/10/843, November 1919). Curzon expressed his desire to reconsider the *status quo* between Sharif Hussein and Sultan Abdulaziz before providing any response to the memorandum previously submitted by the delegation to the British Government on November 1 (FO: 371/4147, November 26, 1919). Curzon was keen to appear neutral in the dispute between the Sultan and "the friend of the British government, Sharif Hussein" (Alangari, 1998, p.211). He used the diplomatic language that expresses Britain's appreciation of the Sultan as one of the leading independent rulers in the Arabian Peninsula, and its earnest desire to preserve the friendly relations established by the bilateral treaty (FO: 371/4147, November 26, 1919). Curzon was also careful not to enter into the details of the conflict, and he contented himself with emphasizing his government's concern about the outbreak of battles, and her desire to find a way to mediate, resolve differences and establish peace between what he described as "the two largest independent rulers of the Arabian Peninsula" (The Times, November 29, 1919, p.11; FO: 371/4147, November 26, 1919).

According to the report prepared by the Foreign Office regarding the November 26 talks, reference was made to the border conflict between the two parties and their battles in Khurma and Turaba. The report recommended that the best solution to the conflict is a direct meeting between the Sultan and the Sharif, in Jeddah or any other convenient place for the two parties. Provided that Britain would intervene with a neutral official to resolve any disputes that could not be settled, and this would be followed by the formation of a commission to determine the borders. Ibn Al-Thunayan replied that the delegation is not authorized to give a definitive answer, but he expressed his belief that the Sultan would welcome this proposal (FO: 371/4147, November 26, 1919).

The Foreign Office report also included responses to some of the points raised by the Saudi delegation in its November 1 memorandum. The first of these is the Sultan's desire to renew and ratify the British –Najdi Treaty, the Foreign Office replied that it is not necessary because the original treaty is still valid and undefined (FO: 371/4147, November 26, 1919). The second point is related to Sharif Hussein's prevention of pilgrims from coming from Najd (Robert, 1990, pp.37-38), and the British side believed that this issue could be settled at the direct meeting between the two sides. As for the third point, it was related to the Sultan's request to increase British financial aid to Najd, and the response was that the time was not appropriate to discuss that, especially with the strained relations with Sharif Hussein. The report concluded that Lord Curzon stressed the Najdi delegation that the Sultan should strive to establish friendly and solid relations with Sharif Hussein (FO: 371/4147, November 26, 1919).

Conclusion:

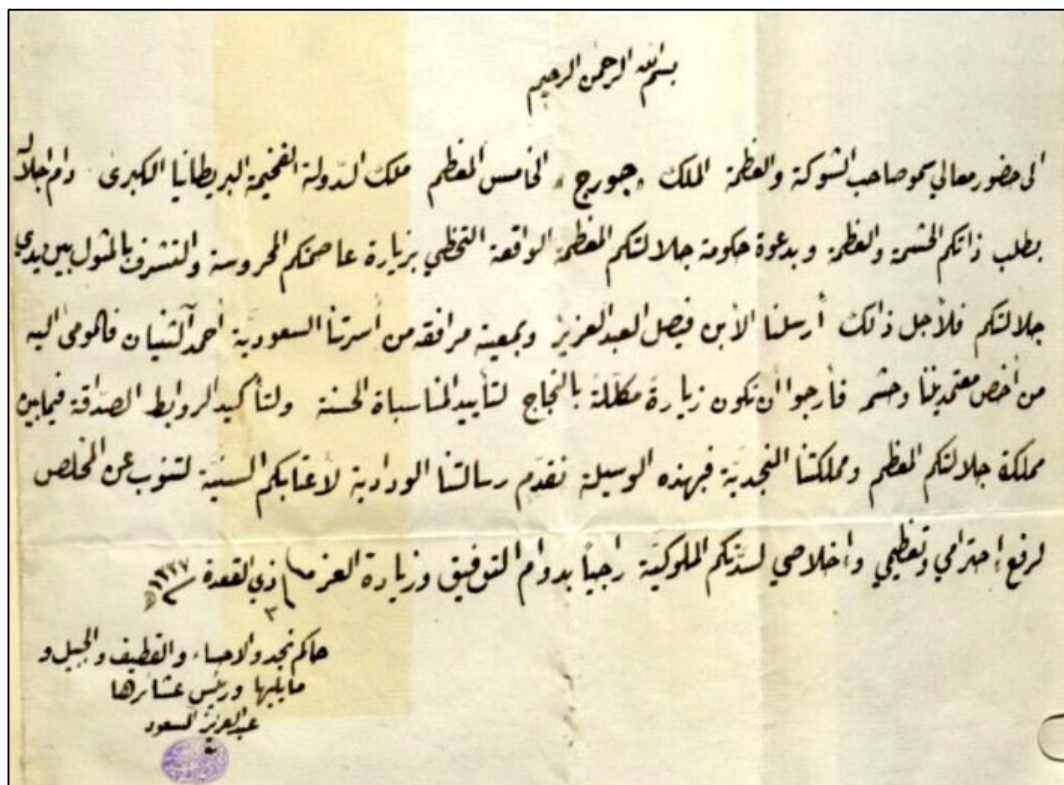
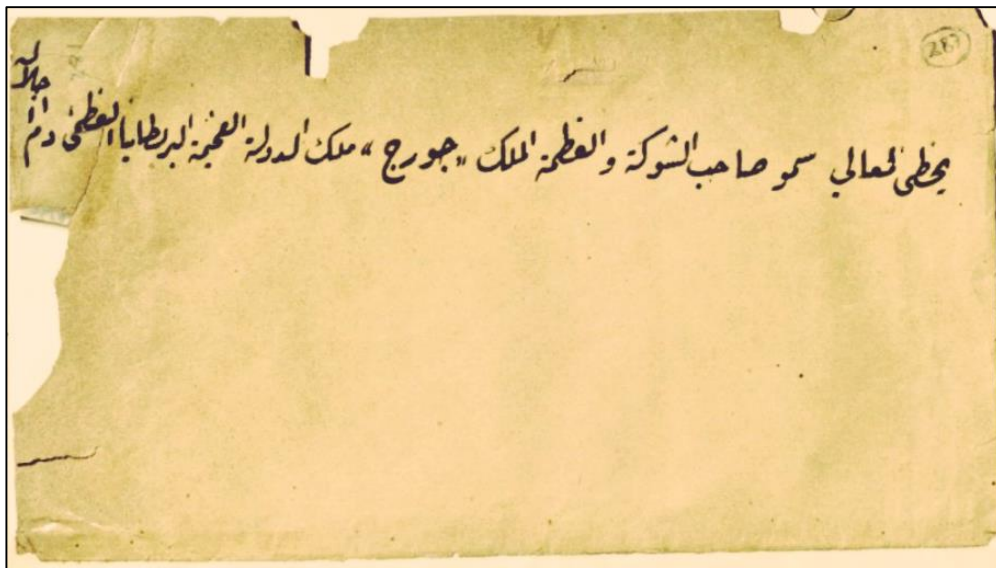
There is no doubt that the timing of the British government's invitation to the Najdi delegation to visit London came in light of the intensification of the armed border conflict between the Sultan of Najd and the Sharif of Mecca. It seems that the victories achieved by Sultan Abdulaziz over his opponent in Khurma and Turaba disturbed the interests of the British government in the Arabian Peninsula. Subsequent conversations with which the Najdi delegation concluded its visit to London show that the main objective of this invitation is to urge the Sultan to avoid further military battles in the disputed border areas, and to resort instead to direct negotiations and accept British mediation and its proposed settlements.

In terms of political gains, it cannot be said that the Najdi delegation has achieved anything. The British official responses neutralized all its other demands, such as renewing the British-Najdi treaty, increasing financial support and solving the problem of Najdi pilgrims. All these demands were conditional on a settlement with Sharif Hussein. Undoubtedly, these are evidences indicating that the only purpose of the visit on the part of Britain is to put pressure on Sultan Abdulaziz, who is the victorious party, to stop the military battles and settle disputes with Sharif Hassan by peaceful means.

To understand the British mentality and the way it dealt with Sultan Abdulaziz and his delegation, it is important to consider the broader context of Britain's growing influence in Arabia and the Middle East, and its emergence as a superpower after its victory in World War I. The British government's view of the Sultan and Sharif as mere tribal chiefs in the desert regions undoubtedly influenced the manner in which the visit was invited, the subsequent British interference in determining the number and personalities of the delegation, the difficulties of accommodation, and the indifference of government officials in care of its members. Indeed, with the exception of King George V's reception of the delegation at Buckingham Palace, which is the only manifestation of honoring the delegation, the entire visit seemed to lack the usual diplomatic rules in dealings between governments and states. Perhaps this, in addition to the delegation's prolonged stay in London without starting the scheduled negotiations, are the reasons that prompted the delegation's members to leave London without completing their mission.

As for the Sultan, there is no doubt that he was fully aware of the British interests in the region, and the importance of Sharif Hussein as a strategic ally whose active role appeared in the Great Arab Revolt against the Ottomans in 1918 AD. Moreover, the British intervention in favor of Sharif Husayn, as soon as his defeat at Khurma became clear, was a semi-official declaration of the side to which Britain was more inclined. Not far from the prudence of Sultan Abdulaziz to realize the true purpose of the British invitation to visit London, so he decided from the very beginning not to go himself, or even to send his heir, content to send his 14-year-old son as his representative. He justified this by not being able to leave the country in light of his internal problems and the unstable conditions in the Arabian Peninsula at the time. Although these justifications are logical and reflect the tense situation in the Arabian Peninsula, it must be taken into account that the invitation came at a time when relations between the British government and Ibn Saud were not at their best. It is certain that the latter resented the British attitude towards his dispute with Sharif Hussein, but the British documents relating to the invitation also indicate a kind of British arrogance inappropriate to diplomatic customs. In fact, the method of the invitation, the people who transmitted it, as well as its form, clearly indicate such a sense.

The leadership of the young boy, Prince Faisal, for the delegation was symbolic. Ibn Saud had planned from the start that his qualified relative, Ahmad Ibn Thunayan, would be the chief negotiator in meetings with British officials. During these negotiations, the British side tried to pretend to be neutral in the dispute between the Sultan and the Sharif, expressing its desire to reach a settlement of the border conflict through a direct meeting between the two opponents. However, because the British negotiator linked this to the fulfillment of the demands of the delegation, which are the renewal of the British Najd treaty, the increase of British financial aid and the issue of Najdi pilgrims, the latter, on its part, declined to provide a definitive response to the British request on the pretext that it does not have the authority to do so. Consequently, just as none of the delegation's demands were met by the British government, the delegation did not make any binding or conclusive promises regarding the approval of the British demand for a peaceful settlement with Sharif.



Appendix I
Letter of Ibn Saud to King George V
(3 Dhul-Qeada 1337- 1 August 1919)

I thank Your Excellency for your friendly letter dated Dhil Qada 3, 1337. It has been a great pleasure to me to receive your son Sheik Faisal ibn Abul Azis and your delegate Sheik Ahmad ibn Thunaiyan and to hear from them of your well-being. It is my desire that the bonds of friendship which unite my Empire with your State should be strengthened and should include all Arab States. Now that the enemy has been defeated and the independence of Arabia recovered I trust that its Chiefs and peoples may live together in freedom, peace and unity, and my Government will support all your efforts to that end.

I cordially wish you long life and prosperity.

(SD.) GEORGE R. I.

Appendix II
Letter of King George V to Ibn Saud
(26 November 1919)

DOCUMENTS:

- FO: 371/4147 (November 26, 1919). Note of a Conversation between the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the Arab Mission Representing the Emir Ibn Saud Feisal, at Foreign Office.
- FO: 371/4210 (July 12, 1919a). Telegram from the Secretary of State for India to Foreign Affairs.
- FO 371/4210 (July 12, 1919b). Telegram from the Political Baghdad to the Simla and Cairo.
- FO: 371/4210 (October 1919). Note by Political A.D.C.
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- IOR: L/PS/10/391/1 (November 26, 1919). Telegram from King George V to Ibn Saud.
- IOR: L/PS/10/843. File 4006/1919: Arabia- Visit of the Sons of the Sheikh of Kuwait, Amir of Nejd to England.
- IOR: L/PS/10/843 (May 13, 1919). Telegram from Wilson to the political Bahrain.
- IOR: L/PS/10/843 (June 16, 1919). Telegram from Ibn Saud to Saiyid Siddiq Hasan, Indian Assistant in Charge of Political Agency, Bahrain.
- (IOR: L/PS/10/843, August 1st, 1919). Telegram from Ibn Saud Ruler of Najd and its Dependencies to His Majesty the King George V.
- IOR: L/PS/10/843 (August 30, 1919). Telegram from Political Baghdad to India Office.
- IOR: L/PS/10/843 (September 18, 1919). Telegram from Political Baghdad to India Office.
- IOR: L/PS/10/843 (September 24, 1919). Telegram from Sir L.D. Wakely to Garth.
- IOR: L/PS/10/843 (October 8, 1919). Telegram from the India Office to Philby.
- IOR: L/PS/10/843 (October 13, 1919). Telegram from Major Bowman to India Office.
- IOR: L/PS/10/843 (October 20, 1919a). Report from Sir James Dunlop Smith to the Political Secretary India Office "Note on Central Arabia".
- IOR: L/PS/10/843 (October 20, 1919b). Telegram from Major Bowman to India Office.
- IOR: L/PS/10/843 (October 22, 1919a). Telegram from Lord Cromer to India Office.
- IOR: L/PS/10/843 (October 22, 1919b). Telegram from India Office to Lord Cromer.
- IOR: L/PS/10/843 (October 22, 1919c). Telegram from India Office to the Government Office.
- IOR: L/PS/10/843 (October 23, 1919). Telegram from Sir James Dunlop-Smith to the Political Secretary.
- IOR: L/PS/10/843 (October 25, 1919). Telegram from Lord Cromer to India Office.
- IOR: L/PS/10/843 (October 27, 1919a). Telegram from Government Hospitality Fund to India Office Political.
- IOR: L/PS/10/843 (October 27, 1919b). Telegram from Lord Cromer to India Office.
- IOR: L/PS/10/843 (October 1919). "Note about Najd Mission".
- IOR: L/PS/10/843 (November 1919). Telegram from Sir Arthur Hirtzel to Foreign Office.
- IOR: L/PS/10/843 (1919a). Telegram from Secretary Government Hospitality Fund to the under Secretary of State Political Department, India Office.
- IOR: L/PS/10/843 (1919b). Telegram from the Political Secretary India Office to Lord Stamfordham.
- IOR: L/PS/18/B381/1 (July 29, 1913). Anglo-Turkish Agreement. Collection of Documents signed on July 29, 1913.
- IOR: R/15/1/712 (1919). Annual Report on the Persian Gulf Political Residency for the Year 1919, by Major H.R.P. Dickson.
- IOR: R/15/2/35 (July 12, 1919). Telegram from the Political Baghdad to the Secretary of State for India, London.
- IOR: R/15/2/35 (August 4, 1919). Telegram from Saiyid Siddiq Hasan, Indian Assistant in Charge of Political Agency, Bahrain to Ibn Saud.
- IOR: R/15/2/35 (August 11, 1919). Telegram from Ibn Saud to Saiyid Siddiq Hasan, Indian Assistant in Charge of Political Agency.
- IOR: R/15/2/35 (August 14, 1919a). Telegram from Saiyid Siddiq Hasan, Indian Assistant in Charge of Political Agency, Bahrain to Ibn Saud.
- IOR: R/15/2/35 (August 14, 1919b). Telegram from Saiyid Siddiq Hasan, Indian Assistant in Charge of Political Agency, Bahrain to Faisal Ibn Saud.

- IOR: R/15/2/35 (August 18, 1919a). Telegram from Political Agency, Bahrain to Ibn Saud.
- IOR: R/15/2/35 (August 18, 1919b). Telegram from Ibn Saud to Saiyid Siddiq Hasan, Indian Assistant in Charge of Political Agency, Bahrain.
- IOR: R/15/2/35 (August 19, 1919). Telegram from Saiyid Siddiq Hasan, Indian Assistant in Charge of Political Agency, Bahrain to Political Baghdad.
- IOR: R/15/35 (August 20, 1919). Telegram from Saiyid Siddiq Hasan, Indian Assistant in Charge of Political Agency, Bahrain to Faisal Ibn Saud at Bahrain.
- IOR: R/15/2/35 (August 21, 1919). Telegram from Faisal Ibn Saud to Saiyid Siddiq Hasan, Indian Assistant in Charge of Political Agency, Bahrain.
- IOR: R/15/2/35 (August 22, 1919). Telegram from Political Agency in Baghdad to Political Bahrain.
- IOP: R/15/2/35 (August 23, 1919). Telegram from Faisal Ibn Saud at Bahrain, to Saiyid Siddiq Hasan, Indian Assistant in Charge of Political Agency, Bahrain.
- IOR: 15/2/35 (August 30, 1919a). Telegram from Political Bahrain Agency to Political Baghdad.
- IOR: R/15/2/35 (August 30, 1919b). Telegram from Political Bahrain Agency to Political Bombay.
- IOR: R/15/2/35, (August 30, 1919c). Telegram from Political Bahrain Agency to Political Baghdad.
- IOR: R/15/2/35 (September 1, 1919). Telegram from Political Bahrain Agency to Ibn Saud.
- IOR: R/15/2/35 (September 11, 1919). Telegram from Ibn Saud to Saiyid Siddiq Hasan, Indian Assistant in Charge of Political Agency, Bahrain.
- IOR: R/15/2/35 (September.19, 1919). Telegram from Saiyid Siddiq Hasan, Indian Assistant in Charge of Political Agency, Bahrain, to Ibn Saud.
- IOR: R/15/2/35 (October 7, 1919). Telegram from Ibn Saud to Saiyid Siddiq Hasan, Indian Assistant in Charge of Political Agency, Bahrain.
- IOR: R/15/2/35 (October 14, 1919). Telegram from India Office to Political Agency Baghdad.
- IOR: R/15/2/35 (November 10, 1919). Telegram from Major G.R.P. Dickson, Indian Assistant, to Charge Political Agency, Bahrain, to Ibn Saud.
- IOR: R/15/2/38. File E9. Philby's Mission to Bin Saud. Pp.30-32: Philby's meeting with Ahamd ibn Thuniyan.
- The Times (October 17, 1919). "Our Guests from Arabia", Friday, 17 October 1919, no. 42, 233, p.11.
- The Times (November 11, 1919). "The King and his Guest", Tuesday, 11 November, 1919, no. 42, 254, p.16
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