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RESEARCH ARTICLE

'Pirates', ports, politics: The Gulf (*khalīj*) & international society's expansion

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Abstract

This paper examines how Britain, through 'gunboat diplomacy' campaigns against so-called Arab pirates, overran the pre-existing Gulf suzerain system and became the predominant power in its waters. By filling a gap in the classical English School 'international society' expansion thesis, this article describes how and when political and ideational shifts in the Gulf allowed sovereignty to manifest into its present dynastic form. It argues British imposition of rules, norms, and institutions through a series of nineteenth-century Anglo-Arab treaties against Arab 'pirates' broke traditional conditions of divisible sheikhly authority to embed a new telos of sovereign indivisibility, facilitating indirect colonisation. Colonialism as an overlooked primary institution in the classical international society expansion story reinforced political inequality to create dynasticism to simplify colonial statecraft. The 1836 Restrictive Line was a central institution introduced by Britain to manage the transition from divisible to indivisible authority. Drawing from colonial archives, the paper argues that British control over cross-coastal movements through a Restrictive Line reinforced domestic sovereignty of British treaty signatories while weakening agency of maritime sheikhs outside the Anglo-Arab treaties framework. This unsettled traditional structures, transforming maritime tribal confederacies from participation to compliance and reconfiguring Gulf coastal security imperatives for treaty-signatory sheikhs from sea to desert.

Introduction

In the 1500s, Portugal established trading posts in Malabar India. Given the Gulf's position in the Indian Ocean trade network,[1] it was natural for Portugal to enter the *khalīj*.[2] The Dutch, English, and Ottomans sought to break Portugal's Indian Ocean trade monopoly.[3] By the 1600s, all extended operations to the Gulf. During these economic and political shifts, the seafaring oligopoly Arabs once enjoyed was lost permanently.[4] After the British, Persians, and ʿOmānis dislodged the

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[1] Fahad Bishara, 'The many voyages of *Fateh Al-Khayr*: Unfurling the Gulf in the age of oceanic history', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 52:3 (2020), pp. 397–412.

[2] Samuel B. Miles, *The Countries and Tribes of the Persian Gulf* (London: Harrison & Sons, 1919), pp. 137–200.

[3] Willem Floor, 'Dutch relations with the Persian Gulf', in Lawrence G. Potter (ed.), *The Persian Gulf in History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 235–59; Giancarlo Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[4] 'Persian Gulf Administration Report, 1884–1885', f. 33r, British Library/Qatar Digital Library (BL/QDL): IOR/R/15/1/709.

Portuguese and Dutch from the *khalīj*, the Qawāsim (sing. Qāsimī) Gulf Arabs attempted to regain control over commercial routes to India but instead met a new master: Britain.

From the mid-1700s, the *khalīj* was thrown into anarchy. Maritime tribes and rising confederacies (*ʾaḥlāf*, sing. *ḥlf*) were moving away from a suzerain system towards independence. Power reconfigurations heightened rivalries, and rivalries gave rise to predation at sea.[5] In the Arab interior, 1744 marked the beginning of Wahhābī expansion (also known as the 'Emirate of Diriyah'). Rising Wahhābis menaced the Ottoman, ʿOmānī, and Persian suzerains with influence on the Arab coast and threatened autonomy of coastal maritime sheikhs and their tribes on Arab shores.[6] On the Persian side, 1747 marked the beginning of turmoil in the heart of Persia. Nādir Shāh's death created a power vacuum rippling to the coast, enabling Arab maritime tribes on the Persian littoral to limit Persian influence and increase control over coastal territories.[7]

For the first two decades of the 1800s, tensions between the Qawāsim and the East India Company (EIC) intensified, with multiple claims of 'piracy' against British vessels.[8] While Britain viewed passage through the Gulf as its right, the Qawāsim and their allies considered it an infringement on their livelihood.[9] EIC animosity towards the Qawāsim was further aggravated when they offered British ships protection in exchange for tribute, a custom interpreted as impudent.[10] These macro- and meso-level shifts in power and authority among tribes, confederacies, and regional/extra-regional powers enabled Britain to enter the Gulf, freeze the political status quo through treaties, and rule for 150 years (1820–1971).

This paper challenges inaccuracies classifying the 19th- and 20th-century *khalīj* as a region of low-intensity indirect rule.[11] This logic assumes a *de jure* form of governance in which British policies had little or no effect on domestic politics. Events that unfolded over 150 years reflect imperial policy that turned direct over time. As one colonial administrator documented: 'Bahrain had fallen under the influence of the British government to such an extent that the shaikh was accustomed to conform to their advice in external affairs and looked to them for protection against attack from without.'[12] Contrary to classical English School claims of a shift of legitimacy from dynasticism to popular sovereignty in 19th-century international society, this article demonstrates that 19th-century British intervention to 'civilise' Gulf 'pirates' gave way to dynastic state formation.[13] The Gulf offers an example in which dynasticism was the preferred institution in 19th- and 20th-century British colonialism. While the claim of transition from dynasticism to popular sovereignty may fit experiences of European states, the story of the colonised non-European other differed.

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[5]Khaldoun Al-Naqeeb, *Society and State in the Gulf and Arab Peninsula* (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 36–46.

[6]See Ahmad Abu-Hakima, *History of Eastern Arabia, 1750–1800: The Rise and Development of Bahrain and Kuwait* (Beirut: Khayats, 1965); Charles E. Davies, *The Blood-Red Arab Flag: An Investigation into Qasimi Piracy, 1797–1820* (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1997); Sulṭān M. Al-Qāsimī, *The Myth of Arab Piracy in the Gulf* (London: Croom Helm, 1986); Ben J. Slot, *The Arabs of the Gulf, 1602–1784* (Leidschendam: Ben Slot, 1995).

[7]Willem Floor, *The Rise of the Gulf Arabs: The Politics of Trade on the Persian Littoral, 1747–1792* (Washington: Mage Publishers, 2007).

[8]Davies, *Blood-Red Arab Flag*, pp. 166–70.

[9]Philip MacDougall, *Islamic Seapower during the Age of the Fighting Sail* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2017), pp. 189–210.

[10]Francis Warden, 'Historical sketch of the Joasmee tribe of Arabs: From the year 1747 to the year 1819', in R. Hughes Thomas (ed.), *Selections from the Records of the Bombay Government: Historical and Other Information, Connected with the Province of Oman, Maskat, Bahrein, and Other Places in the Persian Gulf* (Bombay: Bombay Education Press, 1856), p. 306, BL/QDL: IOR/R/15/1/732.

[11]Donald Low, *Lion Rampant: Essays in the Study of British Imperialism* (London: Cass, 1973).

[12]John G. Lorimer, *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, ʿOmān, and Central Arabia*, Volume I Historical, Part IA, IB & II (Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1915), p. 269, BL/QDL: IOR/L/PS/20/C91/1 and IOR/L/PS/20/C91/2.

[13]Barry Buzan, *An Introduction to the English School of International Relations: The Societal Approach* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014), pp. 108–9.

Applying Isaac Reed's framework of *rector, actor*, and *other* to the Gulf,[14] I suggest British imposition of rules and norms via Anglo-Arab treaties forged three hierarchical levels: the highest authority was *rector* (Britain); residing as gatekeeper between Britain and his community was the *actor* (British-recognised sheikh); and finally, the subordinated and excluded *other* ('pirates'/unrecognised sheikhs). This produced new 'chains of power'[15] whereby 'rector makes actor into rector's agent in the world, and other is profaned and excluded from a given project'.[16] By *rector* co-opting *actor* in his 'civilising' anti-piracy project against the *other*, agency and power accrued through a rector–actor model.[17] While *rector* ruled over maritime tribes indirectly via *actor*, British political oversight and control was maintained through its Bushire political residency and network of native agents.[18] *Rector* had, 'the greatest coercive power … British protection [of *actor*] was least likely to be violated'.[19] This weakened the 'piratical' *other* by restricting agency to alter political outcomes, letting power consolidate within the rector–actor relationship.

This article proceeds in three sections. First, it examines limitations of the classical English School international society thesis in the Gulf case and re-examines the Gulf's position within the 'Middle East' as a region of English School analysis. Here, the paper adapts for International Relations (IR) and International Studies a useful turn proposed by historians to re-examine the Gulf through an Indian Ocean lens.[20]

Second, by situating 'piracy' into the broader 'standard of civilisation' debate on international society expansion, the paper shows incongruence in British usage of the term 'piracy' with local practices, and sheds light into empirical problems it posed for colonial administrators to distinguish between lawful force as 'war' and unlawful force as 'piracy'. Irrespective of these contradictions, suppressing any uses of force (justified or otherwise) by sheikhs and maritime tribes excluded from treaty-making created the necessary conditions for dynastic state formation.

Finally, to approximate the Gulf into a more 'civilised' interstate coexistence, the article identifies what I call mechanisms of 'pacification' deployed by Britain to restrict agency of 'unruly' maritime tribes to support political construction of sovereign indivisibility.[21] This will be done by examining implications of the Maritime Truce (1835), Restrictive Line (1836), and Perpetual Truce (1853) in controlling movement and regulating when and how force was deployed. By nesting the Restrictive Line (also called the 'Hennell Line') as a 19th-century institution of maritime boundary-making, the paper uncovers colonial foundations underpinning dynastic state formation on land. Scholarly fixation on land boundaries caused maritime implications of the Restrictive Line separating Gulf tribes to remain under-theorised.[22] For Gulf Arab maritime tribes, the sea *was* their metaphorical 'land'. The Restrictive Line became a central 'divide-and-rule' policy governing the *khalīj* by restricting movement, limiting cross-coastal tribal connections, and curbing regional powers from soliciting support from maritime tribes to attack territories on opposite shores. This enabled the British *rector* and sheikhly *actors* to assert control, limiting non-recognised sheikhs and their tribes'

[14]Isaac A. Reed, *Power in Modernity: Agency Relations and the Creative Destruction of the King's Two Bodies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020).

[15]Ibid., p. 72.

[16]Ibid., p. 51.

[17]Ibid., p. 27.

[18]James Onley, *The Arabian Frontier of the British Raj: Merchants, Rulers, and the British in the Nineteenth-Century Gulf* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[19]James Onley, 'The politics of protection in the Gulf: The Arab rulers and the British Resident in the nineteenth century', *New Arabian Studies*, 6 (2004), pp. 30–92 (p. 66).

[20]Bishara, 'Unfurling the Gulf', pp. 405–8.

[21]On principles of sovereign indivisibility, see Kathleen Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty: How Ideas of Feudalism and Secularization Govern the Politics of Time* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012); Jens Bartelson, *A Genealogy of Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Stéphane Beaulac, *The Power of Language in the Making of International Law: The Word Sovereignty in Bodin and Vattel and the Myth of Westphalia* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

[22]For example, John C. Wilkinson, *Arabia's Frontiers: The Story of Britain's Boundary Drawing in the Desert* (London: Tauris, 1991); Richard Schofield (ed.), *Territorial Foundations of the Gulf States* (London: UCL Press, 1994).

ability to affect political outcomes. This policy favoured accrual of domestic power under British-backed sheikhly *actors* at the expense of restricting agency of maritime sheikhs excluded from treaty-making. This gradually undermined non-signatory maritime sheikhs' roles as vital agents in the politics of protection of a coastal polity and unsettled traditional structures of authority within maritime tribal confederacies from participation to compliance, all in the name of order and anti-piracy security imperatives.

The English School and the missing Gulf: A sea before land

Born in Europe in the 15th to 18th centuries, the modern international system of states is a legacy of Europe's international society, which evolved to regulate interstate relations among members that are principal originators and subjects of its rules and norms.[23] At its core, the society was exclusive. It arose to address problems within Europe by regulating intra-European relations among a family of 'civilised' Christian nations. Expansion of Europe's international society to the rest of the world varied. Colonialism was the primary instrument of European expansion, its practices justified by a moral-ethical 'standard of civilisation'.[24] International lawyers in the 19th century deployed the 'standard' as a legal doctrine giving European powers the right to colonise, discriminate against, and control non-European societies unconditionally.[25] Edward Keene argues that 19th-century international relations were not merely a story of expansion of European ideals of equal independent states, nor one of acceptance of independent communities as equals within the 'family of nations', but rather a conscious process of 'stratification' between civilised nations of the West and the uncivilised rest in a socially bifurcated European-dominated international society.[26]

Hedley Bull and Adam Watson define the intellectual framework of international society as a:

> group of states (or, more generally, a group of independent political communities) which not merely form a system, in the sense that the behaviour of each is a necessary factor in the calculations of the others, but also have established by dialogue and consent common rules and institutions for the conduct of their relations, and recognize their common interest in maintaining these arrangements.[27]

Based on this definition, international society applies to sovereign states.[28] The modus operandi of interstate relations forming a society involved integration of member states through what Bull

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[23]Edward Keene, 'The standard of "civilisation", the expansion thesis and the 19th-century international social space', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 42:3 (2014), pp. 651–73.

[24]Barry Buzan and Richard Little, 'The historical expansion of international society', in Robert A. Denemark (ed.), *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of International Studies* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. 1–23; Barry Buzan, 'The "standard of civilisation" as an English School concept', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 42:3 (2014), pp. 576–94; Gerrit W. Gong, *The Standard of 'Civilization' in International Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984); Shogo Suzuki, *Civilization and Empire: China and Japan's Encounter with European International Society* (London: Routledge, 2009); Ayşe Zarakol, *After Defeat: How the East Learned to Live with the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Kalevi Holsti, *Taming the Sovereigns: Institutional Change in International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Edward Keene, *Beyond the Anarchical Society: Grotius, Colonialism and Order in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Fred Halliday, 'The Middle East and conceptions of "international society"', in Barry Buzan and Ana Gonzalez-Palez (eds), *International Society and the Middle East: English School Theory at the Regional Level* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 1–23; Barry Buzan, 'Culture and international society', *International Affairs*, 86:1 (2010), pp. 1–25.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Keene, 'Standard of "civilisation"', pp. 657–66; Edward Keene, 'A case study of the construction of international hierarchy: British treaty-making against the slave trade in the early nineteenth century', *International Organization*, 61:2 (2007), pp. 311–39.

[27]Hedley Bull and Adam Watson, 'Introduction', in Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (eds), *The Expansion of International Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), pp. 1–9.

[28]Robert Jackson, *The Global Covenant: Human Conduct in a World of States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 102.

described as common interests and values.[29] This goes beyond political realism, which the international system more accurately embodies.[30] While an international system can exist without international society, the latter posits rules and institutions provide a framework to minimise inter-state violence.[31] This international order assumes a 'society' has a single set of rules and norms applied to all members equally irrespective of variations of domestic political systems or cultures. International order is about commitment to universal 'coexistence' and 'cooperation' among states.[32]

In practice, however, European international legal order was conflictive. While 'toleration' was to promote 'coexistence' in inter-European relations, the principle did not apply to the uncivilised non-European rest.[33] As Shogo Suzuki observes, international society was closer to a space of European-dominated power-driven hierarchies, a phenomenon poorly addressed in classical English School studies.[34]

For non-Europeans polities, membership in a European-dominated international society came with 'social expectations'.[35] It required adherence to a 'standard of civilisation' to undergo what Yongjin Zhang calls a 'socialisation or contractual process', a systematic adoption of rules, norms, and identities of influential European members.[36] Coexistence and cooperation were not confined to the international level but included structural adjustments to reconfigure domestic political structures of authority of non-European polities to meet Western expectations of civility.[37]

In the three-level topology of cultural systems, the Middle East and the Gulf were neither savage nor civilised. They were considered 'barbarous', and at best 'semi-civilised'. Expansion, or as Fred Halliday puts it, 'subjugation', came through 'violence, treachery … expropriation and mass murder.'[38] 'Coercive diffusion' of European norms and rules, more often, led to military modernisation 'mania' taking an overriding importance in state-building,[39] as civility often translated to the expression of military power as quick fixes to close the state-building gap with Europe and gain 'civilised' status.

Although Halliday is right to situate the Gulf under a continental 'Middle East' rubric in a post-1918 world of regional international relations analysis,[40] it has two shortcomings when applied in retrospect. First, while his assessment of increasingly militarised 19th-century Middle Eastern metropoles is valid, the Gulf was not a metropole of continental powers. It comprised border-less settlements with no modern standing armies or centralised bureaucracies. Militarisation was neither an objective nor an affordable endeavour.

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[29]Hedley Bull, 'The *Twenty Years' Crisis* thirty years on', *International Journal*, 24:4 (1969), pp. 625–38 (p. 638).

[30]Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 9–19; for the distinction between *system* and *society*, see Tim Dunne and Richard Little, 'The international system–international society distinction', in Cornelia Navari and Daniel M. Green (eds), *Guide to the English School in International Studies* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), pp. 91–107.

[31]Bull, *Anarchical Society*, p. 13.

[32]Hedley Bull, 'The emergence of a universal international society', in Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (eds), *The Expansion of International Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), pp. 117–26 (p. 120).

[33]Keene, *Beyond the Anarchical Society*, p. 12.

[34]Suzuki, *Civilization and Empire*, pp. 11–33.

[35]Ibid., p. 5.

[36]Yongjin Zhang, *China in International Society since 1949: Alienation and Beyond* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998), p. 4.

[37]Gong, *Standard of 'Civilization'*; Hidemi Suganami, 'Japan's entry into international society', in Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (eds), *The Expansion of International Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), pp. 185–99; Shogo Suzuki, 'Japan's socialization into Janus-faced European international society', *European Journal of International Relations*, 11:1 (2005), pp. 137–64; Yongjin Zhang, 'China's entry into international society: Beyond the standard of "civilization"', *Review of International Studies*, 17:1 (1991), pp. 3–16; Suzuki, *Civilization and Empire*.

[38]Halliday, 'Middle East and international society', p. 18.

[39]Ibid., pp. 10–13; Stephanie Cronin, 'Importing modernity: European military missions to Qajar Iran', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 50:1 (2008), pp. 197–226 (p. 197).

[40]Halliday, 'Middle East and international society', pp. 13–17.

Second, examining the Gulf through a terrestrial Middle East lens overlooks a rich seafaring/maritime culture in which the wealth and livelihood of Gulf people was tied to the sea.[41] As Fahad Bishara cogently argues, since the modern era (post 1500), the Gulf was 'increasingly swept' into an Indian Ocean world,[42] one described by Andrew Phillips and Jason Sharman as a 'heterogeneous' international system of order under political diversity,[43] composed of overlapping autonomous local/Indigenous actors interacting with various regional and extra-regional powers: Persian/Safavid, Ottoman, Moghul, 'Omānī, Portuguese, Dutch, French, and British.[44] Like their Indian Ocean counterparts, conceptions of political power for *khalījī* (of the Gulf) coastal polities were 'heteronomous', 'divisible', and territorially 'non-exclusive'.[45] Rather than militarised per se, security had to be negotiated between and among various power hierarchies.

In the Gulf, James Onley calls this feature of sheikhs negotiating for security as 'protection-seeking' habits.[46] To illustrate, Sheikh Muḥammed-ibn-Khalīfah Āl-Khalīfah, ruler of Bahrain, wrote to Captain Samuel Hennell, Gulf Political Resident (1838–52),[47] in Bushire on 9 February 1849:

> I beg to inform you, I perceive that all the countries in this quarter are dependent upon one or other of the Sultans as for example the coast of Fars is dependent upon the Persians and likewise the people of Koweit and the Wahabee are dependent upon Turkey and I as I have a heart am dependent upon the Exalted British Government and subject to it and I am certain you will not consent to injury occurring to the dependencies of the Sirkar[48] [Britain].[49]

The above text not only reveals the political situation in Bahrain, Najd, and the Persian littoral but exposes how a tribal sheikh or ruler (*ḥākim*) would seek and negotiate security by placing himself under local, regional, or extra-regional powers.

Hitherto, relations of tribes/confederacies within the international system were based on a suzerain relationship with an imperial core.[50] In return for formal or tacit suzerain recognition,[51] tributary tribes or a polity's ruler would secure protection and retain autonomy. A suzerain state system, writes Adam Watson, is a 'shadowy overlordship' amounting to little suzerain control in practice.[52] International lawyer Emer de Vattel in the 18th century explained a tributary system is based on 'purchasing … an exemption from aggression' or 'securing … protection without ceasing to be sovereign'.[53] This Gulf order worked for four reasons. First, coastal *khalījī* society and its Arabian hinterlands were not wealthy, and the cost of directly controlling these territories outweighed the value colonists could extract. Second, the Gulf resided at the periphery of imperial

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[41]This contradicts notions of 'land being the source of wealth', which occupied Islamic powers such as the Ottoman, Persian, and Mughal empires. MacDougall, *Islamic Seapower*, pp. 224–8.

[42]Bishara, 'Unfurling the Gulf', p. 407.

[43]Andrew Phillips and Jason C. Sharman, *International Order in Diversity: War, Trade and Rule in the Indian Ocean* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

[44]Ibid.

[45]Ibid., pp. 19–20, 46, 180.

[46]Onley, 'The politics of protection', pp. 74–5.

[47]Assistant Political Resident (1826–38).

[48]A word of Urdu and Persian origins adopted by Britain denoting a 'chief'.

[49]Muḥammed-ibn-Khalīfah (Bahrain) to Hennell (Bushire), BL/QDL: IOR/R/15/1/113, 'Book No. 157: May 1847 to November 1849', ff. 74v–75r.

[50]Adam Watson, *The Evolution of International Society: A Comparative Historical Analysis* (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 13–18.

[51]Martin Wight, *Systems of States* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1977), pp. 23–4; Adam Watson, 'Systems of states', *Review of International Studies*, 16:2 (1990), pp. 99–109.

[52]Watson, *Evolution of International Society*, p. 15.

[53]Emer De Vattel, *The Law of Nations*, trans. Joseph Chitty (Philadelphia: T. & J. W. Johnson, 1849), p. 3, cf. Yongjin Zhang and Barry Buzan, 'The tributary system as international society in theory and practice', *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 5:1 (2012), pp. 3–36 (p. 19).

cores, and thus, Watson observes, the power of imperial metropoles weakened the further they moved from the centre.[54] Third, maritime Arabs were not land-based societies easily subdued by conventional means. They were a sea-based society that understood the sea, and without strong naval power or knowledge of the Gulf's hydrographic landscape, any power from the outside would face challenges. Finally, for regional and competing powers, subjugating maritime Arabs by force was costly and unattainable in the long run. It triggered anti-hegemonic behaviour, as divided tribes would set aside differences and unite against aggressors.[55]

Like their domestic tribal and confederate political relations, loyalties to regional powers were fluid and mutable. Hegemony, however, was not always imposed, and often it was 'consensual'.[56] It was consensual because, according to Ian Clark, hegemony is insufficient to explain how hierarchies 'under' or 'in' anarchy form in world politics.[57] Rather than accepting order as hegemonic de facto imposition, Clark links conditions of anarchy and hegemony through a prism of hierarchy as 'consensual' and 'relational' in social ordering between ruler and ruled. Authority being relational, according to David Lake, 'rests on a bargain between the ruler and the ruled [i.e. social contract] premised on the former's provision of a social order of value sufficient to offset the latter's loss of freedom'.[58] The bargain between a suzerain and tributary tribes rested on acknowledging nominal allegiance to a local or regional power/suzerain in return for a suzerain not interfering in domestic tribal matters. If the suzerain violates autonomy, it triggers anti-hegemonic behaviour. Tribes could resist the suzerain through force or place themselves under a rival to play one suzerain against the other.[59]

Lacking standing armies, negotiating for security, having non-exclusive conceptions of power, and playing one suzerain against the other were features of how Gulf polities interacted within an international system of diversity. This had a weakness. It predisposed them towards raids/incursions, territorial annexations, and interference in their internal affairs. Halliday describes this as an outcome of what he termed 'low saliency sovereignty' in Middle Eastern regional international relations.[60] This observation has merit when applied to the Gulf's past. Here, I would suggest, with hindsight, 'low saliency of sovereignty' led to what Phillips and Sharman describe as a 'clash' between British notions of sovereign 'exclusivity' versus 'heteronomy',[61] a clash that allowed Britain to overrun the pre-existing international order of diversity to impose 'standardization' in the Indian Ocean,[62] and in the *khalīj* by extension.

The dominant actors and primary units in the political calculations of imperial powers in the Gulf were not sovereign 'states', but tribes and maritime confederacies. However, within a classical English School international society framework, tribes and confederacies reside outside European international law and were not viewed as sovereign states to join the 'family of nations'.[63] The *khalīj* was reduced to a 'primitive' history of 'piratical' non-state tribal lawlessness, lacking European civilisational and territorial attributes of sovereignty, leaving the Gulf outside

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[54]Watson, *Evolution of International Society*, pp. 13–18, 120–32.

[55]See Lieutenant-Colonel William Colebrooke in parliamentary proceedings to the Board of Control – a board initiated by the London Parliament in 1784 to supervise EIC activities – on 27 June 1834, BL/QDL: IOR/L/PARL/2/84, 'Parliamentary Papers: Report from the Select Committee of Steam Navigation to India with Minutes of Evidence, 1834', pp. 132–9.

[56]Ian Clark, *Hegemony in International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 29.

[57]Ibid.

[58]David Lake, 'Escape from the state of nature: Authority and hierarchy in world politics', *International Security*, 32:1 (2007), pp. 47–79 (p. 54).

[59]Onley, 'The politics of protection'.

[60]Halliday, 'Middle East and international society', pp. 15–17.

[61]Phillips and Sharman, *Order in Diversity*, pp. 180–1.

[62]Ibid., pp. 166–201.

[63]Lassa Oppenheim, *International Law: A Treatise* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1912), p. 292; Antony Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty, and the Making of International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 59, 83–4; Thomas Lawrence, *The Principles of International Law* (Boston, MA: D. C. Heath & Co., 1911), p. 58; Bull, 'Universal international society', p. 118; Bull, *Anarchical Society*, pp. 57–62.

the classical English School international society expansion story.[64] Gulf maritime tribes, delegitimised as 'pirates', failed to meet standards of European state political communities whereby mutual interests were cemented, reciprocated, and institutionalised via procedures of international law and European-styled diplomatic institutions.

In the following section, I examine the British 'piracy' claim and argue that the Gulf maritime tribes Britain framed as 'barbarian' and 'uncivilised pirates' in 19th-century encounters became antagonist non-state agents mirroring Europe's earlier experiences with Muslim 'pirates' in the Mediterranean.[65] The Gulf's so-called Pirate Coast was not a one-to-one reflection of Muslim versus Christian 'piracy' in the Mediterranean, nor were Gulf tribes living by robbery at sea. Gulf maritime tribes remained the most important social agents to unpack how primary institutions of sovereignty, territoriality, and later nationalism emerge in the *khalījī* lexicon. By doing so, we understand how imposition of British laws at sea through treaty-making gave way to dynastic state formations on land to allow the emergence of the modern Gulf nation-state *not* as an outcome of the pre-eminence of 'royal' families over others as portrayed in scholarship,[66] but as a result of systematic British colonial policies aimed at narrowing sovereignty through suppression of 'piratical' maritime Arab tribes.

'Pirates': The antagonists in the expansion story

> It may not be useless to mention, that among the hundreds of all ranks who have had access to my tent, where many articles very valuable in their opinion, were within their reach, not a solitary instance of theft has been attempted … With regard to their public faith, you know well, that I have been unarmed with their chiefs, among hundreds of their armed followers, without conceiving myself in the slightest personal danger, or receiving any of those injuries and insults which it has sometimes been my misfortune to witness among individuals calling themselves civilised.[67]

Under Major-General William Keir Grant, three British warships and six EIC cruisers sailed to the Gulf.[68] Accompanying him were 3,000 soldiers, half European artillery and half Indian sepoy infantry.[69] The objective: destroy all 'pirate' nests. By 3 December 1819, the Qawāsim 'pirates' and their allies on both Gulf shores had been attacked.[70] In less than a week, approximately 184 dhows were destroyed, and many seized, with a staggeringly lopsided death toll.[71] On the British side, 5 were killed and 53 wounded.[72] On the 'pirate' front, the death toll was estimated at 400–1,000.[73] Britain's campaign succeeded, its hegemony was confirmed.

Central to the dialectic tension between 'civility' and 'barbarism' in the construction of British colonial Gulf histography was the concept of 'piracy'. As what Alejandro Colás calls 'the dialectical

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[64]This is due to how international order remains strictly confined to sovereign states, a conception of international order that remains narrow and limiting. See Christian Reus-Smit, 'Cultural diversity and international order', *International Organization*, 71:4 (2017), pp. 851–85.

[65]See, for example, Arnold Wilson, *The Persian Gulf: An Historical Sketch from the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928), p. 193.

[66]Nelida Fuccaro, 'Mapping the transnational community: Persians and the space of the city in Bahrain, *c.*1869–1973', in Madawi Al-Rasheed (ed.), *Transnational Connections and the Arab Gulf* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 39–58 (p. 41).

[67]Captain Thomas Thompson, Ras-Al-Khaima, February 1820. BL/QDL: IOR/F/4/651, 'Volume 651: Board's Collections, 1819–1820', ff. 110r–113v.

[68]Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, pp. 664–5.

[69]Ibid.

[70]Al-Qāsimī, *Myth of Arab Piracy*, pp. 224–5.

[71]Ibid., p. 225.

[72]Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, p. 667.

[73]Ibid.

twin to the "standard of civilisation",[74] 'piracy' as a category served British indirect rule to legitimate force under the pretext of free, open seas.[75] Eric Hobsbawm writes that groups 'only became outlaws ["pirates"], and punishable as such, when they are judged by a criterion of public law and order which is not theirs'.[76] For British colonial administrators, civility entailed 'pacification' of 'piratical' maritime tribes to effect 'a complete reformation in the piratical habits of the chiefs',[77] and to cultivate them into productive semi-civilised agents under the *Pax Britannica*. British descriptions of 'uncivilised' Gulf 'pirates', or as Bombay Governor Jonathan Duncan put it, 'enemies of all nations', do not fully explain who these *khalījī* maritime tribes were and how they operated within their regional system.[78] Paul Rich explains that Britain 'exaggerated' the 'piracy' problem in its 'sweeping historical generalisations'.[79]

'Piracy' as an expression of non-state seaborne violence is not unique to the Gulf but remains poorly contextualised. Patricia Risso notes that 'piracy' as '*qarṣanah*' was not part of 19th-century *khalījī* vocabulary before British intervention.[80] Words such as *nahb* and *salb* as 'plunder/pillage' and *fasād* as 'ruin/corruption' were used in Arabic-Gulf sources describing violence at sea.[81] Both described illegitimate activities falling outside legitimate war (*ḥarb*) – an institution not solely confined to sovereign states. While *nahb, salb*, and *fasād* carried negative connotations, *ḥarb* as a necessary evil did not. Irrespective of how just a *ḥarb* may be, more often it leads to conditions of *nahb, salb*, and *fasād*. We can expand on Risso by looking at a key source.

Although '*nahb*' as plunder was used in the Arabic version of the 1820 Maritime Treaty,[82] the term 'piracy' as '*qarṣanah*' was not mentioned. I claim that the British analogised the Arabic term '*ghārat*' (sing. *ghārah*), meaning raids, to describe 'piracy'.[83] While British use of the term '*nahb*' in the treaty was understood by the maritime tribes to denote an illegitimate action, '*ghārah*' was not, because *ghārah* had a legitimate purpose in war or for 'self-help', which cannot be reduced to banditry at sea as Britain understood it through its 'piracy' lens. Thus, *ghārah* as a concept was quite different from the 'piracy' label used to delegitimate all forms of force at sea by Gulf maritime tribes as non-state actors.

In Europe, expressions of seaborne violence were conceptually more developed and differentiated along three lines: piracy, privateering, and corsairing.[84] In the 1700s, while piracy was illegal, privateering was legal if authorised by a sovereign in time of war through 'letters of marque'.[85] Corsairing was a Mediterranean particularity fuelled by Muslim–Christian rivalry.[86] While in

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[74]Alejandro Colás, 'Barbary Coast in the expansion of international society: Piracy, privateering, and corsairing as primary institutions', *Review of International Studies*, 42:5 (2016), pp. 840–57 (p. 844).

[75]Guillemette Crouzet, *Inventing the Middle East: Britain and the Persian Gulf in the Age of Global Imperialism* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2022), pp. 27–65.

[76]Eric Hobsbawm, *Bandits* (London: Abacus, 2001), p. 8.

[77]See instructions to John Macleod (Bushire) from Bombay (12 November 1822), BL/QDL: IOR/R/15/1/28, 'Book No. 28: November 1822 to November 1823', ff. 1r–9v.

[78]Duncan (Bombay) to Saʿūd-ibn-ʿAbdālʿaziz (Diriyah) (9 August 1810), in 'Historical Memorandum on the Relations of the Wahabi Amirs and Ibn Saud with Eastern Arabia and the British Government, 1800–1934', p. 5, BL/QDL: IOR/R/15/1/745.

[79]Paul J. Rich, *Creating the Arabian Gulf: The British Raj and the Invasions of the Gulf* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009), p. 69.

[80]Patricia Risso, 'Cross-cultural perceptions of piracy: Maritime violence in the western Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf region during a long eighteenth century', *Journal of World History*, 12:2 (2001), pp. 293–319.

[81]Ibid.

[82]BL/QDL: IOR/L/PS/10/606, 'Treaties and Engagements between the British Government and the Chiefs of the Arabian Coast of the Persian Gulf', ff. 131r–132v.

[83]Ibid., f. 146v; *Ghārah* is often used interchangeably with the Arabic term *gazwah*. The former is smaller in scale and used as a tactical attack, hence 'raid'; the latter is closer in meaning to 'invasion/incursion'. For a useful discussion on *gazwah* and sea raids, see MacDougall, *Islamic Seapower*, pp. 120–6, 187–210.

[84]'*Qarṣanah*' is derived from the term '*corsairing*'. Pirate as '*qorṣān*' comes from the Italian word *corsaro*. Risso, 'Cross-cultural perceptions of piracy', p. 302.

[85]Colás, 'Barbary Coast', p. 842.

[86]Ibid.

theory these were separate expressions of seaborne violence, in practice distinctions were blurred.[87] Although 'piracy' resembled unlawful acts of '*nahb/salb*', it remains conceptually inapplicable to the concept of '*ghārah*'. Accounts of piracy, privateering, and corsairing in relation to European state-building remain 'under-theorised' and 'under-contextualised' in IR, Bryan Mabee argues.[88] Economic plunder and piracy were practices European states (including the Ottomans) tolerated and often endorsed in the 1600s and 1700s, but with the rise of state navies, the dependence of states on pirates to obstruct enemy shipping diminished.[89] Although private violence was crucial in European mercantilist state-building, bands of 'pirates', like tribes, as socio-political constructs remain absent as social agents in accounts by English School exponents, as they neither meet prescribed attributes of sovereignty under international law[90] nor fit into narrow state-centric international society.[91]

Colás, however, addresses the blind spot in the international society expansion thesis, arguing convincingly that pirates, privateers, and corsairs remained important social agents to expand understandings of non-state actors' role in the evolution of international law.[92] By leveraging Barry Buzan's reinterpretation of the classical account of the expansion of international society, Colás expands on Buzan's hierarchical taxonomy of 'master' and 'derivative' primary institutions of international society.[93] Both shape behaviours and expectations of sovereign states. 'Master' primary institutions are durable, fundamental, and constitutive, including sovereignty, territoriality, diplomacy, balance of power, trade, and nationalism, while 'derivative' primary institutions are procedural and regulatory, including international law, state boundaries, arbitration, war, and self-determination.[94] The former defines legitimate/illegitimate activities in international society, and the latter encompasses activities that transform customs into formal legal frameworks.[95] By nesting piracy, privateering, and corsairing as 'derivative' institutions antagonistic to 'master' institutions of international society, Colás not only challenges the hegemony of state-centric understandings of international relations but also argues that, in the process of eliminating 'piracy' in the late 19th century, it crystallised state-centric principles of international law, territoriality, and sovereignty in the expansion of European-dominated international society.[96]

While Colás focuses on the 16th-century Barbary Coast to connect the evolution of international law and 'piracy' as primary institutions of international society, the Gulf case shows how European legal practices against 'pirates' moved along the lines of imperial spaces and were applied to colonised peripheries at the height of a 19th-century European age of empire. This appears in the Bounty Legislation of 1825, made retroactively applicable to any British engagement at sea after 1 January 1820. Alfred Rubin notes British encounters with 'pirates' led to revival of the Parliament Act of 1803, which rewarded navy men financially when enemy privateer vessels were destroyed. In its newer 1825 rendition, it incorporated the terms 'piracy/pirates' and increased the financial bounty:

> There shall be paid by the Treasurer of His Majesty's Navy … unto the Officers, Seamen, Marines, Soldiers and others, who shall have been actually on board any of His Majesty's

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[87]Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 104–61.

[88]Bryan Mabee, 'Pirates, privateers and the political economy of private violence', *Global Change, Peace, and Security*, 21:2 (2009), pp. 139–52 (p. 139).

[89]Ibid., pp. 139–52.

[90]Anghie, *Making of International Law*, p. 57; Lawrence, *Principles of International Law*, p. 57.

[91]Alejandro Colás, *International Civil Society: Social Movements in World Politics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002).

[92]Colás, 'Barbary Coast', p. 844.

[93]Ibid., pp. 842–3; Barry Buzan, *From International to World Society? English School Theory and the Social Structure of Globalisation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 161–204.

[94]Ibid., pp. 176, 184.

[95]Ibid., p. 166.

[96]Colás, 'Barbary Coast', p. 844.

Ships or Vessels of War, or hired armed Ships, at the actual taking, sinking, burning or otherwise destroying of any Ship, Vessel or Boat, manned by Pirates or Persons engaged in Acts of Piracy … the Sum of Twenty Pounds for each and every such piratical Person, either taken and secured or killed during the Attack on such piratical Vessel, and the Sum of Five Pounds for each and every other Man of the Crew not taken or killed who shall have been alive on board such Pirate Vessel at the beginning of the Attack thereof.[97]

For British agents, labelling any form of non-state seaborne violence 'piratical' made financial sense. Hence, reading the Gulf through the barbarian/civilised binary denies human agency in a complex Gulf story of entangled interests. British and *khalījī* agents alike engaged with 'piracy' in different ways depending on where they were situated in Britain's expansion story.

For Britain, there was financial, commercial, and political incentive to call all sea predations 'piracy'. It broadened the justifiability for EIC agents to intervene on behalf of Britain along the barbarism/civilisation dialectic to exert hegemony under the pretext of open seas. For British-recognised sheikhs, applying the 'piracy' label against sheikhs/tribes viewed as a threat from within their polities allowed consolidation of domestic power. For sheikhs and their tribes excluded from treaties, British expansion weakened them.

While European international piracy law shaped behaviours of the colonised, they clashed with pre-existing customary rules and norms in the *khalīj*. Unlike European experiences on the Barbary Coast, Britain entered the Gulf when European anti-piracy rules were mature. 'Piracy' was no longer tolerated under international law, and 'pirates' were antithetical to Western 'civility' standards. Yet reducing Gulf maritime tribes to mere lawless 'pirates' dehumanises their political struggle for tribal autonomy. If expansion of international society rests on the teleological portrayal of 'civility' and human progress through principles of diversity, pluralism, and toleration in classical English School thinking, experiences of non-European polities differed. In the Gulf, Britain was less interested in understanding nuances of private maritime violence or distinguishing between illegitimate uses of force such as '*nahb*' versus legitimate force under '*ghārah*'. All forms of force at sea by non-state actors became unlawful.

In summary, suppressing Gulf 'piracy' under the pretext of progress and 'civilisation' produced a binary legacy in the evolution of sheikhly sovereignty along two axes: some 'pirates' were accepted by treaty as lawful sheikhs, while other sheikhs remained as unlawful 'pirates'. This binary in the construction of the political narrowed sovereignty to create the beginnings of state-to-state relations. While Gulf states' 20th-century entry into the international system as dynastic monarchies is portrayed as 'fitting' simply because it solves the problem of primordial contestations to allow the modern state to structurally endure,[98] it ignores history and marginalises political contests that came with British intervention. Despite the Westphalian myth,[99] the Euro-centric notions of sovereign *indivisibility* is a colonial/imperial legacy that imposes itself on non-European polities. The Gulf case exposes how colonialism as an overlooked primary institution in the expansion story reinforced political inequality to create dynasticism and absolute rule to allow continuity in colonial statecraft. As Barry Buzan and Richard Little explain: 'More certainly needs to be said about the colonized parts of the world, which tend to drop out of the [expansion] story until decolonization brings everyone inside international society after 1945.'[100] The Gulf is no exception.

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[97]Cf. Alfred P. Rubin, *The Law of Piracy* (Irvington-on-Hudson, NY: Transnational Publishers, 1998), p. 205.

[98]Michael C. Hudson, *Arab Politics: The Search for Legitimacy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977); Lisa Anderson, 'Absolutism and the resilience of monarchy in the Middle East', *Political Science Quarterly*, 106:1 (1991), pp. 1–15; Lisa Anderson, 'Dynasts and nationalists: Why monarchies survive', in Joseph Kostiner (ed.), *Middle East Monarchies: The Challenge of Modernity* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), pp. 53–69; John Gerring, Tore Wig, Wouter Veenendaal, et al., 'Why monarchy? The rise and demise of a regime type', *Comparative Political Studies*, 54:3–4 (2021), pp. 585–622.

[99]Andreas Osiander, 'Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Westphalian myth', *International Organization*, 55:2 (2001), pp. 251–87.

[100]Buzan and Little, 'Historical expansion of international society', p. 16.

Sovereignty that was traditionally overlapping, diffuse, and shared among sheikhs/tribes had to be territorialised, centralised, and lodged into a single sovereign representative as a prerequisite to entry into the international system. I next identify mechanisms of 'pacification' Britain deployed to 'civilise' Gulf polities by restricting agency of its 'unruly' maritime tribes and to support the political construction of sovereign indivisibility.

Suspending divisibility: Making lawful sheikhs and unlawful 'pirates'

In a landscape of multiple maritime sheikhs who considered themselves independent actors, ruling indirectly required suspending the ontology of divisible authority to anchor the indivisible British-backed sheikh. Divisibility treats authority as relative and diffused among various maritime sheikhs/tribes within a maritime confederacy. Indivisibility treats domestic authority as absolute, undivided, and contained within one sovereign representative. Traditionally, while maritime sheikhs exercised authority among tribes, they remained tenuously controlled by a ruler under a maritime confederacy. Philip Khoury and Joseph Kostiner note: 'Bonds between the chief and society are not necessarily institutionalized; they tend more often to be based on personal or ad hoc arrangements [to ensure] a considerable degree of political manoeuvrability and cultural and economic autonomy.'[101] Given the non-institutionalised bond between authority and society under a transcendent modern state framework, exit remained the guiding strategy enabling maritime sheikhs and their tribes to exercise agency, contest authority, and ensure autonomy.[102] Applying Albert Hirschman's loyalty, voice, and exit framework to the *khalīj*,[103] Jill Crystal illustrates how groups in a collective would either: (1) show *loyalty*; (2) *voice* discontent; or (3) *exit* by moving to another coastal area.[104] *Exit* as a form of protest in the pre-oil, pre-statehood *khalīj* was 'a powerful check on the rulers'.[105] Hence, *exit* as a way of life made the socio-political boundaries of the *khalīj* a society of people and ports, 'elusive, porous and mobile'.[106]

If scholars argue that ruling indirectly exerted 'little or no effect on local state governments'[107] and in turn left relations between ruler and ruled 'unaffected',[108] then how was indirect rule possible in a region of porous societies and diffuse authorities? How did Britain individuate authority in a trans-territorial space of overlapping sheikhs, each claiming autonomy/independence within a multi-tribal confederacy? Echoing Thomas Hobbes,[109] Hans Morgenthau explains that 'sovereignty over the same territory *cannot* reside simultaneously in two different authorities, that is, sovereignty is indivisible' (emphasis added).[110] Here, the 1820 Maritime Treaty became the starting point in narrowing sovereignty by inscribing it in a group of British-recognised sheikhs as enforcers of domestic authority and heirs of unity in a fragmented political landscape.

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[101]Philip S. Khoury and Joseph Kostiner (eds), *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 8.

[102]Jill Crystal, *Oil and Politics in the Gulf: Rulers and Merchants in Kuwait and Qatar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 4.

[103]Albert O. Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970).

[104]Crystal, *Oil and Politics in the Gulf*, p. 4.

[105]Ibid.

[106]Timothy Mitchell, 'The limits of the state: Beyond statist approaches and their critics', *American Political Science Review*, 85:1 (1991), pp. 77–96 (p. 78).

[107]Marion Boulby, 'Extra-regional interests, authoritarian elites, and dependent state formation in the Arab world', in Kenneth Christie and Mohammad Masad (eds), *State Formation and Identity in the Middle East and North Africa* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 37–58 (p. 43).

[108]Uzi Rabi, 'Britain's "special position" in the Gulf: Its origins, dynamics and legacy', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 42:3 (2006), pp. 351–64 (p. 354).

[109]Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

[110]Hans Morgenthau, 'The problem of sovereignty reconsidered', *Columbia Law Review*, 48:3 (1948), pp. 341–65 (p. 350).

British recognition of sheikhs via a Maritime Treaty, however, failed in addressing four issues: (1) ending maritime disturbances between rivals at pearl banks; (2) controlling *exit* as a form of tribal dissent; (3) limiting shifts in political alliances by closing the revolving doors of confederate tribal memberships; and (4) defining territorial boundaries of each signatory sheikh. We address the first three issues here,[111] in four ways.

First, Britain introduced the 1835 Maritime Truce to address inadequacies of the Maritime Treaty.[112] Prohibition of 'piracy' under the Maritime Treaty failed, as did barring ongoing hostilities between contending maritime sheikhs.[113] While such hostilities were rendered by colonial administrators a 'natural' state of 'petty' incivility needing civil inoculation,[114] such injudicious exaggerations overshadow conditions Britain itself created. Britain destroyed coastal fortifications and confiscated war vessels in 1819/20, unsettling the balance of power among coastal sheikhs. This intensified political rivalries between tribes and confederacies on the coastal stretch from Abu-Dhabi to Ras-Al-Khaima, involving different allied sheikhs/tribes on opposite shores. With growing episodes of skirmishes ('piracy'), access to pearling fisheries and movement of commercial vessels across the Gulf were disturbed.[115]

With British sheikhly *actors* unable to quell and contain skirmishes or ensure protection to neutrals at sea,[116] Britain found earlier strict non-interference untenable.[117] Terms under Article IV of the Maritime Treaty bound Britain to 'prevent hostilities at sea, whatever their nature, among the pacificated Arabs'.[118] John Lorimer explained that ensuring dhows carry papers and port clearances under Article V, 'had long been abandoned as impracticable … ambiguous … unworkable'.[119] Dependence of tribes on pearling was more important than securing port clearances to India. Pearling was the main source of sustenance[120] and thus a strategic arena for asserting British influence.[121] Even if pearling dhows were registered, it did not guarantee tribes would not *exit* to friendlier ports. Complicating matters further, while Britain had superior naval power, its cruisers were not designed to hunt down dhows that skilfully evaded British ships by retreating towards hazardous, difficult-to-navigate waters, leaving pearl banks, the most important space of confrontations, unregulated.

To address these shortcomings, Captain Hennell introduced a Maritime Truce signed by British *actors* in Sharjah/Ras-Al-Khaima, Abu-Dhabi, Dubai, and Ajman – interestingly, these were the emirates that had to give up their war vessels and become pacified after 1820.[122] By 1836, Umm-Al-Quwain fell under the new terms, and thus, Ajman, Umm-Al-Quwain, and to a lesser extent Dubai ceased to be dependencies of local powers, with Britain their unofficial sheikh at sea. The truce

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[111]The fourth is outside the scope of this study.

[112]Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, pp. 210–11.

[113]Hennell (Basidu) to William Macnaghten (Bombay) (21 May 1835), BL/QDL: IOR/F/4/1596, 'Volume 1596: Board's Collections, 1834–1836', ff. 228v–234r.

[114]Lewis Pelly (Bushire) to C. Gonne (Bombay) (19 June 1869), in Jerome A. Saldanha (ed.), *Précis on Commerce and Communication in the Persian Gulf, 1801–1905* (Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1906), p. 33, BL/QDL: IOR/L/PS/20/C248A.

[115]See multiple cases in 'Board's Collections', BL/QDL: IOR/F/4/1596.

[116]The weakness of sheikhs to protect their dependants at sea was evident in Sharjah merchants' willingness to pay twenty Maria Theresa Dollars (MTD) per annum per pearling boat to the British government for protection. See Hennell (Basidu) to Bombay (26 May 1835), BL/QDL: IOR/F/4/1596, ff. 261r–263r.

[117]Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, pp. 691–3.

[118]Ibid., p. 694.

[119]Ibid.; Carrying a 'safe-conduct pass' (*cartaz*) was implemented earlier by the Portuguese. See MacDougall, *Islamic Seapower*, p. 192.

[120]Hennell (Basidu) to Macnaghten (Bombay) (21 May 1835), BL/QDL: IOR/F/4/1596, ff. 228v–234r.

[121]Hennell (Basidu) to Bombay (26 May 1835), BL/QDL: IOR/F/4/1596, ff. 261r–263r; Guillemette Crouzet, 'The British Empire in India, the Gulf pearl and the making of the Middle East', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 55:6 (2019), pp. 864–78; Onley, 'Politics of protection', pp. 72–4.

[122]Terms of the Maritime Truce by Hennell (21 May 1835), BL/QDL: IOR/F/4/1596, 'Board's Collections', ff. 263v–264v.

impressed three principles. First, it forbade signatory sheikhs from maritime warfare during May-to-October pearling seasons.[123] To change behaviour and align economic maritime participants' economic interests, Britain exercised power with actual or threatened deprivation of maritime tribes from access to pearl banks. This ensured pearl banks would not be a theatre of rivalries, leaving pearling operations unaffected. Second, it placed limits on signatory sheikhs and their subjects from sailing war vessels, 'on the track of the trade of this Gulf, which lies between the Persian Coast and the islands of Surdy [Sirri] and Bomosa [Abu-Musa]'.[124] Finally, it formalised a rule-governed system for when force would be used. Here, use of force by signatory sheikhs at sea was not denied but regulated, scrutinised, and managed before commencement of hostilities after the end of the pearling season.[125] Signatory sheikhs had to lodge formal requests of intent to declare war with the Gulf Resident in Bushire. While the truce broadened Britain's role, turning it into a tribal protector *during* pearling season, it did not extend the role to land. Hostilities on land were not criminalised, nor were they governed by the same anti-piracy rules,[126] effectively favouring sheikhs with stronger links over land, while gradually orienting signatory sheikhs towards the desert for domestic security. Any breach of Maritime Truce terms was criminalised as 'piracy'. This new system, or 'experiment' as Onley puts it,[127] controlled rulers and subjects and enabled Britain to *manage* political outcomes.

Second, the British Government of Bombay sanctioned Hennell's Restrictive Line in 1836 (Figure 1).[128] It followed the geographic line introduced in the 1835 Maritime Truce, but was subsequently extended to insulate Qatar and Bahrain by blocking maritime tribes or regional and extra-regional powers from using Persian shores and islands as bases of operation against Bahrain. The line was prolonged from Halul Island, north of Ras-Rakan, the northernmost tip of the Qatar peninsula, to Ras-Al-Zour near the coast of Kuwait.[129]

The objective was not to formalise sovereign territorial claims over coastal territories and islands,[130] as the sovereign territoriality embedded in the European state system was still not formed in the Gulf. The objective of the maritime line was to set 'war limits'.[131] The goal was to curb coordination of tribes in terms of movement of war vessels between the Persian and Arab coasts and put an end to tribal coastal movements.

[123]Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, p. 211.

[124]Hennell (Basidu) to Macnaghten (Bombay) (21 May 1835), BL/QDL: IOR/F/4/1596, ff. 228v–234r; Sirri and Abu-Musa Island at the Strait of Hormuz approximately halfway between the Persian and Arab coasts.

[125]Crouzet, *Inventing the Middle East*, p. 85.

[126]British Gulf Residents dispatched letters to non-signatory maritime sheikhs barring them from employing force at sea and to ensure any uses of force remain confined to land. This was evident in the case of the Āl-Bū-Sumaiṭ tribe that relocated from Bahrain to Qais Island and Lengah on the Persian coast. In the letter sent to ʾAḥmed-ibn-ʿAbdāllah, sheikh of the Āl-Bū-Sumaiṭ, it stated: 'There is no secret that your dear letter has reached us, and we have knowledge of its content … whatever you want to do through land we shall not interfere with, but we warn you from destabilising the security/peace [at sea] in the Gulf of Persia' (my translation). See letter to ʾAḥmed-ibn-ʿAbdāllah (16 July 1857), BL/QDL: IOR/R/15/1/180, 'Native Letters Outward', f. 102r.

[127]Onley, 'Politics of protection', p. 72.

[128]While the Restrictive Line is attributed to Hennell, the concept pre-dated 1836. Hennell adopted the line from John Malcolm's tenure as Governor of Bombay (1827–30) to create a neutral vessel sailing zone. The plan did not materialise under Malcolm due to the governments' strict non-interference stance, which became unfeasible to British interests in the Gulf. BL/QDL: IOR/F/4/1596, 'Board's Collections', ff. 228v–234r.

[129]Hennell (Bushire) to John Willoughby (Bombay) (15 May 1838), BL/QDL: IOR/R/15/1/76, 'Letter Outward 1837', ff. 37r–39r.

[130]Charles L. O. Buderi and Luciana T. Ricart, *The Iran–UAE Gulf Islands Dispute: A Journey through International Law, History and Politics* (Boston: Brill, 2018), pp. 406–8.

[131]H. F. Disbrow, 'Historical sketch of the Uttoobee tribe of Arabs; (Bahrein;) From the year 1844 to the close of the year 1853', in R. Hughes Thomas (ed.), *Selections from the Records of the Bombay Government: Historical and Other Information, Connected with the Province of Oman, Maskat, Bahrein, and Other Places in the Persian Gulf* (Bombay: Bombay Education Press, 1856), p. 306, BL/QDL: IOR/R/15/1/732, p. 409.

Figure 1. The 1836 Restrictive Line.[a]
[a]Based upon a similar map from John Kelly, *Britain and the Persian Gulf, 1795–1880* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), pp. 866–7; Google Maps, n.d.: available at: {https://www.google.com/maps}.

As maritime tribes continued to view both Gulf shores as part and parcel of one coastal territorial continuum, the Restrictive Line intended to break cross-tribal connections while subjecting tribes on the Persian littoral to Persian laws. Gradually, this redefined Gulf socio-political self-conception around territoriality and nativism. This policy is evident in a Gulf Resident's letter to Sheikh Sulṭān-ibn-Ṣaqr Al-Qāsimī in Sharjah requesting that he not aid his relatives and tribal allies on the Persian coast:

> Inhabitants of Tawanah, Charrack and Lingeh are all subjects of Persia, and if they conceive that they are aggrieved by their neighbours, it is proper that they should refer their cases to their own Government for redress, as long as they should reside in the Persian territory, they must be subject to the laws of that country, nor can their friends on the Arabian side of the Gulf be permitted in any way to interfere in their intestine [internecine?] disputes … Sheikh Abdullah-bin-Roshid of Amulguvin wished to take troops to Charrack to assist the Chief of that place, he was not permitted to do so.[132]

While in 1820 the Gulf remained whole, after 1836, use of force to change political outcomes from one side of the Gulf to the other turned into a breach of the Restrictive Line, holding tribes liable for 'piracy'. The Restrictive Line partitioned the Gulf into antagonistic zones while subjecting people

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[132]Letter to Sulṭān-ibn-Ṣaqr (2 March 1837), in Jerome A. Saldanha (ed.), *Précis of Correspondence Regarding the Affairs of the Persian Gulf, 1801–1853* (Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1906), p. 269, BL/QDL: IOR/L/PS/20/C248C.

residing on opposite shores to British or Persian imperial power. With time, this imaginary line took an *un*imaginary twist to form the epistemological basis of a new ethnoracial interpretation of territorial sovereignty, birthing 20th-century 'ethnonational' identities.[133]

Compared to the relative ease of movement prior to 1836, the Restrictive Line deprived rebellious tribes from freely exiting or employing force against British *actors*.[134] To guarantee tribal accountability, non-signatory Arab coastal sheikhs had to join a British sheikhly *actor*. A new term began appearing in letters, describing exiting tribes as 'fugitives' (*hārbīyn*, sing. *hārib*). They were considered criminals fleeing custody of a British sheikhly signatory, altering traditional sociopolitical relations by making non-signatory maritime sheikhs subordinate to the *actor*.[135] This left 'fugitive' sheikhs/tribes three options: (1) return and submit as 'adherents' to their former British signatory sheikh; (2) join another British-backed *actor*; or (3) relocate to Persian shores. Any uses of force by the 'fugitives' breaching the Maritime Truce and Restrictive Line against a British-backed *actor* was declared 'piracy'.

Third, following the successes of the Maritime Truce, it was renewed repeatedly in the years 1839–42, and its duration extended from 6 to 8 to 12 months.[136] After a decade-long truce signed in 1843, a Perpetual Truce went into force on 4 May 1853.[137] This birthed the Trucial System, in which signatory sheikhs and their subjects could not employ force, abjuring maritime sovereignty in favour of Britain, making Britain 'protector, mediator, arbiter, and guarantor of settlements [for *khalīj* agents]'.[138] This made Britain the 'grand sheikh' and suzerain of the *khalīj* waters: protector and arbiter of disputes not only for signatories, but for all Gulf peoples, including Arab coastal principalities not party to the truce.

By the 1860s, Britain's Gulf hegemony was complete, captured in a complaint by an aggrieved *khalījī* agent to the British Gulf Resident. He stated: 'We know that the Sirkar [Britain] has command of the sea, not the Ahl-Boo Somait.'[139] Attempting to adhere to British rules, he noted: 'we can act just as the Boo Soomait have done, *but it is not the part of any but the Sirkar [Britain] to afford us our rights*' (emphasis added).[140] Gulf waters were no longer a space governed by tribal norms or traditional maritime confederacies for collective security but were subject to the British *rector*'s laws and norms of a European-dominated international society.

The Maritime Truce, Restrictive Line, and Perpetual Truce reflect overt mechanisms of 'pacification' that prescribed a rule-governed framework for 'civilised' coexistence between the British *rector*, sheikhly *actors*, and excluded *others*. More specifically, they expressed in Andrew Linklater's words 'outrage at specific forms of violence',[141] namely 'piracy'. Conversely, to British colonial administrators, this was not 'vengeance' per se, but an act of altruism by a 'civilized power' to

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[133]Application of the Restrictive Line by academics such as Pirouz Mojtahed-Zadeh to affirm state territorial claims over contested islands between the UAE and Iran is a case in point. Pirouz Mojtahed-Zadeh, *Security and Territoriality in the Persian Gulf* (Richmond: Curzon, 1998), cf. Buderi and Ricart, *Gulf Islands Dispute*, pp. 802–60.

[134]Arnold B. Kemball, 'Historical sketch of the Uttoobee tribe of Arabs; (Bahrein;) From 1832 to August 1844', in R. Hughes Thomas (ed.), *Selections from the Records of the Bombay Government: Historical and Other Information, Connected with the Province of Oman, Maskat, Bahrein, and Other Places in the Persian Gulf* (Bombay: Bombay Education Press, 1856), p. 390.

[135]Interestingly, British archival sources use both 'fugitive subjects' and 'fugitive chiefs'. While employing the term 'fugitive subjects' establishes a hierarchical relation between ruler and ruled, 'fugitive chiefs' on the other hand is an oxymoronic contradiction in terms. A chief cannot be a 'fugitive' of another chief, exposing tensions in British framing in the transition from sheikhly divisibility to indivisibility in the Gulf socio-political landscape. See BL/QDL: IOR/F/4/1767/72468 'Application from the Chief of Bahrein for permission to adopt coercive measures against certain of his subjects who have fled to Aboothabee'.

[136]Hennell (Lingah) to Willoughby (Bombay) (14 April 1838), BL/QDL: IOR/R/15/1/76, 'Letter Outward', ff. 14r–18v.

[137]BL/QDL: IOR/L/PS/10/606, 'Treaties and Engagements', ff. 134r–134v.

[138]Onley, 'Politics of protection', p. 72.

[139]Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, p. 262.

[140]Ibid.

[141]Andrew Linklater, 'The "standard of civilisation" in world politics', *Human Figurations*, 5:2 (2016), available at: {http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.11217607.0005.205}.

bring 'peace and progress'.[142] The fourth layer was less overt. For Britain, this was a conscious effort to semantically narrow the pre-political structure of a traditional confederacy of various agents by individuating a British sheikhly *actor* 'as the sole locus of political authority'.[143] To rule indirectly, a British-backed *actor* had to reside above his polity in a 'ruling' class, radically overturning rulership from a concern of all sheikhly-tribal factions to an exclusionary pursuit of 'legitimate' political centralisation. This arises not from customary rules and tribal traditions but from indirect rule seeking functional simplicity. I claim that narrowing authority within a confederacy by lodging it in a British *actor* enabled British administrators to address political disorder. This allowed the coloniser to simplify socio-political relations between a sheikhly signatory and his community, 'in terms of conflict and harmony'.[144] Following Jens Bartelson's logic on domestic authority, conflict appears through 'subjugation', while harmony is realised through 'consent of other agents'.[145] While the effects of narrowing the meaning of a confederacy were negligible in the short term, over the long term it formed the foundations of dynastic royal authority. It transformed traditional shared authority within a confederacy from one based on participation in rulership (*ḥūkm*) to one based on compliance through dynastic ownership (*mūlk*).

Britain did not remove the concept of confederacies altogether. It reconfigured it. Britain took the role of protector to signatory sheikhs by becoming 'head of the [new] naval confederacy' in the Gulf,[146] comprising signatory *actors* working with British *rector* to suppress 'piracy'.[147] In contrast to traditional maritime confederacies with fluid membership, the British confederacy was a closed club of *rector* and signatory *actors*. This formed the ideological basis for princely dynasticism and created conditions for the invention of the modern Gulf territorial state. Bartelson notes that 'state identity appears to be conditioned by the presence of authority within a society from which it is thereby rendered distinct' (emphasis in original).[148] To create this authority, tribes and families were removed from the political realm of a traditional confederacy, their relevance confined to economic spheres (pearling/seafaring). Rulership (*ḥūkm*) was no longer a concern of all members under traditional arbitration, nor was the ruler (*ḥākim*) subject to protection and support from traditional maritime allies within a confederacy. *Ḥūkm* was now confined and negotiated between the British *rector* and its sheikhly *actor* at the expense of excluded *others* (non-signatory/unrecognised sheikhs).

The narrowing of confederacies is evident in the evolution of who was ʿUtbī (pl. ʿUtūb) in British eyes. While earlier British reports framed the ʿUtūb tribal confederacy in Bahrain as one collective body pitted against the Bahrani Shiʿa as aboriginal inhabitants,[149] these binaries were further differentiated on ethnic and political grounds. Describing the people of Bahrain in 1839, Hennell called the Shiʿa 'old Persian settlers', rendering the Shiʿa ethnically Persian. Yet not all Bahrain Shiʿa were Persian; many were Arabs or both. Still, when pitting the Shiʿa against the ʿUtūb, Hennell wrote: 'This class [Shiʿa] perhaps consists of about fifteen thousand individuals, while the Arab inhabitants, calling themselves Uttoobees, may be reckoned at an equal number, although those really

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[142]Pelly (Bushire) to Bombay (1869), in Jerome A. Saldanha (ed.), *Précis of Correspondence Regarding the Affairs of the Persian Gulf, 1801–1853* (Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1906), p. 33, BL/QDL: IOR/L/PS/20/C248A.

[143]Jens Bartelson, *The Critique of the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 13.

[144]Ibid.

[145]Ibid.

[146]Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, p. 694.

[147]Ibid.

[148]Bartelson, *Critique of the State*, p. 13.

[149]Robert Taylor, 'Extracts from brief notes containing historical and other information connected with the Province of Oman; Muskat; the Islands of Bahrein, Ormus, Kishm and Karrack; and other ports and places in the Persian Gulf, 1818', in R. Hughes Thomas (ed.), *Selections from the Records of the Bombay Government: Historical and Other Information, Connected with the Province of Oman, Maskat, Bahrein, and Other Places in the Persian Gulf* (Bombay: Bombay Education Press, 1856), pp. 1–40.

belonging to the tribe [Āl-Khalīfah] do not exceed a thousand.'[150] The ʿUtūb were never a single patrilineal tribe, but a confederacy of maritime tribes and families.[151] Hennell's view had political motivations. By decoupling the ʿUtūb from a confederacy of tribes into a smaller number, they became a separate 'ruling' class bounded to the *rector* for protection, displacing the *actor*'s historic need to negotiate his position as ruler through maintaining a wider ʿUtūb confederacy.

Hennell's effort to narrow the traditional meaning of confederacy to 'royal' authority creates a socio-political centre to describe the landscape and nature of *khalīj* peoples and prescribe a pedagogical foundation of stratifications between higher and lower socio-political orders for subsequent British Gulf Residents. Referring to Hobbes, Carl Schmitt argues: 'The rule of a higher order [sheikhly *actor*] is an empty phrase if it does not signify politically that certain men of this higher order rule over men of a lower order.'[152] While higher and lower orders were determined and the state between conflict and harmony in Bahrain was redefined, Bahrain was still not a signatory to the Maritime Truce, nor the Perpetual Truce, at their inceptions.[153] Britain neither dismantled Bahrain's coastal fortifications nor confiscated and destroyed its war vessels, and thus Bahrain did not suffer the fate of other signatory sheikhs. Bahrain continued to retain what Britain described as an 'imposing force at sea'.[154] Despite Bahrain being a non-signatory to the Maritime Truce, Britain did not allow the Bahrain sheikh to breach the new rules. Rules of the Maritime Truce were imposed, but extending full British protection over an island consumed by internal ʿUtbī strife and regional threats from Persia and Ottoman Egypt was a liability.

The Maritime Truce, Restrictive Line, Perpetual Truce, and semantic narrowing of the meaning of confederacy managed the gradual political transition to a more 'civilised' interstate coexistence from a state of divisible anarchy to one of indivisible hierarchy in authority. It turned sheikhly indivisibility into a political reality, a reality reinforced in the late 1800s by the British Protectorate System. While the Maritime Truce departed from Britain's non-interference stance, it broadened Britain's intrusiveness to secure *actors* as anchors fixing tribes in place. Contrary to scholarly claims, the centralisation of domestic authority under the indivisible British-recognised sheikh affected relations between ruler and ruled. Dividing the Gulf through a Restrictive Line strengthened Britain's ability to control movement and fortify sheikhly indivisibility by insulating its Arab coast *actors* from rivals. While the Restrictive Line and ban on maritime warfare during pearling seasons applied to all maritime tribes on both Gulf coasts, Britain did not interfere with Persian policies towards Arab sheikhs on its shores. While rules were imposed to govern Gulf waters, it left the Persian coast as the frontier of choice for rebellious maritime tribes fleeing the Arab coast. Most important, narrowing the traditional meaning of a confederacy gradually removed maritime tribes from active participation in rulership (*ḥukm*) that rested on arbitration in a space of political contestation. Sovereignty was no longer shared, diffuse, and contested among sheikhs in a maritime tribal confederacy, but dynastically anchored and ideologically frozen by the rector–actor relationship. It sidesteps alternative histories of political diversity and orients the Gulf socio-political past and present through the lens of the indivisible sheikhs.

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[150]Hennell (Bushire) to Willoughby (Bombay) (2 March 1839), BL/QDL: IOR/R/15/1/71, 'Volume 99: Secret Letters Outward', ff. 77r–78v.

[151]According to Captain Robert Taylor, the ʿUtūb maritime confederacy included but is not limited to: Āl-Khalīfah, Āl-Zayed (Āl-Jalāhmah), Āl-Muʿāḍid, Āl-Moʿāwdah, Āl-Salim (Āl-ibn-ʿAlī), Āl-Musallam, and Āl-Sumaiṭ (Āl-Bū-Sumaiṭ). Taylor, 'Extracts from brief notes', p. 23. For a detailed breakdown on the ʿUtūb, see a handwritten military report dated 1 September 1820, submitted by Lieutenant-Colonel Colebrooke. BL/QDL: IOR/F/4/652/17856, 'Volume 7: Proceedings Adopted in Consequence of the Depredations Committed by the Joasmee Pirates in the Persian Gulph', ff. 188v–208r.

[152]Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 67.

[153]Bahrain joined the truce in 1861, followed by Kuwait in 1899 and Qatar in 1916. Onley, 'Politics of protection', p. 32.

[154]Thomas Elwon, Commodore of the Indian Naval Squadron to David A. Blane (Bushire) (10 April 1834), BL/QDL: IOR/F/4/1596, 'Board's Collections', ff. 393r–400v.

Conclusion

By filling a Gulf gap in the classical English School 'international society' expansion thesis, this paper offers a more precise sense of how, when, and what political, structural, and ideational shifts in the Gulf allowed sovereignty to manifest in its present dynastic form. More specifically, it demystifies cultural and tribal logics of Gulf 'dynastic' exceptionalism. As the historian Roy Foster argued, 'revisionism' is necessary to challenge entrenched assumptions and to allow for a better political and historical analysis.[155]

Approaching the Gulf as a region of analysis in International Studies requires three components. First, a scholarly turn from the desert to the sea. Historians such as Bishara in his reclassification of the Gulf from a terrestrial Middle East into an oceanic one opens five centuries of Gulf encounters, interactions, rivalries, and interconnectedness within an Indian Ocean world, thereby offering new insights into the Gulf's transregional maritime history and bringing the Gulf into the fold of an international system Phillips and Sharman describe as order in diversity. This move challenges the region's essentialist overused desert-centred paradigm of pre-oil tribal/regional isolationism. More importantly, it probes an essential political question: how 'indirect' was British indirect rule over people whose livelihood was interlaced with the sea? As the paper shows, it reconfigured inter-polity relations. Second, the Gulf as a region necessitates appropriate and flexible research frameworks. Buzan was right in his defence of the English School as a valuable IR resource.[156] Although the English School has been rightly criticised for its Eurocentrism and neglect of experiences of non-European polities, its value lies with its theoretical flexibility and methodological pluralism to accommodate historically informed research programmes. This flexibility is necessary to bridge a gap between Gulf historiography and IR theory. Third is creativity. For example, Colás's creative approach in his convincing treatment of 'piracy' as a 'derivative' primary institution of international society gave the Gulf an entry point to join the rich English School debate. In doing these three things, this article offers five takeaways:

First, while the classical English School expansion thesis of international society centres around Europe's success in socialising the non-European rest into the rules and norms of a European-dominated international society, its theoretical value falls short in seeing structures and social agents who did not meet the relationships and dominant ideas that classical English School exponents were trying to articulate through an ethnocentric European nation-state logic.[157] Inevitably, it leaves historical accounts of 'piracy' and the relationship between private violence and state-building outside the theoretical state-centric purview. 'Pirates' were everything lawless, uncivil, and unjust under the rules and norms of a European-dominated international society. As enemies of all nations, any use of force, irrespective of intent, by non-state actors was 'piratical'. Pirates became the 'political' other unless civilised as 'friends'. In the Gulf, suppressing 'piracy' via force and treaty-making was a 'just' cause to draw the Gulf into 'civilised' relations.[158] Notions of 'justice' for Gulf maritime tribes, however, differed. Use of force by non-signatory sheikhs and tribes was viewed as a right and legitimate 'self-help' against abuse of power.

Second, scholars need to consider tribes and confederacies as legitimate actors within the context their time and place. Approaching 19th-century British colonial/imperial Gulf expansion through a binary between a legitimate European state (Britain) or state-backed actor (EIC) and illegitimate non-state 'pirates' ignores the complex relationship between private violence in the form of treasure-seeking 'plunder/robbery' versus private violence as a legitimate system of 'self-help'. By declaring all forms of non-state violence illegitimate and thus 'piratical', scholars have not

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[155]Cf. Fred Halliday, *Nation and Religion in the Middle East* (London: Saqi, 2000), p. 77.

[156]Barry Buzan, 'The English School: An underexploited resource in IR', *Review of International Studies*, 27:3 (2001), pp. 471–88.

[157]Tim Dunne and Christian Reus-Smit, 'Conclusion', in Tim Dunne and Christian Reus-Smit (eds), *The Globalization of International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 425–32.

[158]BL/QDL: IOR/L/PARL/2/84, 'Parliamentary Papers, 1834', p. 133.

properly interrogated implications of British anti-piracy intervention and its role in the socio-political engineering of Gulf dynasticism. British–Gulf encounters produced a struggle between old and new systems of order: a pre-colonial 'self-help' system, which Britain delegitimised as 'piracy', and a new rules-governed British system in which uses of force are regulated by European norms and rules of 'civility'. This heightened tensions between rights bestowed by Britain on signatory sheikhs as representatives of their polity and enforcers of British anti-piracy rules versus rights of their people as active participatory agents in rulership within a coastal polity. This not only weakened the role of sheikhs of maritime tribes as agents in the politics of their polity but also reinforced the centrality of British-backed sheikhs as the loci of authority over their subjects. Order and security at sea for colonial administrators trumped justice on land, an emphasis that continues to hold for Western powers concerned with the Gulf today.

Third, diffusion of European rules and norms did not usher in popular sovereignty as a legitimate principle in classical English school thinking. Colonialism as an overlooked institution of European expansion rested on logics of political inequality. Hence, coastal *khalījī* dynastic state formation is not reducible to tribal 'traditions' per se but is a product of a *longue durée* process of interaction between coloniser and colonised. Treaty-making forged new power hierarchies and recognised British-backed *actors* as centres of domestic authority. In doing so, some agents were absorbed under Britain as lawful sheikhs over their polities, while others remained as illegitimate 'pirates' under international law. Lieutenant John MacLeod, British Gulf Resident (1822–3), wrote to Bombay, 'better to have one head to look to than a number of independent pirates'.[159] Absorbing the Gulf under the *Pax Britannica* required transition from a state of divisible to indivisible sheikhly authority to approximate *khalījī* polities into Europe's image and meet more 'civilised' centralised and hierarchical standards of authority. Restricting the agency of unrecognised sheikhs/tribes ensured power was consolidated in a British *rector* and sheikhly *actor* to reinforce sovereignty as a primary institution of international society.

Fourth, what gave way to the suspension of sovereign divisibility in the coastal *khalīj* were British colonial policies that began not over land, as often assumed, but through its sea. Here, I propose considering more seriously the implications of the Restrictive Line as a primary institution of boundary-making in the Gulf. As this paper illustrates, by imposing rules at sea to suppress so-called pirates and control their movements through a Restrictive Line, the traditional role maritime tribes played as vital agents in the politics of Gulf coastal polities was weakened, a weakness further compounded when oil was discovered, breaking traditional alliances between coastal sheikhs and maritime tribes. Gradual weakening of maritime tribes, coupled with oil's discovery, turned the politics of protection of sheikhly *actors* in the Gulf inwards towards the desert as the new centre of power and security. This shift helps to explain why the desert became a central theme in the construction of new state-sponsored 'national' memories of desert tribal solidarity.

Finally, Gulf history matters in politics and international relations. It offers insights into the foreign policy decisions of contemporary Gulf states. As global order reconfigures to a rising East, so is the Gulf reconfiguring. While it remains committed in upholding pre-existing Anglo-American security arrangements, the Gulf is increasingly adopting policies of security diversification. Yet Gulf states today are not the poor, borderless settlements of the past. They have become increasingly a centre of regional influence in the Middle East and beyond. Although militarisation is now affordable, their moment of being and becoming in a world of 'civilised' nation-states remains connected to a colonial experience: close a military gap with the West and end a historic 'salience' in sovereignty. Still, the Gulf continues to adopt policies informed by its past, negotiating security in diversity, hardly a novel strategy if we look towards the sea.

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[159]Letter from MacLeod (Bushire) to Bombay (27 February 1823), in Jerome A. Saldanha (ed.), *Précis of Correspondence Regarding the Affairs of the Persian Gulf, 1801–1853* (Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1906), p. 159, BL/QDL: IOR/L/PS/20/C248C.

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