

# Empires and Nations from the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Century



Empires and Nations from the Eighteenth  
to the Twentieth Century:  
Volume 2

Edited by

Antonello Biagini and Giovanna Motta

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P U B L I S H I N G

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**PART IV**

**COLONIAL POLITICS  
AND THE AGE OF EMPIRES**



## CHAPTER TEN

### MODELS OF EUROPEAN COLONIAL EMPIRES

#### THE IMPACT OF BRITISH POLICY ON THE INSTITUTIONAL SYSTEM OF THE KHANATE OF KALAT (NORTH-WEST INDIA, 1870–1914)

GIANLUCA PASTORI

With its 71,593 square miles (including the area of the semi-independent “feudatory state” of Kharan), the Khanate of Kalat was the most extended part of the Baluchistan Agency, the political and administrative structure set up in 1877 to manage the province, laying on the extreme western parts of British India. Formed by five major regions (Jhalawan, Sarawan, Kachhi, Makran and Kharan), Kalat was ruled by an Ahmadzai king (*khan*), the leader of a wider Brahoi Confederation and, according to the provision of the “Brahoi Constitution” (the set of customary rules regulating the political relations between the *khan* himself and the local headmen, or *sardars*), *primus inter pares* among the chiefs of the region (IGI/PS 1908; on the “Brahoi Constitution,” see Weightman 1934).

The relations between British India and Kalat date back to the early decades of the nineteenth century. During the First Afghan War (1839–42), Kalat was imposed, in Lord Auckland’s eyes, as the main British salient to the northwest (Yapp 1980, 475ff.), but after the war the two powers grew gradually estranged. Neither the Treaty of Mastung (1854) nor that of Jacobabad (1876) could overcome the sense of mutual distrust. The treaties charged the khan with rights and duties *vis-à-vis* both the British authorities and the sardars. They also entrusted the government of India with the power to intervene (both politically and militarily) in the region. However, both Article 4 of the Treaty of Mastung and Article 6 of that of

Jacobabad lacked any precise reference to the forms and to the extent of British involvement (Aitchison 1909, 212–14, 215–17).

### **Feudal or federal? British policy and the Brahoi Constitution**

The proneness of the British authorities to regard Kalat through the prism of European feudalism and their attitude to approach the Brahoi Constitution as a sort of Magna Charta help to explain the reason of this misunderstanding. They help to explain also why, after the establishment of the Baluchistan Agency, their local representatives were constantly trying to reshape the khanate's political and institutional system along the lines of a Western-style constitutional monarchy, balancing the khan's monocratic rule through the strengthening of the position of the main sardars and the establishment of more or less direct links with them.

The image of Kalat as a feudal state was deeply rooted into the British minds and was a constant reference amid the ups and downs of their frontier policy. According to this image, the sardars were bound to provide the khan with their military assistance, in return for the khan's recognition of their authority. This sort of vassalic obligation played a pivotal role in material as well as in symbolic terms. The responsibility to support the khan and the recognition that their authority stemmed from the khan's benevolence made the sardars subordinate subjects, independently from the power that they really enjoyed in their possessions or on their tribesmen. On the other hand, the uncontested power that the sardars locally exerted, together with their nature of Kalat's main political and military power, imbued them with the sense of being the guarantors of the khanate's "traditional freedoms" against any real or perceived tentative of usurpation (Swilder 1969; on the vassalic obligation among the Brahoi see Swilder 1972).

Keeping a balance between these two competing positions was a difficult task. In 1872, Sir William Merewether, the commissioner of Sind (who, at that time, was responsible for the relations with Kalat), remarked:

[t]he power of any of the Khans of Khelat [sic] over the turbulent chiefs of that country has always been of a very uncertain nature, much like that of the Plantagenet Kings over the Barons of England. ... The Khan is very poor owing to the best lands in his country being in the possession of the chiefs ... on whom he can no longer rely in consequence of the changes which are taking place in the habits and ideas of these chiefs. ... Though the chiefs, in virtue of their tenure of the lands they have, should give support to the ruler, his power has hitherto been so small that he cannot



enforce their doing so, or venture to deprive them of the lands for non-performance of their duty. (Merewether 1872, 235–37)

It is not surprising that the sardars massively supported the “constitutional” reading of the Brahoi power structure (Browne 1893).<sup>1</sup> A feudal vision (and, even more strongly, the federal vision that emerged in mid-1870s, following the adoption of the *sardar-i system*)<sup>2</sup> allowed them to strengthen their position and to solve (with the British support) the long lasting tug-of-war with the khan. The limitation of the khan’s autocratic power and a creeping autonomization of the country’s most peripheral areas were the main results of this process. Nonetheless, these benefits did not last too long. In the long run, the British involvement in Kalat’s political dynamics led to permanent alterations at central and peripheral levels. Quoting Simanti Dutta (1990–91, 60), by rejecting the khan’s authority and the set of rules supporting it, the sardars “were opting out of the indigenous skeletal, state structure, which had evolved in the eighteenth Century, in favour of a new colonial future within the orbit of the British Empire.”

Within the system of the khan/sardars relations, the military dimension played a pivotal role. On the one hand, stood Mir Khudadad’s ambitions to overcome the sardars’ reluctant assistance and to endow the kingdom with an independent military power; on the other, the sardars’ complaints, depicting the levy of what they labeled “a mercenary force” as a violation of their customary rights. Another thorny issue was the sardars’ role in the new institutional system of Baluchistan. The choice to make them responsible for the safety and security of their own possessions; their power to levy tribal forces with the *placet* of the government of India; the payment of allowances on direct bases and not through the khan’s mediation, were bones of contention under both Mir Khudadad and his successor, Mir Mahomud II (1893–1931). From this point of view, the

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<sup>1</sup> As a matter of fact, the khan had had an army of his own since the time of Mir Nasir I. Beyond reorganizing the tribal army into two *dastà* (groups), labeled *Dastà-e Sarawan* and *Dastà-e Jhalawan* and formed by the troops of the local sardars, Mir Nasir established, in fact, a *Dastà-e Khan* under his own orders and formed by mercenaries and former slaves.

<sup>2</sup> Through the *sardar-i system* (*Sandeman system*), the sardars were made responsible for maintaining law and order in their own possession; for this reason they were allowed to raise tribal forces (*levies*) and benefited from British allowances on the basis of individual agreements, bypassing the khan to whom they were formally subordinated. This model, originally adopted by Major Robert Sandeman in his dealings with the Marri and Bugti tribes, was extended to the whole Baluchistan Agency during the reign of Mir Khudadad Khan (1857–93).

opening of direct contacts between the sardars and the British authorities and the recognition of their independent political role were paving the way—in the eyes of the khan—for the emergence of a “joint power” system, which found its formal sanction with the establishment—under the auspices of the new AGG, Sir John Ramsay—of the Kalat State Council, in 1913.

### **From the feudal state to the “joint power” system: The KSC**

The project of Kalat’s new institutional order pursued the double aim of stabilizing the country “from inside,” and of making it less sensitive to the external turbulences, coming, for example, from Persia, a country that, at the end of the 1910s, still deeply felt the impact of the “constitutional revolution” of 1904–1905. In this context, the reference to the Plantagenet experience was expedient in the legitimization of an institutional system that sunk its roots in the sardars’ oligarchy, and that was deemed more apt to the character and the inclinations of the Baluch population than the Pashtun “anarchic” model of “tribal democracy” (Bruce 1900; on Pashtun “tribal democracy”: Caroe 1988; on the British fascination for Pashtuns and what they see as their political order: Ahmed 1978).

The birth of the KSC thus was supported (between 1913 and 1914) by the adoption of other practical and symbolic measures. For example, to put the khanate’s administration into a better shape, a regular budget was introduced, including all the state’s properties and revenues, previously considered as mere belongings of the khan. The first Kalat state budget was drafted on the khan’s request, in Mastung, May 18, 1913. From the budget, Mir Mahmud drew 300,000 rupees per year “to cover all my private expenses, including the pay of the troops at present in Kalat and the pay of my private Establishment,” entrusting to his (British) political adviser and to the KSC the management of the remaining sum (Dew 1913a).<sup>3</sup> Referring to the government of India about the impact of these

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<sup>3</sup> On October 13, 1913, Mir Mahmud transferred to the political adviser his authority over the possession (*naibat*) of Jhalawan in exchange of an extra allowance of 50,000 rupees per year, and the revenues of this territory were included into the Kalat state budget. However, the budget did not include the revenues of Makran. This (provisional) arrangement provides a good measure, on the one hand, of the degree of autonomy that Makran enjoyed, on the other, of the role that the British political adviser still played in the domestic administration of Kalat, even after the adoption of the non-interference policy sanctioned by the government of India.

innovations, Ramsay (1913) remarked how, in his opinion, they were “the most important and far reaching changes that have taken place in Baluchistan during the past twenty years” and how they moved (along the guidelines that he had received) towards a more clear distinction of the British responsibility from that of the authorities of the Kalat state.

The short term effects of this action are clearly shown in a report from June 1913 by the political agent at Kalat, Major Armine Dew, about his cold season tour in the region (Dew 1913b). Worth noting, in this report, Major Dew constantly refers to the local headmen as to “the gentlemen of Makran.” He also stressed the importance of the generational change then undergoing, the need to embed the “local aristocracy” into the system of the Indian nobility, and the expediency to acknowledge Makran’s peculiar status *vis-à-vis* the khan’s authority. Comparing the ongoing situation with the outbursts of violence of the previous years and with the old need of constantly sending “pacifying” missions from India, he observed:

the present generation of young Gichki Sardars are mostly educated to certain extent, and have been accustomed to live on friendly terms with the British Officers of the Makran Levy Corps. The son of the senior Sardar, Shehr Umar, is at present going through a Naib Tahsildar’s course of duties under the Political Adviser in Kalat. Sardar Mehrab Khan’s son is training with the 15<sup>th</sup> Cavalry at Jellunder and the son of Mir Abdul Karim is with the 58<sup>th</sup> Vaughan’s Rifles (F.F.) in Quetta. ... As the AGG is aware, there are no tribal question of any importance in Makran, the Gichki being few in number, and dependent on their slaves for their strength, or on intrigues with the aboriginal Baluchis. The presence of the Makran Levy Corps renders it impossible any combination of the people for purposes of creating trouble could possibly arise. ... I also arranged with the Commandant [of the Makran Levy Corps] to form a section of the sons of gentlemen in Makran who are to have a course of training, not only Gichki, but Nausherwanis and others. ... I cannot speak too highly of the Makran Levy Corps, and the work accomplished by the young officers who have been in independent and isolated charge of it. ... The spirit of the Corps is excellent and when with their own British Officers I feel convinced the man would be capable of very good work. As it, considering the life led by the men on the post on the frontier, their conduct has been exemplary. I do not mean to convey the idea that the Brohui of this country are equal to the best fighting races of India, but for the object for which they were formed and for the work in front of them, better men could not be found; they are capable of extraordinary hardship and fatigue, patient, obedient, and with a fine esprit de corps. They might well form the nucleus of an extremely useful force on this frontier. It has been an excellent institution for the tribes, from which the men are drawn, and adds strength to the administration. A very small percentage of the large recruiting ground

available has been touched, and more might be done. The Native Officers as a whole are excellent men and on terms of camaraderie with the British Officers.

The spreading of World War I to the Middle East and Asia marked the apogee of this process. Within the framework of an unprecedented war effort, the rhetoric of the return to the “time honored traditions” melted into the wider framework of imperial solidarity. In November 1914, commenting on the recent establishment of the ill-fated Baluch Camel Corps (he had been its wholehearted supporter), Dew (1914), now lieutenant colonel, remarked how:

[f]rom a political point of view, the formation of the Corps has had a most excellent effect, not only in that it has enabled the rulers of the two states [Kalat and Las Bela] with their Sardars and tribesmen to show their loyalty and take a share in the burden of war, a share by no means light considering the poverty of these frontier states, but also in that it has enabled the feudal system of supplying help to the rulers in time of stress, which had fallen into disuse, to be resuscitated.<sup>4</sup>

In Dew’s perspective, the levy of the BCC was the apex of the process in which the Raj’s good offices had led to a pacified country and to a restored tribal solidarity. Here, the return to “the time honoured tribal ‘gham’ ... [the] scale of tribal assistance fixed as due by each Sardar” was a product of the restoration of the sound principles of the Brahoi Constitution and an example of how these principles could solve, in a non-conflictual way, many problems of Kalat. Mir Mahmud’s proposal to contribute to the British war effort was, in itself, a sign of his pleasure for the new balance and of his will to cooperate with the British authorities to improve the social and political situation of his kingdom (Dew 1915). In a Whiggish perspective, it was also the final proof of the inherent goodness of a political model “which only required honest, earnest men, endowed with common sense to carry it on” (An Old Moss Trooper s.d.).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> According to the *wazir-i azam* of Kalat too, “this system of tribal *gham* was in force in the older times, and has again been revived in this occasion after a very long time” (*Report of the Wazir-i-Asam on the Formation of the Kalat State Camel Corps*, 30.11.1914, BL/OIOC, R/1/34/39).

<sup>5</sup> On the basis of opinions expressed in it, the document was probably drafted in the Bombay presidency since its positions are quoted and criticized in a paper of the Punjab government from November 11, 1876.

## Concluding remarks

Despite Dew's optimism, in 1915 Makran was burning again, soon followed by Jhalawan. In both cases, the government of India had to dispatch regular troops to crush the rebellions and to reestablish law and order. It was the first proof of the limits of the new institutional arrangement. It was also a proof of the limits that the tribal forces (even when led by British officers) encountered if charged to deal with local insurgencies without the khan's or the sardars' support. However, these fresh outbursts of violence went almost unnoticed, and their echo barely reached London. In the new international environment, the problems of Baluchistan became a negligible entity, at both political and military levels.<sup>6</sup>

The effort to build a "Kalat's nobility" *in vitro* had not been able either to solve the country's deeply-rooted institutional problems or to strengthen the British position *vis-à-vis* the quarrelsome native leadership. More radically, portraying the Khanate of Kalat as a feudal (or a federal) state, and its domestic political relations as a product of the unwritten rules of the Brahui Constitution, did not smooth the country's integration into the imperial structure and did not foster its (largely fictional) role of a buffer state. Rather, it worsened its overall position and led to the final collapse of the same feudal paradigm that the British officers had originally placed at the foundations of their action.

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example, *Despatch of Regular Troops to Suppress the Disturbances in Jhalawan*, BL/OIOC, R/1/34/36; *Unrest in Makran 1914/1915 and Raids Committed Therein by Transfrontier Baluchis*, BL/OIOC, R/1/34/37; *Idem*, BL/IOR, R/1/34/38; *Idem*, BL/OIOC, R/1/34/43.

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# THE FIRST TUNISIAN CRISIS (1864)

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During the same years in which Italy and France were trying to negotiate and find a solution to the Roman question, in Tunisia a violent revolt against the sultan attracted the interest of the two powers and a few years later it became a disputed area between the two countries and the origin of stark contrasts. Tunisia, largely autonomous, was ruled by a bey who received his authority directly from the sultan of Constantinople. Vassalage and dependence on the Turkish domination were characteristic factors of Tunisia, which ensured a military contribution during the Greek crisis of 1827 and the Crimean War of 1854–55 (Tunisian military contingent had 10,000 soldiers).

Over time, the trend towards autonomy in Tunisia became stronger: local rulers called for independence from the decadent imperial authority. The centrifugal tendency also found support in the international powers, primarily France, which had consolidated the conquest of Algeria, country that borders Tunisia, and aimed to break the ties between Tunis and Constantinople to extend its influence over the North African coast (Silva 1979, 75). In 1838, an article published in *Revue des Deux Mondes*, affirmed: “Algiers is not a colony, it is an empire, an empire far two days from Toulon.” This is emblematic because it expresses the aspirations of the French colonialists.

Tunisia was also included in the Italian sphere of influence because of its proximity to the coast of Sicily and due to its strategic geographical position on major transit routes. It had attracted the Italian interest and a considerable emigration process and allowed, over the years, the formation of a large Italian community (Gabriele 1958, 368). In the past, the area had attracted the interest of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies and the Kingdom of Sardinia. In the years immediately following the unification of the peninsula, the Italian interest increased, provoking the first conflicts with Paris.

In 1863, the financial situation in Tunisia led to the increase of Tunisian debt to France to about 28 million francs. At the end of the year, the prime minister of the bey, Mustafa Kasnar, tried to get a new



substantial loan, but Napoleon III granted only five million francs. In order to increase state revenues, Kasnar, in agreement with the bey, decided to raise tax levies through the doubling of *Al-magba*, causing protests of the inhabitants and the insurgency of the Bedouins, led by Ali Ibn Ghadaham, in the region of Talah.

The riots spread from the hinterland to the coast, where Jews, French and Italians had major commercial developments. On April 21, the Italian royal consul in Tunis telegraphed to the Italian minister of foreign affairs, Visconti-Venosta, to send urgently naval units to protect the subjects from the violence of the uprising. The request of the consul was accepted and the frigates *Garibaldi*, commanded by Acton, and *Etna*, under the command of Suni, were sent.<sup>1</sup>

On April 23, the two ships sailed from La Spezia. *Garibaldi* stopped in Cagliari to embark 1,000 tons of coal and arrived in Tunis on April 25, the day after the arrival of *Etna*.

The first directives given by Vice-Admiral Albini and Minister of the Navy Cugia to Acton reveal that the Italian intention was not to send an entire fleet and make a landing but to arrive with two ships to supervise the struggles (Gabriele 1958, 372–73). *Etna* was the first vessel to arrive, followed by two French vessels, *Algeciras* and *Redoutable*, and one British vessel, *Meane*.

Initially, the situation did not look serious, the presence of the Italian troops seemed to reassure the community, but in the following days the increase of the French units and the worsening of the situation forced Visconti-Venosta to ask by telegraph Albini to send additional Italian vessels (*Maria Adelaide*, *Duca di Genova* and *Magenta*). The minister demanded to talk with the consul and with the French and English admirals for a possible joint action.<sup>2</sup> Vice-Admiral Albini ordered a landing in case the French and the British decided to intervene. It was necessary to take active part in the defense of the European interests and to avoid being ousted in the eventuality of a future partition of Tunisia. On April 27, Visconti-Venosta ordered additional Italian units.<sup>3</sup>

Albini sailed from La Spezia with *Maria Adelaide* and arrived in the Gulf of Tunis at 10 am. on April 30. Upon arrival, he reached the French Admiral d'Herbinglehem for updates about the situation and immediately realized how strong the Anglo-French rivalry was. In particular, the commander of the French fleet was inclined to urge the bey to dismiss the prime minister, who was guilty of having caused the insurrection, but the

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<sup>1</sup> Archivio Centrale dello Stato (ACS), box 160, doc. 35.

<sup>2</sup> ACS, box 2, doc. 6.

<sup>3</sup> ACS, box 2, doc. 9.

British Commander Woadhome did not have the same opinion and opposed the French proposal about the landing.<sup>4</sup> On May 7, d'Herbinglehem confided to Albini that it was necessary to deploy 10,000 men. The Italian vice-admiral telegraphed the ministry requesting adequate military reinforcements to join the action with no less force than France (Gabriele 1958, 378). On May 12, the Italian frigate boarded two companies of marines with supplies previously requested by the vice-admiral. At that time, Console Gambarotta warned Visconti-Venosta that the situation was becoming more “serious and worrying,” referring to the riots in Tunis between the Arabs and the Jews; while in Sfax, the Italians were forced to take refuge on ships.<sup>5</sup>

In the following days, Acton, the commander of *Garibaldi* at Susa and Pucci, the commander of *Magenta* in Sfax, confirmed the seriousness of the situation fearing an agreement between the French forces and the bey for the deployment of the troops and a future protectorate of Napoleon III. The bey dismissed the news, which probably had been spread by the French to test the reaction of the population. The bey officially denied any news about the negotiations with Paris, confirming Tunisian independence from the Turkish and European influences. In the following days, an Ottoman naval division, composed of three units and carrying on board of the flagship an imperial commissioner, arrived at the Tunisian coast and a few hours later also French military reinforcements arrived under the command of Vice-Admiral Bouet de Willaumetz. The Italian consul emphasized the unusual massive presence of the French units and hypothesized an active involvement of Paris in the rebellion against the bey.

Albini asked for instructions from Turin and the minister reiterated the order to be very careful regarding the French and the British maneuvering.<sup>6</sup>

The false information about an impending European landing spread among the population in Sfax, and the population reacted aggressively, asserting their dissent towards the presence of the foreign armies. Acton—the commander of *Garibaldi* docked in Sfax—suggested caution to the minister, proposing to limit the Italian action to supervision and ensuring the safety of Italian subjects.<sup>7</sup> In June, the situation worsened: the bey opposed the French request for the resignation of the prime minister and the population continued to arm in the event of a French landing. In Sfax, Europeans took refuge on the board of *Garibaldi*, among them also the

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<sup>4</sup> Albini's report to Cugia, Tunis, May 3, 1864 –, ACS, box 2, doc. 14.

<sup>5</sup> ACS, box 2, doc. 19.

<sup>6</sup> ACS, box 2, doc. 23.

<sup>7</sup> From Acton to Albini, ACS, box 2, doc. 65.

consular representatives of Austria, Denmark, France, Spain and the United States. The British wanted to reestablish the Ottoman control in the area and to avoid the French and/or Italian influence over the area.

The fleet that conquered the base in Tunisia would control the Mediterranean Sea and, in the future, with the opening of the Suez Canal, also the routes to the Indies. France would assume the total domination over the seas. As for Italy, London did not want the two coasts of the Mediterranean Sea (Sicilian and African) to be monopolized by a single state.

The British considered only two options: (1) to support Tunisian independence from the Ottoman Empire and from Italy and France; (2) to support Constantinople to restore order in the region.

In both solutions, London wanted to maintain the status quo by opposing the Italian-French landing and the increase of their influence. Probably the British spread the false news about the upcoming foreign landing, stirred up the local population and promoted the sale of arms by Maltese sailors (Gabriele 1958, 398).

Italians were preparing the landing of two infantry regiments, a battalion of riflemen, a battery of artillery, a sapper company and several detachments, in all about 4,000 men. The program was organized as follows: (1) landing and occupation of La Goletta; (2) march on Tunis; (3) stabilization in Tunis; (4) security and organization services; (5) administrative service.

The Italian forces would enter Tunis from two directions: sea and land. From the sea, a sharpshooters battalion, a part of the corps of engineers and two companies of marine corps would enter Tunis.<sup>8</sup>

On June 20, Albini—informing neither the French nor to the British—visited the bey and proposed to land an Italian army corps in order to suppress the revolution. The Tunisian ruler, while emphasizing the good relations with Italy, declined the proposal trusting in his own military forces. Visconti-Venosta warned the vice-admiral. The minister did not have the intention to conquer Tunis and start a campaign, engaging large forces and resources.

With the evolution of the situation and due to the British pressure, the international community was considering more and more favorably a Turkish intervention, but the French Admiral Bouet affirmed that France would not accept any intervention from Constantinople (Chiala 1892, 98, 99). Paris began a campaign of intimidation against the bey, threatening to deploy military corps in the eventuality of a Turkish intervention: *Actif* was sent to cruise in the Tunisian seas, but the British officially protested.

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<sup>8</sup> ACS, box 2, doc. 106.

In the late summer, the situation gradually improved and the pacification of some tribes brought the feeling that the agitation would end soon. In this context, the continuing rumors of a European landing lost credibility and France accepted the British solution of “non-intervention.” The fear of enemy action and the decrease of the number of clashes allowed all the powers to share the maintenance of the status quo. The bey’s forces were now sufficient for the maintenance of order and the European powers decided to recall their fleets. The order of departure of maritime units became an international controversy because the Turkish commissioner, Haydir Efendi, agreed to withdraw his fleet after the French and Italians, but Paris announced that the French ships would be the last to return to their homeland.

The *querelle* lasted for a month. London tried to overcome the impasse by proposing that fleets leave simultaneously. The British initiative was immediately accepted by Paris, but Constantinople hesitated a few days before giving its *placet*. The date was established on September 23 at 11 a.m.

The Italian fleet sailed towards La Spezia and in the bay of Tunis *Etna* and *Sirena* remained to patrol the coastline. At the beginning of October, an official of the consulate of France in Tunisia visited his brother, a resident there and immediately a British flagship, *Revenge*, sailed to Sfax and Susa under the pretext to notify some orders to the corvette *Chanticleer*. Indeed, the Anglo-French conflict was not over yet. London feared the expansionist ambitions of Paris and also a French encroachment from Algeria to Tunisia. The bey’s army defeated the rebels in the decisive battle of October 7 and slowly resumed control over the cities and villages. On November 9, the revolution could be considered over: the leaders of the revolt were arrested and beaten, but forgiven, and the last European vessels came back home. *Etna* and *Sirena* continued the mission until the first week of December, when they returned permanently to Italy.

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THE BRITISH EMPIRE IN SOUTH AFRICA,  
1875–1881:  
A CASE STUDY IN THE CHANGES  
OF IMPERIAL THOUGHT

MICHAŁ LEŚNIEWSKI

Contemporary historiography usually questions the notion that there was a change in the British imperial policy during the 1870s and 1880s. Since the 1950s many historians have criticized the idea that there was a significant shift in the imperial policy and thought during the 1870s. Historians, such as Ronald E. Robinson, John A. Gallagher or Alan G.L. Shaw, have stressed the continuity of British imperial policy and thinking during the nineteenth century. They have pointed to the fact that between 1820 and 1870 the supposedly reluctant generation of British politicians added to the empire a considerable set of territories all over the world (Gallagher and Robinson 1953, 2–3; Porter 1994, 65–66, 70–77, 89–90). They argue that those territories were not included by accident. In fact, they argue that the ideology of the empire of that time was expansionist as after the 1870s.

They do not deny that there was an anti-imperialist opposition and that there were influential politicians, such as John Bright or Richard Cobden, who opposed the imperial expansion. But they remind us also that such critics had always existed, even during the height of the empire in the 1890s.<sup>1</sup> The period between 1815 and 1872 was the time of debate concerning the future of the British Empire. Many different ideas were exchanged between humanitarians, settlers, missionaries, expansionists, colonial reformers, free-traders and protectionists. In fact, the same persons, like Benjamin Disraeli, articulated sometimes contradictory concepts

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<sup>1</sup> It is enough to mention the famous book of John A. Hobson, *Imperialism. A Study*, published in 1902 or the works of Bernard Shaw, such as *The Man of Destiny. A Trifle* from 1920 (especially the pages 200–201), which was first published in 1896 and his *Fabianism and the Empire. A Manifesto by the Fabian Society*, published in London in 1900.