

14 GERMANY'S PUSH TO THE GULF AND INDIAN OCEAN: a war aim reconsidered

What the Germans want after their acquisition of East Asia is a coaling station on the Persian Gulf...The desire...to possess a coaling station halfway on the road to China will give Germany's East Asiatic possession its full value... *The Times*, 1898¹

'I feel we ought to be clear about this question even before it is asked...a world war which will lead our armies into India and Egypt.'² *Admiral Georg Alexander von Müller, head of the Naval Cabinet, 1905*



It was with some suspicion that many in Britain viewed Germany's attempts to obtain territory in what were often economically unviable areas and whose only use could be to facilitate strategic aims. This was particularly so with attempts to acquire a coaling station in the Persian Gulf, which with the extension of the Baghdad Railway would provide direct access to the Indian Ocean.³ In this way the operations of the East Asian Cruiser Squadron would be enhanced as one part of a comprehensive global plan of commerce warfare, primarily aimed against Britain.⁴ Within the broad and sustained German thrust for bases (*Stützpunktpolitik*) from the Near East, through Asia to the Pacific, the importance of the Gulf lay in radio communication with the African colonies and with the ships of the Cruiser Squadron in the Indian Ocean. There had been

¹ *The Times*, reporting on Russo-German rivalry in Turkey, 20 May 1898.

² German Federal Military Archive, Freiburg (BA-MA), RMA 2044 PG 66067 [old] Müller-Tirpitz, 8 February 1905, cited in Volker Berghahn, *Germany and the Approach of War in 1914* (London: Macmillan, 1973), 53.

³ See Sean McMeekin, *Berlin-Baghdad Express: The Ottoman Empire and Germany's Bid for World Power* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010).

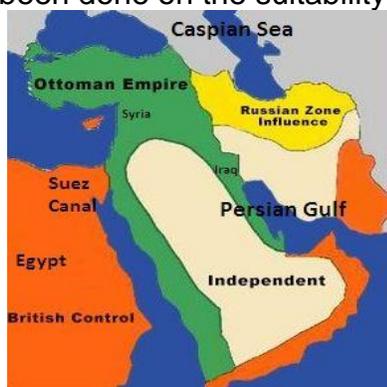
⁴ See P. Overlack, 'The Function of Commerce Warfare in an Anglo-German Conflict before 1914', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 20 (December 1997), 94-114.

long term planning since Bismark's time to use British issues in the East as a distraction from Europe. In the decade prior to the War, this became more specific and relevant with the strategic importance of the Berlin-Baghdad railway and the attempts to gain concessions on the Gulf coast.⁵

Problems and solutions

In addition to his stature as a prophet of battleship warfare, the influential American admiral and theorist Alfred Thayer Mahan advocated the idea that effective naval power was closely linked to the possession of convenient bases. He wrote of the importance of 'coal endurance', the distance able to be travelled within a network of fortified coaling ports which every naval nation should frame for itself.⁶ A leading advocate of cruiser-based commerce warfare, Vice-Admiral Wolfgang Wegener, stated that '...only control of geographical position provides control of trade routes, obtaining freedom in time of war'.⁷ He wrote that at sea tactics depended on the water, but strategy on the fleet's geographical position. Effective naval strategy required appropriate bases and had to begin in peacetime. Consequently it was not solely a military problem but rather a joint one for the military and statesmen: 'Any policy of world politics has a political-offensive character because of the constant need to adapt world-policy to the current political constellation'.⁸

Britain's broader political and military intentions in Asia had serious implications for Germany. Specifically, Britain's possession of the Malay peninsula in the German view established it as a future claimant to the Dutch Indies, and as a rival with whom Germany would have to reckon. For the present the Indies had to be seen as a British sphere of influence as far as the establishment of coaling stations and naval bases by another power was concerned. To Germany's chagrin, the whole region was being consolidated: the Singapore-Bangkok railway project was primarily a military-political undertaking, and the foundation of a 'specific British rear-Indian empire (Hinterindien) from Tibet to Java' appeared to be in preparation.⁹ Increasing British exclusivity gradually was shutting Germany out of the region, and the latter's own interest in acquiring widely-separated points (such as the attempt to establish a naval *dépôt* in Bangkok) illustrates the frenetic pace with which suitable sites were sought in this period. This was not a new phenomenon. As early as 1884 surveys had been done on the suitability of Persian Gulf ports for the navy.¹⁰



At the close of the century the Persian Gulf had assumed considerable significance. By 1899 German negotiations with Turkey were well in hand. The

⁵ See Wolfgang G. Schwanitz, 'Max von Oppenheim und der Heilige Krieg. Zwei Denkschriften zur Revolutionierung islamischer Gebiete 1914 und 1940', *Sozial Geschichte*, 19 (2004) 3, 28–59.

⁶ *The Times*, 1 December 1898.

⁷ Wolfgang Wegener (Tr. Holger Herwig), *Naval Strategy of the World War* (Annapolis: U.S. Naval Institute Press, 1989), 37.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 103-4.

⁹ BA-MA, RM5/v 5972, Kiliani-Bethmann Hollweg, July 1909.

¹⁰ German Federal Archive (Bundesarchiv-BA) Berlin, 1001/7162, 'Erwerbung des Hafens und Territoriums von Cheik-Said zur Zwecke der Marine', November 1884.

German position was assisted by Russian distraction in East Asia and Germany had gained some favour by supporting Russian claims and limiting Japan after the Sino-Japanese War of 1895. As Paul Reinsch, Professor of Political Science at Wisconsin University commented, 'The Sultan is now the dear and exalted friend of the Emperor, and the German government has obtained advantages in Asia Minor which formerly could be hoped for only as the result of successful warfare.'¹¹ Reinsch noted that should the great line from Alexandria to Shanghai become reality, Palestine would become the junction point for European, Asiatic, and African transcontinental lines. Syria was also of strategic value, commanding both land and maritime routes between the continents:

The power that can control it will thereby obtain a material accession to its weight in the politics of the world. At present, Germany does not aim at anything beyond an industrial conquest...it would doubtless lead naturally to the assertion of political influence...'¹²



Bülow



Marschall

In December 1899 Foreign Secretary Bernhard von Bülow wrote to Ambassador Adolf Freiherr Marschall von Bieberstein in Constantinople that a declaration by the Turks concerning the importance of Kuwait¹³ as end point for the Baghdad Railway

creates a very convenient position for us in this question. We should not let the Turkish Minister's offer slip from our hands, and from now on should take the position that with the extension of the Railway to Kuwait we are doing the Sultan a considerable favour...the granting of the concession by the Turkish Government and its realisation by us is a recognition and strengthening of Turkish sovereignty claims to this region...

Marshall was instructed to reinforce the German view that their presence was a considerable advantage to the Ottomans. It was also a matter of concern at the highest level, and it was made clear that the Kaiser expected Marschall to use his influence and ability to secure a permanent German presence: 'It is known to Your Excellency...the great value our Monarch places on winning a naval base on the Red Sea.' The urgently required strengthening of Germany's strategic position here increased the prospect, if not made possible, a satisfactory outcome from any regional conflict with other nations. The problem of acquiring a coaling station on the Red Sea would be solved, and Germany's access to the Indian Ocean would be placed on a secure basis.¹⁴ One British writer commented that it was with a sense of shock that it was now realised that the shortest route to India soon could be transferred to Britain's main rival. While India could be attacked successfully only from the sea, an effective doubling of the German Navy in the Gulf- Indian Ocean region would be complete when the

¹¹ P. S. Reinsch, *World Politics at the End of the Nineteenth Century as Influenced by the Oriental Situation* (New York:Macmilan, 1900), 227.

¹² *Ibid.*, 278-9.

¹³ On the competing interests see Peter Sluglett, 'The Resilience of a Frontier: Ottoman and Iraqi Claims to Kuwait, 1871-1990', *The International History Review*, XXIV, No. 4 (December 2002), 757-1008. It was not until the draft Anglo-Ottoman Convention of July 1913 that there was any agreement on Kuwait's boundaries.

¹⁴ J. Lepsius et.al. *Die Große Politik der Europäischen Kabinette 1871-1914. Sammlung der diplomatischen Akten des Auswärtigen Amtes* (Berlin:Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft für Politik und Geschichte, 1922-7), (GP), Bd. XVII, I, Nr. 5279, Bülow-Marschall, 26 December 1899.

railway had reached Kuwait: 'The new Power at the gate of India will be not only the first military Power in the world at ten days' running from Berlin, but the second naval, at four days' steaming from Bombay'.¹⁵



Kuwait



Farisan Islands

The Admiralty Staff proposed the acquisition of the technically Turkish Farisan Islands in the Red Sea. This was a favourite project of then Chief of Admiralty Staff Otto von Diederichs, who in 1901 wrote to Admiral Viktor von Valois that 'we should not be too reticent acquiring a staging point between Farisan and Kiautschou...'¹⁶ Why was this link so crucial? The Pan-German writer Rudolf Wagner stated bluntly in 1901 that while the whole world was watching events in the South African War and the Boxer uprising in China, with the Baghdad Railway Germany had quietly engineered a major change in communication between Europe, and India, East Asia and the Pacific. This was no mere economic undertaking, for if Germany had entered into such a gigantic project, this was with the view in mind 'to create an unassailable position in the Orient and on the Indian Ocean'. The first necessity was the obtaining of a naval coaling station on the Gulf since the next base was in East Africa, and from there the distance 'would naturally make impossible the exercise of a decisive influence...the German Empire has here the opportunity to give substance to its world-power position...'¹⁷

In 1905 the head of the Naval Cabinet, Georg Alexander von Müller, asked Naval Secretary Alfred von Tirpitz rhetorically what should be done if Germany's naval expansion led to a war with Britain. The answer: 'I feel we ought to be clear about this question even before it is asked...a world war which will lead our armies into India and Egypt.'¹⁸ As early as 1899 the Indian Government warned that 'the obvious corollary to a system of German railways in Asia Minor would be similar railroads to the Persian border and through Mesopotamia to the Persian Gulf...German interests have a tendency to grow with some rapidity, and by steps which are not always acceptable to their neighbours...'¹⁹ There would be an 'agglomerate stretching from the Baltic to Constantinople, and thence dominating Asia to the Suez Canal and the Persian Gulf' which would be used as a wedge to split the British Empire. Although the North Sea was to be the main theatre of wartime naval operations under Tirpitz' plan, the

¹⁵ 'The Focus of Asiatic Policy', *National Review*, June 1901, 627. On British press reaction see Gregor Schöllgen, ' "Germanophobia" Deutschland, England und die orientalische Frage im Spiegel der Britischen Presse 1900-1903', *Francia*, 8/1980, 407-426.

¹⁶ BA-MA, RM5/v 5739, Bl. 216, Diederichs-Valois, 28 September 1901.

¹⁷ Rudolf Wagner, 'Deutschland und die neue Weltstraße nach Ostindien', *Alldeutsche Blätter*, Bd. 13, 1901, 152-4.

¹⁸ BA-MA, RMA 2044 PG 66067 [old] Müller-Tirpitz, 8 February 1905, cited in Volker Berghahn, *Germany and the Approach of War in 1914* (London: Macmillan, 1973), 53.

¹⁹ G.P. Gooch & H. Temperley (Eds), *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1927-38), Vol. IV, No. 319, Indian Government-Secretary of State for India, 21 September 1899, 357 (the 'Curzon Despatch'). Britain was determined to have a share in the control of the rail extension to the Gulf to ensure the effective neutralization of the terminus, but this did not occur until 1914. See BD, Vol. X, Pt. II, 'Baghdad Railway Agreement', 329-333.

second most important region in which damage could be inflicted on British import routes was the Indian Ocean, where routes converged from Asia and the Dominions, and led on to the Cape. The implications for this trade of a German naval presence issuing forth from a Gulf base were obvious and ominous. Britain's command of the sea could well be undermined by a land route which would open the way to Egypt, the Gulf, thence the Indian Ocean and the Dominions beyond.²⁰

The Australian writer A. D. Maclaren in his warning *Peaceful Penetration* stated that from his seven-year sojourn in Germany, it had become clear that the objective of the Central Powers was to extend influence over Turkey in order to become established on the Gulf. He posed the question: where could one find any German enterprise in any part of the world that was purely economic? The influential political economist Paul Rohrbach wrote in 1902 that the Baghdad Railway had an undoubted political aim, and it was clear that 'the first and the essential step in Germany's world-politics is the extension of her sway...to the Indian Ocean.' As Mahan warned, a nation with naval potential on the Gulf could 'flank all the routes to the farther East, to India and to Australia.'²¹



Significantly, in 1907 the Chief of Admiralty Staff Wilhelm Büchsel expressed the view to Tirpitz that the extension of Germany's colonial empire was 'only of secondary importance' to the acquisition of bases. Germany eyed the French possession of Djibuti as Madagascar was too far away from the main steamer routes. This could well lead to friction with Britain which also would consider possession of Djibuti of great value for the strengthening of its own maritime position, 'as the Red Sea could then be made into a completely English *mare clausum*', observed Büchsel.²²

The Gulf remained at the centre point of German Asiatic planning. A British writer in 1902 commented that the full meaning of the Baghdad Railway concession and the importance of its ultimate terminus 'at a magnificent harbour at the head of the Persian Gulf' was fully appreciated in Berlin. It was precisely German attempts to establish coaling and trading stations in Aden, Yemen, and on the southern Persian coast as a projected extension of the railway project that brought a charge of trespass in an area of British interest.²³ Earl Percy MP stated that

...there can be no acquiescence in the creation of a German port at the head of the Persian Gulf. British control of the Gulf must remain inviolate...the terminus of the Euphrates Railway must be in British hands.²⁴

The strategic importance of German activity in the Gulf thus becomes clearer seen in the context of Germany's overall world-political aims. As one writer in the *National Review* pondered, the Baghdad Railway could never compete with the Suez Canal as a commercial

²⁰ Alwyn Parker, 'The Baghdad Railway Negotiations', *Quarterly Review*, October 1917, 487.

²¹ A.D. Maclaren, *Peaceful Penetration* (London: Constable, 1916), 164-7.

²² BA-MA, RM5/v 5955, Bl. 21, Büchsel-Tirpitz, 22 October 1907.

²³ Roland Blennerhassett, 'The Pan-Germanic Idea', *The National Review*, June 1902, 557; similarly 'Welt Politik: Germany and Great Britain', *National Review*, October 1913, 304.

²⁴ Foreign Office Political Archive Berlin (PA-AA), R 13 883, *Times of India*, 4 May 1901, encl. in Reinhardt (Vice-Consul Buschär)-Bülow, 24 May 190.

route, and politically it was meaningless unless its final station lay on the Persian Gulf.²⁵ Büchsel wrote to Tirpitz that

...it appears to me that regarding discussions on this matter weight must be laid on the obtaining of good and strategically useful bases, which are a most urgent necessity...We urgently need such sites which are suitable for supply and conversion [of merchant vessels] and make good staging points and safe refuges, for the extension of our world-power position.²⁶

There cannot be a more clear statement of German strategic policy and of ongoing interest in the acquisition of overseas bases. This highlights the importance of *Stützpunktpolitik* -the policy of acquiring a system of naval bases circling the globe- as a goal of political expansion. While Mahan's greatest influence was in Tirpitz' battleship program, his dictum, 'Naval strategy may win victories even in peace time by the acquisition of local bases on foreign shores' had singular impact.²⁷ In the period 1902-1910 there was an emphasis on *Stützpunktpolitik* clearly expressed in Büchsel's work. It is where German acquisitions in the Middle East and Asia fit into this system that needs to be considered broadly. Germany felt the lack of bases which would enable it to operate on the world scale that the Royal Navy could; only in this way could *Weltpolitik* be implemented.

Büchsel also saw an alternative solution to access Asia lying in the acquisition of French island groups in the southern Pacific, which had 'great value for us, particularly if we could obtain the Lesser Antilles at the same time', with access through the Panama Canal. Then Germany could establish links with its Pacific colonies and a route to East Asia which, although dependent upon use of the Suez Canal, would nevertheless touch at only German possessions.²⁸

German plans had clear implications for the British Dominions. The later commander of the Australian Fleet Unit, William Rooke Creswell, wrote in his 1907 memorandum for Prime Minister Alfred Deakin that German activity in Morocco was designed to gain a position as a counterpoise to Gibraltar, 'the desire to acquire a good point of observation...and overlook the Cape route'. The Mecca railway could place a Turkish army in Egypt, 'rendering quite conceivable the closing of the Canal, and severance of our line of communication...' More specifically, the Baghdad Railway project, attempts to establish a foothold in Persia, and various schemes in Asia Minor 'are all directed to effect a through line to the East as a direct communication with Germany's Eastern possessions.'²⁹ When it was rumoured in 1911 that compensation might be found for Germany in the Pacific, the *Sydney Morning Herald* made it clear that any intrusion would not be tolerated, 'an ever-threatening menace right at our door'. Why did Germany want a *quid pro quo* in the Pacific, if not to provide 'the point of departure for a much more far-reaching attempt at aggression...it is open to Germany to construct a naval base at our backdoor whenever she feels inclined'.³⁰

²⁵ D. G. Horgarth, 'The Baghdad Railway', *National Review*, May 1902, 473.

²⁶ BA-MA, RM5/v 5955, Bl. 21, Büchsel-Tirpitz/ Chief of Admiralty Staff-Navy Office, 22 October 1907.

²⁷ Quoted in Captain Baron von Lüttwitz, 'German Naval Policy and Strategy', *Journal of the Royal United Service Institute*, March 1897, 326.

²⁸ BA-MA, RM5/v 5955, Bl. 21, Wangenheim-Bülou, 19 August 1907.

²⁹ W. R. Creswell, 'Considerations Affecting the Naval Defence of the Commonwealth...' in Neville Meaney, *The Search for Security in the Pacific, 1901-1914* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1976), 179.

³⁰ *Sydney Morning Herald* 4 August 1911. Germany denied it was seeking any Pacific compensation from France.



Armoured cruiser *Goeben* in the Ottoman navy

The strategic push

The *Kölnische Zeitung* commented in 1913 that military and naval increases secured the peace, in that they made the risk for a prospective enemy extraordinarily high. 'In this security lies also the freedom of movement for a fruitful world-policy...which only now is opening up promising paths in Asia as well as Africa'.³¹ Strategic points continued to be sought wherever they might enable pressure to be exerted on the British Empire from Constantinople to Tsingtau.³² Ernst Jäckh, confidant of Foreign Secretary Alfred von Kiderlen-Wächter, wrote that 'Baghdad and the railway can threaten England at its most vulnerable point, on the Indian and Egyptian borders...'³³ With German influence and military-naval power operating in tandem from east and west, the richest part of the British Empire would be caught in a vice. Sir Edward Grey implied that the Baghdad Railway might enable Germany to upset the *status quo*, so that 'the whole of the trade route from the Gulf to Asia Minor' might be lost to British control.³⁴

German bases policy had wide scope and intricate links to world-power aspirations, and shows the scale on which the long-term future was planned. This needs to be viewed in conjunction with overall strategic planning as another step on a path to exercise world-power that already had acquired Kiautschau and Samoa for naval purposes and saw ongoing attempts in the Philippines, Dutch Indies, Portuguese territory, and in Africa. Naval support bases, coaling and wireless stations were considered essential to maintain and extend the German presence on the oceans as one means of counterbalancing Britain's naval supremacy, which was seen as a hinderance to Germany's rightful expansion. This was effective to a limited extent. The influential British naval writer Archibald Hurd commented that Britain was 'compelled to dismiss all thought of being in a position to command at one and the same time the seas of Europe and the seas of Asia.'³⁵

³¹ *Kölnische Zeitung*, 28 June 1913.

³² The importance of Constantinople was that from here a power 'would exercise its pressure on Egypt and indirectly on India'. *Deutsche Volkswirtschaftliche Correspondenz*, Nr.81, 8 Oktober 1912, in Wernecke, 289.

³³ E. Jäckh, *Deutschland im Orient nach dem Balkankrieg* (Berlin, 1913), 14, in Wernecke, 292. Jäckh was editor of the *Neckar-Zeitung* and had a close relationship with Bülow. Kiderlen's interest in German expansion into the Middle East probable originated from his time as ambassador in Bucharest. See W. Görlitz (Ed) *Der Kaiser...Aufzeichnungen des Chefs des Marinekabinetts Admiral Georg Alexander von Müller über die Ära Wilhelms II* (Göttingen:Musters Schmidt, 1965), 79.

³⁴ BD, Vol.X, Pt. II, No. 79, Grey-Goschen, 23 May 1913, 128.

³⁵ A. Hurd, 'The Dominions and Command of the Sea', *Fortnightly Review*, Vol. 96, 1914, 249.



The Gulf and wartime communications

At the beginning of 1914 the *Koloniale Rundschau* welcomed the 'pleasing progress radio telegraphy has made in and with the colonies.' In East Africa there were two stations on Lake Victoria, and Dar-es-salaam could reach ships up to 1,500km distant, and in Southwest Africa, Swakopmund and Lüderitz Bay could reach ships 1,000 km distant. Duala in Kamerun and Lome in Togo had a range of 1,00-1,500 km. In the Pacific, of the Yap-Rabaul-Nauru-Samoa link, the first two were operating, and there were ongoing trial transmissions between Yap and Tsingtau.³⁶ A direct connection of the Pacific net with Germany might be made possible over Sumatra-East Africa-Togo-Nauen if and when the Netherlands granted permission for the Sumatra station. While this was evidence of much local progress, Germany still had not succeeded in constructing its own independent world network independent of British links.³⁷ While not as extensive as originally envisaged, the links sufficed for everyday purposes, with extensions ongoing.

On 2 August 1914 Germany concluded an alliance with Turkey, and the actual command of the Turkish army passed to the Mission of General Otto Liman von Sanders, which had been under negotiation for some.³⁸ German activity in the Gulf throughout the course of the War until late 1917 pursued the aim of a communications belt circling the globe. Crucial to regional strategy was extension of existing and establishment of new communication lines, especially for naval operations in the Indian Ocean. The German aim was to control all cable access to the Gulf.³⁹ There was an urgent need to strengthen communication with Asia, so the Navy strongly supported any extension of the wireless network. The broader effect of this communication presence was that 'the result will be an increase in German influence'.⁴⁰ From early in 1915 there took place a series of conferences in the German Embassy in Constantinople to discuss how to provide Turkey with an extended wireless network. The key figures were the commander of the German Mediterranean Division Kap.z.S. Tägert, Admiral Hopman of the Navy Office attached to the Turkish Naval Ministry, Naval Attaché Humann representing the Turkish Navy, and Direktor Bredow of the Telefunken Company. Although the wireless proposal was primarily a private concession to Telefunken, military and naval interests guaranteed substantial government financial participation. This was essential to ensure uninterrupted communication with the Near East, East Africa, the Dutch Indies, and China. These stations were to be operated by a private company but at all times available to naval and military authorities, the Foreign Office, and the Colonial Office. Tägert proposed

³⁶ *Koloniale Rundschau*, Heft 1, 1914, 114.

³⁷ Bundesarchiv(BA) Koblenz, R85 777, *Hamburger Nachrichten*, 7 January 1914.

³⁸ M. Montgelas & W. Schücking (Eds) *Die deutschen Dokumente zum Kriegsausbruch* (Charlottenburg, 1919), Nos. 99, 117, 149, 364, 733.

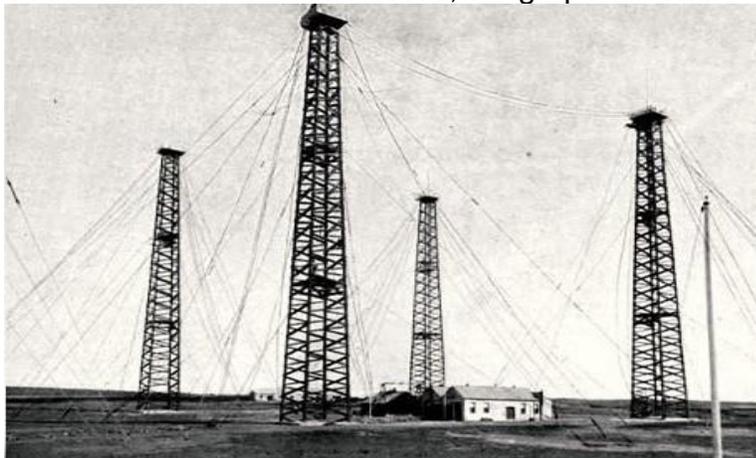
³⁹ BA Berlin, 901/80821, Bl. 121, Post Office-Foreign Office, 18 August 1916. The EETC planned a cable system in the Indian Ocean to land on the Turkish coast in the Gulf, and included cables in East Asia and the Pacific. Bl.165, Post Office-Foreign Office, 29 Sept 1916.

⁴⁰ BA Koblenz, R85 753, Bl.145, encl. Navy Office- Foreign Office, 2 June 1916.

two additional major transmitters for communication with the colonies and wireless stations in the Pacific.⁴¹



In 1916 the Foreign Office expressed a wish for the establishment of a transmitter station at Sana in Yemen of a station powerful enough to reach East Africa.⁴² There was also the need to connect with naval radio on the Dardenelles at Tschanak, although this was not powerful enough to communicate with submarines, for which the Wireless Station Osmanie was required.⁴³ In a meeting held in March 1916, Major Schlee (chief of the 'Osmanie' Station)⁴⁴ proposed that Germany should provide Turkey with an extended network, with two or three major stations needed to transmit to the colonies and East Asia.⁴⁵ In May 1916 the Admiralty Staff decided to restrict Turkish radio construction to what 'is of immediate military or future political and colonial value for the German Empire'. Such locations were Damascus, a high-power station at Konia or Eski, and Baghdad.⁴⁶



Ottoman transmitter in Patara, Anatolia

The course of the War, particularly the loss of the Pacific colonies and Kiautschou, added urgency to establishing an independent wireless network as a counter to the greater part of the world network which was in British hands, directly or indirectly: 'The stations of this world wireless network are a prerequisite for future military-political activity'.⁴⁷ A concession was granted to the Eastern European Telegraph Company for the construction of all cables from East Asia across the Indian Ocean to the Persian Gulf.⁴⁸ Foreign stations had to be German

⁴¹ BA Berlin, 901/80820, Bl.70, Aufzeichnung über die Besprechung vom 10 Dezember 1915 im RPA betr. der Errichtung eines FT-Netzes in der Türkei.

⁴² BA Berlin, 901/80821, Bl. 50, War Ministry-Colonial Office, 25 April 1916.

⁴³ BA Berlin, Bl. 51, War Ministry-Foreign Office, 27 April 1916.

⁴⁴ The 'Osmanie' Station near Constantinople began in August 1915, having cost M.3.5 million. The Navy had purchased the land, and it initially was seen as a backup for the Constanza (Romania)-Constantinople cable. BA Berlin, 901/80821, Bl.220, Schlee-Kühlmann, 22 February 1917.

⁴⁵ BA Berlin, 901/80821, Bl.3, Aufzeichnung über die Besprechung des Plans zur Errichtung eines funkentelegraphisches Netzes in der Türkei. Anlage zum Bericht 3639, Ambassador Constantinople, 31 March 1916. Draft concession is detailed in Entwurf für die Konzession, Bl.96, Post Office-Foreign Office, 27 July 1916.

⁴⁶ BA Berlin, 901/80821, Chief of Admiralty Staff-Commander Mediterranean Division, 14 May 1916.

⁴⁷ BA Berlin, 901/80821, Bl.21, Post Office-Foreign Office, 18 August 1916.

⁴⁸ Ibid., Bl. 179, Aufzeichnung über die Besprechung vom 13 Oktober 1916 im Reichs-Post-Amt.

built and remain in German hands, hence the emphasis on independence of the Turkish Imperial Network. In August 1917 the Post Office impressed on the Foreign Office the urgency of establishing a German world radio-telegraphy network. Its use for communication with ships and for foreign news had to be 'promoted with all possible means', and free from foreign influence. It was a final recognition that 'especially for Germany radio-telegraphy is of particular importance in the War'.⁴⁹

Conclusion

Bülow wrote in 1914 that 'German policy, even before it had secured a strong navy, was able to secure points of support which promised well for our international interests in the future'.⁵⁰ Yet despite considerable German activity in the region, the Gulf project did not develop to the extent planned, aiming at rail connections and coaling stations in Persia and Arabia.⁵¹ Germany was only able to establish a coaling station in the Farisan Islands, but withdrew in late 1902 after Russia protested.⁵² Frantic activity worked negatively for Germany, creating apprehension among the other powers, and its presence near the Gulf was a factor which made easier the Anglo-Russian *entente* of 1907.⁵³

The significance of German expansion on the 'periphery', which caused considerable disruption of international relations, was that it was considered essential to obtain those communication and naval bases around the world which were indispensable for future world expansion after the Continent and *Mitteleuropa* had been secured. A memorandum by Tirpitz' close colleague Admiral Adolf von Trotha pointed out in 1917 that Germany would need to control the entire Indian Ocean coast of Africa to hold the British in the Suez and Red Sea areas. With Turkey dominant in Arabia, Germany could control the trade routes from East Asia and the British Dominions.⁵⁴ In conjunction with similar operations affecting the Atlantic trade routes, Britain's economic survival would be completely dependent on German goodwill. It is within this larger picture of overall long-term intentions that German activity in the Gulf and onward into the Indian Ocean-Asia-Pacific region is significant and directly relevant to Australasia's wartime position.

⁴⁹ BA-MA, R85 762, Post Office-Foreign Secretary, 3 August 1917.

⁵⁰ Prince von Bülow, *Imperial Germany* (London:Cassell, 1914), 94.

⁵¹ See GP, Vol. XIV, Pt. II, Chap. XCIV 'Anhang: Deutsche Bahnbauten und Kohlenstationen in Persien und Arabien?', 507ff.

⁵² GP, Vol. XIV, Pt. II, Note on p. 529.

⁵³ W. Baumgart, *Deutschland im Zeitalter des Imperialismus 1890-1914* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1976), 78.

⁵⁴ BA-MA Nachlass Levetzow, N239/19, Bd. 2, Denkschrift Trotha, 'Aufgaben der Marine nach dem Kriege', 1 July 1917. See also P. Overlack, 'Asia in German Naval Planning before the First World War: The Strategic Imperative', *War & Society*, Vol.17, No. 1, May 1999, 1-24.