

# THE SULTANATE OF OMAN AND THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA IN 1990 (A HISTORICAL VIEW)

**Dr. Said Bin Mohammed Bin Said Al-Hashmi**

Associate Prof. of Modern and Contemporary History  
College of Arts and Social Sciences  
Sultan Qaboos University

## **Abstract**

*The International border agreement was signed between The Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in Hafr Al Batin on the 21<sup>st</sup> of March 1990 during the visit of HM Sultan Qaboos of Oman to Saudi Arabia. The two leaders of the two countries signed the agreement while the two Interior Ministers of both countries signed the annexes. The agreement consists of ten articles and two annexes which organize the border authorities, movement, and benefiting from waters in the border area. Hansa Luftbid German Air force Surveys Company was chosen for border demarcation between the two countries. The completion of the work was celebrated on July 1<sup>st</sup> 1995 in Riyadh where the final maps were signed too.*

*This paper sheds light on the objectives and articles of this agreement, showing what has been really implemented of the agreement and the desired results through the study of these ten articles and their political, economic, and social impact on the society and the strengthening of closer communication and cooperation and good neighborly relations between the two peoples. The paper also deals with the historical background to the problem of the border, which lasted several decades. It focuses on the procedures of implementing the agreement and the international company that conducted the survey and set the borderline, the border signposts and the detailed maps in accordance to article two of the agreement.*

*The researcher depended on an original copy of the agreement, which was published in al-Azmina al-Arabiyya Journal, the final report of the executing company, and the published articles in the daily papers covering the signing event with what followed of polls, statements, and exchange of congratulatory cables.*

**Keyboard:** border agreement, Oman, Saudi Arabia

## **1- Introduction: Historical Background of the border problem**

The borders which are the subject of this study are the 657, 4 Kms western borders of the Sultanate of Oman, that is the Empty Quarter. The international border agreement was the result of rounds of talks and sessions between the two countries where some visions of the border line were suggested, starting back in 1934. Rounds of talks were held in 1949 and 1952 (Kelly 1971, p.36) but the negotiations had not led to satisfactory results for the two parties. In 1954, the two countries reached an agreement to refer the problem to the International Court of Justice for arbitration.

The problem started back in 1933 when the United States of America asked The Republic of Turkey to provide her with any documents pertaining to the eastern borders of the kingdom after The Standard Oil of California won the concession for oil exploration on the 14<sup>th</sup> of July 1933 by virtue of a Saudi Royal

Decree (al-Aqqad 1965, p. 305; al-Sayyar, 1996, p. 100). The rights of this concession agreement were transferred to the Arabian-American Oil Company, known as ARAMCO in 1936. The Saudi government did not provide the company with any document showing its eastern borders.

The Turkish Government referred the issue to the British Embassy in Ankara, requesting it to provide them with July 29<sup>th</sup> 1913 agreement, which by turn was referred to the British Foreign Ministry. Britain sent the United States a memorandum on the 24<sup>th</sup> of April 1934 including the 1913 and 1936 agreements regarding al-Ihsa' Sanjaq borders with Qatar and Shaikhdoms of the coast of Oman and the Sultanate of Oman (The Blue Line 1913) which were agreed upon between The Ottoman and Great British Governments (March, 1981, p. 257; al-Sayyar, 1996, p. 101). This agreement was endorsed in a treaty between the Ottoman and British Governments in March 1914, concerning the borders between Aden Protectorate and North Yemen (the Violet Line 1914). In article three of this agreement reference was made to the Blue Line which marked Yemen borders. The line, which started from the south (Aden Protectorate) and ended at a point located at al-Aqair Gulf which corresponded with the Blue line, which was defined by the British-Ottoman treaty, held on 29<sup>th</sup> July 1913 referred to above. In the Darain agreement between King Abdel Aziz Ibin Saud and Britain on the 26<sup>th</sup> December 1915 the authority of Ibin Saud and his government was recognized on the basis of the May 15<sup>th</sup>, 1914 agreement between Ibin Saud and The Ottoman Government, in which Ibin Saud was content with being the Ottoman Wali (governor) over Hijaz for life followed by his successors/inheritors, provided that they respect in all cases treaties concluded between the Ottoman government and other countries (British Memorandum/memo, appendix 4). According to Article VI of the Convention, Bin Saud, like his predecessors/ancestors pledged, "Undertakes to abstain from all acts/forms of aggression or intervention in the territory of Kuwait, Bahrain and the elders/sheikhs of Qatar and the coast of Oman because they were all under the protection of the British government and because they are all tied with the British Government with treaties which will determine and delimit their territories/possessions later (Kelly, 1971, p. 175; al-Sayyar, 1996, p. 96). Ibin Saud also signed another agreement with Britain on the 25<sup>th</sup> May 1927 after he annexed Hijaz to his authority and domination in which he pledged his commitment and respect to all his agreements with Britain, vowing no aggression on or intervention in his neighbors (al-Sayyar, 1996, p. 96).

Accordingly, Ibin Saud was under the obligation/bound to respect the agreements and treaties, including the Blue Line which had acquired its legal status by virtue of 1914 treaty (the violet line 1914), but Ibin Saud rejected this line and withdrew/disavowed from his agreement with Britain and he maintained that his country's borders are beyond these two lines (the Blue 1913 and the Violet 1914) (al-'Aydarus, 1979, p. 215). The Blue line starts from Zaqnuniyya Island facing the coasts of al-Ihsa' near Aqair and ends at an intersection point in the Empty Quarter at point 20 north, then it moves south until it reaches west of Aden, separating North and South Yemen at 45 degree.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia based its first and second expansions of its country in the 19<sup>th</sup> century on historical legacy, ignoring the historical rights of the Emirates of the coast of Oman and the Sultanate of Oman.

Mr. Fuad Hamza, the deputy of the Kingdom Foreign Ministry protested to the British government about the contents of the memorandum submitted to the United States Embassy regarding the issue of borders. He stated in the protest that his country cannot consider the Blue Line and the Violet line the right borders between the Kingdom and its Yemeni, Omani, and the Gulf Shaikhdoms neighbors. This prompted the officials in both countries to search for a way out and a solution for this dispute through exchanging memorandums in this regard. Fuad Hamza submitted a memo to the British Ambassador in Jeddah on the 3<sup>rd</sup> April, 1935 containing proposed borders between the Kingdom and the Gulf Sheikdoms (Qatar and the Emirates), Oman and Aden protectorate.

Fuad's proposals were known as Fuad's line or "**the Red Line 1935**" which formed the basis for later negotiations. Fuad set the line of eastern borders of the Kingdom from the cape of Doha-Salwa going five miles east then proceeds south to reach the eastern coast seven miles north of Khor el-Edaid then moves ten miles south then the line proceeds east and south east in the form of arc until it meets/connects with longitude line 56<sup>o</sup> east to the point where it intersects/connects with latitude line 19<sup>o</sup> north then it moves south west to longitude line 52<sup>o</sup> east and meeting point with latitude line 17<sup>o</sup> going parallel to it until it connects with the violet line of 1914 (Kelly, 1971, p. 194).

Fuad's proposal was not accepted by the British officials which prompted Sir Andrew Ryan Minister Plenipotentiary (minister commissioned) in Jeddah to submit a memorandum on the 9<sup>th</sup> April 1935, just six days after Fuad's proposal, in which he set a new border line carrying the name "**the Green line**" which started at the cape of Doha-Salwa going south east to a point five miles north east of Skak then it turned direct south to line 20° north until it meets/intersects with the Violet line at a point to be agreed upon.

In July 1935 negotiations based on the two proposals started in London but it seems that these negotiations did not lead to any agreement as each party adhered to its claims and thus the negotiations came to an end with the agreement that the British delegation will do further studies of the tribal situation in the area.

Towards the end of November 1935, Sir Andrew Ryan submitted a memorandum to Fuad Hamza proposing new border lines which start from Salwa-Doha moving south east turning around the southern edge of Matiy oasis (shallow waters) heading east parallel to the north borders of the Empty Quarter to the point where longitude line 55° east intersects with latitude line 20° north. From there it goes south west going in a straight line to the point where longitude line 52° east intersects with latitude line 19° north then goes in a straight line until it meets with the Violet Line at its intersecting point with Latitude line 18° north. This line was known as "**Rayan or Riyadh line**". However, the Saudi government refused this line as it did not meet their claims in Nakhsh Mountain and Khor el-Edaid. The talks came to a halt for one year after that but they were resumed in 1937, focusing on some dispute points between the Sheikhdome of Oman coast and Qatar and the Saudi claims of their ownership such as Nakhsh mountain and Khor el-Edeid and Safuq Well which is actually 12 miles off the shore while the Saudis thought it was 40 miles. The talks did not get anywhere and the negotiations stopped due to the World War II.

Upon the visit of the British political officer in the Shaikhdoms of Oman Mr. B.D. Stobart and Shaikh Hazza' bin Sultan, the brother of the ruler of Abu Dhabi, Shaikh Shakhbut bin Sultan to ARAMCO camps in Safuk area, the company was asked to stop the exploration of oil in the area and leave the area as it belonged to the ruler of Abu Dhabi (The Saudi Memorandum part 1, p. 397). As a result, the negotiations between the two parties started afresh, on the assumption that the settlement would be on the basis of what is under the authority of His Majesty the King and what is under the authority of the princes and shaikhs. In September 1949, the two parties sat at the table of negotiations where the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia submitted the following claims: (Map: 1)

1. The borders between Qatar and the Kingdom shall start at a point on the coast of Doha-Salwa on line 25° and 56' minutes north (point A).
2. The border line goes from point A east until it intersects with Longitude Line 51° east (point B).
3. This line goes straight from point B until it reaches the sea at Latitude line 34° degrees and 48' minutes north (point C) where the border line between Qatar and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia ends.
4. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia considered that its border line with Abu Dhabi shall
  - a. Start from a point at the Gulf coast between Bandar al-Marfa and Bandar al-Munira, 2 KMs east of Bandar al-Marfa (point A)
  - b. This line goes south east from this point straight until it reaches Latitude Line 23° degree and 56 minutes ( Point B)
  - c. From this point, the line goes straight to the east until it reaches Longitude line 54° degree (point C).
  - d. From there, the line goes straight to the point of intersection of Latitude line 24° degree and 25' minutes with Longitude line 55° degree and 36' minutes (points D).
5. As for the territory/land south and east of the Latitude line 24° degrees and 25' minutes north and the longitude line 55° degree and 36' minutes east, it will be under the authority/jurisdiction of the Shaikhdom's of Oman coast which were not tied with any treaties with the British Government and so the borders between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and these Shaikhdoms will be agreed upon between the two parties (The Saudi Memorandum Part 1, pp. 399-401)

It has to be noticed here that the Kingdom avoided referring to or mentioning its borders with Oman but only focused on the borders with Qatar and Abu Dhabi. The British government refused the Kingdom's claims describing them as unrealistic because the Kingdom had included in these claims places and areas it had recognized previously (Fuad Line 1935) as parts of the Shaikhdoms of Oman coast. Between November

1949 -1950 the two countries exchanged memorandums of accusations and allegations which prompted the British government to submit a memorandum in which to remind the Saudi government of its documented obligations with the Ottoman government and with 1913, 1914 and 1915 agreements. The Saudi ruler was also reminded that he was a subject (citizen) of the Ottoman Empire and so he was not in a position to claim rights of property of areas east of the Blue Line on the basis of events that happened prior to that date. Ultimately, the British Government submitted a proposal to form a special committee/commission to investigate the tribes loyalty and in case this committee failed , the whole issue shall be referred to arbitration by an independent body.( Kelly, Ibid: 232) . The commission concluded by holding round table talks in Dammam during the period between January to February 1952 which was attended by Prince Faisal bin Abdel Aziz, head of Saudi delegation which also included Sheikh Yousef Yasin deputy Foreign minister, Prince Saud bi Jalawi, governor of al-Ihasa and Shaikh Wihba the Saudi Ambassador to London . The delegation of the Shaikhdoms of Oman and Qatar was headed by Robert Hay, the British political resident in the Gulf, and included Shaikh Qatar Ali bin Abdulla Al Thani, and Shaikh Shakhbut bin Sultan. The sessions focused only on the topic of the borders between The Kingdom and Abu Dhabi and Qatar. The conference did not conclude with any agreement but only to continue the talks of the basis of the 1935 Red Line but the no meetings were held after that (see the border lines in appendix 2).

The events started accelerating as the Kingdom dispatched Turki bin Abdulla bin 'A'taishan with 50 militants to Buraimi which they reached on 31<sup>st</sup> August 1952 where they stayed in the village of Hamassa. Ibin 'Ataishan conveyed messages from Saud bin Jalawi, the Prince of al-Ihasa to the regions shaikhs calling on them to support Prince Turki to establish his authority there .

That act escalated the tense situation and the region entered into a state of grave disturbance between the Sultanate and the Kingdom and between the tribes' pro Saudi intervention and those against it. The United States intervened/mediated between the two parties to deflate the tension, especially after both H.M. Sultan Said bin Taymur (1932-1970) and Imam Muhammad bin Abdullah Al-Khalaili (1920-1954) mobilized their forces in Suhar and al-Draiz (near 'Abri). They reached an agreement to take the case to International arbitration under the Jeddah agreement signed on the 30<sup>th</sup> July 1954 (Kelly, 1971, pp. 266f). However, the first session of arbitration which was held in Nice in southern France in September 1955 failed for reasons the explanation of which is beyond the scope of this paper (al-Sayyar, Ibid, p. 111). Ultimately, Sultan Said bin Taymour was able with the help of the British and take (regain) back Buraimi after the eviction of the Saudi garrison from it in October 1955 and the dispute remained under the scenes of the British politics. However, matters took another turn when H. M. Sultan Qaboos ascended to the throne in 1970 and the establishment of the union among the Shaikhdoms of Oman coast in 1971. H. M. Sultan paid a visit to Saudi Arabia in October 1971 which was followed by a joint communique in which the Kingdom abandoned/dropped its claims in Oman's territories.in Buraimi (al-Ash'al, 1978, p. 56). Thus the issue of Bureimi was solved but that of the borders remained until 1990, twenty years after the joint statement referred to above.

The government of Abu Dhabi signed an agreement with the Saudi government on the 27<sup>th</sup> August 1974 in which the borders between them were determined. However, in doing this, Abu Dhabi had given up land which did not belong to it but it was Omani territory. Instead of identifying/recognizing the village of al-Qurain to be its borders with the Kingdom and so this village will be the tristate borders meeting point, it was agreed that the village of Umm al-Zamul (Omani territory) would be the border point against which Oman objected.

### **(1) The Agreement and its Contents**

In the wake of the tenth summit meeting of the supreme council of the GCC countries in Muscat in the period between 19-22 Jumadi al-wal, 1410/18-21 December 1989, H. M. King Fahad bin Abdel-Aziz paid a 3-day private visit to the Sultanate (22-24 December 1989) in which the talks between the two leaders focused on consultations and coordination regarding the demarcation of the borders between the two countries and the means of concluding an agreement on these issues. It seems that these talks had resulted into a consensus in views and the desire to demarcate the borders to bring stability to the region and settle the issues of borders and thus officials of both countries embarked on writing up a draft agreement to do this according to status quo.



Three months later, on the 20<sup>th</sup> March 1990, H. M. Sultan Qaboos paid a visit to the Kingdom and on the following day the historic international border agreement between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was signed in Hafr al-Batin. After the signing ceremony, H. M. Sultan Qaboos gave a short speech in which he thanked the King of Saudi Arabia for his kindness, generosity, reception, and hard work for bringing to success that great and historic agreement which will strengthen the deep-rooted relations between the two countries and make them more coherent and that there is no doubt that day in history will be well-remembered in the two countries. (Oman Newspaper, issued Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 1990; Akhbar al-Manama newspaper issued 11<sup>th</sup> November, 1995; Mujaz (brief) Yawmiyyat al-Wihada al-Arabiya issue No. 99, Sep. 1995, p. 173).

The Arab World received the news of signing the agreement with great pleasure and support. Arab World and international media broke the news with commendation, praise, and good statesmanship. A Royal Decree was issued on the 5<sup>th</sup> of Ramadan 1410/31<sup>st</sup> of March 1990 endorsing/ratifying the agreement on the international borders and the two annexes between the Sultanate of Oman and The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Um al-Qura newspaper, issue no. 3305, Ramadan 1410).

#### **(A) Analysis of the terms of the agreement**

This agreement which was signed in the place and on the dates mentioned above consisted of a preamble, ten articles and two annexes signed by the ex- Interior Ministers of the two countries: Sayyid Badr bin Saud Al-Bu Saidi, of Oman, and His Royal Highness late Prince Nayif bin Abdel-Azizi Al Saud, of Saudi Arabia on the same day of signing the agreement.

##### 1. The Preamble

The Preamble consisted of three paragraphs

- Paragraph one carried the names of the two leaders as a symbol of appreciation of their efforts
- Paragraph two stated the justifications and rationalization (recitals) of signing the treaty stating that "In accordance with the norms and principles of Islamic Shari'a, which the Muslim nation believes in, and prompted by the desire to cement the fraternity ties and friendship and the links of kinship bonds existing among the GCC countries, and based on the strong brotherly ties and good neighborly relations between the two countries...."
- Paragraph three stated the Preamble of the agreement which states that the two countries
  - desiring to delimit and demarcate once and for all the lasting borders between them
  - In the spirit of Islamic and Arab brotherhood.
  - In view of this spirit and cordiality (upon which the hopes of the two countries were built to establish the brotherly grounds with full conviction and great objectives to promote and deepen the brotherly bonds and respect... or as expressed by His Majesty the Sultan "to make this agreement an inseparable integration...

##### 2. Articles 1 and 2

Articles one and two identified the border line (total 657.4 KM) between the two countries, starting from the area of Umm al-Zamul North to Ramlat Shuaib South, at intersection point of Latitude 19<sup>0</sup> north and longitude 52<sup>0</sup> east. This line divided the border line to four major points/sectors (A, B, C, and D) as it can be seen in Map two (pls. see map 2)

- Point A: borders start from the village of Umm al-Zamul with geographical coordinates of Latitude 22<sup>0</sup>, 12' minutes and 30" seconds north ; and longitude line 55<sup>0</sup> degrees, 12' and 30" east, Then it proceeds 91.5 KM south east to reach the second major point B.
- Point B: starts at intersection point of Latitude 22<sup>0</sup> North and Longitude line 55<sup>0</sup> and 40' minutes east then turns 232 Kms south west to get to major point C.
- Point C: starts at latitude point 20<sup>0</sup> north and longitude 55<sup>0</sup> degrees east then it turns 333.9 Kms west until it meets with point D.
- Point D: the border line reaches Ramlat Shu'aib at intersection point of latitude 19<sup>0</sup> north and longitude 52<sup>0</sup> east.

### 3. **Article Three**

This article deals with awarding the tender of the demarcation process of the borders to an international specialized company, which will be required to conduct a survey and to identify the points and line of borders on ground and then prepare the needed detailed maps of the land boundary between the two countries. These maps, once signed by the representatives of the two countries, shall be recognized as official maps indicating the boundary between the two countries and shall be an integral part of this the agreement. Hansa Luftbild German Air Surveys company won the tender and so was chosen to do the job and then the awarding documents were signed in Riyadh on the 8<sup>th</sup> of Shawwal 1411 H corresponding to April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1991. Engineer George Figman signed for the company. The minutes of delivering the site to the company were signed on the 26<sup>th</sup> Thu-al-Qi'da, 1411/9<sup>th</sup> June 1991 and the company received the site on the 5<sup>th</sup> Muharram 1411/16<sup>th</sup> July 1991.

### 4. **Article Four**

Article four stipulated that a joint technical committee shall be formed whose duties and responsibilities shall be specified mainly in setting the specifications and the supervision on the execution of the demarcation of the borders. The committee consisted of three members from each country in addition to its chairman as follows:

#### **On the Saudi Part:**

- |  |        |
|--|--------|
| 1. Lieutenant General Khalaf bin Ali al-Haidi, | Head   |
| 2. Mr. Ahmed bin Hamad Al-'Azzawi              | Member |
| 3. Colonel Mohammad bin Khalid al-Shaibani,    | Member |
| 4. Mr. Abdulla bin Abdel-Aziz al-'Ifan,        | Member |

#### **On the Omani Part:**

- |  |        |
|--|--------|
| 1. Sayyid Sultan bin Ahmed bin Saud al-Bu Saidi, | Head   |
| 2. Colonel Ali bin Abdulla bin Said al-Daylami,  | Member |
| 3. Major Awad bin Batti bin Saif al-Manthari     | Member |
| 4. Mr. Ali bin Ahmed bin Ali al-Sinani           | Member |

The head of the Omani committee was Sayyid Sultan bin Ahmed bin Saud Al-Busaidi, ex-undersecretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, while the head of the Saudi committee was engineer Lieutenant General Khalaf bin Ali Al –Haidi from the department of military survey in the Ministry of Defense and Air Force. An equal and equivalent/comparable team of engineers and technicians was formed from the two countries (the number of the supporting team was 63 of which 42 were from Saudi Arabia and 21 from Oman).

### 5. **Article Five**

This article dealt with the identification of the markers on the borders and the distances and bearings from one point to the next. The total number of the border points was 341 along the 657.4 Kms border line. These points were distributed as follows. (See the form and place of such points in the Appendix)

- Four main border points (A, B, C, and D)
- 138 secondary border points
- 199 guidance pillars (posts)

Secondary border points were positioned between the four main points at five Km equal distances. To reduce the distance between some of the secondary points, guidance pillars (posts) were erected between these points at distances which were identified based on the nature of the physical features of the land. For example, in the distance between the main point A and B, amounting to about 91.5 Kms, 18 secondary border points were positioned and an equal number of guidance pillars (posts) were erected.

### 6. **Article six**

This article specifies and sets the methods of settling arising disputes in the process of the demarcation of the borders or may arise after that. The article stated that such disputes shall be solved in an amicable manner and through direct contacts and based on the principle of equality and mutual benefit without prejudice to any of the two parties.

## 7. Article Seven

This article deals with the manner of organizing the border authorities, grazing rights, movement across the borders, benefitting and using sources of water in the border areas. However, the article did not specify this manner of organization so two annexes (referred to above which were signed by the ministers of Interior in both countries) were added to detail this. The researcher was not given access to these annexes and so did not know their content. Yet, one may infer from this article that there were detailed procedures and control over the movement between the two countries, benefitting and using water resources and grazing. General director of the Saudi borders guards, Mu'jab bin Mohammed Al-Qahtani stated to *Middle East Paper* issued on the 21<sup>st</sup> of July 1995 that "the border agreement signed by the two countries stipulated the free movement of the tribes across the borders and the right for grazing in the semi-desert areas but according to guidelines and instructions controlling and organizing this". Such guidelines and instructions may be within the duties of the border authorities of the two countries.

The Sultanate completed the land road connecting it to the Kingdom back in 2005. This road on the Omani side links the center of Wilayat (governorate) 'Abri to Ramalat Kheela on the borders, 142 Kms west of 'Abri; yet the road on the Saud side has not been finished yet.

The land line/road in the Sultanate passes by/through four Omani Wilayats: Wilayat 'Abri in al-Thahirah governorate with 91.5 Kms, Wilayat Haimah in the central region with 232 Kms, Wilayat Maqshan anf al-Mazyunah region with 333.9 Kms.

## 8. Articles Eight to Ten

Articles eight to ten dealt with the agreement per se regarding drafting up the agreement in two original copies in Arabic so every country shall keep one copy, the implementation of the agreement after signing it, the exchange of instruments for ratification from the two countries, the date of its drafting in Hafr Al-Batin in both Hijri and Gregorian calendars.

The agreement was signed at the bottom/appendix by the two leaders: to the right was the signature of H. King Fahad, The Monarch of Saudi Arabia, and to the left the signature of H. M. Sultan Qaboos bin Said, Sultan of Oman.

### **(B) Phases of border demarcation**

Article three states that surveying, delimiting and marking the border points and line shall be awarded to Hansa Luftbild German Air Surveys Company and the awarding documents were signed in Riyadh on the 8<sup>th</sup> of Shawwal 1411/ 22<sup>nd</sup> April, 1991. Engineer George Figman signed for the company. The minutes of site delivery to the company were signed on the 26<sup>th</sup> Thu-al-Qi'da, 1411/9<sup>th</sup> June 1991 and the company received the site on the 5<sup>th</sup> of Muharram 1412 H/16<sup>th</sup> of July 1991. The execution of the work took four years as the executing company finished the project in Shawwal 1415/March 1995. The demarcation of borders and producing the maps was executed in four stages:

### **Phases One and Two**

At these phases, the main works of field surveying among the four main points stated in article two herein (see above) and establishing/erecting the concrete 341 markers (pillars) based on calculations of the right distances to locate the points accurately using the G.P.C to identify the points along the 657.4 km border line using the satellites. All field operations and explorations aiming at locating the proper positions of all points were executed by technicians from the executing company together with the members of the field technical team supported by local guides. At this stage, all denominations of topographical phenomena and features located in the border strip were collected by teams consisting of one member from the executing company team fluent in Arabic language, local guides and a selected number of the Omani-Saudi field technical team.

### **Phase Three**

At this phase, all works of aerial photography and the processing of the air pictures and films of the whole border line were done, using the advanced means of aerial photography such as planes and cameras which helped in identifying a number of points.

#### **Phase Four**

At this phase, maps were produced and printed, using the most advanced technology of printing machines with different scales and aerial photography was conducted at a scale of 1:50,000 for the border strip and at scale 1:25,000 for the main border points and at scale of 1:500,000 for the whole border line area whose dimensions were 500 Km X 500 in which information about the face/surface of the map such as buildings, roads, water resources, plantation phenomena, border markers, and geographical names. Two hundred eight-colored maps were produced to document the borderline and the border strip.

#### **(C) Project Delivery and Exchange of Maps**

After putting the land marks and producing the maps, the final maps for the borders between the two countries were signed during a big ceremony in Riyadh on Monday the 12<sup>th</sup> Safar 1415 /10<sup>th</sup> July 1995. Sayyid Sultan bin Ahmed bin Saud Al-Bu Saidi, ex-undersecretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, head of the Omani side on the joint committee signed on behalf of the Omani government while engineer Lieutenant General Khalaf bin Ali al-Haidi from the department of military survey in the Ministry of Defense and Air Force, head of the Saudi side on the joint executive committee signed on behalf of the Saudi government.

Three speeches were delivered: one by the head of the Omani delegation, the second by the head of Saudi delegation, and the third by the company manager, in which the speakers talked about the importance of the agreement and its objectives, the works of the executive committee, the phases of the project, the manner the project was executed by the company, the difficulties that faced the team, and the use of advanced and sophisticated technology. The following are excerpts of the Omani speech: "the border line is no more than a geographic line but the brotherly and respect and cordial relations and the historic, blood, and language ties are stronger and more everlasting and stronger evidence of extending bridges of communication and showing a more determined will and continuously opening the windows, and strengthening neighborhood ties forever". He added that "we in Oman and Saudi Arabia are proud of this great achievement and the way the agreement was concluded between our two great and historic nations and the good results of this agreement not only at the local level of the two countries but also at the regional as well as the international levels". The speech of the Saudi representative was even more challenging as it touched on the work of the technical committee and the phases of the project. He said "the committee has worked for the last four years in a very friendly atmosphere with the spirit of brotherhood and fruitful cooperation which made it possible to achieve all works entrusted to us as a joint team in response to H. M. Sultan Qaboos and the King Fahd bin Abdul-Aziz, the committee had prepared all technical specifications and then conducted the works of supervision and inspection of all phases of the project of the demarcation of the borders with the participation and help of the specialized field engineers and technicians".

This agreement and the signing of the final maps have echoed favorably world-wide where the Arab and international papers quoted the news. The leaders of the two countries received cables of congratulations on the occasion and the following day (July 11<sup>th</sup> 1995) statements of many officials in the Gulf region were released. The secretary general of the GCC at the time, Sheikh Faahim bin Sultan al-Qasimi, described this project saying that "this blessed step shall contribute to the strengthening of the integrity of the Gulf house and shall pave the way to more coordination and cooperation and provide a solid ground for collective work in the context and framework of GCC, which will ultimately enhance security and stability in the region and bring benefits and well-being to the states and people of the Gulf". *Okath Newspaper* issued on July 11<sup>th</sup>, 1995 published an editorial which said that "by signing of the border demarcation agreement between the Sultanate and the Kingdom, the GCC countries set an example to the world at large to be followed." Qatar cabinet of ministers praised the demarcation of the borders. Similarly, late Sheikh Isa bin Salman Al Khalifah, X- Emir of Bahrain, commended this agreement as his Prime minister was quoted saying "This step shall deepen and strengthen the bonds of solidarity and love and is considered as a new addition to the Arab constructive work".

It was referred above that the number of border line and strip maps was 200 in different scales and measurements. The company delivered fifty copies of each plate to each country. The final printing was done on special synthetic advanced paper in accordance with the best standards in terms of water resistance and foundation properties. The initial colored paper editions of the maps were produced on



regular map paper. The dimensions of the printing plates range between 75cm X80cm for the smallest scale size 1:10,000 to 103.5 cmX130cm for the largest scale 1:500,000.

#### **(D) Border Crossing Ports**

The Sultanate and the Kingdom decided to open border-crossing ports across the Empty Quarter. This was announced in the joint statement issued by his Royal Highness Late Prince Nayef bin AbdelAziz, the then Saudi interior minister and His Excellency Sayyid Saud bin Hamad Al-Bu Saidi, the Oman ex-interior minister regarding establishing border crossing ports. The following is the text of the joint communique:

#### **The two countries,**

- With the help and blessing of Allah and upon the directives of the Custodian of the two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdel-Aziz of Saudi Arabia and his Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said of Oman.
- Taking into consideration the deep-rooted kinships existing ties between the two countries.
- realizing the distinguished fraternal relations between them
- in the context of their joint concern for developing the relations between the two countries and brotherly peoples in the various fields
- desiring to facilitate movement across the borders and to increase the level of trade exchange and transport of goods between them through establishing connecting road network to serve development in the two countries
- in the framework of the meeting of senior border authorities between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Sultanate of Oman held in Riyadh in the period between the eleventh and thirteenth of Thu al-Qi'da 1427 /2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> December 2006

have decided to announce officially the start of establishing the border crossing port between the two brotherly countries which be referred to as "Empty Quarter Port" in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and "Ramlat Khailah port" in the Sultanate of Oman. All necessary measurements were taken to establish the necessary installations and special facilities for this and to pave the roads and providing the other needed equipment for the execution of the crossing port by the concerned authorities in the two countries

Issued in Riyadh Saturday the 11<sup>th</sup> Thu al-Qi'da 1427/2<sup>nd</sup> December, 2006.

The pavement of the road in the two countries had already started. The Sultanate of Oman had completed establishing the 142 kms road connecting Abri with Ramlat Khailah in 1425 /2005 and simultaneously started establishing the buildings and the iron gates.

Picture of the paved road between the center of Wilayat Abri and Ramlat Khailah with the surveying plate The kingdom as well had started paving the road starting from Albathaa crossing port with the Emirates until the border point with Oman at the village of Umm al-Zamul. Stage one with 390 km is underway together with establishing buildings and entrance gates. The following map shows the paved part and the remaining one .

#### **Conclusion**

The paper has reviewed the history of the borders between the Sultanate and the Kingdom since the beginning of the twentieth century. It has referred to the Blue line, which was the subject of a draft agreement between the British Government and the Ottoman Government in 1913 regarding the borderline between the Ottoman Empire and the Arabian Gulf Emirates, and referred to the Violet line, which is an extension of the Blue line up to Yemen. This was also an agreement signed by the British Government and the Ottoman Empire during the demarcation of the borders between the Imamate of Yemen and Aden British Protectorate, which acknowledged the Blue Line.

The researcher avoided going into the historical details and the discussions of the various points of view regarding the border rights as this is beyond the discussion of the border agreement signed in 1990. Brief reference was made to the borderlines, which were the subject of discussions at the time and the obstacles facing them.

The paper has revealed that the conflict over the borders in 1934 started when the Kingdom granted the American companies the concession to explore for oil in its eastern borders in July 1933. The companies

then requested information about the real borders from Turkey which referred the issue to the British Government which in turn submitted 1913 and 1914 agreements to the American companies, and that Bin Saud, who took over the Turkish sovereignty over the regions west and north west of the Blue and violet lines, pledged to the British government in 1914 agreement, which was conducted in Qaroun Island off the coast of al-Qataif, to honor all treaties signed by the Turkey regarding this area.

The paper explained that the kingdom refused these borders and submitted instead Fuad line. The British responded by submitting what was called the Line of Riyadh as an alternative but the break of WW1 brought all negotiations to a total halt until 1949 which then took a new line of claims and proposals for which conferences were held in London and Dammam; yet, these negotiations stumbled again when the Kingdom force occupied Al-Bureimi Oasis in 1952.

The paper has referred to the visit of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos to the Kingdom in October 1972 and the settlement of outstanding disputes and differences regarding Bureimi from which the Kingdom withdrew giving it back to Oman as per the joint statement made following that visit. This had led to the strengthening of the relations between the two countries and contributed to the Kingdom's political, cultural, and economic support. This brotherly relation culminated in the establishment of the GCC in which the two countries played a major role in bridging the differences and promoting development in the whole region.

The paper finally analyzed 1990 agreement, regarding its contents, the ten articles, steps and phases of implementing it until the borders were demarcated and the final maps and border lines were put on ground by Hansa Luftbid German Air force Surveys, and the project was finally delivered in 1995. The study has reviewed the notational, regional and international positive reactions and responses toward this agreement in media and official statements. This agreement has facilitated the freedom of movement for the people residing in the two sides of the borders and reflected the deep-rooted relations between the two countries. It seems that there will be several joint projects underway through this border communication, including the establishment of a network of roads to connect the two countries, which will ultimately have a very promising return.



Map:1

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