





## Safavids allied themselves with all European colonial states in Arab World

Despite the attempts of Shah Ismail, founder of the Safavid state, to give his project a sectarian tint on the Safavid pattern in Iran, his real project is essentially political. We shall not be exaggerating if we say that the Safavid colonial project aimed, right from the outset, to control the eastern wing of the Arab region, especially Iraq and the coasts of Arab Gulf. To confirm that, we have to remember what a Persian politician said about Iraq: "Alas Iraq! That beautiful country fell into the hands of that Iraqi people!! If it was ours, and God will give it to us, it shall then become a paradise".

It was not surprising that the Safavid colonial tendency converged with the European Crusader colonial ambitions, which became a great danger not only to the Arab region, but also to the entire Islamic world.

First pages of the Safavid colonial alliance begin with European Crusader colonial forces at the hands of Shah Ismail the Safavid, the founder of the state, as well as with Portuguese colonialism. In order to realize how heinousness was that disgraceful alliance and its bad influence on the Arab and Islamic world, we need to remember what Portuguese colonialism did, almost at the same time, in Maghreb region; Portugal was not satisfied with what it and Spain did to the Muslims in Andalusia by ending their rule, conducting inquisition courts and massacres against the remaining Muslims in Andalusia, they started, followed by Spain, attempting to invade the Al-Maghreb Al-Arabi in to control it. The Portuguese campaign was the first and they succeeded in seizing the Moroccan port of Ceuta, overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. Since that time, Ceuta has not returned to the Moroccan homeland as Spain inherited it when the Portuguese crown submitted to Spain.


**Persians tried to manipulate colonial powers to achieve their own gains in the Arabian Gulf, but they failed**


Egyptian historian Shawky El-Gamal describes these Portuguese-Spanish campaigns against the Maghreb saying: "These wars were no less ferocious than the wars that took place in the East between the Muslims and the Europeans who came hiding behind the cross of Christ. Thus, we can say that the wave of Crusades that subsided in the East started again in Al-Maghreb Al-Arabi. Any follower would be amazed at the course transfer of those wars from the Levant to Egypt, then to Tunisia, Algeria and Al-Maghreb Al-Aqsa".

In Arab East, Safavid and Portuguese colonial alliance was held to devour the Arabian Gulf region as the Portuguese turned around Africa to reach and control the Arab and Islamic waters. Shah Ismail Al-Safavi concluded a suspicious deal with the Portuguese that would allow the latter to control the Hormuz Island, which controls the strait, thus controlling the navigation traffic in the Arabian Gulf.

The real goal behind this deal was for Portugal to agree to Iran's control of areas of the Arabian Peninsula that overlook the Arabian Gulf. However, after their control of Hormuz, the Portuguese refused to allow the Safavids to reach the Arabian Peninsula because Portuguese ambitions were similar to Safavid ambitions. Abdel Aziz Nawwar explains the extent of the bad influence of this Portuguese-Safavid alliance on the history of the Arabian Gulf for several decades, saying: "The result was that this Shah's policy helped to strengthen Portuguese domination over the Arabian Gulf".

As for the era of Shah Abbas the Great, it was the peak of the pragmatism of Safavid colonial project in its alliance with European colonial projects. He opened the door for them to control the capabilities of the Arab and Islamic world. This is evident through the missionary exchange between the Safavid court and the rulers of Europe. In fact, Shah Abbas intended to seek the help of their kings. So he opened the door wide to European colonial ambitions in the region. Among the key examples of that sinful alliance in was the delegates and messages exchanged between the Safavid court and the Spanish court, while Spain was working to occupy Tunisia, Algeria and Tripoli in Al-Maghreb Al-Arabi.

When Safavid interests collided with the Portuguese interests in the Arab Gulf region, Shah Abbas the Safavid did not object to the alliance with England to confront the Portuguese influence in the region. British-Safavid alliance succeeded in breaking the Portuguese presence in the region, yet, on the other hand, it opened the door wide for the escalation of British influence in the region for centuries.

Not only was Shah Abbas the Safavi playing with the capabilities of the region with the help of England, but he also continued that pragmatic policy. With the occurrence of internal turmoil and conflicts in England, he resorted to seeking the help of a new ally instead of England, which was somewhat preoccupied with its own affairs. Netherlands was the new ally of the Shah, and their maritime and commercial influence in the Arabian Gulf region and the Arab-Islamic waters in general worsened. However, internal turmoil in England soon subsided and the British influence returned again to the region, to continue until the middle of the twentieth century.

The Safavid pragmatic political project opened the door wide for the European colonial powers to enter the region, as acknowledged by a specialist in Persian studies in the Arab world, Badih Jumaa, saying: "There is no doubt that the interest of European monopolistic companies in the Arabian Gulf region brought many disasters to the region, as Shah Abbas opened the door for them companies therein. Then, after him, there was no political personality in Iran nor in the Arab states bordering the Arabian Gulf that stopped these companies at the limit of commercial dealings, thus their existence turned into European colonialism that dominated most of the states bordering the Gulf on both sides."

Thus, through the alliances the Safavids concluded with the European colonial countries, these countries found a foothold in the region and Muslim countries were occupied.

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