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Synopsis

The boundaries of the Arabian peninsula are notable for the sensitivities and disagreements which have accompanied their relatively short history. As the twentieth century progressed, the partition of resources, initially pastures and water wells, subsequently oil and gas, was particularly crucial, but the boundary makers, chiefly the diplomats of the imperial powers, were inconsistent in paying attention to the human and physical characteristics of the terrain when negotiating or imposing many limits. Consequently boundary studies in this area have been and remain a fruitful topic for geographers and anthropologists as well as a necessary preoccupation for strategists and politicians. The records of the various British government departments represented here provide by far the most extensive and complete survey of the evolution of territorial affairs in Arabia and the Gulf. They will certainly form the core of any future legal debate focusing upon the historical aspects of any one of the region's boundaries on land or sea.

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