

**DOI: 10.7596/taksad.v12i1.3223**

**Citation:** Acikel, G. (2023). Türkiye and Oman's Growing Relationship in the First Three Years of Sultan Haitham. *Journal of History Culture and Art Research*, 12(1), 1-13. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7596/taksad.v12i1.3223>

## **Türkiye and Oman's Growing Relationship in the First Three Years of Sultan Haitham**

**Gökhan Açikel<sup>1</sup>**

### **Abstract**

Sultan Qaboos bin Said ruled Oman from 1970 to 2020. After Sultan Qaboos died on January 10, 2020, Haitham bin Tarik began to rule the Sultanate of Oman on January 11, 2020. After taking over the administration, he attempted to rescue his country from its dire economic situation by instituting structural changes to make the country's administration more active and secure. He also adheres to Sultan Qaboos' management principles, particularly in foreign policy. The foundation and development of today's Turkish-Omani relations was largely accomplished during the reign of Sultan Qaboos bin Said. However, relations continue developing with the same goodwill and vision today. The reciprocal visits of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Sultan Haitham are one of the most anticipated developments in Turkish-Omani relations in this period. Türkiye's collaborating with friendly and brotherly Oman in many fields and two countries' sharing their experiences mutually will benefit both Türkiye and Oman, as well as the Gulf region in particular and the Middle East region in general. Türkiye can make significant contributions to Oman, particularly in the construction, tourism, health, and defense industries. The interest and affection of the people of Oman for Türkiye will be an important factor in establishing solid relations between the two countries. Oman is relatively unknown in Türkiye. As a result, Oman should work harder to increase its visibility in Türkiye. The fact that Oman is a beautiful tourist destination should be promoted more widely in Türkiye. Increasing the number of flights between the two countries is a positive step in this direction. With the two countries' cooperation, there is still a lot of work to do in the field of higher education. Both sides are working hard to further develop Turkish-Oman relations, and as a result, relations between the two countries will improve significantly in the future.

**Keywords:** International relations, Sultan Qaboos bin Said, Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Türkiye-Oman Relations, Middle East Region, Gulf Region, Sultanate of Oman

---

<sup>1</sup> Lecturer, Yıldız Technical University, Orcid ID:0000-0001-7619-3513, E-mail: [gacikel@yildiz.edu.tr](mailto:gacikel@yildiz.edu.tr)

## Introduction

Prior to Sultan Haitham bin Tarik bin Taimur, Sultan Qaboos bin Said bin Taimur ruled the Sultanate of Oman for nearly 50 years, from July 23, 1970, to January 10, 2020. Sultan Qaboos established the modern Sultanate of Oman. The country lagged behind in every field during the reign of Sultan Said bin Taimur bin Feisal, Sultan Qaboos' father, and was in desperate need of investment and the blessings of the modern world. Sultan Said attempted to be more self-sufficient by attempting to save the country from debt, but because the income was insufficient, he had to make do with what he had, and he did not evaluate the oil income he had obtained in the last three years of his term in direct proportion to the people's expectations.

At the time, Qaboos bin Said was a young prince who was dissatisfied with his father's rule because he lived a solitary life away from his people and could not keep up with the times. Furthermore, there was a danger of division created by separatists who aimed to liberate the Dhofar Region in the south of the country and even the entire Gulf Region, and they managed to occupy a part of southern Oman with the support of the Marxist government in south Yemen, and this danger was for various reasons against the British. For these reasons, Sultan Said's deposition was viewed, and with successful planning and British support, Qaboos bin Said took over the administration from his father, Sultan Said, with a bloodless palace coup on July 23, 1970 (Açikel, 2022, p. 47-53). With this takeover, Oman embarked on a massive modernization, change, and unification process, and significant progress was made. With the death of Sultan Qaboos on January 10, 2020, this pivotal period in Oman's history came to an end. At the end of this period of great success, the country still faced some economic challenges, and the Oman economy remained heavily reliant on hydrocarbon energy sources. Unemployment was also quite high (Smith, 2021).

During Sultan Qaboos' long reign, which transformed and advanced Oman tremendously, he had a large number of companions, some of whom were his cousins as his closest relatives, and other relatives who held various positions in the administration. Haitham bin Tarik, the current Sultan of Oman, is one of these individuals.

Sultan Haitham bin Tarik served the Sultanate for many years as Undersecretary for Political Affairs at the Foreign Ministry (1986-1994) and Secretary General of Oman's Foreign Ministry (1994-2002). He was the Minister of National Heritage and Culture for 18 years before ascending to the throne. As Sultan Qaboos' cousin and trusted prince, he was his companion for many years and frequently represented him at home and abroad. Sultan Qaboos also appointed him to lead the "Vision 2040" project, which is critical in planning the country's future. Sultan Haitham emphasized in his first speech that he would follow in Sultan Qaboos' footsteps and try to protect his successes by building on them. From this intention, it is concluded that Sultan Qaboos' path, particularly in foreign policy, will be maintained by him (Açikel, 2022, p. 137).

Sultan Haitham restructured the country's administration after taking control. The number of ministries was reduced from 26 to 19 with the publication of the 28 sultanate decrees on August 18, 2020. During the cabinet reshuffle, new ministries were established, while others were merged or renamed. The Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Youth is one of the newly established ministries, and it is currently led by Sultan Haitham's eldest son, Crown Prince Dhi Yazan bin Haitham bin Tarik. Furthermore, the Sultan gave up some titles. The titles of Foreign Minister and Finance Minister are two of them. Each of these positions was filled by a principal minister. On the other hand, he retained the control of the Prime Ministry. In addition, three Deputy Prime Minister Offices are responsible for international relations and cooperation, defense, and cabinet. The position of "Deputy Prime Minister for Defense" existed until 1996, when it was renamed "Ministry of Defense." Sultan Haitham re-established it in March 2020 (Kilani, 2020). The governors of the country's 11 regions have also had their powers and responsibilities expanded (Dudley, 2021).

Sultan Haitham also appointed Sayyid Badr bin Hamad bin Hammoud Albusaidi as Foreign Minister. This was a significant change in the cabinet because Yusuf bin Alawi, the former Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs, was one of the ministers who had served in the Oman administration for a long time (Semiz, 2020). In 1982, he was appointed as a Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, and in 1997, he was appointed as the Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs, a position he held until his retirement in 2020 (TAS News Service, 2020). Sayyid Badr is a diplomat with long-standing ties with the United States and its administration, as well as with Europe, particularly the United Kingdom. The reason for Sultan Haitham's appointment of Sayyid Badr as Foreign Minister could be that, like Sultan Qaboos, he wanted to maintain strong relations with the US and create a balancing force against the Gulf giants, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates. Sultan Haitham also appointed Sultan bin Salim Al Habsi as Finance Minister, succeeding Darwish bin Ismail Al Belushi as Minister Responsible for Financial Affairs. He had also been in the cabinet for a long time. Furthermore, with these management changes, Sultan Haitham left his mark on his administration, aiming to operate with less bureaucracy and a more effective decision-making mechanism. He also demonstrated his commitment to the economy by appointing Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef as Minister of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion. He previously served as Chairman of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Kilani, 2020).

Sultan Haitham clarified the transfer of authority in the administration, including the appointment of an official heir, with two sultanate decrees published on January 11, 2021, the first anniversary of his accession, and formed a new committee directly under him to monitor the performance of the government. As a result, Sultan Haitham's eldest son, Sayyid Dhi Yazan bin Haitham, was named crown prince. Before being appointed as the Minister of Culture, Sports, and Youth by Sultan Haitham, Sayyid Dhi Yazan worked as a diplomat in the Omani Embassy in London. With the Sultan's selection of an heir and the change in the law governing the transfer of administrative authority, some possible speculations, such as those produced in the final years of Sultan Qaboos' reign, were prevented from being recreated in the future (Shalhoub, 2021).

When Sultan Haitham took power, he had to prioritize the economy because one of the country's main economic goals was to diversify the economy. He also found himself alone with the economic difficulties caused by falling oil prices in previous years, as well as the difficulties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (Açikel, 2022, p. 178). Many austerity measures were implemented to combat economic difficulties, such as cutting expenditures such as bonuses for government personnel, removing excess allowances, reducing the number of official vehicles, reducing official trips abroad for conferences and workshops, merging some funds, lowering starting salaries in the public sector, and requiring early retirement for those who complete their service (Ashok, 2022).

Tarik bin Taimur's lineage became more active in government following Sultan Haitham's accession to the throne. Sultan Haitham's grandfather, Sultan Taimur bin Feisal, married Kamile Khanum (later Ilgiray) in Istanbul in 1920, but the marriage ended in Bombay in 1921. Tarik bin Taimur was born in Istanbul as a result of this short lived marriage (Çelik, 2019, p. 96). He spent his primary school years in Türkiye before moving to Germany with his mother in 1935. He studied German in Germany before moving to Muscat in 1937. He served in the Muscat Military Forces, was Mayor of Muscat and Mutrah, and was in charge of some high-level state affairs until 1962, including general supervision of governors delegated to him by his elder half brother, Sultan Said bin Taimur. He returned to Istanbul in 1962 for both political reasons and the education of his children. During this time, he worked as a representative for a German construction company and maintained his contacts with Gulf countries and the Middle East Region, which he visited on a regular basis. From 1966 to 1970, he opposed Sultan Said's management style and lived abroad in a kind of voluntary exile. When Sultan Qaboos came to power, he was invited to the country and served as Prime Minister until early 1972. Later, he served as the general manager of embassies, the Sultan's consultant and representative, and the chairman of the board of directors of the Central Bank of Oman. Tarik bin Taimur was an educated

and experienced statesman who was fluent in Turkish, German and English. He passed away in 1980 (INDEPENDENT Türkçe, 2020).

Sultan Haitham can be said to be related to Türkiye through his paternal grandmother, Madame Kamile Ilgiray, a Turkish citizen of Circassian origin. Furthermore, Sultan Haitham's half brother, Sayyid Talal bin Tarik, and full-brother, Sayyid Qais bin Tarik, had their high school education at Haydarpasa High School in Istanbul. Sayyid Talal bin Tarik is also married to a Turkish woman named Tahira (Royalark, 2022). For these reasons, we can say that some members of the Al Said Dynasty's Tarik bin Taimur branch have ties to Türkiye. Such ties may be thought to be beneficial for Turkish-Omani relations.

With what has been written thus far, what kind of situation Sultan Haitham faced when he came to power and how he acted in the first years of his administration have been broadly explained, as also has been given some information about Oman's general situation. From now on, we will provide as much detail as possible about how the relations between Türkiye and Oman developed during the first years of Sultan Haitham, which is the main focus of this research.

### **Turkish-Omani Relations in Sultan Haitham's First Three Years**

#### **2020 Bilateral Relations Developments**

On January 12, 2020, two days after Sultan Qaboos' death, Turkish Vice President Fuat Oktay visited Oman to express condolences to Sultan Haitham on behalf of the Turkish people and the Turkish presidency. It can be assumed that relations between Türkiye and Oman began with this visit during Sultan Haitham's reign, and it can also be emphasized that relations between the two countries have continued to improve with the same vision, motivation, and mutual trust.

On March 5, 2020, the ribbon cutting for HAVELSAN Technology Oman LLC, established by HAVELSAN in Muscat, was done by Ayşe Sözen Usluer, Ambassador of Türkiye to Muscat. HAVELSAN Technology Oman LLC was formed in collaboration with the Oman-based Masirah International Company after HAVELSAN exported the Command, Control, Computer, Communication, and Intelligence System (C4I) to Oman; HAVELSAN owns 70% of the company, while Masirah International owns 30%. As a result, HAVELSAN Technology Oman LLC has established a permanent presence in Oman. This associated company's activities will continue to benefit Türkiye-Oman relations (HAVELSAN, 2020).

In 2018, the Turkish company ARES Shipyard and the Royal Oman Police Coast Guard (ROPCG) agreed to a four-year supply contract for 14 ARES 85 Hercules-type rapid patrol boats. On December 17, 2019, the company announced the delivery of the first boat to the Omani side. The Royal Oman Police Coast Guard Command received the second and third ARES 85 Hercules-type rapid patrol boats from ARES Shipyard in May 2020 (Deniz Haber Ajansı, 2020). Up to 2022, the number of patrol boats delivered increased to nine (MSI, 2021). With the help of all these and other sales, Oman has moved up to second place among the nations where Türkiye sent the most weapons between 2015 and 2019 (Şahin, 2020).

The Sultan of Oman, Haitham bin Tarik and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan spoke on the phone on May 24, 2020. The leaders congratulated one another on Eid al-Fitr and spoke on the phone about their shared relationships and current events in the region (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı İletişim Başkanlığı, 2020).

On July 12, 2020, Sheikh Ahmed bin Hamad Al Khalili, Grand Mufti of the Sultanate of Oman, congratulated everyone in the Islamic world for the Hagia Sophia decision, in particular President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the Turkish people. On July 17, he made a statement on his Twitter account regarding the decision to reopen the Hagia Sophia Museum as a mosque. He stated that the opening of Hagia Sophia is the herald of great happiness to be felt shortly after the Masjid al-Aqsa is liberated from occupation. The Grand Mufti of Oman, Al Khalili, also expressed his gratitude to the entire Islamic

community which rejoiced and welcomed the Hagia Sophia's restoration to Islam's compassion after it had been barred from the call to prayer, kneeling, and prostration for almost a century and had been in grief over it (İbicioğlu, 2020). Ten days after the Grand Mufti of Oman issued this statement, on July 27, 2022, delegations led by the Deputy Foreign Minister of Türkiye, Sedat Önal, and the Secretary General of the Foreign Ministry of Oman, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Albusaidi, convened via videoconference as part of mutual political consultations on the two nations' relations (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Dışişleri Bakanlığı, 2020).

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic that began in 2020, the first of the planned series of Türkiye-Oman Interconnected Business Meetings was held on the food and health sectors on July 14, 2020, with participation from the DEİK Türkiye-Oman Business Council, Oman-Türkiye Business Council, Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry members, and Turkish and Omani ambassadors. The second was held on November 17, 2020, on the construction sectors. With the help of these online meeting series, it was hoped to enhance trade between the two nations by bringing together business representatives from both sides even during the pandemic days (DEİK, 2020). The trade volume between the two countries decreased by just a small amount in 2020, totaling 854.1 million dollars, with exports at 524.6 million dollars and imports at 329.5 million dollars, as a result of the pandemic and low oil prices (Sözen Usluer, 2021).

### **2021 Bilateral Relations Developments**

The normal nature of relations continued in 2021 as well. Between February 9 and February 11, 2021, Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu traveled to Kuwait, Oman, and Qatar. Between February 9 and 10, 2021, he made his second stop in Oman. Çavuşoğlu met with some Turkish nationals working in Oman on the first day of his visit, and he also gave his warm wishes regarding the Oman-Türkiye Friendship Association founded by the Foreign Ministry of Oman. Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu met with Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr Albusaidi on the second day of his visit to Oman; topics covered during the conversation included collaboration with the defense industry and shared commercial links. He then had a meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud Al Said. At this meeting, Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu made a point of expressing his country's satisfaction with the growing interest Turkish companies had shown in Oman as well as the interest that Oman had shown in Turkish businesses. He also congratulated Oman for its contributions to regional peace and dialogue (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Dışişleri Bakanlığı, 2021).

On May 25, 2021, a crucial development in the two countries' ties took place. The President of the Special Economic Zones and Free Zones Public Institution in the Sultanate of Oman, Dr. Ali Bin Masoud Al Sunaidy and the Head of the Oman 2040 Vision Implementation Follow-up Unit, Dr. Khamis Bin Saif Al Jabri met with the Chairman of the Board of the Gebze Organized Industrial Zone (GOSB), Vahit Yıldırım, and his executive team. A cooperation agreement for the organized industrial zone, which had been discussed for some time and scheduled to be constructed in the Sultanate of Oman in collaboration with GOSB, was signed at the meeting. The Sultanate of Oman's ambassador to Ankara, Qasim Muhammad Salim Al Salhi, and the Republic of Türkiye's ambassador to Muscat, Ayşe Sözen Usluer, both attended the signing ceremony (GOSB, 2021).

Türkiye's Ambassador to Muscat, Ayşe Sözen-Usluer, stated in an interview with her on September 29, 2021, that Türkiye-Oman relations were progressing very well in all areas and that this situation had become much more noticeable in the last ten or fifteen years. Ambassador Sözen-Usluer stated in her statement that a warm relationship had been established between President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Sultan Haitham via phone call, and that while a high-level visit had not yet been made due to the pandemic, mutual commitments had been made and visits would be made at the most convenient time for both sides. In her interview, Ambassador Sözen-Usluer mentioned that a Technical Cooperation Program Agreement had been signed between GOSB, one of Türkiye's leading industrial zones, and the Oman Special Economic and Free Zones Administration (OPAZ) in order to establish an industrial zone in Duqm, one of Oman's important port cities. She stated that, under the

terms of the agreement, a Turkish Industrial Zone would be built in the Duqm Special Economic Zone, which was deemed critical to Oman's future, and that the project would be completed on October 29, 2023, the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Republic of Türkiye. She also emphasized that that development would be a great move in bilateral relations, and the two countries would benefit greatly from it. Ambassador Sözen-Usluer expressed her opinion that Oman, the only country with open ports among the Gulf countries, was a center that provided convenient access to the South Asian and East African markets from its location and that a Turkish Industrial Zone to be built in Oman would provide production and employment to both countries. She made it clear in her words that a Turkish Industrial Zone in Oman would bring significant benefits to both countries in terms of production, employment, and exports.

Furthermore, Turkish Ambassador stated that approximately 35 Turkish companies were operating in Oman then and they had taken large prestigious tenders and completed their processes on time and in a high quality manner, and that Turkish defense industry companies had increased their relations with Oman and become well-known in Oman for their high-quality products. She stated that on this occasion, interest in Turkish and Turkish culture had increased, that Omanis love Türkiye, and the number of Omani tourists visiting Türkiye had increased many times since 2016. She also announced that the Yunus Emre Institute would open a branch in Muscat (Bitmez ve Karyağdı Duran, 2021).

In 2021, a Turkish organization working in the fields of health tourism and tourist health began working with Oman, and we can expect to see similar examples of cooperation with Oman in the field of health tourism in the future. In October, 2021, the Chairman of Treatment Referral Abroad Committee of the Ministry of Health of Oman, its director, and those accompanying him visited Medicana International Izmir Hospital, and the guest delegation was informed by presentations by many branch physicians. The Omani officials who visited the hospital expressed their satisfaction with their visit after the briefing. The Chairman of Treatment Referral Abroad Committee, Dr. Mohammed Abdul Rahim, stated that they were particularly interested in bone marrow and organ transplantation and that they would begin sending patients from Oman through health tourism very soon. Dr. Ulvi Unal, General Manager of Medicana International Izmir Hospital, stated in a statement on the subject that the Omani authorities had previously collaborated with the Far East and India, but Omani patients would come to Türkiye from then on with the majority of patients requiring orthopedics, bone marrow transplants, and liver transplants. General Manager Unal stated in his statement that the Omani authorities were particularly interested in robotic surgery (Medicana Sağlık Grubu, 2021). This, and other similar visits and meetings, suggest that the issue of health tourism between the two countries is also ripe for development.

The Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Asila bint Salim Al Samsami, and several Omani officials such as Ahmed bin Hassan al-Dheeb Ba'Omar, Deputy Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones, Jalal bin Abdul Karim Ali Al Lawati, Promotion Manager of the Special Economic Zone Authority, Saif Mohammed Khalifa al-Rubaie, the Director of the Undersecretariat Office visited GOSB on December 23–25, 2021. During the two-day visit, the road map for the organized industrial zone planned to be established in the Sultanate of Oman with the cooperation of GOSB was discussed and the path to be followed was clarified (GOSB, 2021).

Additionally, there were reports in 2021 that the Omani and Turkish defense ministries had reached a tentative agreement regarding Muscat's purchase of Bayraktar TB2 drones, but no information was provided. Among the GCC nations that have already signed contracts with Türkiye to purchase TB2s are Kuwait, the UAE, and Qatar (Cengiz, 2023).

To summarize trade between the two countries for 2021, the trade volume has reached 1.5 billion dollars. While Türkiye exports mostly furniture, machinery, dairy products, eggs, flour, pastry products, plastics, and carpets to Oman, fertilizers, aluminum goods, and plastics are the most commonly imported goods from Oman (DEİK, 2022).

## 2022 Bilateral Relations Developments

Owing to mutual trust and stability on both sides that the relations would improve in all aspects, relations between Türkiye and Oman continued to progress in 2022. On January 25, 2022, Nezaket Emine Atasoy, President of the International Investment and Business Confederation (ULUSKON), who had previously paid an acquaintance visit to the Embassy of Oman in Ankara in August 2021 (Yeniakit, 2021), paid another visit to Qasim bin Mohammed Alsalhi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to Ankara. During the visit, economic cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and Türkiye was discussed. President Atasoy stated in her statement on the subject that Oman is in a strategic position due to its location and that there are exceptional investment opportunities in fields such as construction, real estate, pharmaceuticals, tourism, and many others (ULUSKON, 2022).

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan spoke on the phone with the Sultan of Oman, Haitham bin Tarik, on April 30, 2022. Bilateral relations and regional issues were discussed at the meeting. President Erdogan stated that they place a high value on expanding cooperation with Oman in all areas (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, 2022).

On June 12, 2022, Prof. Dr. Ugur Unal, Head of the State Archives of the Republic of Türkiye, and his delegation paid a visit to Dr. Hamad Mohammed Al Dhawyani, Chairman of Oman's National Records and Archives Authority. Mutual meetings were held between delegations to discuss cooperation in historical and cultural areas as well as archival records (Oman Daily Observer, 2022).

Another theme for 2022 is the visit of a delegation from Sultan Qaboos University, which has long collaborated with Marmara University, consisting of International Office officials, academicians from the Faculty of Business Administration, and graduate students to the Rectorship of Marmara University, as well as the delegation's meeting with some academics from various faculties of the university on June 17, 2022. Following the meeting, which discussed mutual cooperation and reviving academic/student exchange activities in the post-pandemic period, members of the delegation visited institutions such as THY (Turkish Airlines), Borsa Istanbul, Turkcell, and TEDAS, which are among Türkiye's leading institutions and companies, with the planning of Marmara University (Marmara Üniversitesi, 2022).

Another piece of news that will bring the people of the two countries closer together came from the tourism sector in 2022. SalamAir of Oman, which announced at the end of May that it would launch a flight to Bursa on June 16, which is an appealing tourist destination for Arabs due to its natural beauty, thermal springs, proximity to Istanbul, and many other factors, began three-days-a-week scheduled flights from Muscat to Bursa on June 16, 2022. After Istanbul and Trabzon, Bursa is the third Turkish city served by SalamAir. Due to the start of the flights, a ceremony was held in Muscat with the participation of Türkiye's Ambassador to Muscat, Ayşe Sözen Usluer; in Türkiye, the ceremony was held in Yenisehir. The first flight to Yenisehir was welcomed by the Deputy Mayor of Bursa Metropolitan Municipality and the district's senior managers. Murat Saraçoğlu, Regional President of the Association of Turkish Travel Agencies (TÜRSAB), said in a statement on the occasion that Oman is an important Gulf country and that the launch of the flights would pave the way for charter transportation in the future as well. Hasan Erdem, a former TÜRSAB Executive Board member who now works in Bursa on tourism, predominantly on the tourism activities with the Gulf countries, emphasized that the start of flights with Oman was a result of Türkiye's diplomatic and political relations with Oman (Göz, 2022). This development indicates that the tourism relationship between Türkiye and Oman can be significantly expanded.

On August 23, 2022, Fatih Dönmez, Minister of Energy and Natural Resources of Türkiye, visited Oman and met with his counterpart, Salim al-Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals of Oman, followed by a meeting between the delegations. During the meeting, the two countries' possible gas trade and conditions were discussed. It was concluded that if Türkiye and Oman's conditions were favorable, gas trade between the two countries would be possible. Minister Dönmez stated that Oman had prospective renewable energy projects and the Omani side had offered cooperation to Türkiye

about the projects. He also added that they intended to evaluate the opportunities in this regard with the help of the public and private sectors (T.C. Enerji ve Tabii Kaynaklar Bakanlığı, 2022).

We previously indicated that in the second half of 2021 and early 2022, ULUSKON President Nezaket Emine Atasoy paid a visit to Qasim bin Mohammed Alsalhi, the Omani Ambassador to Ankara, at the Oman Embassy. On September 22, 2022, President Atasoy paid a second visit to Ambassador Alsalhi together with the businesspeople who were with her. Atasoy stated during the visit that they thought their cooperation with Oman could be expanded by utilizing the investment and trade capabilities of the two nations in a variety of fields, particularly in agriculture, tourism, and industry, and emphasized that they would be happy to host entrepreneurs from Oman. On the other hand, Ambassador Alsalhi said they were prepared and eager to provide Türkiye with every convenience in Oman and to enhance their collaboration in line with the desires of Turkish business people by being open to many project suggestions. He further highlighted that when the ULUSKON group visits Oman, they would be glad to host them in the greatest manner possible (ULUSKON, 2022).

The Turkish delegation that went to Canada on behalf of the General Directorate of Civil Aviation met with the delegation of the Oman Civil Aviation Authority on September 29, 2022, as part of the 41st General Assembly of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), which was held between September 27 and October 7, 2022 (Sivil Havacılık Genel Müdürlüğü, 2022). During the conference, the Civil Aviation Agreement between Türkiye and Oman, which was previously amended on September 21, 1999 (DEİK, 2022), was modified and signed again in light of changing conditions. Prof. Dr. Kemal Yuksek, Deputy Director General of Civil Aviation and General Director of Protocol, and Naif Ali Al Abri, Chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority of Oman (Sivil Havacılık Genel Müdürlüğü, 2022).

The Student Guidance Center of Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) of Oman visited Karadeniz Technical University (KTU) on the 24-25 October 2022. On the 24th October 2022, the Rector Prof. Dr. Hamdullah Çuvalcı and Vice Rector Prof. Dr. Halil İbrahim Okumuş welcomed Majid Nasser Al Kahali, the Head of the Center and the computer specialist Mr. Saeed Salem Al Hajri at their offices. During the meeting, the guests gave information about SQU and the Center and following the meeting the Office of Internationalisation of KTU gave information to the guests in a detailed presentation on the student support services and student facilities at KTU. A wide range of ideas were exchanged about the management of student services and financing the facilities of both universities.

The visitors met with the Head of the International Office Prof. Dr. Ercan Köse the following day and the potential of collaboration between the two universities were discussed at the meeting. Both parties expressed optimism about future collaboration through exchange programs and agreement protocols (Karadeniz Technical University, 2022).

Nurettin Nebati, Minister of Treasury and Finance of the Republic of Türkiye, and Qais Mohammed Al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion of the Sultanate of Oman, presided over the 11th Joint Commission Meeting on November 2–3, 2022 (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Ticaret Bakanlığı, 2022). At the meeting, the necessary ways of cooperating to take the two countries' economic relations to a much higher level were discussed, and a joint decision was made to increase bilateral investments and thus trade volume in some fields, particularly education, agriculture, industry, and tourism (Demirören Haber Ajansı [DHA], 2022). One of the positive outcomes of this meeting for both countries was the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding for the establishment of the Yunus Emre Institute in Muscat as well. The establishment of the Yunus Emre Institute in Muscat is an important step toward more effectively promoting Türkiye in Oman and increasing the use of Turkish. As a result, cultural exchange between the two countries will become more active (Yunus Emre Enstitüsü, 2022).

Oman's Minister of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion, Al Yousef, and the delegation accompanying him continued their visit to Türkiye, and in this context, the OSTIM Organized Industrial Zone in Ankara was visited on November 3, 2022. Al Yousef met with OSTIM officials, learned



about their activities and businesses, and discussed potential collaborations. Orhan Aydın, Chairman of the Board of OSTİM, stated that they had followed Oman, visited the country, and valued any cooperation with Oman (Ostim Medikal Sanayi Kümelenmesi, 2022). Minister Al Yousef and his delegation, as well as Turkish Deputy Minister of Industry and Technology Dr. Çetin Ali Dönmez, paid another visit to the Başkent Organized Industrial Zone and continued their research on organized industrial zones there. Negotiations for mutual cooperation took place during the meeting (BAŞKENT Organize Sanayi Bölgesi, 2022). On November 5, Al Yousef and his delegation visited the Gebze Organized Industrial Zone (GOSB) and met with the authorities; following the meetings, it was decided to continue cooperation and work for mutual benefit. Hüseyin Gezer, Chairman of the GOSB Board of Directors, stated that they valued their friendship with Oman and would support any and all efforts to preserve and strengthen that bond (GOSB, 2022).

SalamAir, an Oman-based private flight company, began flying to Bursa as its third destination after Istanbul and Trabzon, as mentioned in one of the previous paragraphs of this study. Trabzon, as seen here, is one of the most popular destinations for Omanis in Türkiye. On November 18, 2022, Trabzon Governor İsmail Ustaoglu spoke at the Trabzon Chamber of Commerce and Industry (TTSO) about his brief visit to Oman and the numerous visits he made in Oman during that time. He also met with the Omani Tourism Minister. He noticed that they were very interested in Trabzon and Türkiye. The Omani Tourism Minister also invited the people of Trabzon to Oman, saying that they had planned a trip with Trabzon tour operators, so that Omanis' interest in Trabzon would continue to grow. Ustaoglu stated that they would work closely with the city's tourism stakeholders in order to capitalize on Omanis' interest and the positive impression he had during his visit to Oman. According to TTSO President Erkut Çelebi, they want to establish not only a touristic but also a commercial relationship with Oman because Turkish goods are regarded as high quality in Oman. Çelebi also stated that they planned to open a region in Oman where Turkish goods from various industries would be promoted and sold (61 Saat, 2022).

Furthermore, SalamAir, made the first regular international flight request for Rize-Artvin Airport, which was scheduled to open on May 14, 2022. The request of company officials, who met with senior Rize officials, was accepted, and SalamAir Airline Company will operate two flights per week from Muscat, Oman's capital, between July 1 and September 5, 2023. This is a significant development because it is the first time a foreign airline company has organized a regular flight to Rize-Artvin Airport in its first year. These developments can be interpreted as new indications that tourism relations between Türkiye and Oman will improve (Sandıkçı, 2022).

In light of all of these developments, it can be stated that under Sultan Haitham bin Tarik's reign, Türkiye-Oman relations has continued to develop on the basis of mutual trust and stability and they are highly capable of reaching the most advanced level that has been dreamed of and wanted, as long as officials from both countries exhibit the required care and significance.

### **Conclusion**

Oman is a country with the oldest state tradition in the Gulf Region, characterized by neutrality and mediation, and it stands out for its peaceful foreign policy, which contributes significantly to regional and global peace. It connects the nations that have contact with it to the ancient cultures that surround it, and it has always been exposed to cultural influences from the outside world due to marine commerce for ages. Because of the massive oil flow, the Strait of Hormuz, which it controls through its province named Musandam, lends a special strategic importance to Oman as well. Furthermore, Oman has always been one of the junction points of trade routes due to its location since ancient times; the fact that it has a very long coastline and the Gulf Region countries are connected to each other through some transportation projects has brought Oman to the point of being a preferable trade partner.

Sultan Qaboos transformed Oman from a backward state to a modern and prestigious peace state. This was not an easy process, but it was completed thanks to the efforts of his companions and the leadership of Sultan Qaboos. Sultan Haitham bin Tarik was one of Sultan Qaboos' devoted

companions. He has also played an important role in bringing the country to this point. As the country's ruler, Sultan Haitham, along with his people and companions, strives to further these accomplishments through reforms and works at the same pace. In such a process, the fact that the Republic of Türkiye collaborates with friendly and brotherly Oman in many areas, and that the two countries can share mutual experience, will benefit both Türkiye and Oman, as well as the Gulf and the Middle East region as a whole. Türkiye can make significant contributions to Oman, particularly in the construction, tourism, health, and defense industries. The Omanis' interest and affection for Türkiye will undoubtedly play an important role in establishing solid relations between the two countries. In Türkiye, Oman is relatively unknown. As a result, Oman should work harder to increase its visibility in Türkiye. The fact that Oman is a beautiful touristic country, in particular, should be made more widely known in Türkiye. Increasing the number of flights between the two countries is a positive step in this direction.

The neutral and pragmatic foreign policy of Oman and its role as a mediator in regional conflicts can be advantageous to Türkiye as well in international relations. Its cooperation with Türkiye on military and defense issues could be a significant step in this direction if Oman, a country that is so neutral in military matters as well, one day expresses interest in joining NATO. The Istanbul Cooperation Initiative of NATO already includes the UAE, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Qatar as members. NATO member Türkiye, which after the US has the second-largest army in the alliance, actively contributed to fortifying the alliance between NATO and the GCC (Cengiz, 2023).

The highest level of political visits between Türkiye and Oman are now expected during Sultan Haitham's reign, and there is a shared intention on both sides on this issue. In response to Sultan Qaboos' official visit to Türkiye in 1989, Turkish Presidents Süleyman Demirel in 1997 and Abdullah Gül in 2010 visited Oman. There is no doubt that the bilateral official visits of Sultan Haitham and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who have developed a good relationship through telephone diplomacy, will bring a completely different momentum and joy to Turkish-Oman relations, and that this situation will positively affect all commercial activities, including the defense industry, between Türkiye and Oman.

As mentioned in this study, similar to the relationship between Marmara University and Sultan Qaboos University, developing new relations with public or private higher education institutions in Oman on education and training issues such as student or academic exchange or language learning will bring great benefits to both countries and strengthen the bond of friendship and brotherhood. The establishment of a "Turkish Industrial Zone" in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm in 2023, modeled after the GOSB model, is a significant commercial move between the two countries. The increase in the number of such significant breakthroughs between the two countries will undoubtedly benefit both Türkiye and Oman.

Türkiye and Oman share a great deal of mutual trust and goodwill in order to achieve greater commercial and political goals, earn more, and grow closer. The important thing is that the two countries' commercial and political actors should focus on high goals with a strong will to achieve these goals. This appears to be done as well. In that case, it can be said that Türkiye-Oman relations will progress significantly in the future.

## References

Açikel, G. (2022). *Sultan Kabûs ve Umman*. Aktif Yayınevi.

Ashok, R. (2022). Oman marks second anniversary of Sultan Haitham's reign. *World GULF*. <https://gulfnews.com/world/gulf/oman/oman-marks-second-anniversary-of-sultan-haithams-reign-1.84877920>

Başkent Organize Sanayi Bölgesi (2022). *Umman Ticaret Sanayi ve Yatırım Geliştirme Bakanı Al Yousef'ten Başkent OSB'ye ziyaret*.

<https://www.baskentosb.org/tr/medya/haberler/2022/umman-ticaret-sanayi-ve-yatirim-gelistirme-bakani-al-yousef-ten-baskent-osb-ye-ziyaret>

Bitmez, S., & Kayağdı Duran, Z. H. (2021). Türkiye'nin Muskat Büyükelçisi Usluer: Umman- Türkiye iş birliği katlanarak devam ediyor. *Anadolu Ajansı*. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/gundem/turkiyenin-muskat-buyukelcisi-usluer-umman-turkiye-is-birligi-katlanarak-devam-ediyor/2377841>

Cengiz, S. (2023). Deciphering the dynamics of Türkiye-Oman relations. *Arab News*. <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2244536>

Çelik, M. (2019). Türkiye Sultan Kabus sonrası Umman için nasıl hazırlanmalı?. *Ulisa: Uluslararası Çalışmalar Dergisi*, 3(2), 82-102.

DEİK (2020). *Türkiye-Umman interconnected business*. <https://www.deik.org.tr/uploads/turkiye-umman-ibs-sonuc-raporu.pdf>

DEİK (2022). *Umman ülke bilgi notu, Şubat 2022*. <https://www.deik.org.tr/uploads/umman-bilgi-notu-subat-2022.pdf>

DEİK (2022). *Oman Ülke Bülteni, Ağustos 2012*. <https://www.deik.org.tr/turkiye-ortadogu-ve-korfez-is-konseyleri-turkiye-umman-is-konseyi?pm=&sm=raporlar>

Demirören Haber Ajansı (DHA). (2022). *Bakan Nebati: Türkiye-Umman Karma Ekonomik Komisyon Toplantısı'nı tamamladık*. <https://www.dha.com.tr/gundem/bakan-nebati-turkiye-umman-karma-ekonomik-komisyon-toplantisini-tamamladik-2156243>

Deniz Haber Ajansı (2020). *İki Ares 85 Hercules daha Umman yolunda*. <https://www.denizhaber.net/iki-ares-85-hercules-daha-umman-yolunda-haber-95026.htm>

Dudley, D. (2021). Oman's Sultan haitham reportedly names son as crown prince, one year after taking over country. *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/dominicdudley/2021/01/12/omans-sultan-haitham-reportedly-names-son-as-crown-prince-one-year-after-taking-over-country/?sh=4e55b7f652eb>

Gebze Organize Sanayi Bölgesi (2022). *Umman Ticaret, Sanayi ve Yatırım Tanıtım Bakanı Qais Mohamed Al Yousef ve beraberindeki heyetin GOSB ziyareti*. <https://www.gosb.com.tr/haberler/umman-ticaret-sanayi-ve-yatirim-tanitim-bakani-qais-mohamed-al-yousef-ve-beraberindeki-heyetin-gosb-ziyareti>

Gebze Organize Sanayi Bölgesi (2021). *Umman Sultanlığı ile iş birliği anlaşması imzalandı*. <https://www.gosb.com.tr/haberler/umman-sultanligi-ile-isbirligi-anlasmasi-imzalandi>

Gebze Organize Sanayi Bölgesi (2021). *Umman Sultanlığı'nın GOSB ziyareti*. <https://www.gosb.com.tr/haberler/umman-sultanliginin--gosb-ziyareti>

Göz, N. (2022). Umman'da pasta kesildi, Yenişehir'de törenle karşılandı. *Bursa Hakimiyet*. <https://www.bursahakimiyet.com.tr/yazarlar/namik-goz-76/umman-da-pasta-kesildi-yenisehir-de-torene-karsilandi-19877>

HAVELSAN (2020). *HAVELSAN Technology Oman açıldı*.

<https://www.havelsan.com.tr/haberler/guncel/havelsan-technology-oman-acildi>

İbicioğlu, S. (2020). Umman Müftüsü'nden Ayasofya mesajı: Mescid-i Aksa'nın işgalden kurtulmasının habercisi. *Anadolu Ajansı*. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/ayasofya-camii/umman-muftusunden-ayasofya-mesaji-mescid-i-aksanin-ısgalden-kurtulmasinin-habercisi/1913948>

INDEPENDENT Türkçe (2020), Umman Sultanı'nın babası Tarık bin Teymur'un hayat hikayesi,

<https://www.indyturk.com/node/226366/d%C3%BCnyaya/umman-sultan%C4%B1n%C4%B1n-babas%C4%B1-tar%C4%B1k-bin-teymurun-hayat-hikayesi>

Karadeniz Technical University (2022). *Visit to KTU rector from The Student Guidance Center at Sultan Qaboos University*. <https://ktu.edu.tr/intz/news/visit-to-ktu-rector-from-the-student-guidance-center-at-sultan-qaboos-university>

Kilani, A. (2020). Oman's Sultan Haitham implements sweeping government changes. *Inside Arabia*. <https://insidearabia.com/omans-sultan-haitham-implements-sweeping-government-changes/>

Marmara Üniversitesi (2022). *Umman Sultan Qaboos Üniversitesi'nden üniversitemize ziyaret*. <https://www.marmara.edu.tr/news/umman-sultan-qaboos-universitesinden-universitemize-ziyaret>

Medicana Sağlık Grubu (2021). *Umman'ın sağlığı Türk hekimlerine emanet*. <https://www.medicana.com.tr/haber-detay/15892/ummanin-sagligi-turk-hekimlerine-emanet>

MSI (2021). ARES Tersanesi, Umman'ın ilk 9 ARES 85 HERCULES'ini teslim etti. *Savunma Haber*. <https://www.savunmahaber.com/ares-tersanesi-umman-ares-85-hercules-teslimatlar-2021-05/>

Oman News Agency (2022). Oman, Turkey hold official talks to boost cooperation in records,archives fields. *Oman Daily Observer*, <https://www.omanoobserver.com/article/1120697/oman/oman-turkey-hold-official-talks-to-boost-cooperation-in-records-archives-fields>

Ostim Medikal Sanayi Kümelenmesi (2022). *Umman'dan OSTİM'e ziyaret*. <https://www.medikalkume.com/ummandan-ostime-ziyaret-haberi-5599>

Royalark (2022). *Oman: The Al-Busaid Dynasty: Genealogy*. <https://www.royalark.net/Oman/oman9.htm>

Sandıkçı, M. (2022). Rize-Artvin Havalimanı'na gelecek yıl Umman'dan sefer düzenlenecek. *Anadolu Ajansı*. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/ekonomi/rize-artvin-havalimanina-gelecek-yil-ummandan-sefer-duzenlenecek/2759707>

Semiz, M. (2020).Umman'da kısmi kabine revizyonu. *Anadolu Ajansı*. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/ummanda-kismi-kabine-revizyonu/1946125>

Shalhoub, D. (2021). Oman's sultan issues decree to appoint crown prince. *Anadolu Agency*, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/omans-sultan-issues-decree-to-appoint-crown-prince/2106583>

Sivil Havacılık Genel Müdürlüğü (2022). *Türkiye ve Umman, Hava Ulaştırma anlaşmasını tadil etti*. <https://web.shgm.gov.tr/tr/haberler/6972-ss>

Smith, S. (2021). Oman: A year under Sultan Haitham's reign. *The Euro-Gulf Information Center*. <https://www.egic.info/oman-a-year-under-sultan-haitham>

Sözen Usluer, A. (2021). Türkiye Umman ticari ve diplomatik ilişkileri. *Katılımfinans*. <https://katilimfinans.com.tr/turkiye-umman-ticari-ve-diplomatik-iliskileri-makale,12691.html>

Şahin, A. (2020). Türkiye'nin dünya silah ihracatındaki payı %86 arttı. *SavunmasanayiST*. <https://www.savunmasanayist.com/turkiyenin-dunya-silah-ihracatindaki-payi-%86-artti/>

T.C. Enerji ve Tabii Kaynaklar Bakanlığı (2022). Körfez mesaisi "verimli" geçti. <https://enerji.gov.tr/haber-detay?id=21020>

TAS News Service (2020). Thank you, Yusuf bin Alawi: After 23 years, Oman's Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs steps down. *The Arabian Stories*. <https://www.thearabianstories.com/2020/08/18/thank-you-yusuf-bin-alawi-after-23-years-omans-minister-responsible-for-foreign-affairs-steps-down/>

Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı (2022). *Umman Sultanı Heysem bin Tarık bin Teymur el-Said ile telefon görüşmesi*. <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/basin-aciklamalari/365/136725/umman-sultani-heysem-bin-tarik-bin-teymur-el-said-ile-telefon-gorusmesi>

Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı İletişim Başkanlığı (2020). Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan, Umman Sultanı Heysem bin Tarık ile telefonda görüştü. <https://www.iletisim.gov.tr/turkce/haberler/detay/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-umman-sultani-heysem-bin-tarik-ile-telefonda-gorustu>

Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Dışişleri Bakanlığı (2020). *Temmuz 2020*. <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/temmuz2020.tr.mfa>

Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Dışişleri Bakanlığı (2021). *Sayın Bakanımızın Umman'ı ziyareti, 9-10 Şubat 2021*. <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/sayin-bakanimizin-umman-i-ziyareti-10-2-2021.tr.mfa>

Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Ticaret Bakanlığı (2022). *Türkiye – Umman 11. dönem Karma Komisyon (KK) toplantısı*. <https://uaabgm.ticaret.gov.tr/haberler/turkiye-umman-11-donem-karma-komisyon-kk-toplantisi>

ULUSKON (2022). *Başkan Atasoy'dan Umman ile ekonomik iş birliği*. <https://uluskon.com/haber-baskan-atasoydan-umman-ile-ekonomik-is-birligi-274.html>

ULUSKON (2022). *ULUSKON Başkanı Atasoy beraberindeki heyetle Umman'a gidiyor*. <https://uluskon.com/haber-uluskon-baskani-atasoy-beraberinde-ki-heyetle-ummana-gidiyor-298.html>

Yeniakit (2021). *ULUSKON iş heyeti Umman Sultanlığı'na gidiyor*. <https://www.yeniakit.com.tr/haber/uluskon-is-heyeti-umman-sultanligina-gidiyor-1565766.html>

Yunus Emre Enstitüsü (2022). *100. yıla doğru 100 kültür merkezi*. <https://www.yee.org.tr/tr/haber/100-yila-dogru-100-kultur-merkezi>

61 Saat (2022). *Trabzon Valisi Ustaoglu, Umman'da neler görüştü? Açıkladı*. <https://www.61saat.com/trabzon-valisi-ustaoglu-ummanda-neler-gorustu-acikladi>