

**British Policy on the Margins and Centre of Iran in the
Context of Great Power Rivalry 1908-1914**

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PhD thesis

Declaration of Authorship

I Li-Chiao Chen Hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

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Abstract

This thesis explores British policy towards Iran in the context of great power rivalry between 1908 and 1914. In the said period, British policy experienced changes in responses to a collapsing Iran, in which foreign powers, namely Russia, Germany and the Ottoman Empire, also became involved. The thesis concentrates in particular on negotiations and incidents in the margins of Iran, such as the south-west region, which came to be seen as being as important as Tehran. The discovery of oil in 1908 as the authority of the central government collapsed led to increasing British involvement in the South-West by the signing of agreements with the local powers, in contravention of Britain's long-standing policy of non-intervention. Neither the constitutionalists nor the vision of Mohammad 'Ali Shah served the British need for order. On the other hand, Germany's project for the Baghdad railway seemed to threaten British interests, which resulted in impediments to Iran's plans for railway development. The British mediated in the dispute over the Ottoman-Iranian border, especially on Mohammerah, in order to secure their interests. In the employment of foreign advisors in the North and South of Iran, the British avoided irritating Russia rather than supporting Shuster in Tehran. In the South they favoured the Swedish Gendarmerie to protect their trade interests.

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Abbreviations

ADHERI	<i>Asnadi Darbareh-ye Hojum-e Engelis va Rus beh Iran</i>
APOC	Anglo-Persian Oil Company
BP	British Petroleum Archives, University of Warwick, Coventry, UK
Entente	<i>Entente Diplomacy and the World: Matrix of the History of Europe, 1909-1914</i>
GASIO	<i>Gozideh Asnad-e Siyasi-ye Iran va 'Osmani: Dowreyeh-e Qajariyeh</i>
FO	Foreign Office, National Archives, Kew, UK
IOR	India Office Records, British Library, London, UK
SAMI	Sazman-e Asnad-e Melli-ye Iran, Tehran, Iran

Note on Transliteration

The transliteration used in this thesis follows the *Iranian Studies* scheme.

Iranian Studies transliteration scheme

Consonants

z	ض	b	ب
t	ط	p	پ
z	ظ	t	ت
'	ع	s	ث
gh	غ	j	ج
f	ف	ch	چ
q	ق	h	ح
k	ک	kh	خ
g	گ	d	د
l	ل	z	ذ
m	م	r	ر
n	ن	z	ز
h	ه	zh	ژ
v	و	s	ص
y	ی	sh	ش
'	ء	s	ص

Vowels

short	long	diphthongs
a (as in <i>ashk</i>)	a or ā (as in <i>ensan</i> or <i>āb</i>)	-
e (as in <i>fekr</i>)	i (as in <i>melli</i>)	ey (as in <i>Teymur</i>)
o (as in <i>pol</i>)	u (as in <i>Tus</i>)	ow (as in <i>rowshan</i>)

Chapter I Introduction

This study examines British policy in Iran from the discovery of oil in the South-West of Iran by Britain in 1908 to the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. It is more particularly concerned with the impact of the discovery of oil in the years leading up to 1914, and its effect on British policy. This discovery proved a major turning point in British policy towards Iran, and as a result Britain paid increasing attention to the strengthening of power in the region. However, the extraction of oil took place against both long standing great power rivalries over Iran, and internal political developments which began to emerge at the end of the nineteenth century. There had been significant rivalry between Britain and Russia in the Middle East and Central Asia, with particular focus on Iran as a buffer state, from the early nineteenth century. Though other powers, notably France in the early nineteenth century, showed some interest in Iran, they had little impact as compared to unified Germany, the emergent power in Europe by the early twentieth century. Then its influence was particularly reflected in the Ottoman Empire, Iran's neighbour, most notably through the construction of railways which reached into Mesopotamia. This in turn had implications for British control in the South-West of Iran, which forms a major theme in this study. Thus by 1914 not only had Britain's commercial and strategic interests in Iran grown and changed, their security had become affected by more complex great power rivalry.

At the same time Iran was undergoing a major political upheaval with the fall of the absolutist system in the Constitutional Revolution of 1906, and the introduction of rule by an elected assembly (Majles). However, the position of the constitutional government was very weak, and the country descended into disorder and fell under great power control. One of the principal aims of Iran's constitution, to eliminate foreign power influence, especially that of Russia in

northern Iran, thus proved entirely unsuccessful. Iran had an empty treasury, and so needed foreign advisors to assist reform a financial programme. The Iranian Majles endeavoured to reject loans from the British and the Russians, and to refuse any candidate as advisor whose name was put forward by the two European powers. In the meantime, Britain and Russia, owing to the rise of Germany, tended to reach an understanding with each other on Iranian affairs. The two powers preferred to act unanimously. As Iran encountered pressure from Russia, Britain made no effective attempt to defend it. In addition, the British had already made Iran aware since the early nineteenth century that they would not intervene, by which they meant significantly, in its internal affairs.¹ A policy of non-intervention in Iran was thus formed and lasted into the twentieth century. However, the discovery of oil in 1908, and the increasing internal disorders, led to a major shift in this policy. In 1914, at the start of the First World War, Iran declared its neutrality in the futile hope that it would be free of foreign power involvement in its affairs, but it remained under foreign control.

Therefore, this study, based on both English and Persian original documents, aims to explore how Iran's politics and foreign policy alongside developments in Europe and the discovery of oil caused the British to change their policy towards Iran in the early twentieth century, and also, how other powers were also drawn deeper into involvement in Iranian affairs, and thus into Anglo-Iranian relations. The rivalries of the European powers, Britain, Russia and Germany, not only influenced Iranian affairs. They also caused reaction on the part of the Iranian government in the development of its foreign policy in order to protect its political and economic interests from diminishing. The reaction of the Iranian government in turn affected British policy. One other significant issue which engaged not only

¹ Edward Ingram, 'An Aspiring Buffer State: Anglo-Persian Relations in the Third Coalition, 1804-1807,' *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (Sep., 1973), p. 530.

Britain, Russia and Iran, but also the Ottoman Empire, was the Ottoman-Iranian border demarcation, which, at specific points, the British saw as significant for their interests.

1. A background review

The development of Anglo-Iranian relations in the early twentieth century was influenced not only by the policy of protecting India, Britain's biggest colony, and European rivalry dating from the previous century, but also evolving British policy itself, particularly in reaction to events in Europe.

In the nineteenth century, Britain had adopted a policy based on the balance of power, as a result of events arising from the French Revolution of 1789 and the emergence of nationalism in Europe. However, the balance of power proved increasingly difficult to maintain. The rise of Germany in the late nineteenth century became a threat challenging Britain's world role, and affected Britain's foreign policy.² From 1882, Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy created the Triple Alliance which lasted till 1914. By the turn of the century, the Alliance caused Britain to look for allies to balance their impact of the Triple Alliance. The most significant was the end of splendid isolation by the Anglo-Japanese alliance in 1902. In addition, Britain generally tended to prefer the *status quo*, and only changed when the position became untenable, particularly as a result of the rise of another great power.³ Accordingly, Britain established the *Entente* with France in 1904, settling their disputes over Egypt and Morocco in order to face the rise of Germany. In the meantime, Russia's weakness, after its defeat in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904 and its revolution of 1905, gave Germany greater

² Max Beloff, *Britain's Liberal Empire 1897-1921: Volume 1 of Imperial Sunset*, London: MacMillan Press, 1987, p. 118.

³ Kenneth J. Calder, *Britain and the Origins of the New Europe 1914-1918*, London: Cambridge University Press, 1976, p. 3.

freedom in international affairs. Russia also wanted to curtail the emerging German power in Europe and moved towards cooperation with Britain. In 1907, Britain and Russia signed a convention at St. Petersburg, settling their disputes over Iran, Afghanistan and Tibet, and enabling them to concentrate on Germany in European affairs. The Triple *Entente* of Britain, France and Russia was then formed to confront the Triple Alliance.

In the Middle East, the Ottoman Empire was losing power as compared to Britain and Russia in particular. Russia had disputes over the Balkan issue with the Ottoman Empire, and its power also stretched to the Bosphorus Straits. This led in the 1870s to the Balkan revolts that culminated in the Ottoman-Russian War, where Britain redressed the Ottoman setbacks and kept the Ottoman Empire alive.⁴ Britain also encouraged the Ottoman reform movement. Of course, Britain's principle intention in supporting the Empire was to safeguard its interests in the Middle East.⁵ Owing to the Triple *Entente*, Britain's interests and dealings with the Ottoman Empire in the early twentieth century were without threat from either Russia or France. The latter was even more careful not to irritate the British in the Mesopotamian sphere. And, the *Entente* also led to Russia being regarded as less of a threat via Istanbul and the Straits. Thus, before the First World War, the new threat to Britain's influence and interests in the Ottoman Empire was Germany. German influence was gaining ground in Istanbul, whence it extended into Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf by 1903. That year, Germany signed the Baghdad Railway Convention with the Ottoman Empire for construction of a railway connecting Berlin and Baghdad, which caused the British to be concerned with its progress eastwards, creating a threat to almost every area of Britain's

⁴ Efraim Karsh and Inari Karsh, *Empires of the Sand: The Struggle for Mastery in the Middle East 1789-1923*, London: Harvard University Press, 1999, p. 5.

⁵ Elie Kedourie, *England and the Middle East: The Destruction of the Ottoman Empire 1914-1921*, London: Bowes & Bowes, 1956, p. 18.

established commercial and trading interests in the area. In 1912, a British consul in the Iranian province of Fars alleged that Germany's commercial policy had political motives challenging Britain's commercial supremacy in the area, and in India.⁶ The British Resident at Bushehr, in the South-West of Iran, argued that there were 'evident efforts of Germany to create vested interests on which she may ultimately base a claim to be associated with the political as well as the commercial future of Southern Persia in the Gulf.'⁷

Another factor in the Middle East was the Suez Canal, which assumed importance in British policy from the mid-nineteenth century. The construction took place from 1854, which was during the Crimean War 1854-1856. After the War, its causes and its consequences, however, were all seen as part of the Russian threat, as perceived by the British, to their interests in the region. When the construction of the Suez Canal was in progress in the 1860s, Indian trade and British policy in Egypt gradually became more significant than the Dardanelles or Afghanistan.⁸ As soon as it was clear that the project was going to succeed, British shipping companies began preparations to use it to capacity, and by 1875, four-fifths of the ships transiting the Suez Canal were British. From that moment onwards, the security of the Canal became Britain's primary strategic interest in the Middle East. Owing to the importance of the Canal, Britain paid much attention to the stability of Egypt. However, in Egypt in the late 1870s there were serious tensions between Egyptians and the European powers. By the early 1880s, Egypt was under occupation by Britain.

As already indicated India, which was of major political and economic

⁶ Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, *The Logistics and Politics of the British Campaigns in the Middle East, 1914-22*, London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011, p. 26.

⁷ Marian Kent, *Moguls and Mandarins: Oil, Imperialism and the Middle East in British Foreign Policy 1900-1940*, London: Frank Cass, 1993, p. 12.

⁸ William Jackson, *The Pomp of Yesterday: The Defence of India and the Suez Canal 1798-191*, London and Washington: Brassey's, 1995, p. 66.

significance to the British, it played a crucial role in their foreign policy to the Middle East and Central Asia. Britain had a long tradition of concern over the security of India. Any threat to India would be not tolerated by the British, a factor which gravely affected Anglo-Iranian relations in the mid-nineteenth century, in the form of an Iranian claim to Herat. The Iranians marched to Herat in October 1856. The British perceived that Herat was vital to the forward defence of India against their great rival, Russia. Eventually, the Iranians were defeated by the British in 1857. It was clear that Russia and Britain were engaged in serious competition over Iran, and Russia's manoeuvres in Iran, though largely concentrated in the north, and its influence over the central government, were perceived by the British as threatening India. The British were otherwise indifferent to the neighbouring states except in punishing troublemakers.⁹ All the same, the British began to consider it 'necessary to end the disagreement with Russia in the regions that bordered India,'¹⁰ and relations between the two became less hostile and more cooperative towards the end of the nineteenth century.

The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 greatly facilitated trade with India, and with Mesopotamia as well, with the effect that trade between Basrah and Bombay also boomed. Cumulatively this trade meant that in 1914 British and British-Indian commercial interests controlled more than two-thirds of the imports and half of the exports that passed through Basrah.¹¹ Thus in 1914, the Suez Canal remained crucial to India. Supporting Britain's political position in the Middle East in the years before the First World War were Britain's commercial interests. The security of Britain's strategic routes to India and the East, both by

⁹ WM. J. Olson, *Anglo-Iranian Relations During World War I*, London: Frank Cass, 1984, p. 4.

¹⁰ Mikhail Volodarsky, 'Persia and the Great Power, 1856-1869,' *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Jan., 1983), pp. 83-84.

¹¹ Coates Ulrichsen, *The Logistics*, p. 25.

water, via the Suez Canal, and by land and sea, through Mesopotamia to the Persian Gulf was of vital importance to Britain. By 1914, owing to Britain's concerns with India, the Persian Gulf, and the Suez Canal, the South of Iran became more and more important in British policy, an importance that was enhanced by the discovery of oil in 1908 there.

Thus it may be understood that of the margins of Iran, the South, and increasingly, the South-West of Iran were of particular importance to Britain. The non-intervention policy maintained towards Iran, gradually only fitted in Iran's centre, and there were stresses emerging in Iran's margins. The Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906 can be viewed as a significant event that had an impact on Anglo-Iranian relations in the early twentieth century. There were various opinions among the British. To the Foreign Office, it was not necessary to intervene in Iranian affairs based on Britain's traditional policy of non-intervention in a major and direct sense, even if it was accompanied by constant meddling. Precisely how the British acted towards the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906 and its consequences, what the Iranians, the Shah and the constitutionalists thought of Britain's actions, and how Anglo-Iranian relations were affected by the period of the revolution, will be discussed in later chapters.

In 1907, a convention covering Iran, Afghanistan and Tibet was signed by Britain and Russia at St. Petersburg, which resulted from the aforementioned British and Russian fear of Germany. The 1907 Convention stipulated that a main purpose of Britain and Russia was to maintain Iran's independence and integrity. In addition, however, should the country come under threat from another foreign power or in any sense gravely weaken, the northern part of Iran was to be made a Russian zone of influence (in effect control) and the East-South was to be a British zone, with a neutral zone in the centre. The Convention demonstrates that

Britain had no specific interests to northern Iran, again showing its concerns with the South of Iran, which, at this stage, still related principally to the security of India.

Oil was thus not yet the most significant factor that affected British policy in Iran. However from 1908 onwards it was increasingly to become important. Britain and Iran signed a concession to prospect for oil in 1901, which granted the British the right of drilling oil in Iran's territory for 60 years. The eventual discovery of oil by the British in the South-West of Iran took place in 1908 in the Bakhtiyari territory, at a time when the Iranian government, increasingly weak, was losing its control in the local regions. This new significant factor meant that the South-West of Iran assumed a position of equal importance for the British as the centre of Iran, and meant a shift in British policy towards Iran. In contrast to Britain's previous non-intervention policy in Iran's political affairs, local affairs were seriously subject to Britain's intervention.

As a result of oil and other interests in the South-West of Iran, Britain also looked for security in the south. In October 1910, Britain delivered an ultimatum to Iran concerning the security of southern Iran.¹² It was also a time that Iran attempted to establish an effective national gendarmerie to modernize their military force, which was a means of state-building.¹³ The gendarmerie was initially supported by the British in finance and diplomacy. Hence, the British indeed attempted to use any means to intervene in the affairs in the South of Iran, even though they still ostensibly held to the non-intervention policy with regard to Iran's political centre. By 1914, generally, Britain had already established more influential power in Iran, especially in the South, than ever before.

¹² Janet Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906-1911: Grassroots Democracy, Social Democracy, & the Origins of Feminism*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1996, p. 305.

¹³ Stephanie Cronin, 'Building A New Army: Military Reform in Qajar Iran,' in Roxane Farmanfarmian (ed), *War and Peace in Qajar Persia: Implications Past and Present*, London and New York: Routledge, 2008, p. 69.

2. Literature review

In *The Persian Revolution of 1905-1909*,¹⁴ E. G. Browne provides a detailed description of the new political system that emerged in Iran through revolution. Browne claims that the causes of the 1906 Revolution derived from absolutist oppression and a modernizing response, Pan-Islamism, and the rivalry between Britain and Russia, as well as the Tobacco Concession of 1890 and numerous subsequent riots. The Iranian Constitution was granted in 1906, but in 1907 this was followed by more friction between the new Shah, Mohammad 'Ali, and the constitutionalists. The author relied extensively on newspaper reports and on letters from both British contacts in Iran and Iranian themselves. Browne was deeply sympathetic to the sufferings of the Iranian constitutionalists, suppressed by the Shah. He did not, however, acknowledge the problems created for Iran by the differences of the various groups in the constitutionalist regime, and the problems of its failure to control the country. He also did not consider perspectives of Mohammad 'Ali Shah.

According to B. H. Sumner's 'Tsardom and Imperialism in the Far East and the Middle East 1880-1914,'¹⁵ the article drew a broad picture of Russia's policy in the East overall. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Russia made a loan to Iran with the purpose of freeing the country from British influence. Russia was also endeavouring to prevent any other power from obtaining a dominant position in Iran, thereby continuing to strengthen its own political and economic influence. The loan, said Sumner, was nominally for the construction of a trans-Iranian railway, which would have allowed Russia to reach the Indian Ocean. The railway

¹⁴ Edward G. Browne, *The Persian Revolution 1905-1909*, London: Cambridge University Press, 1910.

¹⁵ B. H. Sumner, 'Tsardom and Imperialism in the Far East and the Middle East 1880-1914,' *Proceedings of the British Academy*, Vol. XXXVII, 1940, pp. 3-43.

was a means for Russia to act against other powers, too. Since 1890, a prohibition on the building of railways had greatly reduced any possibility of British influence extending from the South to the North of Iran, but when the prohibition lapsed in 1910, Russia did not make any effort to renew the agreement, because, said Sumner, it was aware that the Baghdad Railway was being built by Germany from 1903, passing through Mesopotamia and then connecting with northern Iran. In addition, the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 provided Russia with an opportunity to maintain its influence in northern Iran, where Russian troops played an influential role at the time. However, the article does not identify what difficulties Russia encountered in Iran, and precisely what the changes in Russian foreign policy to Iran were. Factors, such as Britain's role or Iran's reactions, would have provided a more complete vision.

In *Turkey, the Great Powers, and the Bagdad Railway: A Study in Imperialism*,¹⁶ Edward Mead Earle argues that in the political sense the Baghdad Railway was more than a railway, and that it represented the great diplomatic struggle for prestige and dominance between the European powers, and also naval rivalry between Britain and Germany, in this case in the Persian Gulf. The signing of the Potsdam Agreement between Russia and Germany in 1911 led to Germany believing that it had achieved a major diplomatic triumph. On the other hand, in 1914 Britain also reached an agreement with Germany over the Baghdad Railway, in which Germany apparently abandoned its hope of establishing influence in the Persian Gulf, while Britain assured unlimited access to the southern terminus of the Baghdad Railway for German ships. However, Iran was not included in Mead's argument, and he did not discuss how Britain and Russia both had fears that the Baghdad Railway would extend German influence to Iran, and eliminate

¹⁶ Edward Mead Earle, *Turkey, the Great Powers, and the Bagdad Railway: A Study in Imperialism*, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1924.

their own prestige in the country.

Norman Dwight Harris, in *Europe and the East*,¹⁷ addresses that Britain had two objectives in Iranian affairs: the extension of British-Indian commerce in southern Iran, and cooperation with Iranian rulers to develop the country's resources. The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, which was of considerable importance, established that Russia had its sphere of influence in the North of Iran while Britain had the south, and settled British and Russian differences on an international basis so that they would not undermine their unity on European affairs. Harris argues that Russia had three aims: to obtain a major share of Iranian trade and natural resources, to ease Russia's route to the borders of India, and to perpetuate a weak government in Iran for its own exploitation. In Harris's view, the British consistently undertook a passive policy of non-intervention, though this view overlooks the main concern of British policy, the defence of India, in which context the country's attitude to Iran could not be considered passive. In addition, Harris maintains that Britain preferred to sacrifice Iran to Anglo-Russian interests, by keeping it weak, divided and impotent, overlooking the fact that Iran was viewed as a buffer state for the protection of the security of India, and would hardly be useful if Iran was weak. In sum, Harris does not see the key reason for the signing of the 1907 Convention but simply argues that Iran was a sacrifice in the event. Thus his argument is not entirely consistent.

According to Maybelle Kennedy Chapman's *Great Britain and the Bagdad Railway 1888-1914*,¹⁸ Britain was not initially, in 1902, worried about a railway convention granted to Germany by the Ottoman Empire, because Russia's encroachment on the Persian Gulf was seen as much more serious. In the course of their cooperation with Germany over the construction of the Baghdad Railway,

¹⁷ Norman Dwight Harris, *Europe and the East*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1927.

¹⁸ Maybelle Kennedy Chapman, *Great Britain and the Bagdad Railway 1888-1914*, Northampton: Massachusetts, 1948.

the British even considered a share issue, but a few years later the railway issue came to complicate the political panorama between Britain, France, Russia, and Germany, owing to a possible encroachment by Germany into the Persian Gulf, an important commercial area for Britain, and to the fact that Britain was attempting to sign an agreement with Russia and France to oppose Germany. Up to the time of the signing by Germany and Russia of the Potsdam Agreement in 1911, which was viewed by the British as a breach of the Triple *Entente*, Britain had itself begun an initiative for an Anglo-German treaty on the Baghdad Railway, which eventually came to light in 1914. Chapman mainly pays attention to Britain and the Baghdad Railway, but the author's viewpoint that the Potsdam Agreement of 1911 breached the Triple *Entente* is not consistent with the fact that Russia's purpose in signing the Agreement was partly to stop Germany's approaching Iran.

In his work *Russia and the West in Iran, 1914-1948: A Study in Big-Power Rivalry*,¹⁹ George Lenczowsky argues that a German factor had been at play since the early twentieth century. In 1903, the Deutsche Bank, a German bank, obtained a concession to construct a railway linking Berlin with Baghdad, and this was to be the main route for Germany's expansion into Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf. Then, the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, an expression of *détente* between Britain and Russia, made German penetration into Iran more difficult. From a perspective of great power rivalry, Lenczowsky thus argues that Britain and Russia were in cooperation to block Germany's expansion of its influence. However, this was simply a part of the historical background of the author's research period 1914-1948, and therefore how Russia and Britain also used railways built in Iran as a means to block Germany was not included in the book.

A. P. Thornton's article, 'British Policy in Persia, 1858-1890 I,'²⁰ argues that

¹⁹ George Lenczowsky, *Russia and the West in Iran, 1914-1948: A Study in Big-Power Rivalry*, London: Cornell University Press, 1949.

²⁰ A. P. Thornton, 'British Policy in Persia, 1858-1890 I,' *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 69,

an important incident which took place between Britain and Iran was the opening of the Karun river in the South-West of Iran in 1888. Naser al-Din Shah had no desire to approve the opening of the Karun river, and in the course of negotiations, the main concern expressed consistently by the Shah was that of Russia's attitude. The Shah was concerned that once the Karun river was opened for Britain, Russia would ask for navigation rights to the Enzali Mordab lagoon. The Shah, therefore, attempted to push the British to guarantee that the granting of the concession would not lead to trouble from Russia. In 1888, the opening of the Karun river was eventually approved. The British effort had been principally devoted to the promotion of commerce in the southern provinces of Iran and to the improvement of their communications with the Persian Gulf. Thornton's article clarifies that Britain's concerns were with the South of Iran, which was to be a character of British policy to Iran in the later period, the early twentieth century.

In *German-Persian Diplomatic Relations 1873-1912*,²¹ Bradford G. Martin comments that German-Iranian cooperation was beginning to emerge at this time, establishing German influence in Iran. The two countries signed an agreement that Germany would support Iran if the latter was under attack from other powers. In the late nineteenth century, Germany used railway schemes to threaten British and Russian interests in Iran, and also attempted to found a bank in Tehran to strengthen its economic influence in the country. However, this plan was frustrated by the Potsdam Agreement of 1911 with Russia. From the Iranian point of view, with German influence, Iranian national independence would be assured. Yet, this plan failed in the end. Bradford Martin's book was a rarely seen work on German-Iranian relations. A German perspective is able to fill a gap that cannot be filled by the British or Russian perspectives alone.

No. 273 (Oct., 1954), pp. 554-579.

²¹ Bradford G. Martin, *German-Persian Diplomatic Relations 1873-1912*, Gravenhage: Mouton & Co., 1959.

Firuz Kazemzadeh's article, 'Russia and the Middle East,'²² argues that Russia's intention in Central Asia and southwards made Britain worried from the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. The Herat War between Britain and Iran in 1856 was an example that confirmed the importance of the security of India against Russian influence in British policy. In the early twentieth century, the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 was concerned with Russian foreign policy, in the wake of defeat in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904 and the 1905 revolution. To the Russians, their defeat exposed their military and economic limitations as regards to competing with Britain in the Middle East, as well as their domestic weaknesses. Moreover, Kazemzadeh also notices that Germany's role in the Middle East had to be taken into account. Yet, Kazemzadeh argues the facts from a Russian perspective so that other factors seem to be of secondary significance in his article.

Rose Louise Greaves, in 'British Policy in Persia, 1892-1903,'²³ claims that Iran's position as a buffer state was a concern for the security of India. British diplomatic interest in Iran began in the early nineteenth century when an invasion of India by a European power (Russia) seemed possible, and British diplomacy thereafter aimed to make Iran into a buffer state. In 1878, the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Salisbury, viewed Iran as a possible substitute for Afghanistan as the main barrier in the way of the Russian push towards India and the Gulf. Regarding railways, debates on the construction of railways in the South of Iran were inseparable from consideration of the security of India, as without railways in Iran Russia would have no means to reach any part of the Indian border.

²² Firuz Kazemzadeh, 'Russia and the Middle East,' in Ivo J. Lederer (ed), *Russian Foreign Policy—Essays in Historical Perspective*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1962, pp. 489-530.

²³ Rose Louise Greaves, 'British Policy in Persia, 1892-1903—I,' *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (1965), pp. 34-60, and 'British Policy in Persia, 1892-1903—II,' *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (1965), pp. 284-307.

Opposition to the development of Iranian railways, in Greaves's article, is seen a British means of blocking Russia's penetration southwards. In fact the Iranian railway issue is also relevant to the Baghdad Railway passing through Mesopotamia to the Persian Gulf. Further, the British sought to strengthen themselves via various railway schemes in Iran.

Ravinder Kumar, in *India and the Persian Gulf Region 1858-1907: A Study in British Imperial Policy*,²⁴ deals with several cases that show how British policy derived its influence in the Persian Gulf through India. From the early nineteenth century, some British had felt the importance of establishing a British protectorate over the Persian Gulf and British India also made efforts to make London realize the urgency of maintaining British control over the region. Later, control over the south-eastern section of the German Baghdad Railway was also a concern for Indian interests. The author reveals that India always opposed any concession with Russia, and pushed for internationalizing the Baghdad Railway to cast off Russia. His view overall shows the significance of the Indian view in shaping British policy towards the area and the Persian Gulf as well.

In *The Foreign Policy of Iran: A Developing Nation in World Affairs*,²⁵ Rouhollah K. Ramazani claims that Russia and Britain were rivals in Iran for a long time. A reason behind Iran's inclination towards Britain was its concern about Russia, which it particularly distrusted. The dispute between Iran and Russia over Georgia had not ended, despite Iran's defeat in the Russo-Iranian in 1812, which resulted in the Treaty of Golestan in 1813. In this treaty, Iran abandoned its claim to the Georgian provinces, and Russia was confirmed as the possessor of the central and eastern Azerbaijan. Ramazani argues that Russia's

²⁴ Ravinder Kumar, *India and the Persian Gulf Region 1858-1907: A Study in British Imperial Policy*, London: Asia Publishing House, 1965.

²⁵ Rouhollah K. Ramazani, *The Foreign Policy of Iran: A Developing Nation in World Affairs*, Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1966.

influence was far greater than Britain's, and for that reason Iranian nationalism focused on Russia rather than Britain, which appeared to be merely concerned with its own interests. In his view, the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 especially provided an opportunity for Russia to intervene in Iran. He misunderstands, however, the purpose and impact of the 1907 Convention, considering only that it gave Russia an opportunity to intervene in Iran, and ignoring the fact that Russia would have had the opportunity without the Convention. He, yet, fails to perceive how far Britain judged its policy by its own interests and does not fully understand what they were.

In 'The Strategic Background to the Anglo-Russian Entente of August 1907,'²⁶ Beryl J. Williams points out a number of reasons why the British government chose to negotiate with Russia rather than opposing it. One of these was that Germany was viewed as a menace and a disturbing factor because of its naval and military supremacy in Europe. With regard to the Russian threat, the prevailing view was that the British army was not sufficiently strong to fight a war on the north-west border of India. One of the chief benefits of the 1907 Convention was that it was considered a means to block the Russian path to the Persian Gulf, and the other was that an agreement with Russia would not isolate Britain themselves. These considerations had an influence on the British government's decision to come to an agreement with Russia.

In her article 'British Policy and the Iranian Opposition 1901-1907,'²⁷ Nikki Keddie considers the view that the British played an active role in supporting the opposition movement is mistaken. The British considered the Iranian constitutionalists to be a major nuisance, and British policy never favoured the

²⁶ Beryl J. Williams, 'The Strategic Background to the Anglo-Russian Entente of August 1907,' *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (1966), pp. 360-373.

²⁷ Nikki R. Keddie, 'British Policy and the Iranian Opposition 1901-1907,' *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (Sep., 1967), pp. 266-282.

revolution and gave only very limited encouragement to those Iranian constitutionalists who were seeking help. There was indeed a conviction on the part of the constitutionalists that the British were on their side, and that Britain would be against Russian intervention, which was the main threat to the revolution. This conviction, unfortunately, resulted in an unexpected shock with the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907. Keddie's argument was correct, though it focuses only on Iran's centre.

Briton Cooper Busch, in *Britain and the Persian Gulf, 1894-1914*,²⁸ addresses the German factor in the Persian Gulf affecting British policy toward this area preceding the First World War. In addition, the Gulf was also an international waterway in an age of imperial rivalries and also during Ottoman and Iran's revolutionary period. The expansion of Russia and the projected Baghdad Railway made the British strengthen their policy for defence of India. Britain eventually joined the construction of the last part of the Baghdad Railway, close to Kuwait owing to its providing a useful connection with the Persian Gulf. Their overall resistance to the railway meant that India and the Persian Gulf could not be claimed by Germany. The author, however, does not develop the implications of this point for Britain's relations with Iran and Russia.

In *Russia and Britain in Persia, 1864-1914: A Study in Imperialism*,²⁹ Firuz Kazemzadeh provides details of Anglo-Russian relations from the late nineteenth century to World War I. In the late nineteenth century, Britain had far greater economic interests in India, and therefore attempted to maintain as close ties as possible with Iran, viewing it as intimately tied to the need to protect India. The Russians, meanwhile, exerted a strong influence from the North to the South of

²⁸ Briton Cooper Busch, *Britain and the Persian Gulf, 1894-1914*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967, p. 3.

²⁹ Firuz Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia, 1864-1914: A Study in Imperialism*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1968.

Iran, an influence that could not be ignored for both political and economic reasons. According to Kazemzadeh's argument, there was therefore serious competition between Russia and Britain in the fields of railways, trade, loans, and concessions. Kazemzadeh is of the opinion that it was not easy for the two European countries to reach an agreement to guarantee the independence and integrity of Iran. Indeed, the two countries both had their own interests in Iran so that there were difficulties to completely maintain their understandings on Iranian affairs. However, Kazemzadeh considers that the British were weaker than the Russians in their rivalry in Iran. British policy towards Iran was not as solid and strong as that of Russia, and was more hesitant and irresolute in character. In coming to this view, he fails to understand what Britain saw as their particular interests, and whether they were successful in guarding those, which was all that was relevant to them.

Two articles by Rose Louise Greaves 'Some Aspects of the Anglo-Russian Convention and Its Working in Persia, 1907-14—I and II,'³⁰ argue that the signing of the 1907 Convention was a change not only in Anglo-Russian relations but also Britain's policy towards Europe. In Greaves's research, the Russians had a will to make themselves stay in northern Iran, while Britain had no clear objective as to what their essential interests in Iran were. The British Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, was criticized owing to his friendliness to the Russians, but his defence was that such an arrangement with Russia was good for commercial interests in Iran and for having an ally to European circumstances. In addition, when in 1911 the Shuster Mission caused Russian reaction, Grey received criticism in the British parliament that the *Entente* was not working in

³⁰ Rose Louise Greaves, 'Some Aspects of the Anglo-Russian Convention and Its Working in Persia, 1907-14—I,' *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 1(1968), pp. 69-91, and 'Some Aspects of the Anglo-Russian Convention and Its Working in Persia, 1907-14—II,' *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (1968), pp. 290-308.

Iran. Grey's policy was seen by Greaves as inadequate. Grey's policy, Greaves argues, was denounced as weak and undignified. Greaves, in fact, does not see that in the context of the approach of war, Grey's policy maintained an underlying continuity. She also mainly puts emphasis in Grey's policy towards Iran's political centre, and did not see how Grey's management of policy towards the South of Iran worked to British advantage, especially the south-west with its abundant oil.

Zara S. Steiner's work, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy, 1898-1914*,³¹ argues that it was not until the turn of the century, when Germany seemed to be outperforming Britain in the both economic and industrial fields and had begun to build a navy, so that the British started to perceive Germany as an antagonist. On his appointment to the Foreign Office in December 1905, Grey therefore welcomed the French *entente*, on the assumption that Germany was the main threat to peace in Europe. Once in office, he not only extended Britain's obligations to France, but he also had the German threat very much in mind in making peace with the Russians, leading to the signing, in 1907, of the Anglo-Russian Convention in St. Petersburg. Steiner's work only discusses Britain's foreign policy, and generally focuses on incidents in Europe. Yet, there were connections between Europe and other worlds. An Iranian factor included could have provided a broader vision of British policy.

In 'British Intervention in the Persian Revolution, 1905-1909,'³² Ira Klein analyses the role played by Britain in the Iranian revolution, and in doing so explains the impact of the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 on British policy. Conceivably, he said, the policy of Grey may be deemed non-interventionist, but it was aimed directly at shaping Iran's internal affairs. Initially, the Iranian

³¹ Zara S. Steiner, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy, 1898-1914*, London: Cambridge University Press, 1969.

³² Ira Klein, 'British Intervention in the Persian Revolution, 1905-1909,' *The Historical Journal*, Vol.15, No.4 (Dec., 1972), pp. 731-752.

revolution of 1906 ended with the fall of Qajar absolutism, a triumph for the British in Klein's view, though as indicated the British government did not see it that way, and with a diplomatic defeat for the Russians. Klein attempts to present Britain's actions in the Iranian provinces as intervention in the Iranian revolution. However, in Tehran, the British generally did not support the either constitutionalists or the Shah in any effective financial or military sense. Klein also fails to see British concerns over Iran's great financial difficulties, and also the whole problem of Germany, and the question of British interests in the south.

In *The Diplomatic History of the Baghdad Railway*,³³ J. B. Wolf provides details of Germany's considerations and intentions. Wolf argues that Germany was well aware that the Baghdad Railway, which served as a short cut to India, would be objected to by Britain, and by Russia as well. Once the Baghdad Railway was built, its very nature as a purely German venture was sure to lead to major political issues among the great powers. In 1906, for instance, the British insisted on their position of ensuring control over the line to the Persian Gulf, which would secure British interests in the area. Germany believed that the Triple *Entente* objected to the Baghdad Railway, and that Britain saw the Baghdad Railway as Germany's attempt to undermine Britain's relationship with Russia in the East. Like previous scholars Wolf identified Britain's serious concerns over the impact of the railway on their interests in India. However, he did not address the significance of Iran and especially Mohammareh to Britain's attitude to the Baghdad Railway.

'Persia on a Cross of Silver, 1880-1890,'³⁴ by P. W. Avery and J. B. Simmons, may be viewed as the first discussion to focus on the significance of a crucial financial issue in Anglo-Iranian relations. The dual motivations of the

³³ J. B. Wolf, *The Diplomatic History of the Baghdad Railway*, New York: Octagon Books, 1973.

³⁴ P. W. Avery and J. B. Simmons, 'Persia on a Cross of Silver, 1880-1890,' *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (Oct., 1974), pp. 259-286.

pursuit of reform and the danger posed by Russian ambitions led Iran to attempt to associate itself with Britain. In July 1872, therefore, Naser al-Din Shah's Prime Minister, Mirza Hosein Khan, and Baron Julius de Reuter, a British subject, signed an agreement, which granted de Reuter transport construction rights in Iran for 70 years, along with a wide range of public works. This concession was not in Russia's favour at all, and to the British, government, meanwhile, the concession was overambitious, and in fact London had lent Reuter little support in his schemes. The second major event in this context was the opening of the Karun river, in the South-West of Iran, in 1888. To the British, the extension of navigation along the Tigris to the neighbouring Karun, which would shorten the distance for land carriage of goods from the Gulf to the interior of Iran, would enable them to compete more successfully with Russia; to the Iranians, however, such a measure would obviously lead to Iran losing control over the transport of goods within the country. The article focuses on the opening of trade and navigation in the South of Iran, an important development in British policy that would have implications for the early twentieth century. Most significantly, Avery and Simmons drew attention to the fact that Iran's reliance on silver in its currency affairs led to its suffering from the decline of the value of silver world-wide, with consequent serious inflation.

Ishtiaq Ahmad, in *Anglo-Iranian Relations 1905-1919*,³⁵ argues that from 1905 Britain had supported the Constitutional movement, which as discussed above, was not really the case beyond the expression of sympathetic interest. On the other hand, during the Revolution, the Shah was supported by the Russians in crushing the Iranian constitutionalists, demolishing the Majles and abrogating the Constitution. With Russia's intervention, Iran's cities, such as Tabriz and Qazvin, were besieged by Russian troops. In fact, the British also had Indian army

³⁵ Ishtiaq Ahmad, *Anglo-Iranian Relations 1905-1919*, New York: Asia Publishing House, 1974.

personnel in the South of Iran, but this was appreciated by some Iranians as it helped keep order. In addition, Britain did not intervene in the internal affairs of Iran. This, of course, is a simplistic view of the British role, for despite their policy of non-intervention, they did constantly attempt to advise the Iranian government on policy. Ahmad perceives Russia's imperious approach as a threat to Anglo-Iranian relations, which in a sense it was, but with central government control collapsing, the British came increasingly to see the Russian point of view. Ahmad, however, overlooked Britain's intervention in the South of Iran over oil works and the security of India.

Stuart A. Cohen, in his *British Policy in Mesopotamia 1903-1914*,³⁶ follows the line that Germany's construction from 1903 onwards of the Baghdad Railway, was seen by the British as affecting their position in Mesopotamia, the Persian Gulf and even India. On the question of Mesopotamia Cohen considered that the railway did in fact pose a considerable threat to British trade, and this is why the British sought to ensure that they obtained predominant control over their end of the line. Cohen draws attention to how the Indian government was also anxious about the future commercial development of Mesopotamia and about the expansion of German economic competition in the region. Eventually, Britain's main goal for the railway project became clear: instead of sharing the project with international financiers, Britain wished to maintain control over the southernmost section of the line. In the end, the railway project was transformed from an international one into a sectional one. Cohen's work thus highlights the significance of Mesopotamia, connected as it was to the Persian Gulf, in the said period, and how determined the British were to keep it under their own protection, to the point of exacerbating further their relations with Germany if need be.

³⁶ Stuart A. Cohen, *British Policy in Mesopotamia 1903-1914*, London: Ithaca Press, 1976.

In *German Foreign Policy, 1871-1914*,³⁷ Imanuel Geiss argues that, during the unfortunate period of negotiation for a naval agreement between Britain and Germany in 1909, the latter attempted to garner Russia's goodwill, seeing as in October 1909 the new Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs was not unsympathetic to their foreign policy. This resulted in a meeting at Potsdam between the two countries in early November 1910 and an Agreement in 1911, which partly resulted from Britain's failure to support Russia in the Balkans. The focus was on the implications of the Baghdad Railway for Russia's position in Iran, particularly in the north, and was perceived by the British as advancing both Russian and German interests in Iran at the expense of their own. The author comments that Germany intrigued to make Russia break away from the Triple *Entente*. However, this view overstates the case, as Germany was not completely hostile to Britain and Russia, and vice versa at this point, when negotiations between the three countries on the whole sought to resolve issues peacefully.

Malcolm Yapp's article, '1900-1921: The Last Years of the Qajar Dynasty,'³⁸ discusses changes in Iran in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Yapp argues that the domestic development of the Qajar period was intertwined with two factors, firstly the influence of the West, and secondly the efforts of the Qajars to alter the traditional balance of political influence in favour of the state. Yapp also illustrates two viewpoints on internal politics: the first posits that Tehran, the central government, struggled to extend its authority sufficiently to strengthen the country through reform, while the second, from a provincial perspective, sees the Constitutional Revolution as a struggle for local freedom from the power of the centre. By 1905 the campaign against the Belgian customs officials was at its peak,

³⁷ Imanuel Geiss, *German Foreign Policy, 1871-1914*, London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976.

³⁸ Malcolm E. Yapp, '1900-1921: The Last Years of the Qajar Dynasty,' in Hossein Amirsadeghi, (ed) *Twentieth-Century Iran*, New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1977, pp. 1-22.

and various other issues of local government mismanagement, anti-foreign feeling and economic discontent were also coming to a head. These grievances developed into more generalized political instability, with some Iranians promoting constitutional reform with a view to introducing a national assembly, the Majles, to replace the old monarchy. Yapp drew attention to two kinds of clashes between Iran and the West, at both the central and provincial levels.

F. H. Hinsley's edited book, *British Foreign Policy under Sir Edward Grey*,³⁹ looks at Grey's period in the Foreign Office. Like earlier scholars, he views the 1907 Convention as the result of British concern for the balance of power in Europe, in the context of the rise of Germany. To the British, Germany had emerged in the early twentieth century as a powerful industrial and military power, both in Europe and in the Middle East. Given the strength of Germany, Grey's purpose was to create a balance within Europe, through the integration of the country's *entente* with France and its relations with Russia. From Hinsley's point of view, it can be seen that Grey was very concerned with what was taking place in Europe. The 1907 Convention was signed with Russia because of Germany even though the contents were about Iran, Afghanistan and Tibet. This book is thus concerned with European affairs, but does no more than touch on those of Asia.

David Gillard, in his *The Struggle for Asia 1828-1914: A Study in British and Russian Imperialism*,⁴⁰ considers a broad area, Asia, to discuss Britain and Russia's rivalry in the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. The Crimean War (1853-1856), for instance, increased the possibility of a Russian threat to India. From this war, it can be seen that Britain assumed that Russia

³⁹ F. H. Hinsley, (ed) *British Foreign Policy under Sir Edward Grey*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.

⁴⁰ David Gillard, *The Struggle for Asia 1828-1914: A Study in British and Russian Imperialism*, London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1977.

would somehow establish a formidable naval power base in the Black Sea and thus gain control over the Bosphorus Straits. Control of the Straits by Russia was perceived by the British as potentially threatening the Suez Canal, the master key to a short route to India from the Eastern Mediterranean. In the late nineteenth century, both Britain and Germany were working on railway projects, so had both mutual and conflicting interests on the matter. Gillard also explains that although Britain and Russia signed the 1907 Convention, the basic facts of their contemporary Asian politics had remained unchanged. Russian power was still on the increase and the British government had still found no means of halting it. However, Gillard does not see that till the twentieth century the British did not see it necessary to interfere with much of Russian policy because they had already secured their interests along India, the South of Iran and the Persian Gulf.

Stuart Cohen's article, 'Mesopotamia in British Strategy, 1903-1914,'⁴¹ examines Britain's concern with Mesopotamia and its neighbouring area, the Persian Gulf and India. The Tigris and Euphrates, in his view, made a natural highway from Syria to the Persian Gulf, and then the Indian Ocean. Britain claimed that they had no political purpose in Mesopotamia, beyond protecting their interests in the northern Gulf. Railways in the area received much attention because Britain intended to block Russia and Germany heading towards India. The German Baghdad Railway was the important issue for the British from 1903. However, when the Potsdam Agreement of 1911 by Germany and Russia was signed, in which Russia ceased its objection to the Baghdad Railway, Britain displayed a moderate attitude to Germany and Russia in order to cool rivalries. However, Britain was in fact still worried about German influence in the Persian Gulf via the Baghdad Railway, which was constantly mentioned in British

⁴¹ Stuart Cohen, 'Mesopotamia in British Strategy, 1903-1914,' *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (Apr., 1978), pp. 171-181.

documents. In the time just up to 1914 it became more and more relevant to the oil interests of Britain.

Robert Michael Burrell, in *Aspects of the Reign of Muzaffar al-Din Shah of Persia 1896-1907*,⁴² pays attention to Mozaffar al-Din Shah's reign, with his reforms in the army and the customs, and affairs in the provinces of Isfahan and Fars. Burrell perceives Mozaffar al-Din Shah as weak and his government as ineffective, even claiming that he was not interested in politics at all. This produces the weak analytical position that the problems of the country stemmed personally from the Shah, with local areas not under control at all. However, Burrell draws attention to the growth in power of such local potentates as the Sheykh of Mohammearh, who held more influence over the administration of the Customs than the political centre. Although many British diplomatic documents were used in the thesis, it was not a study of Iran's foreign relations, and could not see the implications of Anglo-Iranian relations, and the growth of British influence the South-West of Iran.

David McLean, in *Britain and Her Buffer State—The Collapse of the Persian Empire, 1890-1914*,⁴³ argues that the British government had neither the inclination nor the means to impose its own administration on Iran. McLean claims that Britain did not want to do anything to weaken the Iranian government. In the face of the Russian threat, Britain's aim was to establish Iran as a buffer state between the two countries, and this remained the policy. He makes the important point that Britain wanted stability in Iran, but did not want the responsibility for its imposition. No matter what happened in Iran, Britain's main concern and purpose was still focused on India. Non-intervention is therefore

⁴² Robert Michael Burrell, *Aspects of the Reign of Muzaffar al-Din Shah of Persia 1896-1907*, PhD thesis, London: SOAS, 1979.

⁴³ David McLean, *Britain and Her Buffer State—The Collapse of the Persian Empire, 1890-1914*, London: Royal Historical Society, 1979.

regarded as the main strategy of British policy in Iran. Yet, by the twentieth century, British non-intervention policy was gradually mainly limited to Iran's political centre. In the South of Iran, which was related to Britain's new source of energy, oil, the construction of railways and the navigation of the Karun river, Britain's intervention was more and more to be seen.

The emergence of nationalism, a popular theme during this period, was comprehensively discussed in Richard W. Cottam's *Nationalism in Iran*.⁴⁴ Cottam views Iranian nationalism in the early twentieth century as a new trend. In his view, this nationalism, coupled with programs for economic and social reform, became the basis of modernising leaders' appeal to the newly-awakened people. Those Iranians who became the early nationalists were also those who could be defined as modernists: their objectives were a strong central government sincerely dedicated to ending corruption, the feudalistic landholding system, and the wholesale distribution of Iranian resources to foreigners, aims closely related to the values of nationalism. On achieving power, the modernisers then proceeded to establish a parliament and liberal institutions involving free elections, political parties, and civil rights. Iran, in Cottam's perspective, was on the way towards reform and progress. However, Cottam did not consider the problems of the conflicts created by the different interpretations of nationalism and the way it weakened central control to the advantage of foreign powers at this period.

With regard to British policy in Iran, WM. J. Olson, in *Anglo-Iranian Relations during World War I*,⁴⁵ states that in British policy there was an evolving diplomatic approach between 1800 and World War I, divided into the following periods: seeking contact with Iran (1800-1830); hostility to Iran (1830-1870); strengthening Iran (1870-1890); and accommodation with Russia (1890-1917).

⁴⁴ Richard W. Cottam, *Nationalism in Iran*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1979.

⁴⁵ Olson, *Anglo-Iranian Relations During World War I*, 1984.

This framework provides an easy way to summarise the direction of British policy in Iran, but, given the continuity of British policy, there is no real evidence of much difference between one period and another. Let us take ‘hostility to Iran (1830-1870)’ for an example. The Herat War between Britain and Iran, which took place during this period, did not represent any alteration in long term British policy in securing India; and as for ‘accommodation with Russia (1890-1917),’ there were numerous other factors involved, such as the rise of Germany and the end of the phenomenon of splendid isolation. The Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs was also attempting to develop closer ties with Britain, which played an important role in gradually encouraging the two countries to sign a convention. It was, therefore, the general political climate that pushed Britain and Russia to reach a mutual understanding, rather than the specific position of the two powers at any one time.

Mikhail Volodarsky, in ‘Persia’s Foreign Policy between the Two Herat Crises, 1831-56,’⁴⁶ argues for proactive Russophobic (in the sense of fear of Russia) view in Britain. In 1856, according to Volodarsky, Russia took advantage of worsening Anglo-Iranian relations, whilst the Palmerston government had no intention of furthering its policy in the Middle East which might provoke Russia. According to Volodarshky, Palmerston’s Russophobia was clear. Palmerston and his successors continued to give ground in Central Asia, and avoided confrontation in Iran, overwhelmed by their fear of further disturbances in India, where they felt that Russia was beginning to gain influence. However, Volodarshky’s interpretation of British policy is highly questionable, as the specific pursuit of British interests according to the British perspective was the cornerstone of British policy in Iran, and ‘Russophobia’ does not feature in the

⁴⁶ Mikhail Volodarsky, ‘Persia’s Foreign Policy between the Two Herat Crises, 1831-56,’ *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Apr., 1985), pp. 111-151.

British documents. In accordance with Britain's traditional policy, the security of India was its main diplomatic and strategic concern. Since there was no direct threat to India on the part of Russia, it would be neither a pivotal concern nor a major fear to the British.

Martin Sicker's work, *The Bear and the Lion—Soviet Imperialism and Iran*,⁴⁷ deals with Russo-Iranian relations in the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. With the Treaty of Golestan of 1813 and the Treaty of Torkmanchai of 1828, Russia had assumed a dominant position in northern Iran. At the turn of the nineteenth century the rise of a third imperialist power, namely Germany, caused Britain and Russia to reconcile their differences, at least temporarily, in order to prevent Germany from encroaching Iran. Russia intervention in Iran's politics grew in the years before 1914, particularly with the two Russian ultimatums in 1911 suppressing the Iranian Majles. However, Sicker's argument fails to integrate sufficiently the British and German factors into his discussion of Russo-Iranian relations.

In 'Iranian Relations with Great Britain and British India, 1798-1921,'⁴⁸ Rose Louise Greaves claims that caution towards Germany increased pressure on Britain to reach an understanding with Russia. From a British viewpoint, the 1907 Convention was concluded solely in the interests of maintaining the balance of power in Europe. The Convention, in fact, did not aim to change the nature of Anglo-Iranian relations. It is Greaves' view that after the promulgation of the Anglo-Russian Convention in 1907 relations between Britain and Iran steadily deteriorated. To the Iranians, Russia was an enemy, and in joining her Britain too became an enemy, despite the fact that, as a result of the aforementioned changes

⁴⁷ Martin Sicker, *The Bear and the Lion—Soviet Imperialism and Iran*, New York: Praeger, 1988.

⁴⁸ Rose Louise Greaves, 'Iranian Relations with Great Britain and British India, 1798—1921,' in Peter Avery, Gavin Hambly, and Charles Melville, (ed) *The Cambridge History of Iran Volume 7—From Nadir Shah to the Islamic Republic*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 374-425.

in British foreign policy, Iran had become a distinctly peripheral concern for the British cabinet in London. This argument is valid on the growing significance of Europe but is overstated, largely because it ignores the emerging interest in oil and British interests in the South and South-West Iran, and the protection of India.

In a case study of Anglo-Russian relations in the early twentieth century, 'Hartwig and Russian Policy in Iran 1906-8,'⁴⁹ Vanessa Martin argues that Nicholas G. Hartwig, the Russian Minister in Iran, was acting in the context of a climate of rapprochement between Russia and Britain. It had previously been considered that Hartwig had urged the Shah to do away with the Majles, the constitution and free press established in Iran in 1906, and had tried to undermine the policy of the Russian Foreign Minister, Alexander P. Isvolsky, which resulted in the 1907 Convention. However, Martin questions this perspective, basing her argument on two points: firstly, that Hartwig understood the new rapprochement and supported it; and secondly, that he was considered by his colleagues to be a far-sighted individual. The Russian Minister therefore sought the stability of Iran in order to protect Russian interests. For example, when a constitutional government was confirmed by the Shah, and the Majles swore an oath of allegiance to him, Hartwig sided firmly with new status quo, and when the former Prime Minister, Amin al-Soltan, was recalled, his attitude was to support the middle ground in the expectation of achieving a climate of political moderation. With regard to the bombardment of the Majlis in 1908, which was planned by the Shah, Hartwig neither expected the attack nor was involved in planning it. Martin's article indicates how the Russian Foreign Ministry at this period were committed to cooperation with Britain over the problems of Iran.

Roger Adelson, *London and the Invention of the Middle East: Money, Power,*

⁴⁹ Vanessa Martin, 'Hartwig and Russian Policy in Iran 1906-8,' *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (Jan., 1993), pp. 1-21.

and War, 1902-1922,⁵⁰ examines how in the early twentieth century some British in Tehran were worried that Russia's control in northern Iran was expanding, and British India argued that Britain had to strengthen their position in the south. The author argues that the British Foreign Office did not pay much attention to the situation in Tehran, even the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906, but was primarily concerned with Anglo-Russian relations and British prestige in the Persian Gulf. This argument is flawed because the events unfolding at the centre inevitably had implications in the provinces, and thus affected Britain's relations with both Russia and Iran. Britain had to deal with the repercussions in the south of events in Tehran.

While scholars agree that the 'German menace' was the main factor behind the 1907 Convention, there are two studies that argue otherwise. In *Endgame: Britain, Russia and the Final Struggle for Central Asia*,⁵¹ Jennifer Siegel expresses the view that the argument for the European factor being significant with regard to Iran comes from a Eurocentric perspective. The author believes that in the early twentieth century Britain came to consider more deeply the security and financial state of its empire, ending its traditional policy of 'splendid isolation' first with its alliance with Japan, and then with the Anglo-French *Entente* of 1904. However, the British still needed to avoid a military clash with Russia over India, which would have been more than Britain could bear. According to Siegel, the 1907 Convention is therefore commonly, but incorrectly, considered to have marked the end of the Great Game, in the face of an increasing threat posed by Germany. Siegel indicates that such a Eurocentric analysis focusing on the origins of the First World War and overlooks the reality of

⁵⁰ Roger Adelson, *London and the Invention of the Middle East: Money, Power, and War, 1902-1922*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995.

⁵¹ Jennifer Siegel, *Endgame: Britain, Russia and the Final Struggle for Central Asia*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2002.

Russian and British policymakers, and the fact that the relationship in Central Asia was, first and foremost, directed towards addressing regional and not European concerns. For both Britain and Russia, however, the Convention did not represent a solution, given that competition in Central Asia continued to exist. The German threat also was not solely the result of a Eurocentric viewpoint, but was a reality of the time. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Triple *Entente* of Britain, France and Russia, and the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy, had emerged, and the political climate of Europe was indeed more conflicted than that of Central Asia. Even though it is true, as Siegel argues, that the rivalry of Britain and Russia was not suspended because of the 1907 Convention, European concerns were nonetheless the main factor.

Sneh Mahajan holds a similar view to that of Siegel, maintaining in *British Foreign Policy 1874-1914: the Role of India*,⁵² that Europe was not the key factor behind the 1907 Convention, but that instead the Indian border was a never-ending source of anxiety for British strategy. Russian troops attacked Afghanistan in 1885, though, which did lead to antagonism between Britain and Russia, though it resulted in a settlement after prolonged negotiations on the question of Afghan borders. Generally speaking, therefore, the reasons behind the British government's anxiety about Russian expansionism can be summarized firstly in the perception of Russia's expansion towards the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf as a threat to the most efficient routes towards India, particularly the Suez Canal; and secondly, in the view that the consistent expansion of Russia towards Central Asia could pose another threat to British India. British policy often viewed the Indian border with Russia as the most likely area of conflict. With regard to Europe, during the two years preceding the outbreak of the war,

⁵² Sneh Mahaja, *British Foreign Policy 1874-1914: the Role of India*, London and New York: Routledge, 2002.

there were clear signs of optimism in Anglo-German relations, and similarly, the signing of the Anglo-Russian Convention in 1907 did not automatically result in the establishment of friendly relations with Russia. Until 1907, though German's growing economic, military and imperial power was watched with anxious concern, the British government did not see any military threat from Germany to Britain's security or to its world status. Russia was the enemy, and the *entente* with Russia was likely to make the Indian Empire more secure. This argument, however, does not really accord with the view reflected in the British primary sources.

Mansour Bonakdarian in *Britain and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906-1911: Foreign Policy, Imperialism, and Dissent*,⁵³ looks at British dissenters in Britain claiming to support the Iranian constitutionalists during the 1906 Revolution, and considers whether the British opposition was effective in changing Grey's policy towards Iran, an original approach. Bonakdarian argues that the British dissenters had a vision that Iran, without their efforts, could not successfully reach their goal of establishing a constitutional government. From their perspective, the British Foreign Office's friendship with Russia did not respect the liberal spirit which was a tradition in the Foreign Office at all. He demonstrates that they had some transitory successes, such as Grey's refusal of a joint loan to the shah in January 1909, in view of the shah's rejection of reforms. Nevertheless, despite Grey's anxieties over the Russian-German meeting at Potsdam, he kept to his policy on Iran, and Bonakdarian does not fully comprehend that British interests rather than liberal idealism, were his prime concern. In terms of the gathering storm in Europe, there was much to justify his chosen course.

In Touraj Atabaki's edited book, *Iran and the First World War: Battleground*

⁵³ Mansour Bonakdarian, *Britain and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906-1911: Foreign Policy, Imperialism, and Dissent*, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2006.

of the Great Powers,⁵⁴ Atabaki contributes an article ‘The First World War, Great Power Rivalries and the Emergence of a Political Community in Iran,’ which argues that the outbreak of the First World War created more foreign pressures on Iran, in which the long-standing rift between different groups and views widened, thus further weakening the country. The central government was divided and was no longer the sole source of power in the country. Atabaki argues that from 1910 the British delivered an ultimatum to Iran for the security of southern Iran, and Russia followed the move by delivering their own ultimatum to Iran in 1911. In particular he draws attention to the futility of Iran’s attempt to be viewed as neutral. In another article, entitled, ‘Iranian Nationalism and the Government Gendarmerie,’ by Stephanie Cronin, discusses the establishment of the Gendarmerie of Iran in 1910, and places it in a series of measures modernizing the armed forces under the leadership of foreign officers, in this case Swedes, dating from the Qajar period. The Gendarme officers were to take up a position of national leadership during the war. Cronin also mentions the bitter position of Iran’s unacknowledged neutrality during the war.

James D. Clark, in *Provincial Concerns: A Political History of the Iranian Province of Azerbaijan, 1848-1906*,⁵⁵ deals with Azerbaijan in a weak Iran from the mid-nineteenth century up to the time of the Constitutional Revolution in 1906. Iran in the nineteenth century was a centralized country, in which the provinces were ruled by governors, who had a considerable degree of autonomy, the result being weak central control. On the one hand, Azerbaijan was also under Russia’s influence from the early nineteenth century, and on the other hand, Azerbaijan suffered from official corruption, famine and inflation causing it to be in a poor

⁵⁴ Touraj Atabaki (ed), *Iran and the First World War: Battleground of the Great Powers*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2006.

⁵⁵ James D. Clark, *Provincial Concerns: A Political History of the Iranian Province of Azerbaijan, 1848-1906*, California: Mazda Publishers, 2006.

position in the late nineteenth century. From time to time there were resistance movements in the province, particularly that of the Constitutional Revolution of 1906. This book is specifically helpful for studying the situation in Azerbaijan, which was Iran's wealthiest and most advanced province, and had a key connection to the politics of the centre, and thus provides an example of provincial-centre relations. As a result of the predominance of Russian influence, however, Britain did not play a significant role in the politics of Azerbaijan.

Vanessa Martin and Morteza Nouraei's article, 'Foreign Land Holdings in Iran 1828 to 1911,'⁵⁶ clearly illustrates Iran's attitude to the purchase of Iranian land by foreigners. In comparison with those works which argue that the Iranian government during the Qajar period was weak, naïve and ineffectual in the face of the challenge posed by the intervention of the great powers, this article claims that Iran dealt skilfully with foreign powers on the issue of land during in the nineteenth century, and with some success. The Iranian government was intent on preventing or at least seriously discouraging foreigners from purchasing land in Iran: while the government allowed the ownership of houses, offices and storage space, it was only the buildings, and not the land itself. Martin and Nouraei's article discusses a number of cases involving foreign missions and consulates, the long-standing rights of British Indians and Russian subjects, and outright purchases of land by the Russians, particularly from 1904 onwards. The article makes the point that the Iranian policy of resisting land purchases was more successful in the south, where the British discouraged it as not particularly in their interest, than in the north, where Russian land purchases were much more difficult to control. However, the article did not see how the British dealt land issue for oil works with the Bakhtiyari tribe and the Sheykh of Mohammerah. As oil became

⁵⁶ Vanessa Martin and Morteza Nouraei, 'Foreign Land Holdings in Iran 1828-1911.' *The Royal Asiatic Society*. Vol. 21, Part 2, 2011, pp. 131-145.

an important factor in Anglo-Iranian relations in the twentieth century, there was a change of British attitude to land ownership in Iran.

Rashid Armin Khatib-Shahidi, *German Foreign Policy towards Iran before World War I: Political Relations, Economic Influence and the National Bank of Persia*,⁵⁷ argues that Germany's strategy of establishing a bank in Iran began in the late nineteenth century, and was a means for the promotion of trade between Germany and the Middle East. Then, a banking concession granted by Iran to Germany in 1906 led it to being perceived as a rival by Britain and Russia, who also suspected that Iran was using Germany to control and diminish their own influence. The rise in German influence caused Britain and Russia, according to the author, to change their policy to ensure Iran had a more solid economic base, rather than to suppress its aspirations as before. In fact their policy was try and sort out the finances and strengthen the economy, objectives undermined by their pursuit of their own economic interests. According to Khatib-Shahidi, the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 intended to enable the two countries to establish their own dominant economic influence in Iran, and one purpose was to discourage Germany's economic penetration, an argument which ignores its major strategic purpose. A valuable aspect of this work is that it provides a German perspective, and is thus distinctive from other works, which concentrate particularly on Britain or Russia. Iran viewed Germany as a neutral power in Europe which it could balance against Britain and Russia. However, German commercial endeavours in Iran did not receive support from the German government, and Germany does not seem to have made a concerted effort to establish Iran as an ally in 1914.

⁵⁷ Rashid Armin Khatib-Shahidi, *German Foreign Policy towards Iran before World War I: Political Relations, Economic Influence and the National Bank of Persia*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2013.

3. Approach to and Sources for the thesis

In previous academic studies, it can be seen that mostly the arguments focus on discussions between London and Tehran, discussions on the long period of Anglo-Russian rivalry in Iran and discussions on the policies of European powers to Iran, in the early twentieth century. In other words, not many studies look at British policy and Anglo-Iranian relations specifically. In particular, they do not consider in any detail incidents outside of Iran's political centre. Further, British policy towards Iran was not simply devised in response to Russian actions there, but developed as a result of the vicissitudes of Iranian affairs, both at the centre and on the margins.

The thesis, thus, attempts to explore British policy in the context of the variety of Anglo-Iranian relations between 1908 and 1914. The thesis demonstrates how the interaction of British and Iranians in the marginal areas of Iran had an impact on the relationship between the two countries. It focuses in particular on events in the South-West of Iran over the discovery of oil, and the Ottoman-Iranian border issue, and on the role of the Swedish officers in the South of Iran, a matter in which the British were involved and in which they seriously intervened. On the other hand, the incidents mentioned in the margins had an impact on Iran's overall foreign relations with Britain. The thesis will also cover the role of foreign factors other than Russian policy in Anglo-Iranian relations. For example, it will look at British response to the influence of Germany and the Ottoman Empire on Iranian affairs. Although Russia was the main rival to Britain in Iran, Germany, had influence via the Baghdad Railway from 1903, which seriously affected Anglo-Iranian relations, and the position of the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, the thesis will explore continuity in Anglo-Iranian relations during the said period. The Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906, the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 and the discovery of oil in 1908 were new factors at that time,

which resulted from previous incidents in the nineteenth century and led to new developments afterwards.

The thesis will then consider British policy on the Constitutional Revolution in Iran and the political views of Mohammad 'Ali in the context of Anglo-Russian relations during his reign. Therefore the disagreements between the Shah and Majles had significant implications not only for Anglo-Iranian relations, but also Anglo-Russian reactions. The thesis will consider how far Britain intervened in Iran's internal disputes and how far it was drawn in by Iran itself, in particular in response to Russian actions. Within this context, the thesis will study the problems facing the Majles in terms of financial reform and the maintenance of order which required the assistance of carefully selected foreign advisors, namely Shuster and the Swedish officers of the Gendarmerie.

This thesis is mainly based on primary sources in English, such as the Foreign Office diplomatic correspondence, the British Petroleum and the India Office Records. It can be seen that British documents from the Foreign Office, such as the FO371, FO248 and FO416 series have been used in most academic studies on Anglo-Iranian relations. However, most studies look at Iran's political affairs in terms of the centre, Tehran. There are many documents relating to the marginal areas of Iran which have not been widely used, and which are able to provide valuable insight into British attitudes and policies towards the provinces. As the British had a close interest in the South-West of Iran as a result of the discovery of oil, Foreign Office dispatches relating to these areas have much to reveal. In addition, with regard to disputes over the Ottoman-Iranian border, in which Mohammerah was also in question, Britain was involved deeply in protecting their interests in the area, on which dispatches have much to say. Documents relevant to the border, including maps, have not been broadly used for academic studies. The same may be said regarding the construction of Iranian

railways. There have been close studies of the Potsdam Agreement of 1911 which show how Germany and Russia arrived at an arrangement regarding the Baghdad Railway and its branch lines. However, there has been little on Britain's schemes for railways in the South of Iran to block German influence penetrating through Mesopotamia into the Persian Gulf via the Baghdad Railway. The FO documents have much material on this issue which has been barely used.

The British Petroleum Archive has also been helpful to this thesis. The Anglo-Persian Oil Company (now is called BP) was established in 1909, and many documents relating to the very beginning of the Company are stored in the BP Archive. Although some records about negotiations between the British and the Iranian local powers can be seen in the FO, there are original documents in the BP Archive, and some records of correspondence between the Company and the Iranians which have proved valuable for this work. The Company was also involved in the construction of Iranian railways and the disputes on the Ottoman-Iranian border. Therefore, the BP Archive provides important material for understanding British policy on these issues. Another source of primary material has been the India Office Records in the British Library. Although this thesis does not focus on British India's perspective, it nevertheless played a role, and its opinion and those of the British government, especially on the issues of oil, railways and border, are set out in the India Office Records which thus provide an insight into the connections between the South of Iran, the Persian Gulf and India in British policy.

There are some published documents in English rarely seen in academic studies. George Abel Schreiner's edited documents, *Entente Diplomacy and the World: Matrix of the History of Europe, 1909-1914*, provides many European documents relevant to this thesis. Some Russian documents included have been helpful in interpreting the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 and the construction

of the Baghdad Railway.

Some published Persian document collections, such as *Ketab-e Narenji* and *Ketab-e Sabz*, are very valuable. *Ketab-e Narenji*, a translation into Persian of the despatches and telegrams of the Russian Minister in Iran, Hartwig, are important for the study of Russian attitudes and policies during the Iranian Constitutional Revolution period. And, *Ketab-e Sabz*, which contains a collection of materials relating to the First World War, contributes much information relating to that time. Particularly significant is the selection of political documents on relations between the Ottoman Empire and Qajar Iran, which contains much material about the Ottoman-Iranian border.

4. Structure of the thesis

This thesis is organised into five chapters, in addition to Chapter I Introduction and Chapter VII Conclusion. Chapter II, 'Oil: A New Facet of Anglo-Iranian Relations,' explores the impact of the discovery of oil in 1908 on Anglo-Iranian relations from the perspective of Iran's regions rather than its central government. Owing to the fact that the most promising oil areas were located in the South-West Iran, such as the Bakhtiari territory, Britain's oil works required the goodwill of the local powers, such as the Bakhtiari Khans and the Sheykh of Mohammerah, to protect the oil works from disturbances. There was a range of different attitudes to British oil works, too, on the part of the Sheykh and the Khans, and this chapter will examine the Iranian government's attitude to the relationship between the Sheykh and the Khans and the British. The discovery of oil also took place within the context of the rivalry between Britain and Russia in Iran, and of competition throughout the world between oil companies. The chapter also aims to reveal how Britain secured its oil interests in the face of competition from other powers.

Chapter III, 'British Policy on the Constitutional Revolution in Iran and the Return of the Ex-Shah in 1911,' looks at the actions of Britain and Russia during the reign of Mohammad 'Ali Shah, including his abdication and his return, between 1907 and 1911. The Shah's clashes with the Majles were not only a domestic issue but also an international one, and it is debatable whether the Shah sought out the assistance of foreign powers in his opposition to the Majles, or whether Britain and Russia, especially the latter, intervened in Iranian affairs by exploiting incidents such as the *bast* in the British Legation, the bombardment of the Majles under the command of a Russian colonel, and the return of the deposed Shah to fight for the restoration of his throne.

Chapter IV, 'British Policy and Railways in Iran 1903-1914,' paints a broad picture of the rivalry between the three European countries in relation to the Iranian railway issue. From 1890 there had been a ban on railway building in Iran, and the Baghdad Railway, built by Germany from 1903, threatened British and Russian prestige in Iran by passing through Mesopotamia. As the prohibition lapsed in 1910, Britain and Russia submitted various railway schemes to the Iranian government in order to block or delay Germany's railway line from reaching any part of Iran. In 1912, Russia was also planning a trans-Iranian railway. It is clear that there was a great deal of competition between Britain and Russia as regards railways in Iran, as well as rivalry between all three powers when Mesopotamia came into the equation.

Chapter V, 'Disputes over the Ottoman-Iranian Border and the Involvement of Britain 1905-1914,' argues that the Ottoman-Iranian border disputes also bore the marks of British and Russian influence. The chapter reveals that the settlement of the border between Iran and the Ottoman Empire was also a matter of concern to the two European powers. Because of the border between Russia, the Ottoman Empire and Iran, Russia was concerned with disputes between Iran and the

Ottoman Empire, while Britain, on the other hand, was concerned with the South-West of Iran, especially Mohammerah. There the security of its oil interests necessitated a clearly-defined Ottoman-Iranian border. This issue highlighted the weakness of Iran, which could only verbally challenge statements made by the Ottomans, and rely on assistance from Britain and Russia.

Chapter VI, 'The Employment of Foreign Advisors in Iran and British Policy 1911-1914,' explores the role of foreign advisors in Iran, and the belief of the Iranian constitutional government that they constituted a means whereby the country could secure its independence and eliminate foreign power influence. From 1911, the most significant foreign advisors came from America and Sweden. An American financial expert, Morgan Shuster, was invited by the Iranian government to act as Treasurer-General in Tehran, while some Swedish officers were hired as advisors for the establishment of a gendarmerie in the South of Iran. Shuster irritated Russia by appointing a British subject to work not only in Tehran, but also in the north, the area of Russian influence, which led to his dismissal and acrimony between Russia and Iran. The Swedish Gendarmerie then also encountered pressure from Russia. This chapter will look specifically at how the British handled both affairs in the North and South of Iran, and how they negotiated with the Russians over the issues. It will consider the repercussions for overall British policy.

Chapter II Oil: a New Facet in Anglo-Iranian Relations, 1908-1914

Introduction

This chapter discusses the discovery of oil in Iran in 1908, which was a key point in the subsequent history of Iran, and in the development of its role in the world economy. Up till this time, the British focused on their trade in Iran whilst pursuing a policy of no direct military or substantial intervention in Iranian political affairs. As long as Iran remained stable, and the security of British interests in India were assured, the British were content with advising and consulting with the Shah, and giving British trade in Iran diplomatic support.¹ By contrast, from the late nineteenth century, Russia's oil exports had grown worldwide,² and had become dominant in Tehran, giving it some leverage over Britain in terms of influence.

Britain realized the significance of oil and was anxious to explore the possibility of oil production in Iran: above all because of its significance as a source of energy, but also to allow Britain to compete with Russia in gaining leverage over the Iranian government. Oil works were located in the South-West of Iran, in Bakhtiyari territory from 1905 and in Mohammerah from 1909, (Map 1) at a time when the financially indigent central government was gradually losing control of the provinces.³ To protect their newly discovered interests, the British signed agreements relating to oil with, respectively, the Bakhtiyari Khans, and the Sheykh of Mohammerah before the outbreak of the First World War. As a result of

¹ Thornton, 'British Policy in Persia,' p. 554.

² Charles Issawi (ed), *The Economic History of Iran 1800-1914*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, p. 311.

³ Pierre Oberling, 'British Tribal Policy in Southern Persia 1906-1911,' *Journal of Asian History*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1970, pp. 51-52.

the quest for oil, therefore, the importance of these local powers increased, partly because it was on land that they largely controlled, and partly because they were needed to protect this new British interest.

Studies relating to the story of the discovery of oil by the British include R. W. Ferrier's colossal research, *The History of the British Petroleum Company*,⁴ which covers the development of the oil industry in detail, but only gives a brief description of issues regarding the negotiations for the Oil Concession of 1901, its connection to the South-West of Iran and its local players, such as to the Sheykh of Mohammerah and members of the Bakhtiyari tribe. Instead, he examines the background to the discovery of oil by the British solely, and does not consider implications in the development of British policy in the South-West of Iran in general. Studies of the Bakhtiyari tribe specifically mention their connection to oil, for example Gene R. Garthwaite's 'The Bakhtiyari Khans, the Government of Iran, and the British, 1846-1915,' 'The Bakhtiyari Ilkhani: An Illusion of Unity,' and *Khans and Shahs: A History of the Bakhtiyari Tribe in Iran*,⁵ which partly addresses the relationship between the British and the tribe over oil, but mainly focuses on the history of the tribe. A doctoral thesis, *The Reign of Shaykh Khaz'al*,⁶ by William Theodore Strunk, solely discusses Sheykh Khaz'al's period in Mohammerah, in relation to issues of oil, railways, and the First World War. In this thesis, the relationship between the Sheykh and the British is the main concern, while the Bakhtiyari Khans receive much less attention.

⁴ R. W. Ferrier, *The History of the British Petroleum Company Volume 1 The Developing Years 1901-1932*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

⁵ Gene R. Garthwaite, 'The Bakhtiyari Khans, the Government of Iran, and the British, 1846-1915,' *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol.3, No.1 (Jan., 1972), pp. 24-44.
Gene R. Garthwaite, 'The Bakhtiyari Ilkhani: An Illusion of Unity,' *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (Apr., 1977), pp. 145-160.
Gene R. Garthwaite, *Khans and Shahs: A History of the Bakhtiyari Tribe in Iran*, London: I.B. Tauris, 1983.

⁶ William Theodore Strunk, *The Reign of Shaykh Khaz'al Ibn Jabir and the Suppression of the Principality of 'Arabistan: A Study of British Imperialism in Southwestern Iran, 1897-1925*, PhD thesis, Indiana University, 1977. This thesis has been translated into Persian and published in Tehran in 2006.

Arash Khazeni's article 'The Bakhtiyari Tribes in the Iranian Constitutional Revolution' looks briefly at how the discovery of oil caused British influence to overcome geographical limitations in the South-West of Iran; and his recent work, *Tribes and Empire on the Margins of Nineteenth-Century Iran*,⁷ contains a chapter which specifically looks at oil from the tribe's perspective in order to interpret oil within the context of their relations with the British. However, Khazeni, like Garthwaite, does not provide a broad vision on the development of oil by the British. Instead, the two authors are mainly concerned with the Bakhtiyari tribe and their internal conflicts. Alireza Abtahi's *Naft va Bakhtiyariha*,⁸ which provides details and debates from Persian and English documents, focuses on agreements signed between the Khans and the British. Abtahi's article, 'Bakhtiyariha va Naft: Avalin Gamha 1319-1323,'⁹ looks primarily at the initial period of the oil-Bakhtiyari relationship. The first step was the signing of the Bakhtiyari Agreement of 1905, which indicated that the two parties had not only participated in negotiations but also enjoyed close cooperation. In his *Engelis va Bakhtiyari 1896-1925 Miladi*,¹⁰ Khodabakhsh Qorbabpur Dashtaki has several sections discussing the relationship between the discovery of oil by the British and the Bakhtiyari Khans from the early twentieth century to the outbreak of the First World War. He argues that the Iranian government in Tehran refused to acknowledge the negotiations and agreements signed by the British and the Khans.

⁷ Arash Khazeni, 'The Bakhtiyari Tribes in the Iranian Constitutional Revolution,' *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, Vol. 25, No. 2, 2005, pp. 377-398.
Arash Khazeni, *Tribes and Empire on the Margins of Nineteenth-Century Iran*, Seattle & London: University of Washington Press, 2009.

⁸ Alireza Abtahi, *Naft va Bakhtiyariha*, Tehran: Moaseseh-ye Motale'at-e Tarikh-e Mo'aser-e Iran, 1384/2005.

⁹ Seyyed Alireza Abtahi Forushani, 'Bakhtiyariha va Naft: Avalin Gamha 1319-1323,' *Tarikh-e Mo'aser-e Iran*, Faslname Takhassosi, Vol. 5, No. 19 va 20, Paiz va Zemestan, 1390/2011, pp. 119-140.

¹⁰ Khodabakhsh Qorbabpur Dashtaki, *Engelis va Bakhtiyari 1896-1925 Miladi*, Tehran: Mo'asseseh-ye Motale'at-e Tarikh-e Mo'aser-e Iran, 1389/2010.

The studies abovementioned successfully cover the various negotiations between the British and local power figures like the tribes, but they do not provide a broad vision of Anglo-Iranian relations at the time, or how Iranian oil featured and impacted within British policy towards Iran. This chapter will examine the background to the discovery of oil in Iran within the prism of Anglo-Iranian relations. It will analyze the characteristics of British policy towards Iran over the discovery of oil, and how the British protected their oil interests, given their considerations towards Iran's domestic issues, and rivalry with other foreign powers. This chapter, therefore, will demonstrate that the discovery of oil was not simply the beginning of a new political era, but it introduced a new and vital factor within the long-standing history of the relations between Britain and Iran.

1. The signing of the Oil Concession of 1901

Since the late nineteenth century, Iran had been developing closer relations with Britain through commercial enterprises, such as the opening of the Karun river in 1888, the establishment of the Imperial Bank in 1889, and the less successful Tobacco Concession in 1892. During this period, Iran was looking for cooperation with foreign powers to develop the country, owing to its irregular tax revenues and financial difficulties. The Oil Concession of 1901 was a new co-operative project between Iran and Britain, which dovetailed with the policies of both parties. In addition, the British gained a new opportunity to strengthen their position in the South of Iran and the Persian Gulf.¹¹

A British oil project had been included in the Reuter Concession of 1872, and although the 1872 Concession was later cancelled, the British Minister in Tehran, Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, and the Director General of the Persian Customs, General Antoine Ketabchi, continued to pursue the oil project. Then, a series of

¹¹ Abtahi, *Naft*, p. 38.

surveys indicated that oil might be discovered in the the South-West of Iran. A French report of 1891, published in 1892, had investigated oil at Chah Surkh, in the region of Qasr-e Shirin, ninety miles west of the Ottoman frontier.¹² In 1901, oil negotiations fell under the purview of William Knox D'Arcy, an adventurous Australian, who had been successful in mining ventures, and who enjoyed the support of the Iranian Prime Minister, Amin al-Soltan. A concession was duly signed on 28 May 1901 and included 18 articles in Persian and French.¹³ The British paid much attention to their oil venture, and the 1901 Concession received support from the British Foreign Office and the British government.¹⁴ In his dispatch of 30 May, after the signing of the Concession, Sir Arthur Hardinge, the British Minister in Tehran, reported that the 'Persian Government have granted Mr. D'Arcy monopoly of seeking oil, petroleum, etc throughout Persia He may acquire lands for the purpose and construct pipes to Gulf ports.'¹⁵ D'Arcy employed George Bernard Reynolds, an engineer who had experience with oil drilling in Sumatra, for the oil work in Iran.

As mentioned already, the Concession had 18 articles. In Article 1, Iran granted Britain the right 'to search for, obtain, exploit, develop, render suitable for trade, carry away and sell natural gas, petroleum, throughout the whole extent of the Persian Empire for a term of 60 years...' With regard to lands, it was stipulated in Article 3 that, 'The Imperial Persian Government grants gratuitously all uncultivated lands belonging to the State which the Concessionaire's engineers may deem necessary for the construction of the whole or any part of the abovementioned works. As for cultivated lands belonging to the State, the

¹² L. P. Elwell-Suton, *Persian Oil—A Study in Power Politics*, London: Lawrence and Wishart Lt., 1955, p. 12. See also Nasrollah Saifpour Fatemi, *Oil Diplomacy: Powderkeg in Iran*, New York: Whittier Books, 1954, p. 4.

¹³ Dashtaki, *Engelis*, p. 166.

¹⁴ Helmut Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil: Iraq, 1910-1928*, London: Ithaca Press, 1976, p. 6.

¹⁵ FO60/731, no.10, May 30, 1901, Hardinge to Foreign Office.

Concessionaire must purchase them at the fair and current price of the Province.’ Article 10 stipulated that the concessionaire should pay the sum of £20,000 sterling in cash and a further sum in shares one month from the date of the start of exploitation. ‘It shall also pay the said Government (Iranian Government) annually a sum equal to 16 percent of the annual net profits of every Company or of all and any Company that may be formed in accordance with the said Article.’ As for the expiration of the Concession, Article 15 stipulated that ‘all materials, buildings and apparatuses then used by the Company for the exploitation of its industry, shall become the property of the said Government and the Company shall have no right to any indemnity in this connection.’¹⁶

Vanessa Martin and Morteza Nouraei argue that the Iranian government had always strongly opposed the purchase of land by foreigners ever since the nineteenth century.¹⁷ Therefore, it seems that Article 3 of allowing the British to buy Iranian lands was contrary to the traditionally independent position of Iran. Although the two scholars argue that the British were not interested in the purchase of land,¹⁸ the Iranian lands for British oil works were not included in the afore-mentioned discussions. The reason why Amin al-Soltan granted D’Arcy the right to buy land is not evident from the primary documents, or discussed in any secondary sources. However it can be argued that D’Arcy did not actually buy land for any oil works at this time, and so British policy of discouraging the purchase of land, to preserve the integrity of Iran, was not tested at this point.

The drilling commenced at Chah Surkh on 8 November 1902. D’Arcy was confident that this would be the best oil in the world.¹⁹ Reynolds expected to ‘strike any day a gush of oil which would amply prove the value of the

¹⁶ BP21540, The D’Arcy Concession.

¹⁷ Martin and Nouraei, ‘Foreign Land Holdings in Iran,’ p. 133 and p. 135.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 145.

¹⁹ Abtahi, ‘Bakhtiyariha va Naft,’ p. 127.

Concession, and justify the formation of a Company before the date on which the Concession lapses.’²⁰ In October 1903, oil was found at Chah Surkh. Unfortunately, the quantity and quality of this oil did not suggest a promising profit.²¹ There were alternatives, such as Masjed-e Soleyman (Map 2, no. 1) in the Bakhtiyari territory, but until early May 1908 there was still little optimism over the drilling of oil.²² On 26 May, however, Reynolds’s telegram recorded that ‘Musjid-i-Suleiman 26th May ‘08. Depth of No. 1 Hole is 1180. Oil struck, flowing.’²³ After seven years of drilling, the discovery of oil marked a new and important turn in Anglo-Iranian relations. Subsequently, the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (the APOC henceforth), established in April 1909, replaced D’Arcy in further developing oil production in Iran.²⁴ In addition, the British and the local powers, such as the Bakhtiyari Khans and the Sheykh of Mohammerah, were involved in negotiations over oil, as will be discussed below.

2. Agreements between the British and the Bakhtiyari Khans

After years digging without any satisfactory result, D’Arcy, in September 1905, considered that “no delay shall ensue in the commencement of drilling operations, as such delay would to a certain extent absorb some of the limited money allocated to this work,

”²⁵ Both money and time were therefore very limited from D’Arcy’s point of view. In September 1905, Mr. J. R. Preece, the British Consul in Isfahan, reached a satisfactory agreement with the Bakhtiyari Khans to ensure the process of oil prospecting would run smoothly. The British

²⁰ FO416/13, confident, enclosure 2, March 4, 1903, Note on the D’Arcy Oil Concession in Persia.

²¹ Abtahi, ‘Bakhtiyariha va Naft,’ p. 127.

²² BP17208, GB Reynolds in Persia to The Concessions Syndicate Ltd (Cargill) in Glasgow, 14 May, 1908, William Mine to Reynolds. A Syndicate report claimed that the oil works in Meydan-e Naftun would have to be abandoned because there was still no sign of oil.

²³ BP172108, no. 130, May 26, 1908, Reynolds to Oil Syndicate. See also FO248/923, no. 145/419, May 28, 1908, Cox to Marling.

²⁴ Issawi (ed), *The Economic History of Iran*, p. 320.

²⁵ IOR/L/PS/10/143, 3405, September 26, 1905, D’Arcy to Foreign Office.

Foreign Office felt it necessary to stay on good terms with the Bakhtiyaris. Thus, at this time when the Iranian Constitutional Revolution was taking place, British diplomats were paying considerable attention to the local tribes to serve their oil interests, partly to ensure the development of those interests, and partly in case that a weak Iranian government would not be able to provide any effective form of protection.

Preece noted, however, that it was not easy to make the Bakhtiyari Khans accept terms to open up their lands for oil exploitation. For example, an influential Khan, Sardar As'ad, 'commenced by agreeing to the money terms, but only for guards, stating that the Chiefs would not lease a yard of their country for money, but that they must be partners in the concern. He then began talking of 20% of the profits'²⁶ Hardinge in Tehran gave Preece instructions to insist 'a 16% share of oil proceeds be given to Iran and avoid any form of it (share of profits for the tribe),' stating that 'it is necessary to force the tribes and nomads to abandon their claims.'²⁷ Eventually however, the Khans agreed to reduce their demands to 5% of profits issued by any companies created to undertake oil works in the Bakhtiyari lands. In the end, the Khans accepted 3%, and the agreement was finally concluded on 15 November 1905.

The complete agreement comprised of six articles. Article 1 clearly indicated the different responsibilities of the British and the Bakhtiyaris. The British had the right, for a period of five years from the date of the signing of the Agreement, to make all examinations, borings, inquiries, and investigations necessary for the finding of oil in Bakhtiyari country. The tribe, in consideration of an annual payment of £2,000, undertook to appoint guards on the road, and to watch houses, buildings, dwellings and structures of all kinds. Should oil be found, as many

²⁶ FO371/104, enclosure 2 in no. 267, 2478, November 27, 1905, Report on the Negotiations with the Chiefs of the Bakhtiari Tribes for the Exploitation of Naphtha in their Country.

²⁷ Abtahi, 'Bakhtiyariha va Naft,' p. 131.

gangs of guards as might be required to guard the various spots where drilling might take place would be supplied by the Bakhtiyari, affording due protection. And the acquisition of lands included that 'the Chiefs of the Bakhtiyari tribe will give free of cost all uncultivated ground required for this work'. Besides the shares abovementioned, in Article 3, if the existing springs of oil were damaged by the work of the British and be of no further use, the British agreed to compensate the tribe. Ultimately, after the expiration of the period of the Concession granted by the Shah, such buildings as were the property of the British would then belong to the Bakhtiyaris.²⁸

Subsequently, the agreement ran into problems. The Iranian government of the time denied the legitimacy of the 1905 Agreement. The agreement was signed in November 1905 at a time when the central government was struggling with a growing movement for reform. It was perhaps an opportune moment for the British to approach the Khans. To the British, negotiating with the Khans might have seemed more advantageous than with a weak government. When the Iranian government caught up with the matter once more in January 1906, Moshir al-Dowleh, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, expressed his view that any land purchased or acquired by the British was not in the spirit of the 1901 Concession.²⁹ Hardinge, however, considered that the real reason for this objection was that the Iranian government wished to hinder close relations between the British and the Bakhtiyari tribe, and that 'an arrangement under which they (the Bakhtiyaris) are directly interested in a British enterprise, and receive an annual payment from a British company, will strengthen our political influence in Bakhtiaristan.'³⁰ He might have added that it would strengthen the

²⁸ BP102197, Agreements with Bakhtiyari Khans, 15 November 1905, Translation of an Agreement between Messrs W. K. D'Arcy & the Concessions Syndicate Ltd. with the Bakhtiyari Khans regarding the Right to Drill for Petroleum on the Lands of the Latter.

²⁹ FO248/894, January 9, 1906, Moshir al-Dowleh to Grant Duff.

³⁰ Memorandum by A. Hardinge, (no date), in A. L. P. Burdett & A. Seay, *Iran in the Persian Gulf*

tribe against the centre. Hardinge also believed that the 1905 Agreement bore no political will and no intention to derogate from the Shah's authority.³¹ In July 1906, Moshir al-Dowleh expressed the view that with regard to Article 3 of the Concession 'I have the honour to state that the article in question only refers to the lease or purchase of lands about which the concessionaires can come to terms with the owners, but the latter cannot, without the knowledge or approval of the Persian Government, make with any person an agreement, the stipulations of which affect the rights of the Government.'³² Preece insisted that the oil works on the Bakhtiyari territory was legitimate according to the 1901 Concession and the 1905 Agreement.³³ Moshir al-Dowleh asserted that all lands belonged to the central government,³⁴ and announced the annulment of the 1905 Agreement. Iran obviously had different views in 1905-1906 towards its attitude to the signing of the Oil Concession in 1901. Nevertheless, to the Khans and to the British, given the support of London, the 1905 Agreement was binding,³⁵ even though it could not be considered legitimate given the view of the central government.

The British made efforts to protect their rights and interests. One sensitive matter was the nature of the role of the Bakhtiyari guards. According to the 1905 Agreement and as already mentioned, the Khans had to provide with guards for the oil works. To the British, though, these guards were not reliable. In November 1905, Reynolds attempted to tell the Khan, Samsam al-Saltaneh, a signatory of the 1905 Agreement, that the guards, though present at the oil works, were ineffective in keeping watch.³⁶ However, the situation did not improve, in fact there were instances when the guards themselves became threatening. A company surveyor

1820-1966, Volume 2: 1880-1917, Slough: Archive Editions, 2000, p. 422.

³¹ FO248/894, no. 22, 1588, Extract from Sir A. Hardinge's dispatch, dated February 15, 1906.

³² No. 213, enclosure, July 26, 1906, Moshir al-Dowleh to Mr E. Grant Duff, in Burdett & Seay, *Iran, Volume 2*, p. 441.

³³ FO248/894, no. 138, 30741, September 9, 1906, Preece to Foreign Office.

³⁴ Abtahi, *Naft*, p. 61.

³⁵ Dashtaki, *Engelis*, p. 179.

³⁶ FO416/26, no.63, enclosure, November, 28, 1905, Reynolds to Samsam-es-Sultaneh.

was even warned by certain Khans that he was not allowed to work in this country, and that he would get hurt if he did not have a guard.³⁷ The Foreign Office considered that it was important to have the Khans' consent before operations began on their lands, to avoid disputes and delays, and to settle all matters as described in the 1905 Agreement.³⁸ The British were thus concerned about the security of oil works and the workers stationed there. However, the Khans raised certain objections to the 1905 Agreement, mainly that the pay of the guards should be adjusted to a higher rate.³⁹ Pay for the guards had been agreed at £1,500, but Sardar As'ad, requested that this should be increased to £2,000 annually.⁴⁰ However, D. L. R. Lorimer, the Consul of Mohammerah, opined that no written agreement had been made, and the payment of the extra £500 remained in abeyance.⁴¹ The Khans were not satisfied with this refusal.⁴² Regarding the extra payment, Charles Marling, the Acting British Minister in Tehran, replied that 'until satisfaction is given in this respect I cannot recommend to the Syndicate (the D'Arcy Oil Syndicate) the payment of an extra £500 a-year as suggested.'⁴³ In fact, the Oil Syndicate agreed to the £500 payment to the Khans to eliminate these issues, and also agreed that it was made as much for permission to use the tribe's ground as for their role as guards '..... we think it desirable that the extra £500 per annum should be paid the Chiefs, provided they give adequate guard under a responsible Chief,⁴⁴ The Syndicate also thought that once the desired result had been attained, the situation would completely change. Reynolds

³⁷ Khazeni, 'The Bakhtiyari Tribes,' p. 392.

³⁸ IOR/L/PS/10/143, no. 87, 3640, November 28, 1905, The Marquess of Lansdowne to Grant Duff.

³⁹ FO248/894, no.97, 21654, June 25, 1906, Preece to Foreign Office.

⁴⁰ FO416/29, no. 225, enclosure, August 16, 1906, Grant Duff to the Ilkhani of the Bakhtiaris.

⁴¹ FO416/32, no. 78, April 5, 1907, Spring-Rice to Grey.

⁴² FO416/34, no. 245, 38676, enclosure 1, October 4, 1907, Samsam-es-Saltaneh and Shahab-es-Saltaneh to Marling.

⁴³ FO416/34, no. 245, 38676, enclosure 2, October 8, 1907, Marling to the Samsam-es-Saltaneh and the Shahab-es-Saltaneh.

⁴⁴ FO416/36, no. 78, enclosure 3, November 23, 1907, Memorandum addressed by the Concession Syndicate to Reynolds.

considered that payment of the £500 should be made in full, to 'leave no excuse for the Bakhtiari Chiefs to quarrel with us'.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, Lorimer pointed out that the extra payment could not guarantee any promise made by the Khans.⁴⁶ He also doubted that the situation would be improved by the discovery of oil. To the Khans the extra £500 was important for the fulfillment of their duties regarding the security of the oil works, but to some of the British in Iran it was an unreasonable request.

Disputes between the British and the Khans were seemingly endless. In September 1907, Spring-Rice sent a telegram to the Foreign Secretary, Grey, noting that the tribes were becoming aggressive, and they were beyond all control.⁴⁷ Owing to the disturbances in the Bakhtiyari territory, the British began making plans to bring in military guards of their own for the security of the oil works. Spring-Rice decided that 'the local guards, supposed to be supplied by the Khans, are quite useless, and from the Persian Government nothing is to be expected.'⁴⁸ As a result of the deteriorating state of order in the country, the British considered bringing in Indian guards, which was in line with developing British policy. This policy was not an altogether new idea. With the increase of Russian forces to protect consulates in the north of Iran, since 1901, Hardinge had already suggested that Indian guards might be used to protect British interests in Iran in the event of a Russian force approaching Isfahan.⁴⁹ In August 1903, Hardinge was concerned that at a time when there were likely be more rivalries among the Bakhtiyaris, the Russians might 'try to create a party among them, as they are devoting some attention to Bakhtiaristan and are beginning to recruit men

⁴⁵ FO416/35, enclosure 2, no. 5, December 23, 1907, Reynolds to Lorimer.

⁴⁶ FO416/36, no. 78, enclosure 1, December 30, 1907, Lorimer to Cox.

⁴⁷ FO371/306, no. 253, 30401, September 10, 1907, Spring-Rice to Grey.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ FO60/720, no. 101, June 27, 1901, Hardinge to Lansdowne.

from there’⁵⁰ On 13 September 1907, by which time the country was becoming seriously disturbed, Spring-Rice thought that it was necessary to afford armed protection to the British in the oil working area, pointing out the disadvantages of having to withdraw the oil equipment in its stead: ‘firstly, that it would be a fatal blow to British prestige; secondly, that it would involve a huge loss of equipment, and, last but not the least, a possible supply of petroleum would be lost or indefinitely postponed.’⁵¹

As aluded to earlier, a way for the British to protect their oil works was to dispatch guards to the oil areas themselves. In September 1907, Spring-Rice telegraphed Grey to say that, in view of a recent increase in Russian guards in Isfahan, ‘Indian military authorities should decide question of increase of Consular guards on military grounds.’⁵² As a result, the Foreign Office, on 11 October 1907, replied that an increase in the number of guards had been arranged. In November, Grey confirmed that the main purpose for them was: ‘firstly to protect British persons, who could, if threatened with danger, concentrate in one or two camps; secondly, to prevent the whole undertaking from being abandoned.’⁵³ From the Iranian point of view, Moshir al-Dowleh objected to British guards because he did not want the matter to come to Russia’s attention,⁵⁴ thus providing an excuse for a responding request for more Russian guards; especially as there had already been an increase in Russian guards in Tabriz in March, and then in Isfahan in September.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, the British went ahead anyway, and the Indian guards, led by Lieutenant Wilson, eventually arrived on 17 December 1907. Thus, the British having made little progress with the oil works

⁵⁰ FO416/14, no. 104, August 20, 1903, Hardinge to Lansdowne.

⁵¹ FO371/306, no. 209, 32484, September 13, 1907, Spring-Rice to Grey.

⁵² FO416/33, no. 269, 31231, September 18, 1907, Spring-Rice to Grey.

⁵³ FO416/34, 38405, November, 21, 1907, Grey to Marling.

⁵⁴ FO416/34, 39969, December 5, 1907, Marling to Grey.

⁵⁵ FO416/31, no. 55, 8114, March 12, 1907, Spring-Rice to Grey.

FO416/33, no. 247, 29935, September 6, 1907, Spring-Rice to Grey.

for several years were obliged to bring the Indian guards into Iran, early in 1908, which Elwell-Sutton views as ‘a remarkable violation of a country’s sovereignty that passed quite unnoticed at the time.’⁵⁶ The central government had raised some objections but this was largely ignored. To some extent, as Khazeni argues in his article, the British overrode the Khans’ opposition, and adopted a firm stand.⁵⁷ Generally the British followed their traditional policy of non-intervention, and additionally the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 was signed with a respect to the integrity and independence of Iran, but obviously the dispatch of the Indian guards, though this was only for the oil works, meant Britain was starting to veer from its long-standing policy of avoiding such intervention. It would seem that the security of Britain’s oil interests, with all that that implied, had become an important policy objective.

Although the Indian guards were considered an additional support for the oil works, the British did not want to spend any extra expenses for them. Discussions, therefore, began on whether or not to retain the guards there if it would cost a lot. Cox telegraphed to Lorimer that India was enquiring whether it was necessary to retain the Indian guards in the next hot season, and Cox considered that with ‘the improved attitude of the Khans it will perhaps be possible for the guards to be withdrawn after March.’⁵⁸ Even D’Arcy was of the opinion that it would not be necessary to retain the Indian guards because the conduct of the Khans had been good.⁵⁹ However, Lieutenant Wilson argued that, from his knowledge of the Khans, there was little hope that they would continue to provide satisfactory guards.⁶⁰ He recalled in his memoir that ‘the detachment which I brought out was ostensibly intended to reinforce the guard of the Ahwaz Consulate, though in

⁵⁶ Elwell-Sutton, *Persian Oil*, p. 18.

⁵⁷ Khazeni, *Tribes*, pp. 123-124.

⁵⁸ FO248/923, no. 90, September 20, 1908, Cox to Lorimer.

⁵⁹ FO416/38, no. 313, 38782, November 4, 1908, Grey to Barclay.

⁶⁰ FO248/923, no. 49, September 21, 1908, Lorimer to Cox.

practice it was to protect the drillers until the attempt to find oil was successful or was abandoned.⁶¹ Lorimer also put forward three points for consideration:

Firstly, it was not (has not been) on account of any active good-will on the part of the Khans that quiet has been maintained at the oil works; secondly, their guards have not improved, and have been the cause of trouble; and thirdly, how far (would) the Government be able or willing, in case of need, to reintroduce the (Indian) guard(s).⁶²

In the meantime, Grey considered that it would be inadvisable to make a decision until the question of how long the retention of the Indian guards should last was concluded.⁶³ Reynolds also told Lorimer that D'Arcy might not be aware of how seriously the Bakhtiyari Khans were disrupting the oil works by their failure to protect them, and that the consequences of the removal of the guards needed to be taken into account; the Khans might not remain friendly, either. Lieutenant Wilson agreed with Lorimer, saying that there would be similar encounters with the Khans when new boring operations commenced, and that the Indian guards would be essential. It was his view that the guards must be retained, but for future necessities rather than for the present.⁶⁴ D'Arcy, who did not agree with their retention in September 1908, changed his mind at the end of December (no doubt as a result of the deteriorating security in the country), and wrote a letter to the Foreign Office, stating that 'the Government of His Imperial Majesty the Shah was, and is, absolutely incapable of enforcing its authority over the Bakhtiaris'. He pointed out that catastrophe or violence would result from the withdrawal of

⁶¹ Sir Arnold Wilson, *SW. Persia—A Political Officer's Diary 1907-1914*, London: Oxford University Press, 1941, p. 18.

⁶² FO416/38, no. 364, November 7, 1908, Barclay to Grey.

⁶³ FO371/497, 40517, November 18, 1908, Foreign Office to India Office.

⁶⁴ FO371/709, no. 319, 2163, enclosure 1, no.106, November 24, 1908, Trevor to Barclay.

the guards. In the end, D'Arcy suggested that the British government should protect this important British interest, as otherwise Britain would lose its right to ask for any reimbursement from the Iranian government.⁶⁵ On 11 January 1909, D'Arcy, who had pushed for the signing of the Bakhtiyari Agreement of 1905, pressed the Foreign Office to maintain the Indian guards.⁶⁶ However, the withdrawal of the guards was concluded on 5 August 1909, and the Indian guards left on 25 September 1909.

Land was another important issue in the Bakhtiyari territory. Owing to the laying of pipelines there, the issue of compensation for land arose. On 29 March 1910, Chalres Greenway, the Manager of the APOC, said that:

the Bakhtiari khans have demanded extortionate compensation from the Anglo-Persian Oil Company for the cultivated land required by the latter for their pipe line and works, and they threaten to stop the operations of the company's workmen unless these demands are satisfied, and (the Company have) asked that a telegram might be sent to His Majesty's Minister at Tehran, instructing him to urge on the khans' representatives that reasonable compensation should be accepted, and to insist that the company's work should on no account be interfered with.⁶⁷

In order to ensure the smooth running of the oil works, Greenway chose a conciliatory approach to the issue. On 9 April 1910, an agreement between the APOC and the Bakhtiyaris regarding land at Masjed-e Soleyman and other neighbourhoods concluded that the APOC should pay £5,000 cash to the Khans in compensation for works on the oil lands, until February 1911. The APOC was also

⁶⁵ FO248/953, 45502, December 28, 1908, D'Arcy to Foreign Office.

⁶⁶ FO248/953, 1112/09, January 11, 1909, Foreign Office to D'Arcy.

⁶⁷ FO371/957, 10906, March 31, 1910, Foreign Office to Greenway.

held at liberty to construct machines, buildings, roads and pipelines, and do whatever other work they might require, and no one had the right to interfere or trouble them. Furthermore, the Khans would be responsible for compensation for any losses.⁶⁸

A local people in the Bakhtiyari area, the Lurs, did not, however, agree to the British drilling oil on their lands. According to the argument of Dr. M. Y. Young, who was the representative of the APOC in the Bakhtiyari territory:

the Lurs are resisting all our attempts to make use of any land, whether they actually require it or not. The Khans have done very little to stop such resistance and it seems as if at best they are able only to mitigate it. Not only do they (the Lurs) plough unoccupied land, but they do so on drilling sites.⁶⁹

Young considered that, 'delays will only result in a higher rate and I really do not see how they can be forced to meet us in any way other than by arguments, and these have failed.'⁷⁰ Young foresaw further problems if there was no satisfactory agreement in this land dispute. At this time, therefore, the Khans who represented the Bakhtiyari tribe and Young negotiated a settlement that included purchase of lands. Eventually, an abstract of a Land Agreement on 1 May 1911 stipulated that:

- (1) The ... lands are possessed by the Bakhtiaris, and they have been sold with all that is appertaining thereto, for the sum of £22,000;
- (2) the above mentioned and defined lands hereby become the absolute property of the Company ;

⁶⁸ BP72020, H9/107, Bakhtiari Khans—Main Agreements, April 9, 1910, Agreement between the Oil Company and the Bakhtiyari khans.

⁶⁹ BP70335, H14/93, Dr. M. Y. Young's Persia Correspondence, January 12, 1911, Young to Lamb.

⁷⁰ BP70335, H14/93, Dr. M. Y. Young's Persia Correspondence, April 25, 1911, Young to Lamb.

(3) any Lurs inhabiting the neighbourhood of the said lands, shall have no right whatever to enter, to cultivate, or to graze their flocks and cattle within these boundaries.⁷¹

However, the Khans wanted the Agreement made in secret. Young's telegram explained that 'they (the Bakhtiyaris) seemed very cut up over the agreement, and they begged of me in keeping the whole transaction a secret matter for six months at least. They were afraid that it would get in to the Persian papers in Teheran that they have handed over a portion of the Bakhtiyari territory to the British,,⁷²

Circumstances in Tehran altered when a prominent Bakhtiyari, Samsam al-Saltaneh became Prime Minister from July 1911 to the end of the year. With the advantages of this political change in mind, Young went on to suggest that the Land Agreement be sealed or otherwise affirmed by the Iranian government. After all, all lands belonged to the state. Nevertheless, it was also Young's view that the British should be 'on good terms with them now, and indeed this should be our policy at all times.'⁷³ However, being on good terms with the Khans had become more significant than keeping good relations with the central government. It can be seen that the APOC was desirous of adequate security for their oil works. And the Khans' failure to provide it derived from the presence of different attitudes among them. Some of whom were endeavouring to support the revolutionary movement, while others were in favour of the British, because of the money they offered.⁷⁴ Whether the central government was aware of the purchase is not at present clear, and needs more research.

⁷¹ BP72029, H9/107, Bakhtiyari Khans—Main Agreements, Translation of Land Agreement with the Bakhtiyari Khans, May 1, 1911.

⁷² BP70335, H14/93, Dr. M. Y. Young's Persia Correspondence, May 10, 1911, Young to Lamb.

⁷³ BP70335, H14/93, Dr. M. Y. Young's Persia Correspondence, July 13, 1911, Young to Lamb.

⁷⁴ Julie Oehler, 'Bibi Maryam: A Bakhtiyari Tribal Woman,' in Edmund Burke, III (ed), *Struggle and Survival in the Modern Middle East*, London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 1993, p. 138.

3. The relationship between the British and the Sheykh of Mohammerah

From 1909 the British took an active interest in laying oil pipelines and constructing refineries in Mohammerah (Map 2, no. 2), in the Province of Khuzestan. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 helped facilitate trade between Europe and the Persian Gulf, and this, followed by the opening of the Karun river in Iran in 1888, led to an increase in the significance of Mohammerah, which is located at the mouth of the Shatt al-Arab close to the Persian Gulf. Mohammareh started playing an increasingly important role in the trade in the area and its neighbourhood, and gradually drew it deeper into the orbit of British interest. By 1900, the British were also beginning to feel a threat to their interests in the Persian Gulf from other powers, particularly Germany. As a result, an increasingly close relationship developed between the British and the Sheykh of Mohammerah, Sheykh Khaz'al. The ensuing cooperation between the Sheykh with the British created a political climate to their mutual benefit.⁷⁵ Owing to the Sheykh's monopoly of authority in Mohammerah, the British favoured his consolidation of power in order to securely develop British interests there.⁷⁶

British recognition of the need to be on good terms with Sheykh Khaz'al was already evident at the end of the nineteenth century. On 13 November 1899, Lieutenant-Colonel M. J. Meade, who was then British Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, presented his attitude to the Sheykh as follows:

We consider him (the Sheikh of Mohammerah) the most influential individual in this part of Persia and desire to see him strong and the Arabs

⁷⁵ Strunk, *The Reign*, p. 7.

⁷⁶ H. Lyman Stebbins, *British Consuls and "Local" Imperialism in Iran, 1889-1921*, PhD thesis, The University of Chicago, 2009, p. 132.

united under his authority as it will (be) conduc(ive) to the interests of the country (i.e. Mohammerah). The Shaikh may rely on the support of the Minister at Tehran (Sir Arthur Hardinge) whenever that support can be given without ill-faith to the Persian Government and he will always advise the Shaikh on any subject on which he requires it. In return the Minister trusts that the Shaikh will further the interest of British trade in every way he can.⁷⁷

This favourable attitude was reciprocated by the Sheykh, who aspired to play a significant role in supporting British interests in the South-West of Iran, provided they advanced his position with regard to the central government. The relationship that developed was indicative of the growing interest of the British in a marginal area of Iran, at the expense of their relationship with the centre.

The subject of assurances to be given to the Sheykh was discussed by the British in Tehran and London in late 1902. The British Legation in Tehran expressed the view that ‘we should not allow any foreign Power, on behalf of the Persian Government or otherwise—e.g., Russian naval or military forces—to depose or coerce him so long as he acts in accordance with our advice.’⁷⁸ The British Foreign Office, according to their non-intervention in Iran policy, instructed Hardinge to inform the Sheykh that ‘so long as he continues to act in accordance with our advice and remains a faithful subject of the Shah, he will have the good offices and support of His Majesty’s Government.’⁷⁹ Hardinge argued to London that the influence of the Russians in Mohammerah was growing, and that there was a danger that the Sheykh would align himself more closely with Russia if he received an ambiguous reply from the British. As a means of bringing

⁷⁷ *Treaties and Undertakings in Force between the British Government and the Shaikh of Mohammerah 1899-1919*, Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1919, p. 1.

⁷⁸ FO416/11, no. 71, November 20, 1902, Hardinge to Lansdowne.

⁷⁹ FO416/11, no. 59, November 22, 1902, Lansdowne to Hardinge.

pressure on the British, the agent of the Sheykh in Tehran also consistently warned of the possibility of Russian encroachment in Mohammareh.⁸⁰

By December, London, still adhering to the non-intervention policy, declared that there was no objection to informing Sheykh Khaz'al that 'Mohammerah would be protected by us against (a) naval attack of a foreign Power and we might also equally promise him that he will have our good offices and support so long as he remains faithful to the Shah and acts in accordance with our advice.'⁸¹ On 7 December 1902, Hardinge sent a letter to the Sheykh informing him of the abovementioned assurances from London, with a prerequisite, which further clarified Britain's attitude to Iran:

The relations between the British and Persian Governments are of a friendly character and the preservation of the integrity and independence of the Persian monarchy has for many years been one of the great objects of British policy in this part of the world. Disturbances of a nature to imperil that object would be a serious evil, and you would gain little and might endanger much by throwing off the sovereignty of the Shah.⁸²

Thus, the loyalty to the central government on the part of the Sheykh was a basic request of Hardinge and the British Foreign Office for the integrity of Iran. However, should either another power was at war with Iran, or under the pretence of being a friend, send forces to Mohammerah, the British would 'interfere provided you had acted in accordance with our advice, and our fleet which is the strongest of any in the Persian Gulf would be employed to prevent any forcible

⁸⁰ FO416/11, no. 73, November 26, 1902, Hardinge to Lansdowne.

⁸¹ FO416/11, no. 63, December 2, 1902, Lansdowne to Hardinge.

⁸² *Treaties*, p. 2.

measures against you.’⁸³ H. Lyman Stebbins comments, in his thesis, that Britain had usurped the authority of the Iranian government.⁸⁴ Although the British wanted the Sheykh to be loyal to the Shah, the assurance of 1902 more or less trespassed on Iran’s sovereignty.

In January 1903, Mozaffar al-Din Shah issued a *farman* (a royal command) to Sheykh Khaz‘al. In the *farman*, the Shah claimed that a place, Falahiyeh (an area in the province of Khuzestan, Map 2, no. 3) ‘from ancient times to the present, has been part of the jurisdiction of His Excellency Shaikh Khazal Khan.’ This place had been granted to the Sheykh, and in return, each year he had to pay the usual annual revenue to the Iranian government, and did not have the right to sell or transfer the said properties to foreigners. On this land, the Sheykh was permitted and empowered to exercise all possible rights of ownership.⁸⁵ In other words, Sheykh Khaz‘al had the rights to ownership, without actually owning the property, which still belonged to the Iranian government though only implicitly. The 1903 *farman* was in appearance an expression of approval of the Sheykh’s power, but in essence, it was a representation of the Shah’s authority in the Sheykh’s territory, given that it was largely intended to prevent the area from submitting to or being occupied by others. This *farman* also represented an intention of the Shah to strengthen his control in the provinces, though the action was to have little effect on the relationship between the Sheykh and the British.

In December 1903, the Shah attempted to undermine the assurances given to Sheykh Khaz‘al by Britain in 1902. Although the British Foreign Office’s view in this case was that the assurances of support from the British in 1902 should be confirmed to the Sheykh, Hardinge considered that it was preferable not to intervene in the matter between the central government and the Sheykh, because

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Stebbins, *British Consuls*, p. 138.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

such an intervention 'would be a strong measure which would be deemed very unfriendly by the Shah and might re-act on our general relations with him.'⁸⁶ While the British Foreign Office expressed the view that the Sheykh was justified in opposing the Shah's attempt, Hardinge kept on trying to eliminate the possibility of a clash between the Sheykh and the Shah by telling the former that: 'it will be better in the interest of good relations between the Persian authorities and yourself that our intervention should not be invoked until all other means of adjusting matters directly between them and you have been exhausted.'⁸⁷ Hardinge intended the 1902 assurance to Sheykh Khaz'al to thwart possible close relations between other powers, such as Russia, but to the Iranian government the assurance had the effect of strengthening British political influence in Iran. Hardinge and the British Foreign Office carefully maintained their friendliness to the Shah, but their relationship with the Sheykh could not be disconnected either. In other words, Sheykh Khaz'al was viewed as an important and powerful figure by the British for the security of their interests in Mohammerah.

Such were the circumstances in Mohammerah before oil was discovered in 1908 at Masjed-e Soleyman in the Bakhtiyari territory. This discovery carried with new implications for British policy of attempting to secure the goodwill of Sheykh Khaz'al, and of protecting its interests in the South-West of Iran. The connection with oil, as the British planned to lay pipelines from the Bakhtiyari country to Mohammerah, and wished to acquire lands in Abadan Island opposite Mohammerah, subsequently resulted in an agreement in 1909. In December 1908, Lieutenant Wilson was aware that the Sheykh 'expressed a desire to find some means whereby British capital might be invested in his lands, thus increasing our stake in his country.'⁸⁸ This argument was calculated to attract the British, who

⁸⁶ FO248/781, no. 8, December 11, 1903, Hardinge to Lansdowne.

⁸⁷ FO416/16, enclosure in no. 111, December 24, 1903, Hardinge to Serdar Arfa.

⁸⁸ Lieutenant A. T. Wilson, *A Precis of the Relations of the British Government with the Tribes &*

had an interest in investing in well-ordered areas. The Sheykh knew clearly what the British desired in his territory and also knew the advantages of strengthening his relations with the British. Since oil at that time was a new source of British interest in Iran, the Sheykh then used this chance to reinforce the security of his position in Mohammerh. Oil therefore pulled Britain closer to the Sheykh.⁸⁹

In addition, one new and potential opponent of British influence was Germany, which also made Britain consider strengthening the relationship with Sheykh Khaz'al. Britain had been concerned about Germany since the late nineteenth century. The Baghdad Railway, which was begun by the Germans in 1903, caused the British to resist their approach towards the Persian Gulf. In addition, in the early twentieth century German trade in the South-West of Iran emerged as competition to Britain.⁹⁰ With the 1908 discovery of oil, the British therefore contemplated expanding their 1902 assurances to Sheykh Khaz'al and extending them to his successor.⁹¹ In March 1909, the Sheykh, who was aware of Britain's concern over Germany, was looking to gain advantages from this situation, even threatening that if the British could do nothing for him, they would have no right to object to his friendliness with other powers.⁹² Sir Geroge Barclay, the British Minister in Tehran, warned Grey of:

the importance of maintaining our influence over him (the Sheykh) and keeping his good-will at the present critical moment in our struggle against German influence in the Persian Gulf. It is, I presume, clear that we shall be obliged to find money for the Sheikh when he really requires it, whether we

Shaikhs of Arabistan, Bushire: 1911, p. 70.

⁸⁹ 'Abdolnabi Qayyem, *Faraz va Forud-e Sheykh Khaz'al*, Tehran: Ketab-e Amiyeh, 1391/2012, p. 159.

⁹⁰ Shahbaz Shahnavaaz, *Britain and the Opening Up of South-West Persia 1880-1914: A Study in Imperialism and Economic Dependence*, London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005, p. 104.

⁹¹ FO416/36, no. 135, July 31, 1908, Grey to Marling.

⁹² FO371/715, no. 170, 10028, March 15, 1909, Cox to Grey.

now give him any assurance on this question or not, in order to avoid the danger of his applying for it elsewhere.’⁹³

Eventually, negotiations between the British and the Sheykh for a loan and oil works on Abadan Island took place in 1909.

Regarding land for oil works on the island, Sheykh Khaz‘al requested £10,000 repayable in ten years. The British government on behalf of the APOC suggested giving him a loan of £5,000 to £6,000,⁹⁴ which Cox bargained for. The APOC was anxious to acquire the land, either by purchase or by lease; the British government, on the other hand, considered the satisfaction of the Sheykh and his cooperation even more significant.⁹⁵ Sheykh Khaz‘al rejected the offer of £6,000, and as a result the British government was obliged to promise the higher sum of £10,000. At the end of April, a draft agreement was drawn up by the Sheykh and the APOC, just formally established, by which the APOC was granted the right to lay pipelines wherever they might be required and free of all costs, while Sheykh Khaz‘al was to gain ownership of the oil works on the expiry of the Concession of 1901, in 60 years.⁹⁶ The question arose as to whether the Iranian government should be informed of these negotiations. In Grey’s view Article 2 of the 1901 Concession concerned the construction of pipelines, and so required no reference to the Iranian government.⁹⁷ This ignored the question of who was ultimately to own the oil works.

In the meantime, early 1909 saw a possibility of a civil war between Mohammad ‘Ali Shah, who had ruled the country from early 1907, and opposition factions from the provinces. As a result, Grey perceived the negotiations with the

⁹³ FO371/715, no. 236, 13256, April 7, 1909, Barclay to Grey.

⁹⁴ FO248/953, no. 211, April 28, 1909, Grey to Barclay.

⁹⁵ FO248/954, no. 60, 16185/09, enclosure 2, April 28, 1909, Wallace to Hardinge.

⁹⁶ FO248/954, 20079, enclosure 2, April 30, 1909, Reynolds to Cox.

⁹⁷ FO248/953, no. 220, May 1, Grey to Barclay.

Sheykh as offering a more practicable to secure British oil interests than seeking assistance from the Iranian government. In other words he began distinctly to move away from his adherence to non-intervention policy. In May, therefore without acknowledgement of the rights of the central government and with British acquiescence, Sheykh Khaz‘al and the APOC reached an agreement on land areas, which observed that a strip of land to bring the pipelines from the head of the oil pipes to the refinery was needed. A plot of uncultivated land on Abadan Island was therefore designated for the purpose, and the APOC was required to pay the Sheykh for the lease. Furthermore, the APOC agreed it had no right to interfere in the affairs of Sheykh Khaz‘al.⁹⁸ In June 1909, a draft of a 19-Article agreement between the Sheykh and the APOC was drawn up on 9 June. This agreement also stipulated that a decennial rental of £6,500 would be payable by the APOC on Abadan Island, and that it could lay pipelines, free of all costs, on the Sheykh’s lands, and also on uncultivated lands.⁹⁹ In addition, the British government would also provide £10,000.¹⁰⁰

Eventually, in July 1909, the final agreement between the British and the Sheykh was concluded. It stipulated that the Sheykh would be granted a strip of land for the laying of pipelines on his lands or lands under his jurisdiction, or leased or purchased by him. In turn, the company accepted that, on the expiry of the Oil Concession or of the period of the extension or renewal thereof, the APOC would have no rights to these lands.¹⁰¹ Sheykh Khaz‘al, however, was worried

⁹⁸ FO371/717, no. 3, 22238, enclosure 1, written Declaration recorded by Sheikh Khazal Khan, Sheikh of Mohammerah, on May 15, 1909, regarding the Purchase of Land, &c., by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company.

⁹⁹ FO371/715, 21783, June 9, 1909, enclosure, Agreement entered into between the Sardar Arfa, Amir Toman, Sheikh Khazal Khan. Ibin Madji Jabbur Kha, Sheikh of Mohammerah, on the one part and hereinafter called “the sheikh,” and Messrs. Anglo-Persian Oil Company (Limited) of London, E.C., on the other part and hereinafter called “the company,” in respect of land required by the latter in the territories of the former, for purposes of their business.

¹⁰⁰ FO248/954, no. 292, June 12, 1909, Grey to Barclay.

¹⁰¹ BP102209, Agreement between the Sheikh and the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, Agreement between Shaikh Khazal Khan ibn Haji Jabir Khan, Sardar Arfa and Anglo-Persian Oil Company, Limited. Dated 16th July 1909.

that the Iranian government would be hostile to his close relations to foreign powers, and he therefore asked the British to keep their agreement secret from Tehran, especially the nationalist factions, and not to commence works on Abadan Island immediately.¹⁰² Conveniently, the signing of the final agreement on 16 July took place just when Mohammad ‘Ali Shah had abdicated from the throne on 17 July. Thus, since the British feared Iran’s marginal areas had become anarchic following the Iranian Constitutional revolution of 1906, they attempted to secure their interests in the south-west area.¹⁰³ Further, perhaps the Sheykh considered that the collapse of the central government might soon affect his power at Mohammerah, and his decision to sign an agreement with the British was in order to provide himself with protection. Therefore, to the British and the Sheykh, the agreement was a means to secure their mutual relationship and interests.¹⁰⁴

Subsequently, the Bakhtiyari Khans came to power in July 1909, with Sardar As‘ad as Minister of the Interior, meaning that the Khans were in a superior position in terms of dealing with how Sheykh Khaz‘al acted regarding the oil issue with the British.¹⁰⁵ Sardar As‘ad pressed Sheykh Khaz‘al to submit a copy of the 1909 Agreement to the central government. Cox advised the Sheykh to communicate the Agreement to the Iranian government.¹⁰⁶ Marling told Grey that Sardar As‘ad questioned the Sheykh’s right to lease land to the APOC on Abadan Island, given that it was the property of Iran as a whole.¹⁰⁷ Cox and Marling all saw a possibility of clash between the Sheykh and Sardar As‘ad. As the Bakhtiyari government was interfering with the 1909 Agreement, the India Office wrote that:

¹⁰² FO248/954, no. 305, July 17, 1909, Cox to Grey.

¹⁰³ Stebbins, *British Consuls*, p. 212.

¹⁰⁴ Qayyem, *Faraz*, p. 169.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, p. 160.

¹⁰⁶ FO248/959, no. 767, 40476, November 3, 1909, Barclay to Grey.

¹⁰⁷ FO416/44, no. 194, 14599, April 28, 1910, Marling to Grey.

it is reasonable and proper to guarantee the sheikh against any organized Government, whether Persian or foreign, and therefore indirectly against Bakhtiari aggression so far as it may be attempted by Bakhtiari Ministers acting through the Central Government,¹⁰⁸

In Marling's opinion, Sardar As'ad's power might create difficulties for the APOC in the future. Sardar As'ad continually asserted that Sheykh Khaz'al had no right to lease or sell land, as it all belonged to the central government. Marling was aware that the government 'would have no difficulty in dealing with the sheikh, forcibly if necessary, and they could even dismiss him and appoint another chief in his place.'¹⁰⁹ At Isfahan, Preece, who had had experience of the Bakhtiyaris in the past, told Sardar As'ad that the British would be firm in not allowing any interference with the Sheykh, especially if it caused complications for the APOC. In view of the warnings, Sardar As'ad promised that the Iranian government would not take any action against the Sheykh.¹¹⁰ Furthermore, on 14 and 15 July 1910, the Sheykh and Sardar-e As'ad had a conversation by telegraph in which Sardar As'ad expressed the usual cordial sentiments for the Sheykh.¹¹¹ This was a sign that the two parties had reached an understanding, which was of course to their advantage, though not to that of the central government or Iran itself.

Up until 1913, Grey was prepared to advise Sheykh Khaz'al to let the APOC bore for oil without conditions, and simultaneously to make a new agreement with him.¹¹² Subsequently, in April 1913, there was an instruction to the agents of the APOC at Mohammerah, stating that:

¹⁰⁸ FO416/44, 14682, April 28, 1910, India Office to Foreign Office.

¹⁰⁹ FO248/986, no. 71, 20023, May 14, 1910, Marling to Grey.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ FO416/45, no. 148, 31312, enclosure, Monthly Summary of Events in Persian for four weeks ending August 11, 1910.

¹¹² FO416/56, 16372, April 12, 1913, Foreign Office to Anglo-Persian Oil Company.

The best course to follow is for you to ask the sheikh for permission to bore oil in his territory, pointing out to him the various advantages of establishing this new industry in his province you will make the best bargain you can, either in the form of a percentage on profits (not in any case more than 3 percent), or of rental on the land eventually occupied, or in any other form which circumstances may suggest, avoiding altogether any obligation to pay any cash sum.¹¹³

This instruction showed that the APOC was being granted more and more rights by the British Foreign Office to make agreements with the Sheykh, which demonstrates the growing importance of oil in Mohammerah to British interests and policy. In June 1913, Cox considered that a new agreement would enable the British to obtain control over the oil in Arabistan.¹¹⁴ On 17 December 1914, accordingly, there was another land agreement between the Sheykh and the APOC, which concluded that the APOC would pay the Sheykh a rent of £7,200 in advance for ten years, and that the Sheykh agreed that the APOC could build railways and pipelines for the oil business.¹¹⁵ The year 1914 significantly saw the outbreak of the First World War, and Britain's need for the protection of oil became an even more important issue, making control of Mohammerah a matter of grave concern in British policy.

4. Britain's protection of oil interests in Iran: the interests of other powers and the central government

Britain's oil interests were not simply an issue within Iran, but also

¹¹³ FO371/1728, 17475, April 15, 1913, Anglo-Persian Oil Company to Foreign Office.

¹¹⁴ Stebbins, *British Consuls*, p. 295.

¹¹⁵ BP102209, Abadan Land Purchase, December 7, 1914.

internationally. From the signing of the Oil Concession of 1901 to the outbreak of the First World War, the British endeavoured to prevent other foreign players from having an impact on the South-West of Iran. During this period, Russia, which was an old rival, Germany, a new rival, and foreign oil companies presented competition to Britain.

a. Oil in the context of Anglo-Russian Relations

One implication of the Oil Concession of 1901 to the British was the opportunity to block the Russian's southwards movement to the Persian Gulf.¹¹⁶ Britain and Russia had an understanding that Iran was a buffer state and they did not want to see any direct and serious clash of their interests in Iran. Generally northern Iran was under Russian influence while southern Iran, including the Persian Gulf coast, was Britain's domain. Article 6 of the Concession made reference to the fact that Britain and Iran both wished to avoid reaction from Russia. The British were aware that their every move in Iran might exert an influence on Anglo-Russian relations, and during the process of negotiation for the Concession, the Iranian government sought to disarm Russian opposition by excluding the northern provinces of Khorasan, Astarabad, Azerbaijan, Gilan, and Mazandaran, from the scope of the Concession.¹¹⁷ The Article, therefore, stated that:

Notwithstanding what is above set forth the privilege granted by these presents (*sic*) shall not extend to the Provinces of Azerbadjan, Ghilan, Mazendaran, Asdrabad and Khorassan but on the express condition that the Persian Imperial Government shall not grant to any other person the right of

¹¹⁶ Abtahi, 'Bakhtiyariha va Naft,' p. 126.

¹¹⁷ FO60/731, no. 16, May 30, 1901, Hardinge to Lansdowne.

constructing a pipe line to the southern rivers or to the South Coast of Persia.

In terms of Anglo-Iranian relations, the article represented, on the one hand, British respect for Russian interests in the North of Iran, and, on the other hand, the fact that Iran had the responsibility to keep other powers out of the south. Although the article did not clearly mention Russia, the two signatory countries could not ignore it. In addition, Russia, in 1900, had just advanced to Iran a loan, which meant Russian influence was for a time superior to that of the British. The signing of the Oil Concession in 1901 was above all about oil, but it was a means for Britain to block Russia, and to obtain more advantages from Iran.

After the signing of the Oil Concession, an article in a Russian newspaper *Novoe Vreya* reported on British policy in Iran, suggesting that Iran should beware of Britain intentions. The article went as follows:

The granting of a concession for working naphtha mines in South West Persia to the British capitalist Mr. D'Archi (*sic*) has awakened among the English a special interest in the territory of the Shah. Russia is at liberty to do as she pleases in Northern Persia, but in return we must place the Southern Provinces at the complete disposition of England. Possibly the English are desirous of avoiding so dismal a solution, and with this end in view are trying to acquire all possible concessions in South Persia. Nevertheless it may be hoped that the Shah and His immediate Advisers are fully aware of the danger which threatens them if the English (British) deprive them of the natural riches of the country, or indeed if Persia is thrown open in any considerable degree to Western enterprise.'¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ FO248/755, no. 275, August 25, 1902, Scott to Lansdowne.

This piece represents the concern of the Russian public about the possible advance of British interests and influence through the oil business. There were also reports that the Russian Legation in Tehran was attempting to force the Iranian government to allow the Russians into the management of the Concession and the oil industry,¹¹⁹ which caused serious concern to the British. It is clear that Russia attempted to set boundaries for British influence and prestige in the oil industry, and the Russian factor continued to be seen by the British a matter for consideration. As D'Arcy was not sure of receiving support from British capitalists, there was always the possibility that he might take the option of offering shares to foreigners, unless the British government provided support. Therefore, it was considered possible that the Concession might be in danger of coming under Russian control.¹²⁰ Any Russian response to oil in Iran, either to the Iranian government or to D'Arcy, was an important British concern.

On 31 August 1907, the Anglo-Russian Convention was signed, which had implications for relations between the Iranians and the British as regards to oil. In the meantime, Russia had experienced defeat in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904 as well as the upheaval of the Russian Revolution of 1905, which made the country weak. In 1906, the new Minister of Foreign Affairs, Isvolsky, therefore considered the idea of an amicable arrangement with Britain with Iran being a key issue. The British Foreign Office was told that Russia did not want to annex Iranian territory or to acquire a port on the Persian Gulf.¹²¹ And, as regards Iran, it seemed to the British Foreign Office that 'the main object should be to put an end to the unfortunate rivalry of the two Powers, whom the Persian Government invariably endeavored to play off against one another, and we, of course, desired that an equal opportunity should be afforded to our commerce in Persian

¹¹⁹ FO60/731, no. 102, November 9, 1903, Grant Duff to Foreign Office.

¹²⁰ FO60/731, no. 113, December 16, 1903, Hardinge to Foreign Office.

¹²¹ FO416/25, no. 300, October 5, 1905, Lansdowne to Hardinge.

territory.’¹²² The British Foreign Office also clearly expressed its long term policy on Iran, namely that ‘His Majesty’s Government has consistently sought to maintain the continued national existence and the territorial integrity of Persia, and to develop her resources.’¹²³

With regard to Iran in the 1907 Convention, the country’s integrity and independence was a common interest to both parties, as was expressed in five articles. In the first two articles, it was agreed that the British would not engage or allow any other kind of force such as a third power or a concessionary acquire advantages in Iran, ‘beyond a line starting from Kasr-i-Shirin, passing through Isfahan, Yezd, Kakhk, and ending at a point on the Persian frontier at the intersection of the Russian and Afghan frontiers, and not to oppose, directly or indirectly, demands for similar Concessions in this region which are supported by the Russian Government.’ (Article I) By the same token, the Russians undertook to do the same, ‘beyond a line going from the Afghan frontier by way of Gazik, Birjand, Kerman, and ending at Bunder Abbas, and not to oppose, directly or indirectly, demands for similar Concessions in this region which are supported by the British Government.’ (Article II) In addition, the Article III stipulated that:

Russia, on her part, engages not to oppose, without previous arrangement with Great Britain, the grant of any Concessions whatever to British subjects in the regions of Persia situated between the lines mentioned in Articles I and II, Great Britain undertakes a similar engagement as regards (to) the grant of Concessions to Russian subjects in the same regions of Persia. All Concessions existing at present in the regions indicated in Articles I and II are maintained.

¹²² FO416/25, no. 662, October 7, 1905, Lansdowne to Bertie.

¹²³ FO60/707, November, 1905, Memorandum on British Policy in Persia.

In other words, the Oil Concession of 1901, which was by implication included in the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, was outside Russian influence. The Convention was perceived as a new factor influencing Anglo-Iranian relations in the South-West of Iran. For example, an M.P., Mr. J. D. Rees, suggested in 1908 that use be made 'of the facilities afforded by the Anglo-Russian Agreement respecting Persia for the advancement of British interests in the southern part of that country.'¹²⁴ The privileged position of Britain, as expressed in the Oil Concession of 1901 was thus further confirmed by the 1907 Convention.

b. The issue of a loan to the central government

After the discovery of oil at Masjed-e Soleyman in 1908, the British considered increasing European staff in the oilfields in order to prevent delay and waste of money, and to facilitate negotiations.¹²⁵ The result of this was the establishment of the APOC in April 1909, as already mentioned. An important issue between the APOC and the Iranian government was related to a loan to the latter by the APOC, which enabled Iran to maintain oil interests in the Company. There had been financial support for Iran from Russia since 1900, and since the signing of the Oil Concession of 1901 Russia had paid close attention to all of Britain's actions in relation to oil. Although on this occasion the loan was proposed by the APOC, it was an issue between Britain and Russia as much as it was between Britain and Iran. This loan also had the advantage of securing for Britain influence at the Iranian centre at a time when it was so actively engaged on the margins.

At the end of 1909, a rumour circulated that oil shares were to be sold by the

¹²⁴ FO416/36, no. 70, 13229, May 6, 1908, Grey to Marling.

¹²⁵ Ferrier, *The History Volume 1*, pp. 90-91.

Iranian government. Although it was proven false, the Vice-Chairman of the APOC, E. W. Wallace, asked the British Foreign Office to stop the sale, or to form a syndicate to buy half the Iranian government's rights and interests.¹²⁶ A loan to Iran was then therefore proposed by the APOC in May 1910, with a view to securing the oil interests. Grey informed Marling in Tehran that Wallace was asking if the British government would advance £200,000 as a loan to be made by the APOC, but the British Foreign Office was not in favour of this proposal at all, expressing the view that 'it did not appear probable that the Persian Government would require an external loan,',¹²⁷

At the same time the loan proposed by the APOC became involved in 1910 with a renewed application by the Iranian government to Britain and Russia for an advance. Grey told the APOC that he was concerned about the Russian government's reaction to the proposed loan.¹²⁸ Even though the terms of the 1907 Convention prevented Russia from interfering with the 1901 Concession, Russia took a serious stance on APOC actions. Grey also believed that 'we cannot admit the hypothecation to any new loan of any source of revenue already pledged to the service of the debts owed by the Persian Government to the British or Russian Government, or to the British or Russian bank.'¹²⁹ A loan made by a British firm at a time when Iran was in debt to the two powers was not therefore possible, and the British Foreign Office argued that 'the conversion of the debts due to the Russian and British Banks shall precede any loan made to the Persian Government other than those which might be made by the Russian and British Governments,',¹³⁰ Nevertheless, the Russian government expressed the view

¹²⁶ BP71195, H15/128, Loans to Persian Government 1909-1911, December 26, 1909, Oil Company to Foreign Office.

¹²⁷ FO248/982, no. 83, 16075, May 12, 1910, Mallet to Marling.

¹²⁸ FO416/44, 17899, May 23, 1910, Foreign Office to Wallace.

¹²⁹ FO416/44, 18632, May 30, 1910, Foreign Office to Wallace.

¹³⁰ FO416/44, 26101, July 25, 1910, Foreign Office to Anglo-Persian Oil Company.

that they did not oppose a British syndicate having discussions about a loan with the Iranian government. In the end, the APOC arranged a loan to Iran directly. On 15 August the Iranian government accepted a loan of £500,000 from the APOC.¹³¹

As the process of arranging the loan from the APOC was taking place, the British Chargé d'Affaires at St. Petersburg, Hugh O'Beirne, informed the Russian government that 'the transaction was not strictly a loan, but was rather of the nature of a transfer of shares, the Persian Government merely making over to the oil company the shares which they held in that concern.'¹³² Although the Russian government had previously stated that they had no desire to oppose discussions between the APOC and the Iranian government towards an advance, and only wanted to be informed of the progress of the application,¹³³ they later insisted that it was unquestionably desirable that the loan agreement should be postponed until completion of the negotiations respecting the conversion of debts to the Russian Bank, negotiations with which the Iranian government was reportedly about to proceed.¹³⁴

In addition, the British government wanted its Iranian counterpart to give the APOC security for the loan, which they proposed as 'the surplus revenues of the southern customs and of the telegraphs available after prior claims in respect of the advances to which they are already pledged to have met.'¹³⁵ However, the Iranian government objected to giving any security, and negotiations broke down, though they did resume on a number of occasions. On 3 September 1910, Wallace telegraphed the British Foreign Office reporting that:

The Persians appear to make two alternative proposals, £100,000

¹³¹ FO416/45, no. 438, 29746, August 15, 1910, Grey to O'Beirne.

¹³² FO416/45, no. 227, 29875, August 16, 1910, O'Beirne to Grey.

¹³³ FO416/44, 26101, July 25, 1910, Foreign Office to Anglo-Persian Oil Company.

¹³⁴ FO416/45, no. 230, 30643, August 22, 1910, O'Beirne to Grey.

¹³⁵ FO416/45, 30627, August 22, 1910, Wallace to Norman.

secured by certain Persian public revenues; or, £200,000 secured by the said revenues plus (the) Persian Government's interest and share of (the) profits in the oil concession; while you would prefer a third alternative, £100,000 secured by the Persian Government's interest and share of profits in the oil, and in a prospective mineral concession.¹³⁶

In Wallace's opinion, the shareholders of the APOC would accept the third choice. On 3 October, Barclay told Grey that the Iranian government would accept a £100,000 loan, providing as security their interests in the APOC. On the same day, Wallace also confirmed that £100,000 had been accepted by the Iranian government.

Nevertheless, a new Iranian cabinet formed in July 1911, and by August it pointed out that the arrangements for the loan had still not been concluded.¹³⁷ With the change of the Iranian cabinet, the previous decision was repudiated. The APOC, hence, was attempting to reduce the amount of the loan. Greenway, the Manager of the APOC, said that the Iranian government 'would expect an advance of £200,000 in respect of their oil interests and they may not be willing to accept £100,000, but if we make any advance at all I think it should be limited to the latter sum.'¹³⁸ In addition, the APOC was concerned that the Iranians would sell their interest, stating that they (the APOC) should in case of need, and to prevent any alienation by the Iranians of their interests, be prepared either to purchase a half share in them, or to make an advance of £100,000 against the whole.¹³⁹ However, in the meantime the APOC's position changed in comparison to that of the previous year, because of the uncertainty of Iranian politics.¹⁴⁰ The

¹³⁶ FO416/45, 32628, September 3, 1910, Wallace to Foreign Office.

¹³⁷ BP54484, no. 898/424, August 16, 1911, Greenway to Cargill.

¹³⁸ BP54484, no. 425/250, August 17, 1911, Greenway to Strathona.

¹³⁹ BP54484, no. 444/448, August 22, 1911, Greenway to Cargill.

¹⁴⁰ BP71195, H15/128, Loans to Persian Government 1909-1911, August 21, 1911, Cargill to

APOC was waiting for signs of improvement before lending money, and when this did not happen, the proposal of the APOC to make a loan to the Iranian government was aborted in August 1911.

In short, from 1910 the loan to the Iranian government was an issue that was relevant to various aspects of Anglo-Iranian relations. The APOC proposed the loan themselves, but encountered the problem that the resources of the Iranian government were committed to the repayment of the debts that it owed to Britain and Russia. Meanwhile, the loan also did not satisfy the Iranian government, which considered it insufficient. Finally doubts grew within the APOC because, in terms of Anglo-Iranian relations, Russia had to be consulted even though the main issue was simply a loan by a British firm rather than the government itself. This necessity derived from the intricacies of Iran's financial problems, and its dependence on Russia in particular for financial support from 1900 onwards. The incident demonstrates that, at the point when the British were having negotiations with the Bakhtiyari Khans and Sheykh Khaz'al over the oil, the Iranian government was, for financial reasons, not in a position to secure its oil interests.

c. The German factor in the South-West of Iran

With regards to Germany, Britain's rival in the South-West of Iran, there were varying opinions as to the extent it was a threat or not. In May 1908, M.P. Rees said that German activities must have the consent of the Iranian government especially as German influence was increasing in the South of Iran, and 'equally, any arrangements affecting the neutral zone must, in virtue of the Anglo-Russian Convention, possess the acquiescence of Russia.'¹⁴¹ Rees considered Germany to be an immediate threat to British interests in the South-West of Iran. In September

Greenway.

¹⁴¹ FO416/37, no. 157, Memorandum by Mr. Loraine, no. 70, May 6, 1908.

1908, Grey telegraphed Marling regarding Germany's intentions in the area. He summarized an article in a German newspaper, *Berliner Tageblatt*, of 28 August about extending German trade in the western region of Iran.¹⁴² London had already sensed Germany as a threat to Iran. In contrast, however, Barclay, the British Minister in Tehran, pointed out that:

It is impossible for any concession to be obtained on behalf of German subjects I have no doubt that in these districts the Russian Legation could, and would, block any application for such a concession,¹⁴³

Barclay was confident that Germany was not a threat in the South-West of Iran. Nevertheless, the British in the region did pay attention to the relationship between Sheykh Khaz'al and the Germans. Cox mentioned that a German firm, Wonckhaus, had business dealings with Sheykh Khaz'al in Mohammerah, and said that it was necessary for the British to subsidize the Sheykh.¹⁴⁴ Cox in Bushehr, unlike Barclay in Tehran, clearly felt the advance of German influence. Grey asked Barclay to be careful not to clash with the Germans, and to consult the APOC 'with regard to the rental for land and for the pipes, and also on the subject of an increased loan.'¹⁴⁵ Due to growing German influence, the British made more efforts to maintain their influence in the South-West of Iran, especially with the Sheykh.

In fact, in 1909 the Sheykh granted the Germans a lease of land close to the banks of the Karun river for eight years. In addition, in September 1913

¹⁴² FO416/37, no. 168, 30098, September 15, 1908, Grey to Marling.

¹⁴³ FO416/38, no. 281, 40830, October 19, 1908, Barclay to Grey.

¹⁴⁴ FO371/717, no. 494, 18932, May 18, 1909, Cox to Barclay.

¹⁴⁵ FO416/40, no. 263, 19326, May 25, 1909, Grey to Barclay.

Wonckahus also acquired a ten year lease of wharfs, and intended to erect buildings there later on. In 1914 Lorimer already acknowledged the German threat in Arabistan and other Iranian and Arab ports in the Gulf.¹⁴⁶ A report from Bushehr argued that ‘the arrival of the Germans in strength will not only adversely affect our position in Arabistan, but will also undermine the influence and authority of the Sheykh of Mohammerah, inasmuch as it will be the policy of the Germans to refer matters of interest for arrangement between their legation in Tehran and the Persian Government.’¹⁴⁷ In the meantime, there were negotiations for a new agreement in process between the APOC and the Sheykh in 1914, by which it can be seen that Germany was an immediate factor having an impact on British interests in Mohammerah.

5. Oil and the British Admiralty

Although the British discovered oil in the South-West of Iran, its oil industry relied on other suppliers, about which they felt insecure. From 1912, the British became concerned about threats from outside commercial competition, such as the Royal Dutch-Shell group of companies (Shell henceforth).¹⁴⁸ As Britain owned no oil, if Britain needed oil she had to buy it from foreign countries. Shell had influence in Mesopotamia after 1907, and its importance increased in the Ottoman Empire after 1912.¹⁴⁹ Shell played a substantial role in oil industry globally, preceded by the Standard Oil Company of the United States.¹⁵⁰ As the British Admiralty had considerable interest in the APOC, it therefore played a huge part in any negotiations. This section mainly concerns the impact of the relationship

¹⁴⁶ FO416/59, no. 4, 10133, February 8, 1914, Lorimer to Grey.

¹⁴⁷ FO416/60, no. 13, 19383, enclosure 1, April 8, 1914, Knox to Government of India.

¹⁴⁸ Marian Jack, ‘The Purchase of the British Government’s Shares in the British Petroleum Company 1912-1914,’ *Past & Present*, no. 39 (Apr., 1968), p. 141.

¹⁴⁹ Edward Mead Earle, ‘The Turkish Petroleum Company—A Study in Oleaginous Diplomacy,’ *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (Jun., 1924), p. 267.

¹⁵⁰ Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil*, p. 5.

between oil and the Admiralty on British diplomacy with regards to Iran.

On 13 September 1912, the British Foreign Office revealed to the Admiralty a message concerning an arrangement in Mesopotamia regarding working petroleum deposits in any part of the Ottoman Empire in Europe and Asia.¹⁵¹ The Foreign Office acknowledged that world oil supply seemed to be in the process of coming under the control of Shell, and competition between Shell and the APOC was therefore likely. Greenway, the Manager of the APOC, analysed the oil circumstances of the time in terms of the supply of oil for the British Admiralty and the possible development of the APOC. Firstly, concerning oil fuel supplies, Greenway, as manager of the APOC, mentioned that:

1. the British and/or Indian government should enter into a contract with the Anglo-Persian Oil Company for the purchase of all the oil fuel we can produce,
2. should enable the Company to raise the large amount of extra capital which it would be necessary to expend on further development, pipelines, refineries, and etc., in order to produce this large amount of oil fuel,
3. the British government should use their utmost influence to secure ... the Anglo-Persian Oil Company,¹⁵²

In his opinion, once fuel for the Admiralty was supplied by the APOC, British oil interests should operate under its protection. Secondly, with regard to the development of the APOC, Greenway indicated that:

ensuring for all time British control over the oil produced from the Persian oilfields, (would) in all probability mean not only the saving of a very large

¹⁵¹ FO416/53, 36674, September 13, 1912, Foreign Office to Admiralty.

¹⁵² BP71221, Admiralty 1912-1913, October 11, 1912, Greenway to Admiralty.

sum in the cost of oil fuel to the British Navy, but also ensure that supplies from this important oilfield would not in time of war be subject to the restraints which might occur were this Company forced into a commercial alliance with a foreign Combine.¹⁵³

Greenway thus implied that the APOC would only provide oil to the British Admiralty, and had no wish to be in alliance with others. Furthermore, Greenway also claimed that the South-West of Iran possessed a large amount of oil, and that ‘therefore it should, in view of the importance of ensuring supplies of oil fuel for naval purposes, at all costs be maintained under British control.’¹⁵⁴ Greenway concluded that the supply and control of oil interests required government support, which could be a way to prevent a monopoly of oil by foreign powers and companies.

In the Admiralty, too, there were similar opinions to those of Greenway’s. In December 1912, the Admiralty telegraphed the Foreign Office, stating that British interests in the Iranian oil field were sufficiently strong, and the Admiralty was firm in recommending that diplomatic support should be given to the APOC in respect of their application for concessions in Mesopotamia. All legitimate influence should be used to prevent foreign control of any of the Iranian oil fields.¹⁵⁵ A probable outcome of oil development, as argued by the India Office, was that if no financial support was forthcoming from the British government, the APOC would be absorbed by Shell. This result would, of course, be gravely prejudicial to British interests in southern Iran, and ultimately in the Persian Gulf as a whole. The only way forward was therefore to endeavour to provide all

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ FO416/54, 44428, October 21, 1912, enclosure, Notes for Evidence to be given before Royal Commission.

¹⁵⁵ FO416/54, 55654, December 28, 1912, Admiralty to Foreign Office.

possible support for the APOC.¹⁵⁶ The Admiralty claimed that only government support could ensure the preservation of the commercial independence of the APOC,¹⁵⁷ and Grey commented that the APOC must not feel it necessary

to combine with the Shell Company. (This view) is shared very strongly by myself and by every one of my colleagues, and it is solely for this reason that we have been endeavouring to seek for some practicable means of maintaining the purely British character of the Company (the APOC).¹⁵⁸

From the views expressed above, it is clear that in the Foreign Office there was the will to support the Admiralty and the APOC, in which they were aided by the desire for APOC to have full British protection. The most important point was that it should all remain purely British in character, i.e. under sole British control.

On 20 May 1914, the British government entered into an arrangement with the APOC. This stated that ‘this Contract shall continue for a term of twenty years commencing from 1 July, 1914, And, the quantity of such oil fuel to be sold and delivered to the Admiralty in each year of the said term of twenty years shall be the quantity specified in a notice to be given by the Admiralty to the Company as to the year 1914-15 not later than 31 August, 1914,’¹⁵⁹ After the Admiralty Agreement, Winston Churchill, who was appointed as the First Lord of the Admiralty in 1911, made a speech on 17 June 1914, in which he declared that ‘The Admiralty must have power to control an oil-field somewhere What we want now is a proved proposition, a going concern, an immediate supply, and a definite prospect with potentialities of development over which we can ourselves

¹⁵⁶ FO416/55, 722, January 4, 1913, India Office to Foreign Office.

¹⁵⁷ FO416/55, no. 2463, February 5, 1913, Foreign Office to Greenway.

¹⁵⁸ BP71221, Admiralty 1912-1913, February 12, 1913, Greenway to Foreign Office.

¹⁵⁹ BP102148, Admiralty Agreement with Anglo-Persian Oil Company, May 20, 1914.

preside. These we find in Persia.’¹⁶⁰ Subsequently, on 17 July, he expressed the opinion that ‘the Admiralty should become the independent owner and producer of its own supplies of liquid fuel. We (the British) must become the owners, or at any rate the controllers at the source, of at least a proportion of the supply of natural oil which we require.’¹⁶¹ His views on the subject of the Admiralty and oil were therefore as strong as those of Greenway. In Anglo-Iranian relations in 1914, oil had a broader dimension, which involved the British Admiralty. At the outbreak of World War I in August 1914, the result of the purchase of oil in the South-West of Iran had positive and global implications, which had up to then only been an issue relevant to Anglo-Iranian relations.

The purchase of Iranian oil by the British government gave Russia concerns, as reflected in its newspapers. In June 1914 a Russian newspaper, *Novoe Vremya*, published an article entitled ‘Anglo-Persian Naphtah,’ where it was claimed that:

the greater part of the shares of the Anglo-Persian Company have been bought by the British Government for a sum of £2,000,000, and the company becomes an organ of British Government authority on Persian territory. the area of the concession is almost four times as large of (as) the whole of the United Kingdom, and is situated not only in the British sphere of influence as demarcated by the Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1907, but also partly in the neutral zone.¹⁶²

Another Russian newspaper, *Rech*, also argued that ‘the purchase by His Majesty’s Government of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company shares, may give

¹⁶⁰ Cited in Sara Reguer, ‘Persian Oil and the First Lord: A Chapter in the Career of Winston Churchill,’ *Military Affairs*, Vol. 46, No. 3 (Oct., 1982), p. 136.

¹⁶¹ Elwell-Sutton, *Persian Oil*, pp. 22-23.

¹⁶² IOR/L/PS/10/410, no. 190, 28134, June 20, 1914, Buchanan to Grey.

rise to friction between (the) two countries (Britain and Russia).'¹⁶³

Grey explained three points to the Russians, with a view to demonstrating that the purchase of the shares of the APOC shares did not contravene the 1907 Convention:

The British Government did not acquire any rights that did not exist under the concession originally. Those rights remained exactly as they were before the Anglo-Russian Agreement about Persia was made; of course if it or anything else required in our opinion, special measures in the neutral zone, inconsistent with the Anglo-Russian Agreement or the independence and integrity of Persia, we should consult with Russian Government before taking them; The influence of the Admiralty (i.e. through the signing of the Admiralty Agreement with the APOC) in the oil concession would be used not to push development into the Russian sphere,¹⁶⁴

Grey's three points revealed that the British had no intention of violating the 1907 Convention in the Agreement between the Admiralty and the APOC. Nonetheless, Russian newspapers continued to target the privileges that the British government had gained for the APOC, criticizing the British on the grounds that they did not have a genuine intention to maintain their friendship with Russia. They said that 'The purchase of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company's shares is contrary both to the spirit and to the letter of the 1907 Agreement, and is not likely to assist that strengthening of the entente (Triple Entente of Britain, Russia, and France) which is so necessary to both countries.'¹⁶⁵ In fact, the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Serge D. Sazonov, who had already heard of Grey's explanation,

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ FO371/2077 no. 283, 28760, June 25, 1914, Grey to Buchanan.

¹⁶⁵ IOR/L/PS/10/410, no. 191, 29081, June 24, 1914, Buchanan to Grey.

considered it adequate and was relieved. To him, it amounted to a definite assurance from Britain,¹⁶⁶ though the Russian press continued to be anti-British.

George Buchanan, British Ambassador in St. Petersburg, therefore, reported to Grey that there should be more reassuring replies, in order to satisfy Russian public opinion. Grey telegraphed Buchanan, saying that he could point out to the Russians that 'the British government does not acquire any rights under the concession that were not possessed by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company already.'¹⁶⁷ Nonetheless, *Novoe Vremya* continued to argue that, whether the British government had purchased the shares from the APOC or not, the foundations of the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 had been altered. The newspaper stated that the purchase 'has destroyed the neutral zone, has brought the sphere of British influence into direct touch with that under Russian influence, and has affected the integrity of Persia.'¹⁶⁸ However, the 1907 Convention confirmed Britain's right in the 1901 Concession that except in the five northern provinces of Iran the British were allowed to commence oil works in the Iranian territory. It can be understood that the Russian diplomats did not obviously oppose the British purchase of the APOC, as it did not violate the 1907 Convention. However, Buchanan and Grey failed to put the Russian public at ease and to show that with the purchase of shares in the APOC Britain had no desire to encroach on the Russian zone.

Conclusion

In the period leading up to 1914, oil introduced new concerns within Anglo-Iranian relations in the South-West of Iran. When Iran was in its revolutionary period, the discovery of oil by Britain created another strategy,

¹⁶⁶ FO371/2077, no. 143, 29064, June 28, 1914, Buchanan to Grey.

¹⁶⁷ FO416/61, no. 303, 29579, July 3, 1914, Grey to Buchanan.

¹⁶⁸ IOR/L/PS/10/410, no. 200, 30759, July 3, 1914, Buchanan to Grey.

making negotiations and agreements with the local powers. At the start, the drilling of oil in Iran did not seem promising to the British owing to limited funds and concerns about the quality of the oil. The major success in Masjed-e Soleyman in May 1908 eventually changed Britain's position in the area. Due to oil, Britain's concerns with the South-West of Iran significantly increased, and its policy towards Iran acquired new and different facets.

The discovery of oil had an impact on Anglo-Iranian relations in both the centre and margin of Iran. The British reached separate agreements with the Iranian government and with the local powers in south-west Iran, and indeed Britain considered the agreements with the local powers were as important as their concession from the Iranian government, despite the fact that the agreements were not acknowledged by the political centre. The signing of the Bakhtiyari Agreement of 1905 and the Mohammerah Agreement of 1909 were at the time significant events. It can be perceived that despite Britain's policy of non-intervention in Iran's political affairs, the British from the early twentieth century, attempted to cement their influence in marginal areas of the country. In addition, an unstable and weak Iranian central government made Britain focus on the security of its oil interests. At the same time, it is clear that Britain endeavoured to avoid disagreements between the local powers and the central government connected to its role.

The land issue was an important one. The British were granted the right to buy land for oil works in accordance with the Concession of 1901, and this granting was contrary to Iran's policy of not selling lands to foreigners. Subsequent Iranian governments therefore denied that Britain had any such right, but then the British had not as yet purchased lands in the oil areas because they did not consider it in their interest. In Mohammerah, the 1903 *farman* of the Sheykh of Mohammerah stated that the Sheykh had the responsibility to protect

the land and could not sell it to foreigners. The Sheykh, indeed, did not give the British any right to his lands, even when they signed the 1909 Agreement at the time of the downfall of Mohammad 'Ali Shah. In the Bakhtiyari territory, however, the situation was different. The Land Agreement of 1911 brought about changes. The APOC purchased certain lands in the Bakhtiyari territory in secret and the fact was deliberately kept secret from the central government for six months at least.

The discovery of oil in Iran took place during the period when the Iranian central government had lost control in the provinces. The Bakhtiyari Khans and Sheykh Khaz'al obviously were aware of the changing situation, and therefore the signing of the agreements with the British represented their intention of obtaining advantages for themselves. The British on the other hand used the agreements to secure their own oil interests. For instance, the relationship between Sheykh Khaz'al and the British became more specific with the signing of the 1909 Agreement, though it could be interpreted as a reiteration of assurances made by the British since 1902. In addition, although there were disputes between the British and the Bakhtiyari Khans, the Bakhtiyari Agreement of 1905 could be seen as an example of how oil drew the British and the Iranian tribe much closer.

Oil also complicated British policy with regard to the protection of its interests in Iran, especially in connection with foreign powers. In the signing of the Oil Concession in 1901, consideration of Russian interests was taken into account, and hence the northern part of Iran under Russian influence was not included. With regard to the loan proposed by the APOC in 1910, Russia's concern obliged Britain to be careful to satisfy Russia that there were no additional implications. Germany, too, was a rival of Britain in Iran. German activities at Mohammerah caused the British concern regarding their existing supremacy in the South-West of Iran, and led to further assurances by the British

to Sheykh Khaz'al. Furthermore, oil supply was an international issue, given the competition faced by the APOC, and the signing of the Admiralty Agreement in 1914 represented Britain's concern to secure its oil interests on the eve of war, as well as not to weaken its international status.

By 1914, with the start of World War I, oil had already exerted a significant impact on Anglo-Iranian relations. The British attempted to retain their traditional policy of non-intervention, but simultaneously were drawn more deeply into Iran by their interest in the oil producing areas, such as Mohammerah and the Bakhtiyari territory. The British actions of securing their oil interests in the South-West of Iran were not only encountering the Iranian local powers, but also other powers, such as Russia and Germany. The discovery of oil initiated changes within British policy in both Iran's marginal areas and internationally.

Chapter III British Policy on the Constitutional Revolution in Iran and the Return of the Ex-Shah in 1911

Introduction

This chapter examines British policy on the Constitutional Revolution of 1906 in Iran and its aftermath up to the return of the ex-Shah in 1911. The Revolution began as an attempt to limit the Shah's authority and eliminate foreign power influence in the country, especially that of Russia in the north. Generally the British had adopted a policy of non-intervention in Iranian affairs, in the sense of avoiding major political, financial or military involvement, since the nineteenth century, the major exceptions being the two wars in Afghanistan carried out in defence of India. From the end of the nineteenth century, their economic interests, which had hitherto been comparatively minor, now began to expand, especially with the opening of the opening up of the Karun river and the establishment of the Imperial Bank. The advent of oil in the early twentieth century was to bring about a momentous change. Another issue was the evolving crisis in Europe and the rise of Germany. It was at this time that the British and the Russians signed the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, demarcating a Russian zone in the north, a British zone in the south-east and a neutral zone in between. The two powers endeavoured to maintain a policy of unanimity, towards, and Iran's independence and integrity.

However, the victory of the Iranian constitutionalists in 1906, and the establishment of a constitutional monarchy under Mohammad 'Ali Shah in 1907, brought about a further major change in the political configuration of the country. Confronted with the growing weakness of central authority in the country and a major financial crisis, the Shah struggled to secure his authority and avoid chaos,

which brought about conflict with the constitutionalists, who considered absolutism to be the main source of all ills. Forced to abdicate in 1909, Mohammad 'Ali made efforts to regain his throne from places in 1911. This chapter will examine period of the 1906 Revolution from the point of view Mohammad 'Ali Shah's actions and policies, and the British response to them.

The Constitutional Revolution of 1906 was facilitated by government weakness due to financial difficulties took place in Iran owing to its financial problems, exemplified by two large loans from Russia, as argued by Nikki Keddie. Britain attempted to reduce Iran's dependence on Russia, but in the meantime refused to offer any financial assistance herself (on the grounds that the money was unlikely ever to be repaid) and also preferred to maintain good relations with Russia above all else. Financial pressure from Russia and unsuccessful financial reforms by the Prime Minister, Amin al-Soltan, and the Belgian customs administration resulted in a sense of grievance against the government amongst the Iranian people, and this financial crisis remained unresolved.¹ With the establishment of a constitutional government in 1906, most modern research on the Revolution provides arguments, via the perspectives of the constitutionalists, on the victory of the constitutional government and the downfall of Mohammad 'Ali Shah, and the constitutionalist resistance to foreign influence from Britain, and Russia. However, Mohammad 'Ali had declared himself in favour of the Constitution before he was crowned, and he was a signatory with his father, Mozaffar al-Din Shah to the rescript granting the constitution.² The British were not particularly in favour of Mohammad 'Ali Shah, yet in their documents he appears as less negative towards the new political developments that he does in

¹ Nikki Keddie, 'Iranian Politics 1900-1905: Background to Revolution,' *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Jan., 1969), pp. 3-31; 'Iranian Politics 1900-1905: Background to Revolution: II,' *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (May, 1969), pp. 151-167; and 'Iranian Politics 1900-05: Background to Revolution: III,' *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Oct., 1969), pp. 234-250.

² FO416/29, no. 252, 36251, enclosure 2, September 25, 1906, Grant Duff to the Grand Vizier.

studies by western and Iranian scholars.

It can therefore be seen that mostly Mohammad ‘Ali Shah has been viewed as a negative figure in academic studies. After all, a common understanding is that a constitution is a means for a country to reach a better and more, developed and civilized state. A case such as that of Mohammad ‘Ali Shah’s clash with the constitutionalists is therefore to some degree bound not to win him any praise. For instance, Norman Dwight Harris, in his *Europe and the East*, argues that Mozaffar al-Din Shah had the ‘honour of becoming the first constitutional ruler of his country,’ while Mohammad ‘Ali Shah ‘found his position intolerable and took steps to protect his own person and to break the power of the Medjliss.’³ Ferrier also comments that the two shahs, Mozaffar al-Din Shah and Mohammad ‘Ali Shah, were viewed differently, with former grudgingly accepted and the latter condemned. Mozaffar al-Din Shah was described as ‘mild’ and ‘ineffectual’, and Mohammad ‘Ali Shah was ‘cruel’ and ‘autocratic.’⁴ These arguments are clearly biased in favour of the Iranian constitutionalists. Ahmad Kasravi’s Persian language work, *History of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution*,⁵ describes Mohammad ‘Ali Shah as greedy and self-serving, and unable to understand the meaning of a mass movement. ‘This man, with his narrow-mindedness and self-centeredness, was not the sort of person to be concerned with the state of country and people.’ Yet, Kasravi’s point of view on the constitutionalists was very positive. Despite the fact that the Majles opened with inexperience representatives and poor facilities, Kasravi concludes that it should have been able to develop gradually. Sahrab Yazdani, too, comments that Mohammad ‘Ali during his time as Crown Prince and Governor of Province of Azerbaijan, ‘at

³ Harris, *Europe*, p.179 and pp. 182-183.

⁴ Ferrier, *The History Volume 1*, p. 73.

⁵ Ahmad Kasravi, *History of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution Vol. I*, trans. Evan Siegel, California: Mazda Publishers, 2006.

Tabriz ruled with cruelty, so that city residents were under pressure from the incompetence of government officials.’⁶ It should be remembered, however, that there is no absolute criterion to state which political system, either a constitutional government or a monarchical government, is better. The Shah’s actions during the revolutionary period, and his return for the throne in 1911 should be explored from a more neutral position, and his role in the Constitutional Revolution deserves some rethinking.

British actions and views of the Shah also have to be considered in the context of their relations with Russia. These include their obligations under the 1907 Convention, including the principle of both parties respecting Iran’s independence and integrity. This issue was to be complicated by the actions of both the Shah and the constitutionalists, and the problems they presented for both Britain and Russia. In addition, the British were faced with the problem that the more significant events of the Revolution generally took place in the Russian zone, where Britain had no right to intervene. However, to some extent this suited their non-intervention policy.

With regard to the scholarly debate on the role of the British and their policies, Keddie’s article, ‘British Policy and the Iranian Opposition 1901-1907,’⁷ argues that the British did not intervene in Iranian affairs at all, and the British did not encourage the Iranian revolutionaries or accept their requests for help. Ira Klein’s article, ‘British Intervention in the Persian Revolution, 1905-1909,’⁸ is of the opinion that the British supported constitutionalism with a view to overthrowing Qajar absolutism, a possible means of protecting its own interests. The 1907 Convention, on the principle of the independence and integrity of Iran, did not, though, end the Anglo-Russian struggle for power in the country. Klein

⁶ Sohrab Yazdani, *Mojahedan-e Mashruteh*, Tehran: Nashr-e Ney, 1389/2010, p. 32.

⁷ Keddie, ‘British Policy,’ pp. 266-282.

⁸ Klein, ‘British Intervention,’ pp. 731-752.

also asserts that neither Britain nor Russia completely followed a policy of non-intervention, and that both exerted a major influence on the course of the revolution. However, Klein did not see either any fundamental change to British's non-intervention policy towards Iran, or in the reasons why the Russians did intervene. With regard to the role of Britain and Russia in Iran in the constitutional movement of 1908, Vanessa Martin's 'Hartwig and Russian Policy in Iran 1906-08'⁹ shows that Britain did not intend to intervene in Iranian affairs, while Russia seemed to have two policies, one of non-intervention, as advocated by the Russian Foreign Minister, Isvolsky and implemented by Hartwig, and the other advocated most probably by the Russian military, that of supporting the Shah by intervention through the Cossack Brigade, which was commanded by Colonel Liakhov. Martin also asserts that Grey's policy towards Iran was consistently one of non-intervention. Hourì Berberian in her research on the Armenians in the 1906 Revolution argues that both Britain and Russia supported the Shah,¹⁰ while Taqavi Mogaddam's book considers that during the events of the Revolution Britain supported the revolutionaries and Russia supported the Shah.¹¹

Hence, this chapter attempts to examine Mohammad 'Ali Shah's actions in the revolutionary period, in order, firstly, to pursue a more impartial position on the Shah; and, secondly, to understand how the British perceived the role and policies of the Shah in the context of the Revolution, the 1907 Convention and the actions of their rival, Russia. It will thus explore what most concerned the British in terms of their interests in Iran, and their relations to the Russians It will also consider British reactions to the return of Mohammad 'Ali in 1911 and how it

⁹ Martin, 'Hartwig,' pp. 1-21.

¹⁰ Hourì Berberian, *Armenians and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911*, Colorado: Westview Press, 2001, pp. 2-3.

¹¹ Seyyed Mostafa Taqavi Mogaddam, *Faraz va Forud-e Mashtureh*, Tehran: Mo'asseseh-ye Motale'at-e Tarikh-e Mo'aser-e Iran, 1384/2005, p. 307.

affected Anglo-Russian relations, not least over affairs in the Russian zone, bearing in mind that increasingly the British prioritised Anglo-Russian interests over their relations with Iran.

1. Mohammad ‘Ali Shah and his unsettled constitutional government

In early 1906, Evelyn Grant Duff, the British Special Envoy to Iran, believed that the British government should support the Vali‘ahd, Crown Prince, Mohammad ‘Ali, once a revolution took place.¹² Although Grant Duff’s view cannot be seen as a formal perspective of the British Foreign Office, there is, however, an implication that the British probably paid respect to the heir to the throne, and that Mozaffar al-Din Shah was in bad health. Supporting the Vali‘ahd was a way for the British to quell unrest and disorder in Iran by accepting the legitimacy of official heir to the throne. Meanwhile, the British government suggested that a joint loan with Russia should be approved for Mohammad ‘Ali immediately on the death of the Shah,¹³ for his journey to Tehran and for the payment of troops.¹⁴ Thus it can be seen from British documents that Mohammad ‘Ali was viewed with good will by the British.

On 30 July 1906, Mozaffar al-Din Shah granted five key concessions, including the establishment of Courts of Justice and of a Majles to the constitutional movement.¹⁵ Subsequently the Shah accepted the resignation of the Prime Minister, ‘Eyn al-Doweleh, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Moshir al-Dowleh, took on the post Prime Minister. On 4 August 1906, the Shah granted the establishment of a Majles.¹⁶ This was a sign of a settlement of the Iranian

¹² FO371/109, no. 114, 16425, April 24, 1906, Grant Duff to Grey.

¹³ FO416/27, 18374, enclosure 2, May 26, 1906, Government of India to Mr. Morley.

¹⁴ FO416/27, no. 83, 19795, June 14, 1906, Grey to Grant Duff.

¹⁵ FO371/112, no. 201, 25830, July 30, 1906, Grant Duff to Grey.

¹⁶ FO416/28, no. 207, 26945, August 4, 1906, Grant Duff to Grey.

disturbances, which had lasted for months. The first meeting of the Majles took place on 18 August 1906, and on 12 September, the Shah signed the regulations of the Majles. The opening of the Majles, on 7 October 1906, concluded the tasks of 'restoring financial equilibrium and eventually freeing the country from the burden of foreign debt,'¹⁷ and the constitutional movement thus had a significant victory.

In September 1906, Mohammad 'Ali, then residing in Tabriz, showed his opposition to reform movements.¹⁸ His action towards the revolutionaries there did not necessarily denote opposition to reform. Instead, it was more likely to have been for the security of the city. Nevertheless, the Vali'ahd did endorse the Constitution, along with his father, Mozaffar al-Din Shah. The people in Tabriz requested a formal telegraph from Tehran confirming the granting of the Constitution. The Vali'ahd accepted it, and announced four articles stating that he guaranteed the right of refuge of the people, that the Majles would be confirmed and supported by the Vali'ahd, that the Majles represented the prosperity and progress of the nation, and that when the people's delegates had been elected they would set out for Tehran.¹⁹ By December 1906, Mozaffar al-Din Shah was seriously ill, and Mohammad 'Ali was on his way to Tehran, and at the end of 1906, he stated that he respected the Majles and the Constitution.²⁰ On the first day of 1907, the Mozaffar al-Din Shah granted the Constitution, which stated that 'control of the finances, including loans, should be in the hands of the Assembly.'²¹ The Shah then passed away on 8 January 1907, and Mohammad 'Ali succeeded to the throne on 12 January.

The establishment of the Majles and the passing of the Constitution did not

¹⁷ FO248/868, no. 261, October 7, 1906, Spring-Rice to Grey.

¹⁸ FO371/113, no. 203, 29704, enclosure, July 14, 1906, Wratislaw to Grant Duff.

¹⁹ FO371/112, no. 265, 36264, enclosure 3, 8th Shaban, 1324, The Valiahd to Wratislaw.

²⁰ FO248/869, private, December 21, 1906, Spring-Rice to Grey.

²¹ FO371/301, no. 1, 170, January 2, 1907, Spring-Rice to Grey.

mean, however, that Iran's circumstances improved all respects. The Majles itself did not work efficiently, a point not lost on the Shah, and a cause of concern to him. The ministers attended the Majles irregularly, and the deputies failed to cooperate effectively.²² The members had no experience in solving problems, either in terms of administration or finance.²³ In addition, the Majles was quite hostile to the Shah and to foreign powers. In February 1907, the Majles demanded an explicit declaration on the part of the Shah that Iran 'enjoyed a Constitution and had entered the number of Constitutional States,' as well as a formal recognition of the principle that no foreign subject could hold the position of a Persian Minister.²⁴ Mohammad 'Ali Shah accepted, but still the unrest in Iran lasted for months afterwards in some cities, such as Rasht, Tabriz, Shiraz, and Isfahan. There was alarming news that assassins were planning an attempt on the Shah's life, too. The passing of the Constitution did not, therefore, seem to calm the situation in Iran. During 1907, relations between the Majles and the Shah did not go well. Firstly, Joseph Naus, the Minister of Customs, was dismissed by the Majles in February 1907. Naus, who had arrived in Iran in 1898, ran the customs administration and organised the taxation system. On the point of control of the finances by the Majles, the removal of Naus was viewed as a block to foreign pressure and a limitation on the Shah's sovereignty, to which the Shah did not take kindly. Eventually, the Shah was compelled to agree to the dismissal of Naus.²⁵ In June 1907, the Majles undertook to investigate Naus's accounts, forcing him to return to Belgium. Eventually, Naus left Tehran on 30 May 1907, and this was a sign of a decline in the Shah's authority. Nevertheless, on 19 August 1907, the

²² Vanessa Martin, *Islam and Modernism: The Iranian Revolution of 1906*, London: I.B. Tauris, 1989, p.107.

²³ FO371/301, no. 24, 5276, January 30, 1907, Spring-Rice to Grey.

²⁴ Edward G. Browne, *A Brief Narrative of Recent Events in Persia*, London: Luzac and Co., 1909, p. 20.

²⁵ Morgan Shuster, *The Strangling of Persia*, New York: The Century Co., 1912, p. xxii.

Shah confirmed his desire to cooperate with the Majles over reforms.²⁶ However, the President of the Majles argued that:

We have many faults, but the people believe in us and will not allow us to be suppressed. We want to work with the Shah, and we will if he allows it. If he consents, we shall save the country together. If he refuses, he may be able to suppress us; but, if he does, it will be the end of him, of ourselves, and of Persia.²⁷

The Majles had its own difficulties. For example, the treasury was empty, there were few statesmen of proven experience, and taxes were being paid only irregularly. In addition, many of the members of the Majles actually had no idea how an assembly was supposed to function.²⁸ The Iranian cabinet also continually clashed with the Shah. Only Sa‘d al-Dowleh, who was in his post from September 1907, supported the Shah,²⁹ and he was mistrusted by the Majles because of his close relations with the Shah and the Russians. During his forty day ministerial term, no ministers were close to him, and as a result, he was dismissed by the Majles on 3 October 1907,³⁰ thus weakening the position of the Shah.

The Shah swore to the Majles in November 1907 that he would ‘maintain the fundamental articles of the Constitution and rule conformably to the established laws.’³¹ Yet, by December 1907, the situation for the Shah remained not a hopeful one. The constitutionalists were crowded around the Majles, while the

²⁶ FO416/33, no. 225, 27871, August 19, 1907, Spring-Rice to Grey.

²⁷ FO416/32, no. 81, 15441, April 24, 1907, Spring-Rice to Grey.

²⁸ FO416/34, no. 230, 35498, October 10, 1907, Marling to Grey.

²⁹ FO416/34, no. 285, 32878, October 2, 1907, Spring-Rice to Grey.

³⁰ Sa‘id Qanei Mohammad ‘Ali Elmi, *Nokhostvaziran-e Iran az Sadr-e Mashruteh ta Forupashi-ye Dolat-e Bakhtiyar*, Tehran: Elmi, 1391/2012, p. 87.

³¹ Browne, *The Persian Revolution*, p. 162, and Fatemeh Mo‘ezzi, ‘Mohammad ‘Ali Shah Qajar (Nokhostin-e Sal-e Saltanat),’ *Tarikh-e Mo‘aser-e Iran*, Faslnameh Takhassosi, Sal-e 15, No. 59, Paiz 1390/2011, p. 101.

Shah's supporters were camped out in Meydan-e Tupkhaneh.³² The military force available to the Shah was the Cossack Brigade, which was led by a Russian officer, Colonel Vladimir Liakhov. The Shah was unable to improve relations between himself and the Majles,³³ particularly because of his firm measures, such as arresting the Prime Minister, Naser al-Molk, which then caused the other Ministers to resign.³⁴ The Shah pointed out to Marling that his opposition to the Constitution could hardly be possible because he himself had signed it, and had brought it to his father to sign. The Shah also consistently expressed the view to Marling that he approved of the Constitution, but not of the society in chaos and the incapable Majles. In the meantime, the people were not content with the new December cabinet, which included two or three members of dubious loyalty to the Constitution.³⁵ Up to the end of December, the Shah consistently argued that he 'professed to be an earnest friend of the Constitution.'³⁶ The Shah claimed again that he had no quarrel with Constitutional government, but only with the Majles, which, in his view, was itself continually guilty of unconstitutional acts.³⁷ To the constitutionalists, opposing the Majles equaled opposing the Constitution, but to the Shah this was not the case.

During the conflict between the Shah and the Majles abovementioned, it became obvious that the two parties had opposite opinions which could not be reconciled at all. The Majles wanted to eliminate the Shah's power, and remove his favourites, while the Shah did not want to see disturbances in his country. The Shah did not actually denounce the Constitution, but he only saw that the Majles itself was in chaos. In May 1908, there were, for instance, wholesale resignations

³² Telgeraf-e Hartwig, Dovvom Desamr, 1907, Vezarat-e Omur-e Kharejeh-e Rusiyeh, *Ketab-e Narenji Jeld-e I*, beh Kushesh-e Ahmad Bashiri, Tehran: Nashr-e Nur, 1367/1988, p. 56.

³³ Telgeraf-e Hartwig, 15 Desamr, 1907, Ibid, p. 57.

³⁴ FO416/34, no. 383, 41204, December 16, 1907, Marling to Grey.

³⁵ FO416/35, no. 283, 1995, December 31, 1907, Marling to Grey.

³⁶ FO416/35, no. 283, 1995, December 31, 1907, Marling to Grey.

³⁷ FO416/35, no. 14, 5424, January 29, 1908, Marling to Grey.

owing to the fact that members were not in favour of the leadership of Nezam al-Saltaneh, who was a notable and supporter of the Shah, and who was viewed as a man with no concern for the Constitution. It was therefore believed that there was no way to cooperate with the Shah.³⁸ On 9 June 1908, the Shah denounced the fact that the constitutionalists' 'selfish motives' made the nation fragile, and that corruption continued in the Constitutional government.³⁹ The Cossack Brigade then bombarded the Majles on 23 June 1908, an event which showed that the Shah could not bear the political chaos, and which had become his only means of putting an end to the unrest and state of disorder in the country.

At the end of June 1908, Mohammad 'Ali Shah reiterated 'that he had no designs against the Constitution; that he had no misunderstandings at all either with the Government or with the Medjliss,'⁴⁰ In August, the Shah stated that an assembly would be formed.⁴¹ He also stated that he would fulfil his promise to avoid serious domestic problems, and complained that the constitutionalists were causing chaos in the country.⁴² On 29 September 1908, the Shah announced that 'the Assembly was to be convoked on 14 November, and that new electoral regulations would be promulgated on the same date.'⁴³ However, on 8 November 1908, there was opposition from the Shah's own courtiers, who presented a petition to him to abandon the Constitution.⁴⁴ The Shah said he was reluctant, and that he was to issue the Electoral Law soon.⁴⁵ The Shah told Barclay, the British Minister in Tehran, that he himself had not ordered the abrogation of the Constitution, claiming that:

³⁸ FO416/36, no. 136, 19702, May 22, 1908, Marling to Grey.

³⁹ Yazdani, *Mojahedan-e Mashruteh*, p. 72.

⁴⁰ FO416/36, no. 290, 22338, June 26, 1908, O'Beirne to Grey.

⁴¹ Evan Aleksiyovich Zinovif, *Engelab-e Mashrutiyat-e Iran: Nazarat-e Yek Diplomat-e Rus: Havades-e Iran dar Salha-ye 1905 ta 1911*, Tarjomeh: Abu al-Qasem E'teshami, Tehran: Eqbal, 1362/1984, pp. 92-93.

⁴² *Ibid*, p. 94.

⁴³ FO416/38, no. 430, 35214, September 29, 1908, Nicolson to Grey.

⁴⁴ FO416/38, no. 381, 39962, November 16, 1908, Barclay to Grey.

⁴⁵ FO416/38, no. 366, 38812, November 8, 1908, Barclay to Grey.

personally he was in favour of an Assembly, but that it should not be one like the last, and that he was now endeavouring to devise a scheme for one which would be suitable.⁴⁶

The statement above shows that the Shah intended to open a new Majles which would be under his supervision.⁴⁷ The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iran, 'Al'a al-Saltaneh, endorsed the Shah's words by saying that 'the last one (the Majles) is not suited to the feelings of the public, and that so much liberty is unbecoming and will produce the anarchy and mischief which has already been witnessed.'⁴⁸ To the Shah, the function of a new Majles would be to provide 'general supervision over the Ministers and Provincial Governors, and would "acquaint themselves with the Shah's commands and the duties laid down for them".'⁴⁹ In this context, at least, the Shah's power would be restored.⁵⁰ These measures, were not, however, supported by the constitutionalists.

In early 1909, a force from Gilan, north-west Iran, led by Sepahdar Tonokaboni entered into direct conflict with the Shah's authority,⁵¹ and the Bakhtiyari Khans joined the anti-government movement, collaborating with Sepahdar from Isfahan. On 16 March 1909, the Shah called a meeting of different classes in Tehran 'to discuss the situation and to express their views as to the desirability in principle of reverting to the constitutional regime.'⁵² On 5 May 1909, the Shah announced that:

⁴⁶ FO416/38, no. 372, 39496, November 12, 1908, Barclay to Grey.

⁴⁷ FO416/38, no. 386, 40440, November 19, 1908, Barclay to Grey.

⁴⁸ FO248/947, November 27, 1908, Ala-es-Sultaneh to Barclay.

⁴⁹ FO416/38, no. 310, 44432, December 4, 1908, Barclay to Grey.

⁵⁰ Yazdani, *Mojahedan-e Mashruteh*, p. 144.

⁵¹ Loqman Dehqan Nayyeri, 'Anjaman-e Moqaddas-e Melli-ye Isfahan va Kudeta-ye Mohammad 'Ali Shah,' in *Majmu'eh Moqalat, Nehzat-e Mashrutiyat-e Iran, Jeld-e 1*, Tehran: Mo'asseseh-ye Motale'at-e Tarikh-e Mo'aser-e Iran, 1378/1999, pp. 100-101.

⁵² FO416/40, no. 61, 13650, March 24, 1909, Barclay to Grey.

..... in order to introduce order into the Government Administration, the constitutional principle, which is the best foundation for the security of the people and for reorganizing the Government and State, has from this day, the 5th May, 1909, been commanded by us to be instituted, (along with) the drawing up of laws in accordance with the necessities of the dear Fatherland⁵³

The Shah announced that the electoral law would shortly be published, and elections were fixed for 19 July.⁵⁴ He was aware of his people's desire for a Constitution, but in fact none of his actions could possibly meet the people's wishes, namely to limit the Shah's power. The Shah was defeated by the Bakhtiyari Khans and Sepahdar in early July, and finally abdicated on 17 July 1909.

In all the incidents from 1907 to 1909, it cannot be absolutely determined the Shah was against the Constitution, but it is reasonable to comment that he attempted to make changes in his own way after quarrels with the Iranian constitutionalists. Mohammad 'Ali Shah's attitude to the Constitution was one of struggle and resistance to control, rather than blind anti-constitutionalism. During his reign, his conflict was actually with the radical interpretation of the role of the Majles, and was strongly motivated by his desire to restore order in the country.

2. British policy towards Iran in Mohammad 'Ali Shah's reign and the role of Russia

In principle, Britain preferred joint action with Russia in Iranian affairs, and

⁵³ FO416/40, no. 91, 19456, enclosure 2, Imperial Rescript, dated May 5, 1909.

⁵⁴ FO416/40, no. 366, 17095, May 5, 1909, Barclay to Grey.

hoped that neither party would actually support either the Shah or the constitutionalists. However, while the British had adopted a policy of non-intervention in Iran for a long time, the Russians, on the contrary, took up a position of non-intervention in Iran only as a result of the country's being weakened by the defeat in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904 and the revolution of 1905. A consequent change to its foreign policy was reflected in the appointment of a new Minister in Tehran, Hartwig, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Isvolsky, who assured Britain in 1906 that Russia had no ambitions for further expansion in Iran.⁵⁵ Russia, also, consented not to act in Iran without mutual consultation with Britain in advance.

The two powers had agreed joint actions in Iran from 1907. The British Ambassador in St. Petersburg, Arthur Nicolson, was informed by Isvolsky that 'an interchange of views was eminently desirable between the two Governments, so that they might come to a common understanding as to the best line to follow.'⁵⁶ The three main points of Russian policy to Iran as set out by Isvolsky were that:

- (1) They would abstain from all interference in Persian internal affairs; (2) Unless absolutely necessary, they would not adopt military measures, and would keep them, if adopted, within the narrowest limits possible; (3) They would act generally in close harmony with British Government, and would take no step without previously consulting that Government.⁵⁷

The most satisfactory statement could be seen as a gesture of Russian good-will, providing Britain with a guarantee of cooperation. However, Russia was in a more difficult position than Britain because disturbances in the North of Iran caused by

⁵⁵ Martin, 'Hartwig,' p. 3.

⁵⁶ FO416/31, no. 70, 5225, February 4, 1907, Nicolson to Grey.

⁵⁷ FO416/31, 5949, February 18, 1907, Morley to Government of India.

the revolutionary movements were taking place close to the Russo-Iranian border. In the meantime, Ottoman troops trespassed over the Iranian border in the Province of Azerbaijan, which is close to the Russian border as well, which caused more Russian troops to show up in the area. Thus even in early 1907 the Russian Legation was of the opinion that the popular movements in Iran would endanger their interests. The Russians were also concerned about the criticism of the Shah. In March 1907, the two powers had agreed that:

(1) there are signs of a dangerous movement against the dynasty and Europeans, in spite of the apparent outward calm; (2) the anti-dynastic movement is manifested by persistent reports that the Shah wishes to dismiss the Assembly which is organizing a militia; (3) the anti-European movement aims at the removal of foreigners from the Persian service, and at preventing them from obtaining Concessions in Persia, but that it is not directed against individuals or foreign Legations; (4) Great Britain and Russia, while carefully avoiding any intervention in the internal affairs of Persia, nevertheless cannot permit their interests to be injured in any respect whatever, and that, in view of the tendencies of the Assembly, they would be justified in making a declaration to the Persian Government in the above sense.⁵⁸

Generally Russia itself claimed to be non-interventionist,⁵⁹ and would have welcomed harmonious relations between the Shah and the Majles.⁶⁰ The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, which was signed in August, with the principle of Iran's independence and integrity, made Russia prefer a secure and

⁵⁸ FO416/31, no. 41, 7661, March 8, 1907, Nicolson to Grey.

⁵⁹ FO416/32, no. 71, 15431, April 19, 1907, Spring-Rice to Grey.

⁶⁰ FO416/32, no. 297, 18916, June 3, 1907, Nicolson to Grey.

stable government, and it was otherwise indifferent as to which Shah reigned or what kind of government was established.⁶¹ At that point, therefore, the two powers followed their policy of non-intervention, in the hope that the Iranians would be able to solve their own problems.

Nevertheless, a policy of non-intervention became increasingly difficult to maintain. To the British, *bast*, or sanctuary, at the British Legation during the disturbances in Iran became an issue as regards their non-intervention policy. *Bast* at mosques and shrines was an Iranian tradition from the early Qajar period, but after the Iranian government limited this practice in the mid-nineteenth century, *bastis*, or refugees, gradually came to foreign legations.⁶² However, when Iranians took *bast* in the British Legation after the disturbances of July 1906, the British ran into the problem of accusations of intervention for permitting their entry.

In 1906, the Iranian government opposed British acceptance of the *bastis* while the British blamed the country's government for not taking action to satisfy the people.⁶³ The *bastis* argued that the Prime Minister, 'Eyn al-Dowleh, should be dismissed, and that, in the absence of this, measure the *bastis* should not be forced to leave.⁶⁴ By 30 July 1906, the number of *bastis* had reached 12,000. Grey again claimed that Britain did not intend to interfere in Iranian affairs, and persuaded the *bastis* to leave the British Legation once the change of Prime Minister had been enacted.⁶⁵ On 2 August 1906, the British claimed that 'though we have allowed the people to take refuge in the Legation (the British Legation), we cannot interfere between them and their Government.'⁶⁶ Spring-Rice, the

⁶¹ FO416/34, no. 267, 42144, December 25, 1907, Nicolson to Grey.

⁶² Martin, *Islam and Modernism*, p. 87.

⁶³ FO371/112, no. 195, 25310, July 24, 1906, Grant Duff to Grey.

⁶⁴ FO371/112, no. 100, 25491, July 25, 1906, Grey to Grant Duff.

⁶⁵ FO416/28, no. 364, 26986, August 3, 1906, Grey to Nicolson.

⁶⁶ FO371/112, no. 104, 26312, August 2, 1906, Grey to Grant Duff.

British Minister in Tehran, argued too that the *bastis* would gain nothing by their action, and that Iran should be free to solve its problems without foreign interference.⁶⁷ The British did not want Russia to think that they were interfering in Iranian affairs.⁶⁸ With regard to the *bast*, Russia's attitude was that 'British prestige in Persia has immensely increased by the fact of the people having come to His Majesty's Legation, '⁶⁹

The issue of *bast* at the British Legation arose again in 1908 when Mohammad 'Ali Shah clashed with the constitutionalists. This took place after the signing of the 1907 Convention, and the British were hence doubly anxious to avoid any suspicion of intervention. Grey instructed Marling to discourage Iranians from coming to the British Legation.⁷⁰ On 26 June 1908, three days after the bombardment of the Majles, the Shah wrote a letter to the British King complaining that the Legation had invited in mischief-makers, which was 'a clear interference with the internal affairs of Persia.'⁷¹ The King argued that his consul in Tehran had done everything possible to discourage the Iranians from taking refuge at the Legation, but 'the conduct of your troops in surrounding my Legation and arresting those who come out of it is an indignity which cannot be tolerate(d)'⁷² The Iranian government seized the people around the Legation and criticized British for intervention,⁷³ while the British government blamed the ruthless action of the Cossack Brigade for compelling the *bastis* to come in the first place.

As the *bast* dragged on, the British Legation began to complain that the

⁶⁷ FO371/112, no. 282, 39524, November 9, 1906, Spring-Rice to Grey.

⁶⁸ FO416/28, no. 112, 28004, August 16, 1906, Grey to Grant Duff.

⁶⁹ FO371/112, no. 234, 30289, September 6, 1906, Grant Duff to Grey.

⁷⁰ FO416/36, no. 124, 21954, June 25, 1908, Grey to Marling.

⁷¹ FO416/36, no. 138, 22465, June 29, 1908, Grey to Marling.

⁷² FO416/36, no. 139, 22465, June 29, 1908, Grey to Marling.

⁷³ Fatemeh Mo'ezzi, 'Mohammad 'Ali Shah Qajar dar Vapasin-e Sal-e Saltanat,' *Tarikh-e Mo'aser-e Iran*, Faslnameh Takhassosi, Sal-e 15, No. 60, Zemestan 1390/2011, p. 189.

bastis had no intention of leaving.⁷⁴ Marling was worried that Hartwig might think that they were not sincerely trying to solve the *bast* problem, and his principal anxiety was that some of the *bastis*, who had political agendas, refused to leave.⁷⁵ Marling was also upset that Hartwig would not accept any explanation on the *bast* issue.⁷⁶ In July 1908, Grey again announced that the *bastis* would not obtain anything further and should leave,⁷⁷ instructing Marling to inform the *bastis* that taking refuge for political ends would be resented by the British government.⁷⁸

Meanwhile, Russia also had encountered a major problem, which was the bombardment of the Majles by the Russian commander, Liakhov. Colonel Liakhov was a Russian officer in charge of the Cossack Brigade, which had been established since 1879, and was in Mohammad 'Ali Shah's service from September 1907. He was regarded as being a person of significance by the British. The Cossack Brigade was established in Iran and received training from Russian officers, and its commander was responsible only to the Shah and the Prime Minister. Already in 1889, the Brigade had been considered superior to the rest of the Iranian army,⁷⁹ and by the time when the Shah had clashes with the constitutionalists in 1908, Liakhov became a key figure in relations between Britain and Russia.

The Cossack Brigade has been depicted by pro-constitutionalist historians as having played an inglorious role in the suppression of the Constitutional Revolution.⁸⁰ In 1908, the Brigade surrounded the British Legation to prevent the Iranians from taking refuge there, and Britain argued that Liakhov should be held

⁷⁴ FO416/37, no. 211, 24000, July 11, 1908, Marling to Grey.

⁷⁵ FO416/37, no. 225, 24661, July 16, 1908, Marling to Grey.

⁷⁶ FO416/37, no. 186, 26831, July 16, 1908, Marling to Grey.

⁷⁷ FO248/926, no. 178, July 17, 1908, Grey to Marling.

⁷⁸ FO416/37, no. 179, 24796, July 18, 1908, Grey to Marling.

⁷⁹ Reza Ra'iss Touse, 'The Persian Army, 1880-1907,' *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 24, no. 2 (Apr., 1988), p. 219.

⁸⁰ Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia*, p. 496.

responsible for the actions of the Cossack Brigade. Grey claimed that the Russian officer had caused damage to the policy of non-intervention.⁸¹ On 23 June 1908, the Cossack Brigade, commanded by Liakhov, bombarded the Majles, and the Shah announced martial law and gave Liakhov full powers over the police and military forces. On 1 July 1908, Grey also made a five-point request to the Shah, including ‘Cossacks and police to be withdrawn immediately from the approaches to the Legation’ and ‘a guarantee in writing for the property, lives, and persons of the “bastis” to be given, and to be signed by the Shah.’⁸² In addition, the British argued that Liakhov’s presence in the Brigade represented Russian intervention. Isvolsky did not share this view, asserting that:

if the proceedings of the Persian Cossack Brigade, of which the British Legation complains were taken by order of the Russian Colonel, this occurred independently of the Imperial Government (the Russian Government) and the Russian Legation.⁸³

Isvolsky gave O’Beirne in St. Petersburg assurances that the ‘Russian Colonel, in carrying out (the) Shah’s recent measures and assuming military control of Tehran (if he had done so), acted without either the orders, knowledge, or approval of the Imperial Government (the Russian government).’⁸⁴ There was much concern that Liakhov’s actions at that time were in violation of the 1907 Convention. According to a statement by Isvolsky, Liakhov had no direct relations with the Russian Government, and was in fact under the command of the Shah rather than the Russian government. Isvolsky pointed out that the Russian commander had

⁸¹ FO416/37, no. 201, 22576, July 1, 1908, Grey to O’Beirne.

⁸² FO416/37, no. 145, 22576, July 1, 1908, Grey to Marling.

⁸³ FO416/37, no. 301, 23183, July 2, 1908, O’Beirne to Grey.

⁸⁴ FO416/37, no. 111, 22953, July 3, 1908, O’Beirne to Grey.

been in the service of the Shah for four years.⁸⁵ In 1910, two travelers, J. M. Hone and Page L. Dickinson, made the comment that Russia's intrigues in the Liakhov case had not yet been revealed, and gave an affirmative view that Liakhov brought security to Tehran.⁸⁶ Stephanie Cronin argues that Liakhov was independent as regards the political climate between Britain, Russia, and Iran,⁸⁷ and Vanessa Martin, too, mentions that Liakhov considered himself to be responsible to the Shah.⁸⁸ In any case, there is no direct source that suggests that Liakhov was given instructions by the Russian government in the June bombardment. The Liakhov case remains unclear in academic studies.

Except the two episodes abovementioned, the two European powers in fact endeavoured to maintain their friendship during the Iranian Revolution. The British, on the other hand, were concerned as to whether the Russians would change their position and policy with regard to Iran. When the Shah tried to suppress the Constitutionalists in late 1907, Grey wanted Isvolsky to instruct the Russian Minister in Tehran to cooperate with the British Minister there to encourage the Shah to be more positive towards the Majles.⁸⁹ In September 1908, Marling, who favoured the reestablishment of the Majles, still had his doubts as to whether Hartwig had put pressure on the Shah on the matter of the Majles.⁹⁰ What is clear is that the two Ministers had no mutual understanding as regards one another's actions, and, as Hartwig did not get along well with Marling, the Russians, in November 1908, replaced him with Evgueni Sablin, who was pro-British, in order to improve cooperation with the British.⁹¹ To the end of

⁸⁵ FO416/37, no. 308, 25021, July 5, 1908, O'Beirne to Grey.

⁸⁶ J. M. Hone and Page L. Dickinson, *Persia in Revolution with Notes of Travel in the Caucasus*, London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1910, p. 122.

⁸⁷ Stephanie Cronin, 'Deserters, Converts, Cossacks and Revolutionaries: Russians in Iranian Military Service 1800-1920,' *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 2, 2012, pp. 168-169.

⁸⁸ Martin, 'Hartwig,' p. 7.

⁸⁹ FO416/34, no. 349, 41016, December 16, 1907, Grey to Nicolson.

⁹⁰ Telgeraf-e Hartwig, 25 Septamr, 1908, *Ketab-e Narengi Jeld-e 1*, pp. 290-291.

⁹¹ Martin, 'Hartwig,' p.16.

Mohammad 'Ali Shah, the two powers maintained their friendship, being neutral to Iran.

The constitutionalists also sought assistance from foreign consulates, for example, Tabriz, in June and July 1908.⁹² The British considered that 'it is not suitable to the dignity of the Persians to call in help from strangers, while they have power to help themselves.'⁹³ In July 1908, some in Astarabad believed that the British would help them to reestablish the Constitution,⁹⁴ and the British did nothing at all. Marling claimed that there would be no intervention from Britain in the present situation.⁹⁵ In November, people in Astarabad complained that the British did not see their sufferings, and the British must help them to restore the Constitution.⁹⁶ However, this was simply an Iranian hope. The British made no attempt to do anything owing to the principle of the non-intervention policy. Of course, Astarabad could not be an exception, because elsewhere in Iran would not receive Britain's assistance. Nevertheless, till early 1909, there were still requests for British aid by Iranians.⁹⁷ It can be seen that generally Britain did not intervene in Iranian affairs, especially after the discovery of oil in 1908, by which time the British paid much more attention to the South-West of Iran. With the 1907 Convention, it was particularly unlikely that the British would take any political action in the Russian zone.

Russia had a different experience in Iran. In early 1909, Russia experienced conflicts along the Ottoman-Iranian border, with first Ottoman troops trespassing into the area close to Ormiyeh, in the North-West of Iran, and then movements of Iranian revolutionaries in Azerbaijan, which caused chaos close to the

⁹² FO248/947, June 16, 1908, Translation of telegram from "Omoum Millet" (i.e. the whole people) of Tabriz to HM Legation.

⁹³ FO248/948, June 9, 1908, no title, p. 183.

⁹⁴ FO248/947, Astrabad report for the week end July 14 1908.

⁹⁵ FO248/949, September 8, 1908, Memorandum by Marling.

⁹⁶ FO248/947, November 28, 1908, From Astrabad to the British Legation.

⁹⁷ FO248/976, February 22, 1909, Tel from the Ulema, notables and merchants of Ispahan to H.M. the Shah through the English and Russian Legations.

Russian-Iranian border. Russian troops were therefore dispatched into Iran to ensure the security of the border in April 1909. Mohammad 'Ali Shah attempted to stop these Russian troop movements, but in vain.⁹⁸ A British and Russian joint note claimed that the purpose of such a Russian action was to ensure the security of Russian subjects in Iran.⁹⁹ A conflict between Sepahdar and the Shah later resulted in the increased entry of Russian troops near Tabriz and Qazvin,¹⁰⁰ owing to the chaos in the area close to the Russian border, so Russia's military actions eventually did affect the territorial integrity and independence of Iran.¹⁰¹ To the Russians, despite the principle of non-intervention and the 1907 Convention, the events of the time adjusted their policy.

Around June 1909, the Bakhtiyari Khans and Sepahdar advanced on Tehran in pursuit of their conflict with the Shah. The British did not expect that the tribal leader, Sardar As'ad, would decide to lead this movement, considering instead that it would result in difficulties for the restoration of order.¹⁰² Barclay asserted that, 'If it be the intention of Sirdar Assad merely to demonstrate (support) on behalf of the constitution and thereby save his face, we may regard this move on his part as simply a mischievous and ill-timed prank,'¹⁰³ The British and the Russians had no wish for this initiative to take place, and on 2 July 1909, Isvolsky again assured O'Beirne that Russian troops in Iran were there to protect Russian subjects, rather than to intervene in the internal affairs of Iran. He reiterated that they would not provide any support for Mohammad Ali Shah,¹⁰⁴ and the Shah's

⁹⁸ Arthur Moore, *The Orient Express*, London: Constable & Company Ltd., 1914, p. 4, and Mo'ezzi, 'Mohammad 'Ali Shah Qajar dar Vapasin Sal-e Saltanat,' p. 172.

⁹⁹ Barclay and Sablin to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Iran, 23 April, 1909, Mohammad Torkman, *Asnadi Darbareh-ye Hojum-e Engelis va Rus beh Iran*, Tehran: Daftar-e Motale'at-e Siyasi va Beynalmelali, 1370/1991, p. 174. (henceforth *ADHERI*)

¹⁰⁰ Greaves, 'Some Aspects I,' p. 91.

¹⁰¹ Sumner, 'Tsardom,' pp. 41-42.

¹⁰² FO416/40, no. 472, 22706, June 17, 1909, Barclay to Grey.

¹⁰³ FO416/40, 23292, June 21, 1909, Barclay to Grey.

¹⁰⁴ FO416/41, no. 335, 24907, July 2, 1909, O'Beirne to Grey.

force, the Cossack Brigade, was indeed seriously defeated on 6 July.¹⁰⁵ On 7 July 1909, Sardar As'ad's request for help from the British received no reply,¹⁰⁶ obviously owing to Britain's dislike of his movement. People in Rasht also complained that Russia's troops were in Iranian territory even though they had claimed neutrality, and that the British turned a deaf to this circumstance.¹⁰⁷ However, the chaotic situation in northern Iran, the Russian zone, forced the Russians to intervene for protection of their prestige in the region, and of their subjects, and interests.

The abdication of Mohammad 'Ali Shah in July 1909 created a new situation which had never before arisen in the Qajar period of Iranian politics. It was new, too, to Britain and Russia. On 18 July, the Minister of War, Sepahdar, and the Minister of the Interior, Sardar As'ad, announced that Mohammad 'Ali Shah had been deposed, and that his successor, Soltan Ahmad, had been made Shah on 16 July. The difference from previous Qajar rulers was that the new Shah was only 12 years old, and was under the regency of 'Azod al-Molk, the head of the Qajar tribe.

During the Constitutional revolution of 1906, the succession to the throne and the nomination of a regent were stipulated in the Supplementary Fundamental Law of 1907: 'Article 38: In case of the decease of the Sovereign, the Crown Prince can only undertake in person the functions of the Throne, provided that he has attained the age of eighteen years. If he has not reached this age, a Regent shall be chosen with the sanction and approval of the National Consultative Assembly and the Senate, until such time as the Crown Prince shall attain this age.'¹⁰⁸ Britain and Russia both recognized the new Shah and the new

¹⁰⁵ FO416/41, no. 539, 25563, July 6, 1909, Barclay to Grey.

¹⁰⁶ FO248/976, July 7, 1909, Tel from the Sardar Assad to the British Legation.

¹⁰⁷ FO248/976, July 7, 1909, Telegram from Local Assembly at Resht to British Legation.

¹⁰⁸ There is an extract of the Laws of 1907 in FO416/34, no. 231, 35944, enclosure. A complete English version can be seen in Shuster, *The Strangling of Persia*, pp. 345-355.

government.¹⁰⁹ Their acceptance of the new regime was to secure a stable Iran. As regards foreign relations, on 31 July 1909 the Regent made the assurance to the diplomatic body of ‘the determination of the Shah’s Government to maintain and strengthen the friendly relations happily existing between Persia and the Powers.’¹¹⁰ This was a declaration of Iran’s goodwill towards foreign powers.

However, the Majles did not fulfil the Regent’s statement. An important task for the new Iranian government at the time was to remove all influential figures that were viewed as obstacles to the constitution. On the one hand, some of those who had supported the ex-Shah, such as Sheykh Fazallalah Nuri, were executed by the new government,¹¹¹ and on the other, Russia was viewed with suspicion, given that it had assisted the ex-Shah during his reign. The presence since July 1909 of Russian troops at Qazvin, because of disturbances caused by the nationalist movement in the area, in the eyes of the constitutional government, posed the danger of the possible restoration of the ex-Shah, and was seen as a sign of the abiding possibility of foreign intervention.¹¹² Since the ex-Shah had left Iran in September 1909, Russia became the main object of suspicion for the new government, even though outwardly both Iran and the foreign powers showed goodwill towards each other.

Both Britain and Russia pressed for economic and political concessions, which were declined by the Majles.¹¹³ A joint note was sent to Iran by Britain and Russia on 7 April 1910 (henceforth the April Note), which stated: ‘we have further the honour to inform you that England and Russia, while not hampering the rights

The idea of regency was not entirely new, but it originated in the influence of European practices disseminated by Britain and Russia in the mid-nineteenth century: the principle was that if the heir was too young to reign (i.e. under eighteen), then there must be a regent to deal with court affairs. However, the principle had not been put into practice. FO881/850, Abstract of Papers relating to the Succession to the Throne of Persia, and the Nomination of a Regent, July 25, 1859.

¹⁰⁹ FO416/41, no. 616, 27620, July 21, 1909, Barclay to Grey.

¹¹⁰ FO248/958, no. 149, July 31, 1909, Barclay to Grey

¹¹¹ FO416/41, no. 152, 32490, August 10, 1909, Barclay to Grey.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution*, p. 285.

of nationals of other Powers to purely commercial enterprise in Persia, cannot admit in any case that concessions affecting their political or strategic interests in Persia should be given to the nationals of other foreign Powers.’¹¹⁴ Thus, the two powers attempted to prevent Iran from granting concessions to any other nation, and on 23 April 1910, Isvolsky said that Russia would oblige Iran to accept the April Note,¹¹⁵ as otherwise the withdrawal of Russian troops would be impossible, and further Russian troops would be dispatched to Tehran.¹¹⁶ The Iranian cabinet, regarding to the April Note, argued that,

In view of the difficulty of defining concessions which might injuriously affect their political or strategic interest, the two Powers expect that before granting any concessions for means of communications for telegraph or harbours to a foreign subject, the Persian Government will enter into an exchange of views with them in order that the political or strategic interests of the two Powers may be duly safeguarded. Any act in contravention of this principle would be regarded as contrary to the traditional friendship so happily existing between Persia and Russia and Great Britain.¹¹⁷

This conciliatory response to what was in effect a serious intervention in Iran’s rights to grant concessions to whomsoever it chose, drew from Marling of the view that this reply demonstrated ‘the intention of the Persian Government to return an evasive and unsatisfactory reply to the two Governments (Britain and

¹¹⁴ *Parliamentary Papers*, No. 1 (1911), Cd. 5656, Enclosure in No. 87, p. 43.

¹¹⁵ Telgeraf-e Modir-e Vezarat-e Omur-e Kharejeh beh Safir dar London, 23 April 1910, Vezarat-e Kharejeh-e Rusiyeh, *Ketab-e Narenji Jeld-e 4*, Tehran: Ketab-e Parvaz, 1368/1989, p. 103.

¹¹⁶ Isvolsky to the Russian Ambassador at London. Telegram, April 10-23, 1910. No. 531, in George Abel Schreinder (ed), *Entente Diplomacy and the World: Matrix of the History of Europe, 1909-1914*. trans. De Siebert, B.. New York and London: The Knickerbocker Press, 1921, p. 82. (henceforth *Entente*)

¹¹⁷ *Parliamentary Papers*, No. 1 (1910), Cd. 5656, Enclosure 2 in No. 106, p. 54.

Russia).¹¹⁸ The two countries insisted on their own conditions, and the loan negotiations were broken off.¹¹⁹ The Iranian government, a under the constitutional regime with an agenda to reduce foreign interference in the country, found itself in a position of considerable difficulty with regard to its relationship to Britain and Russia.

3. The Protocol of 1909 and return of the ex-Shah

After his defeat in July 1909, the ex-Shah intended to seek *bast* at the Russian Legation in Tehran.¹²⁰ Isvolsky claimed that he had no intention of supporting the ex-Shah, though he was suspected of doing so, and stated that he would of course recognize the new Iranian government, though if order was not maintained, Russia would take the necessary measures to protect her interests.¹²¹ Although the Shah had been deposed, many messages from the provinces revealed support for him.¹²²

When the ex-Shah took *bast* in the Russian Legation in Tehran, Britain and Russia began to plan his departure. Barclay and Sablin agreed that the ex-Shah's departure should be escorted as far as Qazvin by an Iranian force under the Iranian government, and then an Anglo-Russian joint force would replace them as far as the coast (the Caspian Sea). The condition for this was that the ex-Shah must hand over his civil list and the crown jewels.¹²³ Barclay was planning to propose an annual pension for the ex-Shah to be provided by the Iranian government, and needed Russia's cooperation with this venture.¹²⁴ Discussions on this issue, which lasted for two weeks, resulted in a preliminary agreement on the ex-Shah, who

¹¹⁸ FO416/44, no. 249, 20268, June 6, 1910, Marling to Grey.

¹¹⁹ Ahmad, *Anglo-Iranian Relations*, p. 184.

¹²⁰ FO416/41, no. 592, 27000, July 17, 1909, Barclay to Grey.

¹²¹ FO416/41, no. 361, 26878, July 16, 1909, O'Beirne to Grey.

¹²² FO416/41, no. 601, 27315, July 19, 1909, Barclay to Grey.

¹²³ FO416/41, no. 612, 27511, July 20, 1909, Barclay to Grey.

¹²⁴ FO416/41, no. 620, 27741, July 22, 1909, Barclay to Grey.

should leave Iran on 17 August 1909,¹²⁵ but this was delayed because he did not want to compromise and hand over his jewels and properties.¹²⁶ Barclay told the ex-Shah that the Iranian government could confiscate all his estates without asking the two Legations, if he kept on refusing to compromise,¹²⁷ and then told Grey that the pension for the ex-Shah should be reduced as much as possible in order to prevent him from hatching intrigues in Iran.¹²⁸ In these discussions, Britain and Russia worked together to eliminate any possibility of the ex-Shah's movements having an impact on Iranian politics afterwards. In the end, a protocol of 11 articles was formally signed on 9 September 1909 by Barclay, Sablin and the Iranian cabinet. The ex-Shah had to hand over to the Iranian government all his property, such as jewels and personal estates, and in return the Iranian government promised to give him an annual pension of 100,000 tomans. In addition, Article 8 stipulated that the ex-Shah was to leave Tehran within two days of the signing of this protocol, and Article 11 that if the ex-Shah left Russia to plan political agitation in Iran, the Iranian government had the right to stop his pension.¹²⁹ The 1909 Protocol confirmed the attitude of Britain and Russia that they would not provide support to the ex-Shah in any case. Mohammad 'Ali went first to Enzali, and then on to Odessa, in Russia.

There were disturbances in Azerbaijan caused by royalists supporting the ex-Shah in 1909 and 1910, but these were not successful.¹³⁰ One year after the departure of the ex-Shah, on 5 October 1910, it was said that he was in Paris, preparing to return to claim his throne. Sazonov, the Russian Minister for Foreign

¹²⁵ FO416/41, no. 654, 29477, August 5, 1909, Barclay to Grey.

¹²⁶ Ahmad, *Anglo-Iranian Relations*, p. 130.

¹²⁷ FO416/41, no. 673, 31213, August 8, 1909, Barclay to Grey.

¹²⁸ FO416/41, no. 672, 31086, August 17, 1909, Barclay to Grey.

¹²⁹ *Parliamentary Papers*, No. 1 (1910), Cd. 5210, Protocol signed August 25, 1909, pp. 130-131.

¹³⁰ Gilbert Murray, *The Foreign Policy of Sir Edward Grey 1906-1915*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1915, p. 92.

Affairs, claimed that there was no support for the return of the ex-Shah.¹³¹ Grey was aware that Russia did not actually disapprove of the ex-Shah, and merely tried to 'support whatever government proved to have the greatest hold on the country.'¹³² The plan for the return of the ex-Shah, which became known in late 1910, did not, however, become a serious matter until July 1911. The British began by first expressing their intentions to warn the ex-Shah, along with the Russians, to desist from this course of action.¹³³ Count Benckendorff, the Russian Ambassador in London, also considered that the Russian government should not support the ex-Shah as his return might lead to a civil war in Iran.¹³⁴ The two powers both remained neutral in this incident, recognizing the existing government. Grey was of the opinion that the 'Ex-Shah left Persia under British and Russian protection, and we both recognized the new Shah. I do not see how we or Russia can acquiesce in (the) return of ex-Shah.'¹³⁵ Grey argued that 'he (the ex-Shah) cannot be allowed to remain permanently in Persia We consider that the present Shah and the Regent, whom both Governments have recognized, should remain in power.'¹³⁶ Grey was also of the opinion that the ex-Shah's pension should be stopped.¹³⁷ Neither Britain nor Russia wanted circumstances in Iran to deteriorate once more, though it was clear that the prospect of the return of the ex-Shah did indeed enjoy some support within Iran. Meanwhile, there was news that the ex-Shah had arrived in Gomish Tepeh, near Astarabad, in the Province of Golestan.¹³⁸ Barclay had evidence that 'in a number of the bigger towns there exists a decided feeling in favour of Mahomet Ali Mirza. Such feeling seems to be more due to despondency at the failure of the present

¹³¹ FO248/983, no. 475, 44995, December 6, 1910, O'Beirne to Grey.

¹³² Murray, *The Foreign Policy*, pp. 92-93.

¹³³ FO248/1012, no. 206, July 15, 1911, Grey to Barclay.

¹³⁴ Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia*, p. 604.

¹³⁵ FO416/49, no. 355, 28098, July 18, 1911, Grey to Buchanan.

¹³⁶ FO416/49, no. 358, 28252, July 19, 1911, Grey to Buchanan.

¹³⁷ FO248/1012, no. 211, July 19, 1911, Grey to Barclay.

¹³⁸ FO248/1041, July 20, 1911, Extract from the Astrabad Agents reports.

regime to preserve order than to any faith in the ex-Shah.’¹³⁹

As in both Mashhad and Tabriz there were rebels who supported the ex-Shah, the Russian consuls in these cities were instructed to be strictly neutral. The Russians claimed that they were in favour of the Constitutional regime of Iran, and had no desire to see any change.¹⁴⁰ The Iranian Minister in London, Mehdi Khan, told Grey that, despite the complaints of the Iranian government, the two powers had done nothing to prevent the ex-Shah’s return. Iran pointed out that this was not what the two nations had agreed in the 1909 Protocol, in which Article 11 stated that ‘His Britannic Majesty’s and the Russian Governments undertook to give serious injunctions to the ex-Shah to abstain, once and for all, from any political agitation against Persia.’¹⁴¹ In principle, in his view, the two powers had to do something to stop the ex-Shah due to the 1909 Protocol. However, the growing disturbances affected Russian interests, and Russia was becoming increasingly concerned to protect them. Britain could do nothing in the Russian zone, but tried by diplomatic efforts through communication with the Russian colleagues to exert some influence on events, always bearing in mind the need to maintain the 1907 Convention. On the other hand, the British were also concerned with their interests in the South of Iran. On the whole, the British needed to keep on good terms with Russia and did not want Russian hostility to them to be caused by the return of the ex-Shah.

On 5 August 1911, the British Consul in Mashhad said that the ex-Shah had a ‘recruited a large body of bad characters, mostly Russian subjects.’¹⁴² On the one hand, the content of this telegram may well have been hearsay rather than reliable proof. On the other, it is possible that the Russian Consul in Mashhad considered

¹³⁹ FO371/1193, no. 281, 28967, July 24, 1911, Barclay to Grey.

¹⁴⁰ FO371/1193, no. 217, 29931, July 27, 1911, Buchanan to Grey.

¹⁴¹ FO416/49, 30213, undated, (received July 31) Mirza Mehdi Khan to Grey.

¹⁴² FO371/1193, no. 310, 30943, August 5, 1911, Barclay to Grey.

that the ex-Shah's return would ease the chaos in the area, and believed that Tehran and St. Petersburg did not actually understand the reality of the situation in Mashhad.

Other Iranians also complained of Russian intervention. Mehdi Khan telegraphed Grey, saying that 'it has become evident that a member of the Russian consulate-general in Tehran is actively taking up the cause of the ex-Shah'¹⁴³ The Iranian government alleged that the ex-Shah had been on a Russian vessel at Gomish Tepeh,¹⁴⁴ and on 13 August 1911, the government informed Barclay that a force belonging to the ex-Shah had been defeated near Balideh, fifty miles from Tehran.¹⁴⁵ The ex-Shah was seriously defeated by the government troops at Firuzkuh, Province of Tehran, in August 1911, and thus did not return to his throne at this point.

In November 1911, it became known that the Russian Consul at Astarabad was assisting the ex-Shah.¹⁴⁶ The Russian government denied the fact, and Barclay argued that there was no confirmation of this information. Then, the British wanted the Russians to join them in declaring that they did not consent to the return of the ex-Shah.¹⁴⁷ On 10 December 1911, Anatoli Anatolievich Neratov, the Russian Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs, stated that Russian troops in Iran had no connection with the ex-Shah or his attempts to be restored to his throne.¹⁴⁸ Even when the ex-Shah's force defeated government forces at Daughan on 14 December 1911,¹⁴⁹ Neratov claimed that under no circumstances would Russia recognize the ex-Shah.¹⁵⁰ However, rumours that Russian consuls were recruiting

¹⁴³ FO416/49, 32346, enclosure, Summary of telegrams received by Mirza Mehdi Khan on August 5, 1911.

¹⁴⁴ FO248/1012, no. 245, August 23, 1911, Grey to Barclay.

¹⁴⁵ FO248/1018, no. 364, August 30, 1911, Barclay to Grey.

¹⁴⁶ FO371/1193, no. 135, 44208, November 3, 1911, Grey to Barclay.

¹⁴⁷ FO371/1197, no. 319, 48599, December 4, 1911, Buchanan to Grey.

¹⁴⁸ Ahmad, *Anglo-Iranian Relations*, p. 240.

¹⁴⁹ FO248/1019, no. 698, December 14, 1911, Barclay to Grey.

¹⁵⁰ Sir George Buchanan, *My Mission to Russia and Other Diplomatic Memories Volume 1*, London: Cassell and Company, 1923, p. 100.

for the ex-Shah continued to circulate at the beginning of 1912, and Grey telegraphed the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg, Sir George Buchanan, saying that the 'Russian consul-general at Meshed must be deliberately disobeying orders of his Government,'¹⁵¹ The Russian government denied this, adding that the ex-Shah's supporters were Iranians.¹⁵²

Movements in support of the ex-Shah caused serious clashes with Russian forces in Mashhad in March 1912,¹⁵³ which resulted in the bombardment of the Mashhad shrine by the Russians on 31 March.¹⁵⁴ Percy M. Sykes, the Consul-General at Mashhad, was worried that the Russians were about to take over the city. In his view, the 1907 Convention would be affected.¹⁵⁵ The local inhabitants considered that the Russians were not restoring order at all,¹⁵⁶ while the Russians themselves blamed the tragedy on locals, such as mischief-makers and robbers, who entered Mashhad by force and ill-treated all the inhabitants.¹⁵⁷ There were thus contrasting perspectives on the situation. By 9 April 1912, the ex-Shah, who was alleged by the British to be in a Russian boat at Enzali waiting on events, still received support in Tabriz, Khorassan and Azerbaijan.¹⁵⁸ Sykes considered that the Russians used the pretext of disorder to justify the bombardment.¹⁵⁹ As a result the British became increasingly convinced that the Russians were strengthening their control in northern Iran using the ex-Shah as their instrument. In addition, the British were concerned that, as Mashhad was very close to Iranian-Afghan border, the Russians might try to expand their influence into Afghanistan, and thus India, as they had done in the 1830s. The

¹⁵¹ FO371/1422, no. 82, 5225, February 5, 1912, Grey to Buchanan.

¹⁵² FO371/1437, no. 38, 5513, February 7, 1912, Buchanan to Grey.

¹⁵³ FO416/51, no. 184, 10791, March 12, 1912, Barclay to Grey.

¹⁵⁴ FO416/51, no. 223, 13602, March 31, 1912, Barclay to Grey.

¹⁵⁵ FO416/52, no. 41, 13654, enclosure, no. 8, February 14, 1914, Sykes to Barclay.

¹⁵⁶ FO416/52, no. 103, 14641, enclosure 1, Translation of an Agency telegram from Meshed dated March 18 (31), published in the "Official Messenger," of March 20 (April 2), 1912.

¹⁵⁷ FO416/52, no. 234, 14610, April 5, 1912, Barclay to Grey.

¹⁵⁸ FO248/1060, April 9, 1912, From the Hamadan Consulter Agent to Barclay.

¹⁵⁹ FO416/52, no. 242, 15010, April 9, 1912, Barclay to Grey.

security of India remained important in British policy. Although the Mashhad incident only affected Anglo-Russian relations temporarily, it showed that the British remained seriously concerned about their interests in eastern Iran in relation to India.

In the end, though, the ex-Shah, did not have the military strength to fight his way to Tehran in 1912, and instead retreated to Odessa till 1913. In February 1913 Smith, the British Consul-General in Odessa, sent a telegraph stating that the ex-Shah was to spend the spring of 1913 in the South of France.¹⁶⁰ It may be concluded that the ex-Shah realized that he did not have the strength to return to Iran, and there were rumours that he would go to Berlin, Nice, or Austria. In early 1914, the ex-Shah went to Berlin for treatment of his diabetes,¹⁶¹ and by this time, his health was too weak for him to return to Iran. The end of his aspirations was a relief to the British, as the negative effect he had had on Anglo-Russian relations now faded.

Conclusion

By 1911, Iran's domestic politics had become a serious issue in international politics for Britain and Russia. From 1907 to 1911, Mohammad 'Ali Shah endeavoured to save his authority and his country. To the Shah, the Majles with the Constitution did not mean the development and progress of Iran. Rather, it only produced chaos. His clashes with the Majles and his return to Iran in what been agreed by the 1907 Convention as the Russian zone presented a problem for British policy. The British could not intervene directly in the incidents taking place in the Russian zone, and so had to make considerable diplomatic efforts to maintain positive relations with the Russians in the face of their ambivalence

¹⁶⁰ FO416/55, 10679, March 7, 1913, Smith to Grey.

¹⁶¹ FO371/2072, no. 41, 6016, February 9, 1914, Buchanan to Grey.

towards the ex-Shah, and the possible damage his ambitions might cause to their interests.

Following the general trend of his attitude to constitutionalism, the Shah was unhappy with the unrest caused by the Constitutional movement and the incompetence of the Majles rather than the Constitution itself. From the perspective of the Shah, his acceptance of the Constitution was the logical result of his father having granted it in 1906. However, owing to the chaos emerging after the granting of the Constitution and the Majles, Mohammad 'Ali Shah endeavoured to protect his own authority and to restore order in Iran. To the ex-Shah, his defeat in 1909 was not the end of his power, and to regain his throne was his utmost wish. However, the reign of Mohammad 'Ali Shah was too short to establish a new political system. There were too many pressures that he had to deal with, and no opportunity for him to establish a constitutional government of Iran that reflected his view of a type of a constitutional monarchy in which there was some popular participation through the Majles, but the Shah retained overall control, thus ensuring the good order and strength of the country.

British policy to Mohammad 'Ali Shah generally remained to maintain non-intervention and goodwill. However, there were episodes then made the British under suspicion of the Shah. First of all, Mohammad 'Ali Shah kept complaining that the acceptance of *bastis* at the British Legation in 1908 was a kind of intervention on the part of the British. The problem was that the British thought, on the one hand, that permitting *bast* was their duty, even though they tried to refuse more *bastis*. On the other hand, from the Shah's perspective, the British did not provide any support for him. A further point was that, as regards the return of the ex-Shah, the 1909 Protocol took on the form of an essential principle. The British had recognized the new Shah and the new Iranian government, so it was not possible for them to provide support to the ex-Shah.

Obviously, the British were securing their interests in the South of Iran. If Mohammad 'Ali Shah had the chance to stabilize the country, the British would provide their goodwill, and vice versa. Regarding the return of the ex-Shah, it was not Britain's wish to see disturbances in Iran that might emerge from their supporting him.

The 1907 Convention could not bring complete harmony in the policy of the two powers. For example, the Russians did not agree with the British Legation accepting the *bastis* in 1908. The British argued that they were not intervening in the Iranian affairs by doing so. Then, in the case of Colonel Liakhov and the bombardment of the Majles in 1908, the British insisted that the Russian commander's taking a leading role in the Iranian forces represented a form of Russian intervention. However, the Russians insisted that there was no connection with Liakhov and the Russian government. In addition, the British were also concerned that the Russians were providing support for the return of the ex-Shah in 1911. Russia consistently denied the fact. The two powers continued to claim that they were applying the principle of non-intervention to Iranian affairs, but owing to the complicated situation, an unclear vision emerged in their relations, and in fact they increasingly intervened to a considerable extent.

British policy during Iran's revolutionary period demonstrated its different attitudes to different regions. As the British focused on their interests in the South-West of Iran due to the discovery of oil in 1908, Iranian affairs in the political centre became a secondary consideration. The Revolution and its aftermath generally affected Russian interests in northern Iran, where the British had no right to intervene. However, the return of the ex-Shah in the Russian zone from 1911 affected the agreements of the 1907 Convention and the 1909 Protocol, and produced a serious challenge to the policy of Anglo-Russian cooperation towards Iran. It is a testimony to the gravity of the situation in Europe that their

good relations were not broken.

Chapter IV British Policy and Railways in Iran 1903-1914

Introduction

This chapter will mainly discuss schemes for railway construction in Iran devised by Britain from the early twentieth century to the outbreak of World War I. To the British, construction of railways in Iran was not solely an issue of economic advantage in Anglo-Iranian relations, but also a matter that related to Russia in the context of international politics. In addition, it was inexorably linked to the rising influence of Germany in the region, and the perceived threat of its railway schemes. By 1908, the discovery of oil in the South-West of Iran also began to have a serious impact on British attitudes to railways, as well as to the policy of the Iranian central government itself. Iran, meanwhile, aspired to build railways, but was hampered by its empty treasury, and impeded by great power rivalries.

In general, railways in the Middle East and India were both promoted by and invested in by the British from the mid-nineteenth century. India's first railway was constructed with British investment in the 1840s.¹ About 50 years later, in 1900, trains ran through most Indian territory.² Regarding the Middle East, after Britain occupied Egypt in the 1880s, it endeavoured to build on the existing railway system.³

In Iran, an attempt to begin the construction of railways emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century with the Reuter Concession of 1872, signed by a British financier, Baron Reuter.⁴ In July 1873 a railway from the Caspian

¹ J. N. Westwood, *Railways of India*, Vancouver: David & Charles, 1974, p. 9.

² Ian J. Kerr, *Building the Railways of the Raj 1850-1900*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 1.

³ Hugh Hughes, *Middle East Railways*, Middlesex: The Continental Railway Circle, 1981, p. 7.

⁴ Charles Issawi, 'European Economic Penetration, 1872-1991,' in Avery, Hambly and Melville (eds), *The Cambridge History of Iran Volume 7*, p. 593.

port of Enzali to Tehran was commenced, but stopped owing the cancellation of the Concession.⁵ In November 1879, Britain also planned a railway from Qandahar to Herat to improve communications with Iran, but this also resulted in nothing.⁶

Obviously Britain's intention for railways in the Middle East, Iran and India was to have a stronger transportation network connecting its broad trade routes from Mesopotamia to the Persian Gulf and then to India. Meanwhile, Anglo-Russian rivalry extended to railways, and Britain did not want to see a Russian railway system developed in Iran for security reasons.⁷ Iran, of course, wanted to use the construction of railway to strengthen itself. Another alternative was American investment.⁸ However, Britain and Russia joined forces to prevent that happening. It can thus be seen that the two European powers were rivals on but had a understanding to exclude other powers from obtaining any advantage from Iran on the other. Therefore Iranian railways were altogether a complex issue for both Britain and Iran.

In the late nineteenth century, in consideration of a serious clash of economic interests in Iran with Britain and Germany, Russia induced Iran to agree to prohibition of railway building on 12 November 1890.⁹ The Agreement stipulated that 'The Persian Government engages, for the space of ten years, beginning from the date of the signature of this agreement, neither to construct a railway in Persian territory, nor to permit nor grant a concession for the construction of railways to a company or other persons and after the expiration of the ten years the renewal of the prolongation shall be immediately discussed between the two

⁵ Hughes, *Middle East Railways*, p. 101.

⁶ R. A. Johnson, "'Russians at the Gate of India'? Planning the Defence of India, 1885-1900,' *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 67, No. 3 (Jul., 2003), p. 705.

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 727.

⁸ John S. Galbraith, 'Britain and American Railway Promoters in Late Nineteenth Century Persia,' *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Summer, 1989), pp. 248-262.

⁹ Issawi, 'European Economic Penetration, 1872-1991,' p. 594.

parties,' and that 'after the signature of this agreement all documents concerning railways previously signed by the two Governments become null and void.'¹⁰ Nevertheless, Russia did not stop scheming over railways. About a decade later a rumour began to circulate that the Russians and the Iranians had renewed the 1890 Agreement for another ten years.¹¹ In November 1899, a group of Russian engineers arrived in Tabriz to carry out a survey for a proposed railway from Tabriz to Bushehr.¹² Then, in a Russian loan to Iran in 1900, the two countries agreed that no other government could obtain railway concessions from Iran for ten years.¹³ By this renewal of the 1890 Agreement, Russia again dominated Iran's railway development.

There were three questions in Anglo-German relations from the late nineteenth century: the Baghdad railway; the German navy; and colonies.¹⁴ According to Paul Kennedy, 'The period 1895-1901 had been marked by Britain's global embarrassment at the advances which the other powers (*inter alia*, Germany) were making in colonial, naval and economic terms.'¹⁵ In the early twentieth century, the Baghdad Railway, which was constructed by Germany, was designed to pass through the Ottoman Empire and reach the Ottoman-Iranian border and the Persian Gulf. Since 1898 the Germans had planned a road and railway concession from Baghdad to Tehran.¹⁶ In April 1900, the British were worried about a railway line planned by Germany from Istanbul to Baghdad and a possible line through Iranian territory connecting with Indian railways.¹⁷ A

¹⁰ FO248/811, Appendix No.XXV, Translation of a Russian Railway agreement signed at Tehran on 12th November 1890 (1308) by Monsieur de Butsov, Russian Minister, and the Amin-es-Sultan, Persian Prime Minister.

¹¹ FO416/1, no. 63, June 22, 1899, Durand to the Marquess of Salisbury.

¹² FO416/1, no. 51, November 23, 1899, The Marquess of Salisbury to Sir M. Durand.

¹³ Gillard, *The Struggle for Asia*, p. 165.

¹⁴ R. B. Mowat, 'Great Britain and Germany in the Early Twentieth Century,' *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 46, No. 183 (Jul., 1931), p. 426.

¹⁵ Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism 1860-1914*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1980, p. 265.

¹⁶ Issawi, (ed) *The Economic History of Iran*, p. 189.

¹⁷ FO416/3, no 93, April 4, 1900, Sir C. Scott to the Marquess of Salisbury.

British newspaper, *The Times*, argued that this line would have an international impact, indicating that the British were anxious about losing their security and prestige in the Persian Gulf.¹⁸ To Britain and Russia the Baghdad Railway appeared as a threat to their security and prestige in Iran. Nevertheless, in late 1902, Germany was looking for cooperation with British capitalists for the Baghdad Railway, and one of the main issues was whether or not Kuwait should be the proposed terminus,¹⁹ particularly as the British intended to control all stations which were close to the Persian Gulf.²⁰ They were even then determined to prevent any challenge by Germany to their own hegemony in the region. The Baghdad Railway Convention was signed in May 1903 by the Ottoman Empire. David Fraser, in 1909, commented that Germany was using this railway enterprise to entail huge profits, which was affecting Britain's commercial preserves.²¹ Charles Sarolea, in 1915, argued that German railways in Mesopotamia were dark clouds that 'may burst into a political storm and cataclysm such as the world has not seen since Napoleonic times.'²² Edward Mead Earle also commented that 'the political potentialities of the Bagdad Railway aroused the fear and opposition of the other European Powers.'²³ Britain therefore had an ambivalent attitude to the Baghdad Railway – on the one hand it was willing to cooperate over it in order to create wider connections for its own interests; on the other it wanted no German intrusion in its sphere of influence in Iran and the Persian Gulf.

A number of articles have studied the question of railways in twentieth-century Iran. In 'Russian Imperialism and Persian Railways,'²⁴ Firuz

¹⁸ *The Times*, Thursday, April 19, 1900, p. 10.

¹⁹ *The Times*, Wednesday, September 17, 1902, p. 3.

²⁰ *The Times*, Friday, May 8, 1903, p. 3

²¹ David Fraser, *The Short Cut to India: The Record of a Journey along the Route of the Baghdad Railway*, Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1909, p. 319.

²² Charles Sarolea, *The Anglo-German Problem*, New York and London: The Knickerbocker Press, 1915, p. 186.

²³ Earle, *Turkey*, p. 131.

²⁴ Firuz Kazemzadeh, 'Russian Imperialism and Persian Railways,' in Hugh McLean, Martin E. Malia, and George Fischer (eds), *Russian Thought and Politics*, Cambridge: Harvard University

Kazemzadeh paints a broad picture of Russian action in relation to railways in Iran from the late nineteenth century up to the outbreak of World War I. Owing to the continuous growth of Russo-Iranian trade, Iranian markets became more and more attractive to the Russians. In 1874, a line from Jolfa, on the Russo-Iranian border, to Tabriz, the principal city of Iranian Azerbaijan, was proposed. After the British obtained rights to the opening of the Karun river in the South-West of Iran in 1889, the Russians became anxious that soon Iran would also grant railway concessions to Britain. The Russians negotiated with Iran not to grant any railway concessions to any other nations before 1900, but they were aware that the prohibition could not last for another decade or generation. In addition, the new Minister for Foreign Affairs, Isvolsky, in 1906 advocated an agreement with Germany, which resulted in the Potsdam Agreement in 1911 stipulating that the two countries agreed to construct a branch railway in Iran connecting to the Baghdad Railway, and promised mutual commercial freedom. According to Kazaemzadeh, Iran thus potentially benefited from the period of rapprochement between Russia and Germany.

In 'The Trans-Persian Railway Project and Anglo-Russian Relations, 1909-14,'²⁵ D. W. Spring explores a scheme for a railway traversing Iran from north to south. By 1908, Isvolsky was aware that the veto on railway building in Iran established in 1890 was no longer practicable. Isvolsky therefore attempted to obtain Britain's goodwill on railway building, as well as to discuss the question of the Baghdad Railway with the Germans. When the Russian project for a Trans-Persian Railway was proposed in 1910, Russia also withdrew its objection to a British scheme for a railway from Mohammerah to Khorramabad in 1911. This made it difficult for Grey to be intransigent on the Trans-Persian Railway. In

Press, 1957, pp. 354-373.

²⁵ D. W. Spring, 'The Trans-Persian Railway Project and Anglo-Russian Relations, 1909-14,' *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 54, no. 1 (Jan., 1976), pp. 60-82.

'Public Opinions and Middle Eastern Railways: The Russo-German Negotiations of 1910-11,'²⁶ Judith A. Head discusses Russian public opinion on the railway issue. The Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs in 1910 was Sazonov, who on the one hand maintained the *Entente* with France and Britain, and on the other arranged a meeting with Germany on the railway issue, in November 1910. Sazonov intended to take public opinion into account when making a decision on foreign diplomacy. Some Russian newspapers opposed the *Entente* and advocated the obtaining of German friendship. At the same time Sazonov was aware that the growing influence of Germany meant that Russia had to negotiate with it on the issue of railways. In the course of negotiations between 1910 and 1911, a railway line, the Khanaqin-Tehran line, was agreed by the two states. The final agreement in August 1911 resulted in Russia gaining control of the Khanaqin-Tehran line, which quietened public opinion.

These articles examine the episodes of the prohibition of railways in 1890, the Potsdam Agreement of 1911, and the Trans-Iranian Railway of 1912 principally concentrating on the importance of the Russian and German factors. However, the roles of Britain and Iran have received less attention. British policy had begun to diverge considerably as between one region of Iran and another, and this factor influenced the railway issue. On the part of Iran, railways were seen a means to strengthen itself and relatively eliminate the influence of foreign powers. In the following sections, it will be seen that whilst the three foreign powers all attempted to proceed with their railway schemes to strengthen themselves and suppress the others' prestige in Iran and in the Middle East, they also endeavoured to negotiate with each other in order to diminish any hostility between them. In this scenario, the needs and interests of Iran itself became increasingly less

²⁶ Judith A. Head, 'Public Opinions and Middle Eastern Railways: The Russo-German Negotiations of 1910-11,' *The International History Review*, Vol. 6, no. 1 (Feb., 1984), pp. 28-47.

significant in their policies.

1. Schemes for railways in Iran: 1903-1910

This section will explore railway discussions and schemes in and relating to Iran as between Britain, Russia and Germany, and to some extent the Iranian view on such schemes. It will specifically look at the negotiations over the Baghdad Railway being built by Germany, which was perceived to varying degrees as a threat by Britain and Russia. These negotiations were still influenced by the 1890-1910 embargo on railways imposed on Iran by Russia at the end of the nineteenth century.

a. Iranian railways: discussions between Britain and Russia

In early April 1901, the British were concerned that the Russians were making a survey for a railway line from Jolfa, in Russian territory, to Tabriz, Tehran, and from there to Isfahan, Yazd, and on to a port in an unspecified location outside the Persian Gulf.²⁷ The British realized that the Russians had not explicitly forfeited their right to construct railways in Iran during the period of the 1890 prohibition, and the proposed line would seriously affect British trade. Therefore, the British Minister in Tehran, Spring-Rice reminded the Iranian government that Naser al-Din Shah had given Britain priority in the construction of any railway from the south to Tehran on 26 December 1881, and that he agreed then that no southern railway concession could be granted to other powers without consulting the British government.²⁸ Amin al-Soltan acknowledged that such a promise had been made, but *The Times* revealed that an actual suggestion had been made by the Russians in September 1901 for the construction of a railway

²⁷ FO416/5, enclosure, April 2, 1901, Memorandum.

²⁸ FO416/7, no. 132, August 28, 1901, Hardinge to the Marquess of Lansdowne.

from the Trans-Caspian Railway to Bandar Abbas, passing through Mashhad, and Sistan,²⁹ which increased British concern. Whether or not this proposal was approved by the Iranian government, it can be seen that a Russian railway network connecting Mashhad, Bandar Abbas and Sistan would become a threat to Britain's influence in eastern Iran close to Afghanistan, and India as well. In 1902, a Trans-Iranian railway was again proposed by Russia to secure a free exit point to the Indian Ocean for itself, with the added objective of diminishing the impact of the Baghdad Railway.³⁰ Russia had still not relinquished its intention to reach India as will be demonstrated further below with regard to the Trans-Persian railway in 1912.

Iran attempted to keep the balance of power between Britain and Russia over the railway issue. For example, a telegram from Mashhad in January 1903 revealed that Mozaffar al-Din Shah 'has granted to the Russian Bank concessions for railways from Sarakhs to Meshed and from Julfa to Tabreez.'³¹ In addition, in May 1904 the Iranian Minister in St. Petersburg, Moshir al-Molk, asserted that '..... England should make use of the right secured to her, by the Shah's promise, to allow her to construct railways in the South of Persia, if Russia constructed railways in the North.'³² Whether Iran granted a concession to Russia or not, the replies that Iran gave to Britain seem to indicate that it aimed to control the rivalry of the two powers by ensuring that it treated them equally in the granting of concessions.

The Times, in the meantime, kept covering other Russian schemes for railways. For instance, an article published in St. Petersburg entitled 'Railways across Persia' revealed projects for a line constructed close to the northern

²⁹ *The Times*, Tuesday, September 10, 1901, p. 3.

³⁰ Sumner, 'Tsardom.' p. 21.

³¹ FO416/12, no. 6, January 27, 1903, Hardinge to the Marquess of Lansdowne.

³² FO416/18, no. 233, May 7, 1904, Spring-Rice to the Marquess of Lansdowne.

Russo-Iranian border from Kara Kliss, a station midway between Tiflis and Erivan to Mashhad. The purpose of a terminus at Mashhad was to expand Russia's influence by ultimately reaching the Persian Gulf via a railway passing from Mashhad through Sistan.³³ In December 1905, another Russian article in St. Petersburg, 'Projected Railways from Russia towards India,' proposed a line from the Russo-Iranian border at Jolfa through to Khorrasan, and then went southwards close to the border of India.³⁴ The Russian interest in railways at this time was very clear, though the veto on Iranian railways had not been expired yet. *The Times* revealed the consequent concerns of British public opinion.

From 1908 onwards, Britain had a more proactive policy regarding railways. On 6 May 1908, Mr. Loraine in the British Legation pointed out the importance of railways, arguing that they could lead to long-term political influence for Britain, and strengthen the authority of the Iranian government.³⁵ In Britain, the railway issue was connected to a new factor, namely oil, struck on 26 May 1908. In June 1908, Marling argued that it was time to take into account the effect of oil.³⁶ Marling's statement was a good representation of British concerns regarding south-western Iran. On the part of Britain, the railway development in Iran would be taken over by a third power, obviously meaning Germany, which was contrary to British strategic and economic needs.³⁷ Railway lines could be advantageous to British trade in the South-West of Iran, especially as with the discovery of oil. In October, Grey proposed communicating with Isvolsky on the railway issue.³⁸ In fact, Isvolsky was aware that the 1890 veto could not possibly be renewed, so obviously the German Baghdad Railway appeared as a threat to the Russians.

³³ *The Times*, Saturday, September 23, 1905, p. 13.

³⁴ *The Times*, Thursday, December 14, 1905, p. 11.

³⁵ FO416/37, no. 157, enclosure, memorandum by Mr. Loraine, May 6, 1908.

³⁶ FO416/37, no. 157, June 17, 1908, Marling to Grey.

³⁷ Siegel, *Endgame*, p. 67.

³⁸ FO371/503, 36372, October 12, 1908, India Office to Foreign Office.

Russia had been considering an end to the veto since April 1908.³⁹ In terms of British policy by 1908, railways in the south-west had become of intense concern because of their oil interests. With regard to Anglo-Russian relations, the two powers' close relationship over Iranian railways was a means of excluding Germany from Iran.

b. Britain, Russia and Germany - cooperation and division to 1910

Germany had connections with Iran over railways because of the Baghdad Railway, and Britain was seriously concerned about this. Germany did not have close relations with Britain, and Russia, in the early twentieth century. Mowat argues that in 1900 Germany ignored Britain's desire for an alliance.⁴⁰ Martin considers that 'There were several themes or threads within German activity in Persia: a diplomatic campaign on Persia's behalf against Turkey; a German attempt to found a bank in Tehran; lastly a branch of the Baghdad Railway was also to play a part in the economic rehabilitation of Persia in order to create a future market and source of raw materials.'⁴¹ To the British, German expansion in Iran was decidedly ominous. In 1902, a Russian newspaper, *Noveo Vremya*, reported that a visit by Mozaffar al-Din Shah to Berlin was to a large extent focused on the railway issue. It said that the extension of the Baghdad Railway had brought Iran and Germany closer economically, and German assurances that their interests in Iran were solely commercial did not convince the Russians. Meanwhile, Britain, too, was concerned about the rise of German influence as a result of the Baghdad Railway and the increase in the German navy.⁴² Iran's apparently friendly intentions towards Germany were thus viewed with

³⁹ Spring, 'The Trans-Persian Railway Project.' p. 61.

⁴⁰ Mowat, 'Great Britain and Germany,' p. 425.

⁴¹ Martin, *German-Persian Diplomatic Relations*, p, 92.

⁴² Busch, *Britain*, p. 348.

apprehension by Britain.

In 1905 *The Times* reported that Germany proposed to build lines from south-western Iran, for example from Kermanshah to Khanaqin on the Ottoman-Iranian border, which would be not only an expansion of the Baghdad Railway, but also a means of expanding their own interests in Iran.⁴³ German capitalists attempted to persuade the Iranian government to grant them railway concessions which would enable them to cross the country from the south-west to the north-east.⁴⁴ Germany was targeting the area where Britain enjoyed influence and prestige. To the British, Khanaqin was a significant location as forty percent of British imports to Iran came via Khanaqin and Hamadan.⁴⁵ Britain itself had a plan for the construction, control, and management of the Baghdad-to-Gulf section of the line, together with the branch line to Khanaqin,⁴⁶ to secure its interests in that area.

The relationship between Russia and Germany was not entirely one of conflict. Germany attempted to establish a Russo-German alliance at the end of 1903 when it became apparent that France, Italy, Spain, and Britain were uniting in a series of agreements.⁴⁷ However, the plan failed as Russia turned its foreign policy towards allying with Britain after its defeat in the Japanese-Russian War of 1904.⁴⁸ Russia had opposed the Baghdad Railway since the early twentieth century, fearing that the scheme would conflict with Russian interests in Iran.⁴⁹ The weakness of Russia after 1904 led to a more cautious foreign policy, especially with regard to Germany. This policy was adopted by the two Ministers

⁴³ *The Times*, Wednesday, June 6, 1905, p. 5.

⁴⁴ FO416/24, no. 90, July 26, 1905, Hardinge to the Marquess of Lansdowne.

⁴⁵ Derek William Spring, *Anglo-Russian Relations in Persia, 1909-1915*, PhD thesis, London: 1967, p. 155.

⁴⁶ Kumar, *India*, p. 182.

⁴⁷ Raymond J. Sontag, 'German Foreign Policy, 1904-1906,' *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 33, no. 2, Jan., 1928, p. 281.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p. 287.

⁴⁹ Martin, *German-Persian Diplomatic Relations*, p. 79.

for Foreign Affairs from 1906, Isvolsky appointed in 1906 and Sazonov in 1910.⁵⁰ Isvolsky intended to have peaceable arrangements with each of Russia's neighbours: with England over Central Asia, with Austria over the Balkans, and with Germany over Iran and the Baghdad Railway.⁵¹ Thus, Isvolsky approached Germany in October 1906 to assure the Germans that Russia and Britain had no hostility to them. In return, Germany guaranteed that it simply wished for open door trade with Iran.⁵²

In the course of negotiations between Britain and Russia for rapprochement in 1906, Isvolsky was most anxious to avoid irritating Germany by assuring Berlin that Anglo-Russian negotiations would not touch upon the Baghdad Railway, and if otherwise, the German government would be consulted.⁵³ He considered that 'if Russia could settle her accounts with Germany at the same time as she did with England,' its difficulties over foreign relations would be removed. Railways were a possible means to reach his goal.⁵⁴ This did not mean that Russia took a friendly view of the Baghdad Railway, but it did mean that Russia attempted to diminish the loss of prestige caused by Germany building the Baghdad Railway. To the British, however, Russia seemed to intend to withdraw its objections to the Baghdad Railway, to show its goodwill to Germany.⁵⁵ A memorandum by Isvolsky in February 1907 recorded the main terms of their changed policy towards Germany: 'Russia agreed to make no opposition to the Baghdad Railway; if there were to be any connection between Iranian railways and the Baghdad Railway, no decision would be made without prior consultation between Russia and Germany; Germany had no political interests in Iran but only

⁵⁰ Dietrich Geyer, *Russian Imperialism: The Interaction of Domestic and Foreign Policy 1860-1914*, trans. Bruce Little, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987, pp. 275-276.

⁵¹ Wolf, *The Diplomatic History*, p. 67.

⁵² Martin, *German-Persian Diplomatic Relations*, p. 140.

⁵³ Busch, *Britain*, p. 361.

⁵⁴ Wolf, *The Diplomatic History*, p. 72.

⁵⁵ FO248/898, no. 15, January 4, 1907, Marling to Grey.

commerce. Germany should recognize Russia's special interests in the North of Iran, and would seek no concessions for a line there without a mutual agreement.⁵⁶ In the memorandum, the two countries each obtained what they wanted. Germany would not receive objection from Russia. And, obviously, Isvolsky was attempting to eliminate Germany's intentions in Iran, and to secure Russia's prestige there. The recognition of Russia's special interests in the North of Iran by Germany was one of Isvolsky's principle objectives. In June, Germany gave assurances that it would not seek concessions for railways, highways, or telegraphs in northern Iran if Russia were to commence a railway from Tehran to Khanaqin connecting with the Baghdad Railway.⁵⁷ However, these discussions did not go further, possibly because of the signing of the Anglo-Russian Convention in August 1907, which was implicitly to counter the rise of Germany.

In June 1908, a new phenomenon appeared in a mutual understanding between Britain and Russia on the railway line from Jolfa to Mohammerah. The understanding was certainly a means to block Germany encroaching into Iran by the Baghdad Railway. Neither Russia nor Britain completely trusted Germany. Grey said in August 1908 that the extension of the Baghdad Railway amounted to a foreign undertaking in the direction of the Indian border,⁵⁸ and this proposed new line would, on commercial grounds, be the most effective means of a German commercial advance in the South of Iran.⁵⁹ Meanwhile, in December 1909, Isvolsky continued to maintain good will towards Germany on the railway issue. He intended to make an agreement with the German government respecting the section of the line from Baghdad to the Persian Gulf.⁶⁰ On the other hand,

⁵⁶ Cited in Martin, *German-Persian Diplomatic Relations*, p. 143.

⁵⁷ Kazemzadeh, 'Russian Imperialism,' p. 366.

⁵⁸ FO248/926, no. 172, August 18, 1908, notes on Russian Memorandum on Railway projects in Persia.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ FO248/955, no. 325, December 21, 1909, Mallet to Nicolson.

Isvolsky was still worried about German activities in Iran, such as a proposed German loan to the country, and the possibility of Iran granting a concession for the Baghdad-Khanaqin railway.⁶¹

The relations between the three powers was thus of ostensible goodwill and underlying suspicion owing to the emerging threat of the Baghdad Railway. Although the three powers were seemed to be in harmony in negotiations over the railway issue, essentially they were still in a state of rivalry. In fact, they had no wish to see any serious clash over the railway issue, and thus managed to maintain ostensibly friendly relations.

c. Expiry of the 1890 Agreement and Britain and Germany in 1910

Although Britain questioned German intentions regarding Iran, like Russia, it did not wish to be in conflict with Germany. Grey tried to reassure the Germans that the British purpose was simply to prevent any railway rights which would endanger Britain's political interests in Iran from being undermined by the Iranian government. In addition, Grey assured Germany that Britain had no intention of excluding investments in Iranian railways by foreign powers.⁶²

On 21 March 1910, the German Ambassador in London, Count Metternich, told Grey that he had heard a rumour that there were conditions for a proposed loan to Iran by Britain and Russia, such as the prohibition of the building of a railway in Iran without Anglo-Russian consent; that concessions in Iran should be granted only to Russian subjects in the Russian sphere, and only to British subjects in the British sphere; and that Iranians were to receive concessions only if they could prove that they had no foreign capital behind them.⁶³ The German view was in accordance with the section on Iran in the Anglo-Russian Convention

⁶¹ FO416/43, no. 92, 8745, March 13, 1910, Nicolson to Grey.

⁶² FO416/43, no. 140, 9876, March 21, 1910, Grey to Nicolson.

⁶³ FO416/43, no. 64, 9876, March 21, 1910, Grey to Goschen.

of 1907, which stated that the British and Russian governments have ‘mutually engaged to respect the integrity and independence of Persia, and sincerely desired the preservation of order throughout that country and its peaceful development, as well as the permanent establishment of equal advantages for the trade and industry of all other nationals.’⁶⁴ In Count Metternich’s view, these conditions violated the wording of the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, and also limited freedom of trade for any other powers. However, the actual document that Grey gave Count Metternich on 22 March 1910 stated the following: ‘Russia and Britain reserved the prior right to build railways in their respective spheres of influence. The Russians and the British did not claim any exclusive rights to build in their own zones, but wanted to control any lines of strategic or political importance; The two European powers’ English and Russian Legations at Tehran had to agree about the use of the money lent (to the Iranian government). Its expenditure was to be controlled by the committee of French advisers, although if Germany objected to French nationals, advisers of another nationality could be substituted.’⁶⁵ In fact, Britain and Russia were willing to accept railway building that had no political purpose, and Germany would supposedly be able to participate in certain Iranian affairs on that basis. In this way, Grey countered the German argument by informing Count Metternich that ‘we quite recognized the general principle of commercial equality for third Powers in Persia.’⁶⁶ However, even the conditions that Grey gave Metternich can be seen to represent a more entrenched protection for British and Russian interests than the 1907 Convention. Despite Grey’s efforts, this point was not lost on the Germans.

The ban on the building of railways in Iran expired in April 1910. After the

⁶⁴ J. C. Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East—A Documentary Record: 1535-1914, Volume I*, Toronto, D. Van Nostrand Company, 1958, p. 266.

⁶⁵ Cited in Martin, *German-Persian Diplomatic Relations*, p. 169.

⁶⁶ FO416/43, no. 65, 9877, March 21, 1910, Grey to Goschen.

expiry of the 1890 railway agreement then, three European powers and Iran all entered in a new stage of meetings and negotiations. It could be seen that Britain, Russia and Germany all had plans regarding railways. Germany at that time argued that they 'had a perfect right to obtain concessions for railways or anything else in Persia'⁶⁷ In other words the Germans believed that they now had an opportunity to acquire the same rights as Britain and Russia in the railway issue. In the meantime, the negotiations between Britain and Germany over the Baghdad Railway collapsed because Britain insisted on obtaining complete control over the part of the railroad from Baghdad to the Persian Gulf, to which Germany did not consent.⁶⁸ Thereafter, partly due to these events, Britain adopted a different attitude to Germany, and in April 1910 the India Office proposed schemes for southern railways for the security of British interests in the South of Iran. They wanted to preclude possible German enterprise from obtaining a railway concession through the neutral zone, all concessions within the British sphere should be secured, not necessarily for construction, but merely to prevent outside interference in the British sphere.⁶⁹ This demonstrates that it was Britain's intention to block all German proposals for railways.

Meanwhile, the Germans endeavoured to negotiate with the two other powers over their political intentions, repeating to Russia that they had no intention of obtaining railway concessions from Iran,⁷⁰ and giving assurances to Britain that they had no political intentions with regard to Iran but were simply requesting an open door policy for commerce.⁷¹ The proof of this was that no German loans had been given to the Iranian government, and that no concessions had been granted to Germany by the Iranian government. The Iranian Minister in

⁶⁷ Spring, *Anglo-Russian Relations*, p. 114.

⁶⁸ The Russian Ambassador at London to Iswolsky. Telegram, April 6-19, 1910, *Entente*, p. 519.

⁶⁹ IOR/L/PS/10/177, 16398, enclosure, April 11, 1910, Morley to Government of India.

⁷⁰ FO416/44, no. 124, 12751, April 14, 1910, Nicolson to Grey.

⁷¹ FO416/44, no. 130, 15891, May 5, 1910, Goschen to Grey.

London, Mirza Mehdi Khan, stated that the Iranian government had not made any offers to Germany.⁷² Therefore, after the expiry of the railway agreement in 1910, Britain took a strong stand against increased German influence in Iran through the railway issue.

2. The Potsdam Agreement of 1911 and British railway projects in south-western Iran

As demonstrated above the British did not display a cooperative attitude to German plans in Iran, which the Germans noted. An officer in the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Herr von Stumm, complained that the British were delaying settling outstanding issues between Germany and Britain.⁷³ In response, Grey argued that, ‘we have had no indication from the German Government of a desire to come to an agreement of sort (over the Baghdad railway project).’⁷⁴ This was hardly an invitation to discuss such an agreement. By contrast, Germany and Russia began meetings on the railway issue from November 1910, and these led to the Potsdam Agreement of 1911.

a. The Potsdam Agreement of 1911 and its assessment

The Potsdam Agreement of 1911 has received much attention in academic studies. Dominic Lieven argues that the Potsdam Agreement seemed to indicate an emergence of a rapprochement between the two states.⁷⁵ J. B. Wolf also believes that to Sazonov, ‘to make an agreement with Germany was the expedient thing to do, and at the same time it fitted nicely with Sazonov’s general policy, for he belonged to that section of the Russian court whose sympathies were with

⁷² FO416/44, no. 78, 16458, May 10, 1910, Grey to Marling.

⁷³ FO416/45, no. 181, 25383, July 18, 1910, Grey to Goschen.

⁷⁴ FO416/46, no. 676, 40736, November 9, 1910, Grey to O’Beirne.

⁷⁵ Dominic Lieven, *Russia and the Origins of the First World War*, London: Macmillan, 1983, p. 38.

Germany rather than France, and a *detente* with Germany would satisfy their idea of proper policy.’⁷⁶ Maybelle Kennedy Chapman asserts that, without consulting the *Entente* states, Britain and France, on the agreement, Russia left them to make arrangements with Germany alone.⁷⁷ Earle argues that ‘Russia had a great deal to gain and little to lose by the Potsdam Agreement. Whether Russia liked it or not, the Baghdad Railway had become a going concern, and there was every indication that another decade would see its completion. When finished, the Baghdad system, together with projected Persian lines, would provide Russian trade with direct communications with the Indies (via Baghdad and the Persian Gulf) and with the Mediterranean (via Mosul, Aleppo, and the Syrian coast).’⁷⁸ Kazemzadeh comments that ‘the ostensible willingness of the Russian Foreign Minister to accept German demands in regard to the Khaneqin-Tehran line stuck them (Britain) as foolish and harmful.’⁷⁹ Derek Spring comments that ‘the Potsdam agreement was not a brilliant success for Sazonov.’⁸⁰ These scholars therefore tend to the view that generally Russia allowed itself to draw too close to Germany, which resulted, to their loss, in the Potsdam Agreement, and their distancing from Britain, the 1907 Convention, and the Triple *Entente*. However, the question of whether the Potsdam Agreement was a sign of an end to the *Entente* and the 1907 Convention as far as the Russians were concerned needs exploring. In terms of Russia’s overall policy at that time, it was unlikely that the Russians would wish to see an expanding Germany.

A confirmed meeting in November 1910 between Russia and Germany affirmed that the two powers maintained their goal to meet their interests on railways and to cease any other disputes in their foreign relations. In August 1910,

⁷⁶ Wolf, *The Diplomatic History*, p. 85.

⁷⁷ Chapman, *Great Britain*, pp. 132-133.

⁷⁸ Earle, *Turkey*, p. 240.

⁷⁹ Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia*, p. 596.

⁸⁰ Spring, *Anglo-Russian Relations*, p. 137.

the German Ambassador in St. Petersburg, Friedrich von Pourtalès, expressed a wish for rapprochement with Russia, informing Sazonov that Iran was a subject on which decisions were urgently required.⁸¹ The German Foreign Minister, Alfred von Kiderlen-Wachter, believed that agreement with Russia was possible if Germany assured Russia that the Baghdad Railway was a purely economic venture, and that if agreement was reached it might in turn end Russian cooperation with France and Britain.⁸² On 10 October 1910, Sazonov told O'Beirne in St. Petersburg that a meeting of the Russian and German Emperors at Potsdam in Germany would take place in the following month, and the main concern was a railway line from Khanaqin to Tehran connecting the Baghdad Railway to the proposed Iranian railway network. The point which concerned Sazonov was that Germany might seek concessions in the Russian zone in Iran, especially in relation to railways.⁸³ Sazonov also believed that 'Germany could not recognize the right of Russia and England to any economic privileges in Persia, based on an agreement (Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907) between themselves and that country: Germany considered that this agreement, to which she was not a party, violated the principle of the open door and was injurious to her economic interests.'⁸⁴ Thus, to some extent, Russia did not trust Germany.

On the part of Britain, Grey asked Russia not to discuss railways in the neutral zone of Iran with Germany. Sazonov promised that he would refuse to discuss this in the forthcoming meeting,⁸⁵ telling O'Beirne that any discussions regarding German railways in the Russian sphere would be put on hold. In this way, the basic principle of the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, to exclude

⁸¹ Head, 'Public Opinions,' p. 32.

⁸² Roderick R. McLean, *Royalty and Diplomacy in Europe 1890-1914*, Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 63.

⁸³ FO416/46, no. 282, 37799, October 17, 1910, O'Beirne to Grey.

⁸⁴ Serge Sazonov, *Fateful Years, 1909-1916*, London: Butker & Tanner, 1928, p. 30.

⁸⁵ FO416/46, no. 432, 40355, October 30, 1910, O'Beirne to Grey.

other powers from Iran, was secured before the Russo-German meeting of November.

The first discussion between Russian and Germany took place on 8 November 1910. During this meeting, the German Chancellor, Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg, agreed not to build any railway lines in the Ottoman Empire to points on the Iranian border north of Khanaqin,⁸⁶ thereby protecting the interests of Russia, but not those of Britain. Sazonov was also aware that it was necessary to maintain Russian political prestige in Iran untouched by Germany, and to obtain Germany's recognition of it.⁸⁷ The next day, *Novoe Vremya* published an interview with Sazonov, who, in his role as the newly-appointed Minister for Foreign Affairs, declared that in fact Germany had no special intentions regarding Iran, and that it recognized Russia's interests in the north of the country.⁸⁸ Britain was in effect left dependent on Russian goodwill, which might, of course, later conflict with Russian interests. Buchanan, the British Ambassador in St. Petersburg, revealed that the British government trusted Russia not to 'give any engagement to effect a junction of the Bagdad Railway with the future North Persian systems until some satisfactory settlement with regard to the Gulf section of the Bagdad Railway had been reached by the British and German Governments.'⁸⁹ In January 1911, Grey informed Benckendorff, the Russian Ambassador in London, that 'it was extremely important that, should Russia connect Khanekin with a point in Northern Persia, whatever Germany's participation may be, the control and management of this branch line in our Persian sphere of interest should remain solely in Russian hands to the exclusion of every kind of German interference.'⁹⁰ In July 1911, Sazonov said that Russia

⁸⁶ FO416/46, no. 445, 41950, November 9, 1910, O'Beirne to Grey.

⁸⁷ Sazonov, *Fateful Years*, p. 33.

⁸⁸ FO416/46, no. 445, 41950, November 9, 1910, O'Beirne to Grey.

⁸⁹ FO416/46, no. 331, 44649, December 9, 1910, Buchanan to Grey.

⁹⁰ The Russian Ambassador at London to Sazonoff. Letter, January 4-17, 1911, *Entente*, p. 538.

intended 'to control the Tehran-Khanaqin line even if Russia did not build it, and to keep north Persia as a preserve for Russia. But Germany wanted some assurance that the Tehran-Khanaqin railway would be built in return for recognizing Russian predominance in the north.'⁹¹ Sazonov thus demonstrated that he was fully concerned for Russian interests, but not particularly for those of Britain. Although Sazonov assured the British that the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 would be observed, the Potsdam Meeting endeavoured at the same time to at least make Russian interests in northern Iran more secure.

Eventually, after nine months of delays and negotiations, the Potsdam Agreement was signed in St. Petersburg on 19 August 1911 by the German Ambassador, Count de Pourtalès, and the Acting Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Neratov (Sazonov was ill then). The preamble announced that Russia had special interests in Iran, while Germany was pursuing commercial objectives there. In general terms, the points of the Agreement were as follows:

1. Germany agreed not to seek railway, road, or telegraph concessions for its nationals or on behalf of foreigners to the north of a line passing Isfahan, Yazd and Khakh and then the Afghan frontier;
2. Russia agreed to build a railway from Tehran to Khanaqin to be connected to the Sadijeh-Khanaqin line, a branch of the Baghdad Railway. The line was to be built by Russia within two years after the completion of the Sadijeh-Khanaqin line. The two countries would have the benefit of international traffic by these lines. If Russia could not build the Tehran-Khaniaqin line within two years after the completion of the Sadijeh-Khanaqin branch, Russia should forfeit the construction;
3. Russia had no right to interrupt the construction of the Baghdad Railway or prevent capital from being invested in this enterprise;

⁹¹ Spring, *Anglo-Russian Relations*, p. 132.

4. Russia reserved the right to let any foreign financial group build the Tehran-Khanaqin line;
5. Russia had the right to commence the railway works as it wished.⁹²

Despite Sazonov's view that the Agreement was restricted to the northern zone of Iran, and thus in conformity with the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, Article 1 and Article 3 in particular demonstrate Russian concerns for its interests over those of Britain in that they disregard Britain's concerns in the south and over the Baghdad Railway. In effect that abovementioned, scholars are to some extent correct in arguing that Russia at this point was drawing away from Britain. In terms of the issue of Iranian railways, the Potsdam Agreement of 1911 had a potentially beneficial outcome for both Russia and Germany. In addition, Russia would cement its prestige in the North of Iran through the construction of the proposed Khanaqin-Tehran line, while Germany staved off pressure from Russia on the Baghdad Railway.

Russia denied that the Agreement had destroyed its relations with the Entente. In his memoir, Sazonov expressed his view on the Potsdam Meeting that his purpose was to 'postpone their (German interest) fulfillment for about ten years. I felt sure that by that time, we should have succeeded in attracting foreign capital to our scheme of railway construction; we should thus stave off the danger of Germany seizing and concentrating in her own hands the whole of the carrying trade in North-west Persia.'⁹³ Sazonov also insisted that Russia did not consent to Germany's extending the Baghdad Railway to the Persian Gulf, and not give any other advantage either.⁹⁴ By the Potsdam Meeting of 1911, thus, Russia's influence in northern Iran would not be disturbed.⁹⁵ Therefore the Russians

⁹² Hurewitz, *Diplomacy Volume I*, pp. 267-268.

⁹³ Sazonov, *Fateful Years*, p. 33.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 34-35.

⁹⁵ Friedrich Stieve, *Isvolsky and the World War: Based on the Documents Recently Published by the German Foreign Office*, trans. E. W. Dickes, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1926, p. 20.

themselves did not share the view that the Agreement weakened them in the face of Germany.

b. British railway projects in south-western Iran

From a British point of view, Anglo-German relations had seen no improvement at all for years owing to naval competition and the Baghdad Railway. In 1911 the two states were on the brink of war over the Agadir Affair in Morocco.⁹⁶ With the emergence of the details of the Potsdam meetings, British consuls in southern Iran were not slow to express their opinions. Cox in Bushehr, for example, argued that Russia had encouraged Germany to undertake an enterprise in the neutral zone which could weaken Britain's privileged position in that area.⁹⁷ After the Potsdam Meeting of 1911, however, Iran saw Germany as a friend of their opponent, Russia,⁹⁸ and in December 1910, an Iranian newspaper *Iran-e No* criticized Germany for settling the Iranian question with Russia in a friendly way.⁹⁹ During that time, railway schemes put forward by Britain to be built in the South-West of Iran were approved by the Iranian government. This section looks at Britain's actions and Iran's attitude over Potsdam.

In 1911, the British were negotiating with the Iranians over certain railway lines, the proposed Mohammerah-Khorramabad line, for example. The Iranian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mohtasham al-Saltaneh, telegraphed Grey to the effect that Iran was keen to safeguard its political and economic interests, and that therefore a railway built for commercial purposes should be considered.¹⁰⁰ With regard to proposed British railway lines in the neutral zone, Russia had no right to

⁹⁶ Mowat, 'Great Britain and Germany,' pp. 423-441.

⁹⁷ FO416/47, 2803, enclosure 2, December 20, 1910, Cox to Government of India.

⁹⁸ Martin, *German-Persian Diplomatic Relations*, p. 185.

⁹⁹ Hosein Nazem, *Russia and Great Britain in Iran (1900-1914)*, PhD thesis, Columbia University, 1954, p. 117.

¹⁰⁰ IOR/L/PS/10/177, no. 79, 21726, enclosure, 22nd Rebbi-ul-Sani, 1329 (April 22, 1911), Mohtashem-es-Sultaneh to Barclay.

object, owing to Article 3 of the 1907 Convention, which stipulated that ‘Russia, on her part, engages not to oppose, without previous arrangement with Great Britain, the grant of any Concessions whatever to British subjects in the regions of Persia situated between the lines mentioned in Articles I and II (which referred to the neutral zone). Great Britain undertakes a similar engagement as regards the grant of Concessions to Russian subjects in the same regions of Persia.’

A primary interest for Britain was her oil interests and the need to protect them. In 1909, as discussed, Britain had already reached an agreement to this purpose with the Sheykh of Mohammerah for laying oil pipelines and constructing refineries in his territory. Schemes of railways in Mohammerah and its neighbourhood were seen as a means to both protect and extend oil interests. At the same time the Iranian government itself was becoming increasingly interested in railways. In April 1911, the Iranian Regent, Naser al-Molk, told Britain that Iran viewed railways as a priority, and that ‘it was important that Persia should make a beginning in railway development without delay, and here was a favourable opportunity for coming to terms for the construction of a railway of primary importance to the country.’¹⁰¹ The Regent was aware of opportunities for constructing railways as a result of the expiry of the 1890 prohibition. In addition, the meetings between Germany and Russia influenced the Regent in seeking opportunities for Iranian railways to be constructed rather than only schemed over. Iran accepted the British proposal for railways, but made it clear that Iran’s preferred policy for dealing with the powers was to make Britain and Russia join up with a third power, for example France, to reduce any possible disputes. This was also a sign that the country was attempting to negotiate with Britain on the subject of railways, rather than simply acquiesce.

The APOC also took part in discussions on Iranian railway affairs. On 15

¹⁰¹ FO416/48, no. 55, 17216, April 18, 1911, Barclay to Grey.

June 1911, the APOC applied to the Iranian government for a concession in the southern zone in the name of a newly formed company, the Persian Railway Syndicate.¹⁰² It proposed to build three lines, from Mohammerah to Khorramabad, from Bander Abbas to Kerman, and from Bandar Abbas to Shiraz. The Indian government, yet, was of the view that a line between Bandar Abbas and Mohammerah should also be pursued, given that it was possible that the line from Bandar Abbas to Shiraz might lead to the Baghdad Railway being extended in the direction of Shiraz.¹⁰³ The British proposed line from Bandar Abbas to Shiraz would ensure that Germany had no opportunity to strengthen their influence in the South of Iran by the means of railways. The British Foreign Office, thinking strategically, replied to the APOC that it was a good idea to add a line between Bandar Abbas and Mohammerah.¹⁰⁴ The Foreign Office considered that Germany might well attempt to enter Iranian territory, in which case such a railway line would block Germany from infiltrating the south-west of the country. On 15 July 1911, the Persian Railways Syndicate made a new proposal for four railway lines: from Mohammerah to Khorramabad or Borujerd, from Bander Abbas to Kerman, from Bandar Abbas to Shiraz, and from Bandar Abbas to Mohammerah. However, there were also three proposals of extensions going into the Russian zone. Grey informed Greenway, the Manager of the APOC, that they could not authorize this without consulting the Russian government in advance.¹⁰⁵ The APOC and the Persian Railway Syndicate thus attempted to expand Britain's railway network in Iran into the Russian zone, but were thwarted by Grey, who still prioritized good relations with the Russians over the advantages of railway schemes.

¹⁰² FO416/48, 23549, enclosure, June 15, 1911, Proposed telegram to be dispatched to Brown (Tehran) by Greenway.

¹⁰³ FO416/48, 25433, June 29, 1911, India Office to Foreign Office.

¹⁰⁴ BP70396, H17/64, Persian Railways Syndicate 1911-1921, July 11 1911, Foreign Office to APOC.

¹⁰⁵ FO416/49, 28215, July 24, 1911, Nicolson to India Office.

A survey of the railways in the South-West of Iran was proposed by Lieutenant Wilson in October 1910, and his report was published in July 1911. Wilson considered that the Baghdad Railway in Mesopotamia would alienate Mesopotamia from the principal seats of British commercial and political influence in the Middle East. It was therefore imperative for Britain to build a railway from Mohammerah to Dezful and to reserve the right to extend it to Khorramabad. The Persian Railways Syndicate was the main body responsible for communicating with the Iranian government. A formal contract between the Iranian government and the Persian Railways Syndicate was signed on 7 September 1911. The Iranian government granted the Syndicate the exclusive rights to the survey, construction and working of the railways in southern Iran. All the plans of the Syndicate should be completely acceptable to the Iranian government, which had right to criticise and make objections.¹⁰⁶ In this way, the British and the Iranians settled the railway issue in southern Iran for the time being.

The contract also demonstrated that Iran felt free to grant concessions solely in consideration of its own interests once the veto agreement with Russia had ended in April 1910.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 still had an impact on negotiations in this episode, given that neither Britain nor Iran violated the stipulations of the 1907 Convention. Some studies argue that between 1911 and 1914 there was détente between Britain and Germany, which resulted in the signing of the Anglo-German Convention in 1914 for the Baghdad Railway,¹⁰⁸ but this view does not give an adequate explanation of the situation in 1911. To the British at that point, the Mohammerah-Khorramabad line could enable British

¹⁰⁶ IOR/L/PS/10/177, 35420, enclosure, September 7, 1911, Contract between the Persian Government and the Persian Railway Syndicate.

¹⁰⁷ Spring, 'The Trans-Persian Railway Project,' p. 62.

¹⁰⁸ Sean M. Lynn-Jones, 'Détente and Deterrence: Anglo-German Relations, 1911-1914,' *International Security*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (Fall, 1986), pp. 121-150.

trade to go directly northwards from the Persian Gulf,¹⁰⁹ and counter German advance to Iran by the Baghdad Railway.

3. The period of railway scheme competition in Iran: 1910-1914

By the outbreak of the war, there were two issues in process: the Trans-Persian Railway scheme which emerged in 1910, and the fact that certain matters related to Trans-Persian railways, such as alignments, had not been settled by the start of World War I; secondly, a proposal for a British line, the Mohammerah-Khorrambad line, devised in rivalry with a proposed Russian line, the Jolfa-Tabriz line.

a. The Trans-Persian Railway scheme and the Société d'Études

A new approach to railways through Iran had come from Hartwig, the Russian Minister in Tehran, in May 1908, who considered they would benefit Russian trade and their military strategic position. Isvolsky agreed that railways in Iran would be useful in relation to Russia's political and economic interests.¹¹⁰ From 1910 onwards, then, a Trans-Persian railway scheme was formally being developed by a Russian private initiative, with a view to linking Europe and India. In July 1910, Isvolsky made it clear to Nicolson, the British Ambassador in St. Petersburg, that the Trans-Persian Railway was a necessary competitor to the Baghdad Railway.¹¹¹ Isvolsky did not provide a clear idea of how the Trans-Persian Railway would compete with the Baghdad Railway, but it may be inferred that he intended to have a railway passing through Iran which would strengthen Russian influence and block Germany from penetrating the country via

¹⁰⁹ McLean, *Britain and Her Buffer State*, p. 115.

¹¹⁰ Siegel, *Endgame*, p. 66.

¹¹¹ Spring, 'The Trans-Persian Railway Project,' p. 63. See also IOR/L/PS/10/160, no. 326, 27694, July 26, 1910, Nicolson to Grey.

the Baghdad Railway. Generally, the Russians' expression to the Trans-Persian Railway was that 'Anglo-Russian friendship will be a real thing only when England and Russia unite for a struggle with Germany, not only on military but on economic grounds. The road (railway) which we propose connecting not only England but all of Europe with India and the Far East kills at its start the proposed move of Germany both against England and Russia.'¹¹² Sazonov had in mind the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, which 'would never yield the full value of which it was capable until it was completed by the adoption of the trans-Persian railway scheme, which would reduce the Baghdad line to a position of entire insignificance.'¹¹³

Even though the Russian scheme was supposed to ensure the security of Anglo-Russian relations, there were opposing voices amongst the British. For example, Bushehr believed that the cooperation between Britain and Russia over the Trans-Persian Railway project could not guarantee keeping Germany out of Iran.¹¹⁴ Probably with the aim of securing Anglo-Russian relations through the approval of the Russian scheme, Grey instructed Buchanan in May 1911 to inform the Russian government that the British government in principle approved of the Trans-Persian Railway scheme. Before a confirmed route for the scheme emerged, though, Grey set a few conditions, such as that: 'the line should enter the British sphere at Bandar Abbas rather than at Kerman; and Russia should support demands made by Britain to the Iranian Government for concessions for the following branch lines to be connected with the proposed Trans-Persian Railway: (a.) From Mohammerah to Khorramabad, (b.) From Bandar Abbas to Kerman, and (c.) From Bandar Abbas, via Shiraz, to Ahvaz.'¹¹⁵ Grey intended to expand

¹¹² Cited in Spring, 'The Trans-Persian Railway Project,' p. 62.

¹¹³ Cited in *ibid.*, p. 63.

¹¹⁴ FO371/968, no. 1216, December 20, 1910, The Political Resident in the Persian Gulf to the Secretary to the Government of India.

¹¹⁵ IOR/L/PS/10/177, no. 129, 15143, May 10, 1911, Grey to Buchanan.

British railways in Iran connecting with the Indian railway system, and to build a more developed network of railways in the South-West of Iran. Louis Mallet from the British Foreign Office explained that Grey's view of the scheme would be of benefit to British trade in Iran.¹¹⁶ In addition, regarding Grey's conditions, Buchanan in St. Petersburg explained to Neratov, the Russian Acting Foreign Minister, that their concern was the security of Indian interests, which still retained its importance in British policy. Although the Trans-Persian Railway to some extent represented British and Russian cooperation against Germany, Britain still endeavoured to diminish Russia's pressure on India.

From January 1911 onwards, an international body, the Société Internationale d'Études du Chemin de Fer Transpersan, (henceforth the Société d'Études), which consisted of a joint British, Russian, and French group, began to deal with all matters relevant to the Trans-Persian Railway scheme. The objectives of the Société d'Études for the Trans-Persian Railway were: 'to obtain a concession from the Iranian Government for a line connecting the Russian railway at the Russo-Iranian frontier with the Indian railway at the Irano-Baluchistan frontier; and to carry on negotiations with Russia and Britain with the object of finally determining the alignment.'¹¹⁷ The British government did not oppose the scheme in principle, and neither did it oppose the Société d'Études.¹¹⁸ In addition, in March 1912 the Persian Railways Syndicate considered cooperating with the Société d'Études.¹¹⁹ The British group in the Société d'Études also asked the Persian Railways Syndicate to cooperate, on condition that both British and Russian interests should be given prior consideration. In addition, the APOC wanted the Syndicate to cooperate with the Russian government, in order to

¹¹⁶ FO416/48, 18485, May 15, 1911, Foreign Office to War Office.

¹¹⁷ IOR/L/PS/10/199, no. 324, 49582, enclosure, Memorandum of Conversation between M. Goukassow and Lord Revelstoke at 8, Bishopsgate, December 7, 1911.

¹¹⁸ FO416/51, 2412, enclosure, February 1912, Draft of Letter to Persian Railways Syndicate.

¹¹⁹ FO416/51, 11835, March 18, 1912, Greenway to Mallet.

secure the continuation of the Mohammerah line into the Russian zone.¹²⁰ In April 1912, the Société d'Études believed that it should make a loan to Iran for the construction of railways. The British government supported this undertaking, and favoured the Société d'Études freedom of action to deal with certain issues.¹²¹ The Russian government was satisfied that the link between the loan and the Trans-Persian Railway scheme would facilitate the settlement of the concessions and the Iranian government's assent to railway surveys.¹²²

The route of the Trans-Persian Railway was formally discussed in early 1913. It was supposed to reach the coast at Bandar Abbas by either the main line or a branch.¹²³ In February 1913, Buchanan communicated with Sazonov on the subject with the British government insisting that 'the main line must pass through Isfahan and Shiraz, and if continued to the British sphere reach that sphere at Bander Abbas.' Sazonov preferred the line to pass through Yazd, a more eastern town, than Isfahan.¹²⁴ Evidently Sazonov wished the line of the Trans-Persian Railway to reach the British zone in the South-East of Iran, and which was not a result that Britain had expected. Grey still insisted that a line should enter the British zone at Bandar Abbas,¹²⁵ which would easily block German entrance into Iran.¹²⁶ In April 1913, the Indian government took the position that the connection of Europe and India via the Trans-Persian Railway was a risk to the British zone in Baluchistan.¹²⁷ In July 1914, the Indian government even expressed the view that it would be advisable for the British government to withdraw its support of the Société d'Études.¹²⁸ The Russians, however, lobbied

¹²⁰ FO416/51, no. 279, 11805, March 26, 1912, Grey to Buchanan.

¹²¹ FO416/52, no. 125, 16777, enclosure 1, April 2 (15), 1912, Aide-memoire communicated to Sazonov.

¹²² FO416/52, no. 125, 16777, enclosure 2, April 4 (17), 1912, Aide-memoire.

¹²³ FO416/55, 1283, enclosure, January 8, 1913, Government of India to the Marquess of Crewe.

¹²⁴ IOR/L/PS/10/137, no. 63, 8687, February 20, 1913, Buchanan to Grey.

¹²⁵ IOR/L/PS/10/137, no. 173, 8647, February 27, 1913, Grey to Buchanan.

¹²⁶ IOR/L/PS/10/137, no. 71, 9850, March 2, 1913, Buchanan to Grey.

¹²⁷ FO416/56, 15016, April 1, 1913, India Office to Foreign Office.

¹²⁸ FO416/61, 33160, July 21, 1914, India Office to Foreign Office.

for the Yazd-Kerman-Charbar alignment, while the British favoured that of Isfahan-Shiraz-Bandar Abbas,¹²⁹ but there was no final decision at the outbreak of the First World War.

On the whole, both Britain and Russia were concerned about the Baghdad Railway, and the routes that each proposed were calculated to diminish its impact from the point of view of their own interests. Although the main bodies in charge of the plan were the Societé d'Études and the Persian Railway Syndicate, it was clear that the overall interests of the British and Russian governments and the general atmosphere of international relations were the decisive factors.

b. The signing of British and Russian railway concessions with the Iranian government 1910-14.

The British and Russians had conflicting interests in applying for railway concessions from the Iranian government, and the main bone of contention was two specific lines, namely the Jolfa-Tabriz line and the Mohammerah-Khorramabad line. In May 1910, Isvolsky had been informed that an agent of the Deutsche Bank of Germany had secured a railway concession in northern Iran.¹³⁰ Russia's response was to apply for a concession for a line from Jolfa to Tabriz. On 4 April 1911, an application for the Jolfa line concession was made to the Iranian government.¹³¹ At the time of this application, the British were also applying for a concession for the Mohammerah-Khorramabad line, which appeared in the proposal of the Persian Railways Syndicate in April 1911. On 1 April 1911, Barclay announced to the Iranian Foreign Minister, Vusuq al-Dowleh, that Britain would shortly present an application for a

¹²⁹ FO416/56, 28750, Memorandum by Captain Wilson on a Conversation with Mr. Cecil Baring and Lord Errington on June 12, 1913.

¹³⁰ FO416/44, no. 134, 15895, May 6, 1910, Goschen to Grey.

¹³¹ FO416/48, no. 117, 13382, April 10, 1911, Barclay to Grey.

Mohammerah-Khorramabad Railway option,¹³² and in May Grey instructed Barclay to assure the Iranian government that Britain would appreciate it if the Iranian government did not grant any concessions to other powers in the neutral zone.¹³³

In June 1912, negotiations over the Mohammerah-Khorramabad line between the Iranian government and the Persian Railways Syndicate began.¹³⁴ Meanwhile, the Russian Minister in Tehran, Stanislaw Alfonsovich Poklewsky-Koziell, expressed his approval of the Mohammerah-Khorramabad line, and was instructed by his government to obtain a concession for the Jolfa-Tabriz line with an extension to Lake Ormiyeh.¹³⁵ Russia actively showed its goodwill to Britain, probably in the belief that the two railways could impede the expansion of the Baghdad Railway into Iran. The new British Minister in Tehran, Sir Walter Townley, was assured in August 1912 by the Iranian Minister for Foreign Affairs that the Mohammerah-Khorramabad line would benefit from the same advantages as the Jolfa-Tabriz line.¹³⁶ In September, Grey announced to the Russians that Britain would shortly press for the granting of a concession for the Mohammerah-Khorramabad Railway, and Sazonov did not object. The Russians also began negotiations for the Jolfa-Tabriz line, which was then to lead to Ormiyeh.¹³⁷ On 24 October 1912, the Iranian Minister for Foreign Affairs, 'Al'a al-Saltaneh, told Townley that his approval of the concession for the Mohammerah-Khorramabad line 'would be given at the same time as that to Russia for the Julfa-Tabriz line.'¹³⁸ Townley therefore expected in November

¹³² Strunk, *The Reign*, p. 205.

¹³³ IOR/L/PS/10/177, no. 132, 16605, May 4, 1911, Grey to Barclay.

¹³⁴ FO416/52, no. 366, 23863, June 11, 1912, Grey to Townley.

¹³⁵ FO416/53, no. 128, 7787, June 19, 1912, Townley to Grey.

¹³⁶ FO416/53, no. 474, 35799, August 24, 1912, Townley to Grey.

¹³⁷ Strunk, *The Reign*, p. 213.

¹³⁸ FO416/54, no. 570, 44977, October 24, 1912, Townley to Grey.

1912 that both governments would receive grants for concessions soon.¹³⁹ The only problem was that ‘in the present political uncertainty (of Iran) it is very hard to get anyone to take decided action.’¹⁴⁰

Townley’s worry was right. The Iranian constitutional government with the Bakhtiyari khan, Samsam al-Saltaneh, as Prime Minister, was unpopular owing to resistance by local tribes in the South of Iran to the dominance of the Bakhtiyari khans.¹⁴¹ Townley warned the government that ‘a most serious situation might be created were a conflict to break out in Arabistan.’¹⁴² It might consequently largely hamper British trade, and also might have a significant effect upon the general situation in Iran. Protection of British interests was Townley’s main concern caused by the deteriorating Iranian domestic political situation. The Bakhtiyari government has received much criticism from scholars on this account. Garthwaite argues that the Khans were self-aggrandising,¹⁴³ and Yapp comments that the Bakhtiyari Khans ‘paid themselves money to provide non-existent road guards.’¹⁴⁴ These negative impressions were perhaps related to the Khans’ inability to control disputes with other tribes in the provinces,¹⁴⁵ and especially their battles with Sheykh Khaz’al from 1910, which may be put down to the desire of the Khans to impose their authority on Mohammerah and the Arab provinces,¹⁴⁶ with which Britain also had close connections. There was no clear indication of where Iranian politics were leading, and Britain feared for the security of its interests in the area.

On 27 January 1913, Townley telegraphed Grey again to say that the Iranian

¹³⁹ FO416/54, no. 583, 47379, November 7, 1912, Townley to Grey.

¹⁴⁰ FO416/54, 55081, December 31, 1912, Foreign Office to Persian Railways Syndicate.

¹⁴¹ Khazeni, *Tribes and Empire*, p. 183.

¹⁴² FO371/1443, no. 90, 22812, May 14, 1912, Townley to Grey.

¹⁴³ Garthwaite, *Khans and Shahs*, p. 121.

¹⁴⁴ Yapp, ‘1900-1921,’ p. 15.

¹⁴⁵ Floreeda Safiri, *The South Persian Rifles*, PhD thesis Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 1976, p. 14.

¹⁴⁶ Strunk, *The Reign*, p. 227 and p. 229.

government was prepared to grant the concession for the Mohammerah-Khorramabad line.¹⁴⁷ The Jolfa-Tabriz concession was, however, signed on 6 February 1913, with a thirty-mile branch line to Ormiyeh.¹⁴⁸ (Map 3) The signing took place after a change in the Iranian Cabinet in January 1913 after the resignation of Samsam al-Saltaneh,¹⁴⁹ and the decision of Iran to agree to the Jolfa-Tabriz line was influenced by the need to seek the withdrawal of Russian troops in Qazvin and in Azerbaijan.¹⁵⁰ The Jolfa-Tabriz concession was for seventy-five years, with the option of purchase by the Iranian government after thirty-five years.¹⁵¹ Although the concession for the Moammerah-Khorramabad line was signed on 10 February 1913, the British did not receive equal treatment with the Russians. This incident shows that Iran had difficulties of its own in treating the two powers evenly, owing to both domestic and foreign pressures.

The result of the railway concessions episode was a loss of prestige for Britain in Iran. However, Britain and Germany signed an agreement on the Baghdad Railway in 1914. In terms of Anglo-Iranian relations, despite the contract between the Persian Railways Syndicate and the Iranian government in 1911, the two states were unable to reach any firm agreement at all on railways, owing largely to the Russian factor. Of course the unstable situation in the Iranian government made the development of Iranian railways insecure. Because of the outbreak of World War I, all the schemes for Iranian railways stopped for the time being.¹⁵²

Conclusion

¹⁴⁷ FO416/55, no. 36, 4154, January 27, 1913, Townley to Grey.

¹⁴⁸ FO416/55, no. 53, 7569, enclosure 2, January 25 (February 7), 1913, Aide-memoire communicated to Buchanan.

¹⁴⁹ Strunk, *The Reign*, p. 214.

¹⁵⁰ FO416/55, no. 61, 6459, February 10, 1913, Townley to Grey.

¹⁵¹ FO416/55, no. 65, 6702, February 11, 1913, Townley to Grey.

¹⁵² Kazemzadeh, 'Russian Imperialism,' p. 372.

Due to the rivalry between the major powers, even the impact of the Baghdad Railway project in the early twentieth century, the Potsdam Agreement of 1911, the contract between the Persian Railways Syndicate and the Iranian government in 1911, and the Trans-Persian Railway scheme in 1912, did not produce any specific progress on the Iranian railway issue by 1914.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, generally, the failure to build railways was caused by commercial rivalry between Russia and Britain. However, Russia played a stronger role in the impasse than Britain by way of its 1890 veto on Iranian railway building, which, among other effects, had a long-term impact in blocking British trade and interests from stretching from southern into northern Iran. In comparison with the two powers, Iran itself was weak owing to its poor financial state, which prevented it from constructing railways itself in its own interests. With the expiry of the veto in 1910, Iran, Britain and Russia all had an opportunity to look for a chance to develop railways, and the contract with the Persian Railways Syndicate of Britain was an example of these attempts.

In terms of British policy in Iran, the issue of railways in the South-West of Iran, especially with the new oil interest, considerably gained in significance. This in turn affected Britain's changing view of the centre of Iran, as compared to the marginal south-west in particular. Britain's non-intervention policy gradually related only to affairs taking place in Tehran, and considerable intervention took place in the South-West of Iran. As Russia and Germany reached an understanding in the Potsdam Agreement in 1911, the British, at the same time, took steps to obtain a railway contract from the Iranian government, which focused on railways in the South-West of Iran. Despite the Russian assurance that the 1907 Convention would not be violated, Britain did not fully trust the Russians, nor feel that their rivalry had ceased.

With regard to Iran, there was not a proper opportunity for the country to

develop railways. Under pressure from Britain and Russia, and Germany as well, all Iran could do was endeavour to maintain a balance of power. It was not only the insecure political climate after 1906 which made Iran more unstable. In terms of the granting of railway concessions to the British and Russian governments, the fact that Iran gave the British the final decision on their concession in 1913 three days later than the Russians was the result not only of changes in the Iranian cabinet, but also of the pressure exerted on Iran by the Russian troops in Qazvin and in Azerbaijan. The decision therefore had an impact on British prestige.

Germany, too, was an influence in the Iranian railway question. Although the German Baghdad Railway scheme had not actually included a planned route into Iran, Britain and Russia were both concerned over the possibility of the railway leading to a major German impact on Iran. Negotiations between Britain and Germany bore no fruit, but Russia did in 1911 sign the Potsdam Agreement with Germany, which guaranteed that the latter had no intention of constructing railways in Iran, and accepted a line from the Ottoman-Iranian border to Tehran built by Russia. Russia did not intend to damage the interests of the *Entente*, even if it was determined to advance its own interests in particular; it did not leave behind the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, even if it used it to its advantage; and Russia certainly did not want to give Germany any advantage. Russia intended to contain Germany's influence to Iran in general, and in relation to Russia's prestige in northern Iran in particular. Nevertheless the Potsdam Agreement represented, to some extent, some conciliation of Germany at the expense of British interests. From the point of view of Germany, it should be noted that, despite the Potsdam Agreement, there was an element of pragmatism in the German attitude to an area where Britain and Russia were so entrenched.

The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 remained important too. The Convention provided an opportunity for cooperation between Britain and Russia

in terms of Iranian affairs, such as the railways issue. Each, however, could interpret the Convention to their own advantage. Britain used the articles of the 1907 Convention to guarantee that their railway scheme applications in the South-West of Iran and the neutral zone, would not be opposed by the Russians. Russia in the Potsdam Agreement of 1911 used the concept of the Russian zone to secure its interests there whilst advancing its connections with Germany against the wishes of the British. However, the Convention did not resolve all their mutual differences. The negotiations for the lines of the Trans-Persian Railway in 1912 between the British and the Russians could not be settled then due to Britain's opposition to the lines passing through the British zone. The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, therefore became less a means of ensuring Britain and Russia would not come to conflict in Iran at the time of a possible war in Europe, than a means whereby they negotiated over their mutual interests, and their particular concerns in their own zones, at the expense of Iran.

Chapter V Disputes over the Ottoman-Iranian Border and the Involvement of Britain 1905-1914

Introduction

The Ottoman-Iranian border was a subject of controversy from the sixteenth century, and several treaties failed to settle the issue of a definite border. From the nineteenth century Britain, and Russia, also became involved in ongoing discussions. A serious dispute arose in 1905 only ended with a border line being delimited at the outbreak of the First World War after countless negotiations. Britain was concerned to settle the issue owing to its interests in the south-west of Iran, i.e. oil. In the process, the Ottoman-Iranian issue became a multiple country issue, involving the Ottoman Empire, Iran, and Britain, and Russia as well. It was complicated by the long historical legacy of border disputes and in turn created further problems for the later twentieth century both in relations between Iran and Iraq, and questions of broad international politics relating to oil.

On the Ottoman-Iranian border lived numerous tribes which moved across from one area to another.¹ The two governments were well aware that loyalty from tribes could not be taken for granted.² An approximate demarcation of the Ottoman-Iranian border was agreed in the Treaty of Zohab in 1639, which covered a broad zone stretching from Armenia and Azerbaijan in the north, including the western Zagros mountains, and reaching the Persian Gulf coast near Mohammerah in the south.³ (Map 4) The two countries, however, remained in

¹ Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, *Frontier Fictions—Shaping the Iranian Nation, 1804-1946*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999, pp. 28-29.

² Richard Schofield, 'Narrowing the Frontier: Mid-Nineteenth Century Efforts to Delimit and Map the Perso-Ottoman Border,' in Roxane Farmanfarmanian (ed), *War and Peace in Qajar Persia: Implications past and present*, London and New York: Routledge, 2008, p. 151.

³ Graham Williamson, 'The Turko-Persian War 1821-1823: Winning the War but Losing the Peace,' in Farmanfarmanian (ed), *War and Peace in Qajar Persia*, p. 88.

dispute over the border, and exercised haphazard jurisdiction in the area.⁴ Then, in the eighteenth century, foreign factors became intertwined in the dispute. In 1723, Russia, which was looking to expand its influence in the Caucasus, collaborated with Tahmasp, the son of the last Safavid ruler, Shah Soltan Hosein, in preventing the Ottomans from occupying the Caucasus and the Caspian area. In return for this assistance, Iran was obliged to cede Darband, Baku and the provinces of Gilan, Mazandaran and the southern Caspian shores to Russia.⁵ In 1724, however, the Ottoman Empire and Russia went on to negotiate a treaty that allowed the Ottoman Empire to extend its area of control into parts of Iran, such as Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Kurdistan, and including the important Iranian cities of Kermanshah, Hamadan and Tabriz.⁶ In the following decades, though Nader Khan (later Shah), a powerful Iranian military commander, regained most of the abovementioned territory from the Russians and the Ottomans, including Georgia in 1735.⁷ The Ottoman-Iranian border was then settled approximately according to its previous boundaries by the Treaty of Qasr-e Shirin in 1746, which generally retained the same stipulations as the 1639 Treaty.⁸ The Qajars, a new Iranian dynasty established at the turn of the eighteenth century, inherited the dispute with the Ottomans.⁹ Between 1821 and 1823 there was a war between Iran and the Ottoman Empire which was eventually won by Iran. Hostilities were ended by the Treaty of Erzerum of 1823, which maintained the territorial *status quo* as established by the 1746 Treaty.¹⁰

⁴ Alexander Melamid, 'The Shatt al-'Arab Boundary Dispute,' *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (Summer, 1968), p. 351.

⁵ F. Kazemzadeh, 'Iranian Relations with Russia and the Soviet Union, To 1921,' in Avery, Hambly and Melville, (eds) *The Cambridge History of Iran Volume 7*, p. 317.

⁶ Hurewitz, *Diplomacy Volume I*, pp. 42-45.

⁷ Stanford Shaw, 'Iranian Relations with the Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,' in Avery, Hambly and Melville, (eds) *The Cambridge History of Iran Volume 7*, p. 305.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 309.

⁹ Richard Tapper, 'The Tribes in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Iran,' in Avery, Hambly and Melville (eds), *The Cambridge History of Iran Volume 7*, p. 520.

¹⁰ Williamson, 'The Turko-Persian War,' p. 108, and Hurewitz, *Diplomacy Volume I*, pp. 90-92.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, Britain became involved in the issue, within the context of the rivalry between Britain and Russia in which Iran played the role of buffer state. Britain considered that further clashes between Iran and the Ottoman Empire in south-western Iran, in areas such as Mohammerah, would weaken the security of its commercial and strategic interests in the area and in the Persian Gulf as a whole. It further considered that its commercial interests from the eastern Mediterranean to Mesopotamia, including the Tigris and the Shatt al-Arab, would be affected.¹¹ In 1834 Britain and Russia agreed with regard to the integrity of Iran that it would be beneficial for the two powers to act ‘with regard to the affairs of Persia, in the same spirit’, and be ‘equally animated by a sincere desire to maintain, not only the internal tranquility, but also the independence and integrity of Persia.’¹² This was put into practice after the Ottoman foray into Mohammerah in 1837, which led the two powers to establish a joint Anglo-Russian border commission in 1843. Thereafter further negotiations led to the (Second) Treaty of Erzerum in 1847, (Map 5) which focused on the western and southern sections of the border, such as Zohab, Soleymanieh, Mohammerah and the Shatt al-Arab. In Article 2, Iran was granted the mountainous eastern part of Zohab, while the Ottoman Empire had the western part and the lands on the plain. In addition, Iran gave up the province of Soleymanieh, though it maintained control over Mohammerah and the eastern bank of the Shatt al-Arab.¹³ Article 4, on the other hand, granted Britain and Russia the right to influence subsequent developments stipulating that the Ottoman Empire and Iran had to settle all disputes with ‘the acceptance of the

¹¹ Richard Schofield, ‘Interpreting a vague river boundary delimitation: the 1847 Erzerum Treaty and the Shatt al-Arab before 1913,’ in Keith McLachlan (ed), *The Boundaries of Modern Iran*, London: UCL Press, 1994, p. 76.

¹² FO881/12464, April 22, 1874, Memorandum respecting the Boundary between Persia and Russia; and the Understanding between Great Britain and Russia as to the Maintenance of the Independence and Integrity of Persia.

¹³ FO881/10041, enclosure 1, no. 7, June 1, 1847, Annex (B) Translation of the New Treaty of Erzeroum (1847)

friendly suggestions of the two great mediating States.¹⁴ The Treaty of Erzerum of 1847, therefore, provided Britain and Russia with the right to be involved in the Ottoman-Iranian border issue.

Yet, many local inhabitants were forced to move owing to the border demarcation, and consequently complained.¹⁵ A further irony lay in a British commissioner's observation was that the border had actually not been specified, which necessitated more discussion regarding the exact spot where Ottoman territory ended and Iranian began.¹⁶ The mediation was in tune with Britain's aim of protecting its commercial and strategic interests in the area, and of keeping to a minimum any disturbances that might be caused by Ottoman-Iranian rivalry. And in 1848, an Explanatory Note (the 1848 Note henceforth) was added, in the name of the Ottoman Empire. The most important part of the 1848 Note was the following:

The undersigned Representatives are further in agreement with the Ottoman Minister in the view that, in ceding to Persia in the region in question the city, port and anchorage of Muhammara (Mohammerah) and the island of Khizr (Abadan Island), the Sublime Porte (The Ottoman Ministry for Foreign Affairs) is not ceding any other territory or any other ports there may be in this region. The undersigned Representatives further declare that Persia will not be entitled on any pretext whatsoever to put forward claims in regard to the regions situate on the eastern bank of the Shatt-al-Arab, or to the territory on the left bank belonging to Turkey, even where Persian tribes or parts of

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Keneth Bourne and D. Cameron Watt (ed), *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Report and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print, Part I, Volume 18*, University Prince of America, 1985, p. 427.

¹⁶ Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, 'Fragile Frontiers: The Diminishing Domains of Qajar Iran,' *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (May, 1997), p. 215.

such tribes are established on the said bank or in the said territory.¹⁷

The implication here was that the Ottoman Empire was in full control of the whole river, except for Mohammerah and Abadan Island.¹⁸ As far as the Iranians were concerned, the 1848 Note was in direct violation of the Erzerum Treaty of 1847, as it allowed the Ottoman Empire to obtain the upper eastern part of the Shatt al-Arab from Iran.¹⁹ The 1848 Note then was signed by the Iranian envoy, Mirza Mohammad 'Ali Khan, but the Iranian government considered that he had no authority to do so,²⁰ given that Iran had in fact not concurred with the 1848 Note.

Another serious ongoing dispute took place at Qutur. The Ottoman commissioner, Dervish Pasha, seized Qutur four or five days after the signing of the 1847 Treaty, and put up pillars with inscriptions claiming that the cities of Khoi, Tabriz and Ormiyeh were the possessions of the Ottoman Empire.²¹ Dervish Pasha's map left an important source for the Ottomans on which to base their arguments on the border issue later. The importance of the Qutur area lay in its location, which was close to the city of Khoi and also afforded easy access to Tabriz and Ormiyeh.²² The Iranian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Moshir al-Dowleh, argued that seizing of Qutur contravened the 1847 Treaty.²³ In April 1865, the British and the Russians agreed that:

the maps should be placed in the hands of the Turkish and Persian

¹⁷ *League of Nations Official Journal*, February 1935, pp. 199-200.

¹⁸ E. Lauterpacht, 'River Boundaries: Legal Aspects of the Shatt-al-Arab Frontier,' *The International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (Apr., 1960), p. 210.

¹⁹ Akbar Rezania, *Iran-Ottoman/Iraq Conflict since 1514 and the Role of International Politics*, PhD thesis, Nottingham Trent University, 2000, p. 49.

²⁰ Khalid al-Izzi, *The Shatt Al-Arab Dispute: A Legal Study*, London: Third World Centre for Research and Publishing Ltd, 1981, p. 30.

²¹ FO881/3943, no. 138, enclosure 1, September 12, 1852, Williams to Sheil.

²² FO881/3943, no. 138, September 29, 1852, Sheil to the Earl of Malmesbury.

²³ Kashani-Sabet, 'Fragile Frontiers,' pp. 215-216.

Governments, with an expression of opinion, on the part of the two mediating Powers; the line of the boundary must be found within the limits traced on the map; and the two Mahomedan Powers should themselves mark out the line of boundary, and, in the event of any difference arising between them, in regard to any particular locality, that the points in dispute should be referred to the Governments of Great Britain and Russia.²⁴

The two powers thus left the final decision to Iran and the Ottoman Empire, but again secured their own prestige and interest. In August 1869, a further agreement was concluded by Britain and Russia, stating that, pending the settlement of the disputed boundary, the *status quo* of the border should be maintained, and that no new buildings should be erected in the disputed territories.²⁵ Iran, on the other hand, believed that as the map enshrined a similar solution to that of the mid-1840s, it embodied the best solution for the border.²⁶ On the whole, Iran had been accommodating as regards the border in the mid-nineteenth century.

The Qutur issue was to come up again later on. In 1875 Iran and the Ottoman Empire tried to alleviate problems over the border through an agreement according to which the Iranians renounced their claim to Qutur, and the Ottomans abandoned theirs to the area around Mohammerah.²⁷ This solution was not, however, favoured by Russia. Disturbances in the Balkans in 1877, and the Ottoman Empire's rejection of the proposed settlement for the area, caused Russia to declare war on the Ottomans.²⁸ Iran, under Russian influence, placed small

²⁴ FO881/2136, January 10, 1873, Memorandum on the Turco-Persian Boundary Question by Hertslet.

²⁵ FO881/5883, no. 95, April 19, 1884, Granville to Thornton. See also Edward Hertslet, *Treaties, Etc. Concluded Between Great Britain and Persia, and Between Persia and Other Foreign Powers (1891)*. London: Butterworths, 1891, pp. 176-178.

²⁶ Richard Schofield, 'Narrowing the Frontier: Mid-Nineteenth Century Efforts to Delimit and Map the Perso-Ottoman Border,' in Farmanfarmaian (ed), *War*, p. 163.

²⁷ FO881/3151, no. 376, July 22, 1875, Elliot to the Earl of Derby.

²⁸ W. N. Medlicott, *The Congress of Berlin and After: A Diplomatic History of the Near Eastern Settlement 1878-1880*, London: Frank Cass, 1963, p. 2.

detachments of troops on the Ottoman-Iranian border, in order to divert Ottoman troops.²⁹ After the end of the war in 1878, the Treaty of San Stefano was signed in March of the same year. In Article XVIII, it touched on the Ottoman-Iranian border issue, stating for example that ‘the Sublime Porte will take into serious consideration the opinion pronounced by the Commissioners of the mediating Powers on the subject of the possession of the town of Khotour, and undertakes to have the labours of the definitive demarcation of the Turco-Russian frontier executed.’³⁰ The Article warned the Ottomans over asserting their claims on possession of Qutur. In July 1878, the whole of the Treaty of San Stefano was revised, and renamed the Treaty of Berlin. Article LX of this Treaty, stipulated that ‘the Sublime Porte cedes to Persia the town and territory of Qutur, as fixed by the mixed Anglo-Russian Commission for the delimitation of the frontiers of Turkey and of Persia.’³¹ Article LX of the Treaty of Berlin stipulated the cession of the Qutur area to Iran by the Ottoman Empire, but it is true that the latter had to accept Article LX against its wishes.³² The episode did not mean that Russia was on the side of Iran, but simply that the deteriorated relations between the European powers and the Ottoman Empire had an impact on the border issue.

The above provides a background to the Ottoman-Iranian border issue before the twentieth century. Iran made efforts to negotiate with the Ottomans but generally the latter were more aggressive on the subject. Iran at the time was under a new dynasty, which had lost battles with Russia in the early nineteenth century, and perhaps the central administration was not strong enough to deal with their arguments with the Ottomans. The Ottomans, on the other hand, looked for any opportunity for expansion.

²⁹ Martin, *German-Persian Diplomatic Relations*, p. 50.

³⁰ FO881/3831, October 23, 1878, Memorandum by Sir E. Hertslet on the Town and District of Khotour., Annex 5, Treaty of San Stefano, March 3, 1878, Article XVIII.

³¹ Hurewitz, *Diplomacy Volume I*, pp. 189-191.

³² FO881/3831, no. 1269, October 17, 1878, Layard to the Marquis of Salisbury.

Modern Iranian-Iraqi relations over the Shatt al-Arab have led scholars to study the history of the Ottoman-Iranian border disputes from this perspective. In his article 'The Shatt Al-'Arab Boundary Dispute,'³³ Alexander Melamid looks at the issue from an economic point of view and as a background to oil development. He points out that in 1826, the British wanted to develop their steamboat transport along the Tigris, and so pressed both Iranian and Ottoman governments to establish a clearly defined boundary. When oil was struck successfully in Iran in 1908, the shipping of both oil and equipment increased at the mouth of the Karun river and the Shatt al-'Arab outside Mohammerah, which led to the need for the Iranian and Ottoman governments to again define their border in order to secure their own oil interests. Vahé J. Sevian, in 'The Evolution of the Boundary between Iraq and Iran,'³⁴ argues that one reason for the importance of the Shatt al-Arab in the twentieth century was the discovery of oil in the sea bed of the Persian Gulf, which brought with it the extension into the Gulf of the sea border between Iran and the Ottoman Empire. Lawrence G. Potter, in his 'The Evolution of the Iran-Iraq Border,'³⁵ looks at the background of the border issue between Iraq and Iran from the Ottoman period up to 1914, before the creation of Iraq in 1920. Potter argues that the Treaty of Erzerum of 1847 was the first European-style treaty between the two Islamic states in which Britain and Russia intervened. Till 1913, by the Istanbul Protocol of 1913, Ottoman sovereignty over the Shatt-e al-Arab was confirmed. The Ottomans also obtained some of the Zohab region to the west of Kermanshah, holding rich oil fields.

There are also several studies on the Ottoman-Iranian border in articles by

³³ Melamid, 'The Shatt al-'Arab Boundary Dispute,' pp. 350-357.

³⁴ Vahé J. Sevian, 'The Evolution of the Boundary between Iraq and Iran,' in Charles A. Fisher (ed), *Essays in Political Geography*, London: Methuen & Co, Ltd, 1968, pp. 211-223.

³⁵ Lawrence G. Potter, 'The Evolution of the Iran-Iraq Border,' in Reeva Spector Simon and Eleanor H. Tejirian (eds), *The Creation of Iraq, 1914-1921*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2004, pp, 61-79.

Richard Schofield. In 'The Evolution of the Shatt Al-'Arab International Boundary in International Law,'³⁶ Schofield gives a short description of the events of the period between 1847 and 1911. In regard to the said period, Schofield argues that the 1847 Treaty was a success for the British as far as the South-West of Iran was concerned. After the establishment of navigation of the Karun river from Mohammerah to Ahvaz, effective Iranian control of the area increased owing to Britain's administrative and technical assistance. In his 'Interpreting a Vague River Boundary Delimitation: The 1847 Erzerum Treaty and the Shatt al-Arab before 1913,'³⁷ Schofield claims that Britain's mediation line of 1850 running along the middle of the Shatt al-Arab was also an interpretation of the 1847 Erzerum Treaty, but in the early twentieth century the British Foreign Office had to take other factors, such as recognition of the interests of local people on the border into consideration. In 'Narrowing the Frontier: Mid-Nineteenth Century Efforts to Delimit and Map the Perso-Ottoman Border,'³⁸ Schofield argues that a change of demarcation of the traditional Ottoman-Iranian border from a zone to a mappable line appeared with the mediation of Britain and Russia from 1843 to 1876. The most important result was a map in 1869 by Britain and Russia that 'executed on a scale of one inch to a mile, covering the entire length of the borderlands between the 30th and 40th degrees of latitude from the Persian Gulf in the south to the high drainage divides of the Caucasus mountains in the north.' Although there were disputes lasting for a few more years, this map was a significant proof for the delimitation of the Ottoman-Iranian border.

Sabri Ateş's book, *The Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands: Making a Boundary, 1843-1914*,³⁹ with Turkish documents, displayed a broad history of the border

³⁶ Schofield, *Evolution of the Shatt Al-'Arab Boundary Dispute*, Wisbech: Middle East & North African Studies Press, 1986, pp. 42-66.

³⁷ Schofield, 'Interpreting,' pp. 72-92.

³⁸ Schofield, 'Narrowing the Frontier,' pp. 149-173.

³⁹ Sabri Ateş, *The Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands: Making a Boundary, 1843-1914*, New York:

dispute between the two Islamic powers. The author argues that, when the Ottomans and Iranians had a further dispute over their border in the early twentieth century, the dispute was not constant as the two Islamic countries were always conscious of their mutual opponent, Russia. When the Iranians feared a threat from Russia crossing the border, they needed the Ottomans as an ally. However, the author also emphasizes that the local inhabitants who did not favour Iran's revolutionary movement sought the assistance of the Ottomans, which gave the Ottomans an advantage. Burcu Kurt, also using Ottoman documents, discusses disputes between the Ottomans and Iranians over the Shatt al-Arab in 'Contesting Foreign Policy: Disagreement between the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of War on the Shatt al-Arab Dispute with Iran, 1912-1913.'⁴⁰ Kurt argues that the Ottomans altered their policy on the Ottoman-Iranian border between 1912 and 1913 as a result of changes within the Ottoman polity. The Ottomans were insisting, contrary to British demands, on obtaining the Shatt-e al-Arab and its neighbourhoods in 1912, but after a coup in 1913, the new and weak government agreed to resolve the Shatt-e al-Arab question in accordance with British policy.

Given their purpose of providing nineteenth century background to a later twentieth century dispute over the Shatt al-Arab, these studies do not look in detail at what took place in the early twentieth century. Although Ateş's study covers the period that this chapter is going to explore, it does not see the border issue in the context of Anglo-Iranian relations. This chapter, then, will look at the series of disputes over the Ottoman-Iranian border in the early twentieth century up to the start of World War I, also examining the influence of Britain and the

Cambridge University Press, 2013.

⁴⁰ Burcu Kurt, 'Contesting Foreign Policy: Disagreement between the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of War on the Shatt al-Arab Dispute with Iran, 1912-1913,' *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 47, No. 6, September 2014, pp. 967-985.

broader dimension of Anglo-Iranian relations.

1. Ottoman occupation and negotiations in the early twentieth century

a. The Ottoman occupation of the border in 1905-1906

In September 1905, Ottoman troops occupied villages and towns belonging to Iran along the Ottoman-Iranian border, from Bayazid south to Vazneh.⁴¹ In October, Ottoman troops occupied Lahidjan (Lajan) and Vazneh, in Savojbolagh. This was due to an ongoing dispute in which the Ottomans had argued many times that troops sent by the Iranian government to Lajan were considered to be a military threat to the border. Iran, on the other hand, replied that the troops were there to collect revenue and maintain security, rather than for any aggressive action. On the other hand, Russia was weakened by its defeat in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904 and the 1905 Revolution. The disturbance on the Ottoman-Iranian border was close to the Russian border, but the Russians were not strong enough to deal with the question. Meanwhile, Britain and Russia were also involved in the process of negotiations to contain Germany in Europe. It could be understood that in 1905 the Ottomans used the chance to transgress the border.⁴²

On 10 October 1905, the British Consul-General in Tabriz, A. C. Wratislaw, claimed that the areas that the Ottomans had occupied were part of the dominion of Iran, even though the border had never been properly demarcated.⁴³ On 12 October 1905, the Iranian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Moshir al-Dowleh, asked

⁴¹ Gökhan Çetinsaya, 'Challenges of a Frontier Region: The Case of Ottoman Iraq in the Nineteenth Century,' in A. C. S. Peacock, (ed) *The Frontiers of the Ottoman World*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 279.

⁴² Ateş, *The Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands*, p. 228.

⁴³ FO416/25, no. 236, enclosure 3, no. 46, Tabreez, October 10, 1905, Consul-General Wratislaw to Mr. E. Grant Duff.

the British to assist the Iranian Ambassador in Istanbul, Arf'a al-Dowleh, with this matter.⁴⁴ However, there was no result. In December 1905, the Ottoman government proposed a mixed commission to examine the issue, and the Ottoman Sultan stated that their troops were not to be withdrawn until the mixed commission had arrived at a decision.⁴⁵ Three days later the Iranian government replied firmly that according to:

Article III of the last Treaty of Erzeroum (1847) the two parties agreed to abstain from claiming this territory, and at the time this Treaty was concluded Vazne, Lahijan, Serdesht, and other places were in (under) Persian occupation, as was clearly established when the Commissioners of the Four Powers visited the locality.⁴⁶

The places mentioned in this statement were in fact not explicitly mentioned in the 1847 Treaty but it was implied that they belonged to Iran in Article II, which stated that Iran obtained the lands of the eastern part of the province of Zohab from the Ottoman Empire. Arf'a al-Dowleh telegraphed the Iranian government, on 21 December, accepting the Ottoman proposal and not insisting on the withdrawal of the Ottoman troops.⁴⁷ This did not mean that he had succumbed to the Ottomans, but that he was simply attempting to obtain an opportunity to negotiate on the border issue. On 29 December, the Ottoman government continued to insist that the proposed commission should come to a decision before

⁴⁴ FO416/25, no. 236, enclosure 2, October 12, 1905, Mushir-ed-Dowleh to Grant Duff.

⁴⁵ FO416/25, no. 924, December 18, 1905, O'Connor to Grey.

⁴⁶ FO416/26, no. 951, 108, enclosure 3, December 8 (21), 1905, Note communicated by the Persian Government to the Ottoman Government.

Article 3 of the Treaty of Erzerum in 1847: 'The two contracting parties undertake that by this treaty, all other territorial claims being abandoned, engineers and commissioners shall be appointed without delay on either part, so that they may draw the frontier between the two States in conformity with the foregoing article.'

⁴⁷ FO248/866, no. 3, 4139, January 3, 1906, Grant Duff to Grey.

the troops were withdrawn.⁴⁸ Moshir al-Dowleh strongly objected to this, asserting that 'the Persian Government were not prepared to consent to the formation of a Mixed Commission to inquire into the Turco-Persian frontier dispute until the districts of Lahijan and Vazneh had been evacuated by the Ottoman troops.'⁴⁹ However, Moshir al-Dowleh's insistence was not supported by the British and Russian Ambassadors in Istanbul, N. R. O'Connor and Ivan A. Zinoviev. They preferred to obtain a satisfactory solution via negotiations rather than opposition.

On 7 April 1906, O'Connor changed his mind and decided to take further measures on the border issue, as the Ottomans had by now advanced as far as Pasaveh and Dasht, which were undoubtedly in Iranian territory.⁵⁰ Zinoviev felt the same. The Sultan insisted that the places his troops had reached were within his territory, a statement strongly opposed by Zinoviev.⁵¹ On 23 April, O'Connor suggested that Arf'a al-Dowleh should inform the Sultan's Secretary, Izzet Pasha, that he would advise Mozaffar al-Din Shah 'to send Commissioners to Passova, on condition that the Sultan will promise that on their arrival the Ottoman troops shall be withdrawn within the zone in dispute and proceed with the delimitation of the frontier.'⁵² However, the British Foreign Secretary, Grey, gave no further instruction, and meanwhile Russia did not take action on the Ottoman-Iranian border,⁵³ presumably because it was embroiled in revolution. The Ottomans thus advantages over the disputed area.⁵⁴ O'Conner still tried to find an opportunity to ease the tension by telling the Ottomans their 'persistence in a policy which menaced the preservation of order, not only in Persia but also in the regions of the

⁴⁸ FO248/836, no. 179, December 29, 1905, Grey to the British Minister at Tehran.

⁴⁹ FO248/864, no. 1, 394, January 5, 1906, Grey to Grant Duff.

⁵⁰ FO248/864, no. 244, 12800, April 10, 1906, O'Connor to Grey.

⁵¹ FO248/864, no. 260, 13660, April 17, 1906, O'Connor to Grey.

⁵² FO416/27, no. 65, 13834, April 23, 1906, O'Connor to Grey.

⁵³ FO416/27, no. 288, 15445, April 27, 1906, O'Connor to Grey.

⁵⁴ Martin, *German-Persian Diplomatic Relations*, pp. 203-204.

Persian Gulf, could not be viewed by us (Britain) with indifference.’⁵⁵ In My 1906, O’Conor communicated two proposals to the Ottomans:

The first was to the effect that the Porte should agree to refer the whole question to the arbitration of the two mediating Powers, and the second that a joint Turco-Persian Commission should meet, and that, in the event of their being unable to come to an Agreement, the Porte should accept the Anglo-Russian Protocol of 1865.⁵⁶

O’Conor had some justification for this argument, as the 1865 Protocol also stated that ‘the two Mahommedan Governments should themselves mark out the line.’⁵⁷ In fact, the 1869 map made up by Britain and Russia had not solved the border dispute owing to lacking of reliable data, and erroneous judgments. In Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet’s view, even the British and the Russians did not actually agree on the matter.⁵⁸

Beyond dispatching an Iranian commission to Pasaveh on 18 May 1906, Iran was not in any case conciliatory on the border issue at this stage. The Ottoman Grand Vizier claimed that a commissioner, Zekki Pasha, would be sent, but he was not authorised to reach any settlement.⁵⁹ The Ottomans thus showed that they had no will to deal with this issue with Iran. By 18 August 1906, the Ottomans had begun to collect taxes in the area that they had occupied.⁶⁰ Moshir al-Dowleh told Spring-Rice, the British Minister in Tehran, that Iran was disappointed that Britain and Russia were not providing help.

⁵⁵ FO416/27, no. 70, 14433, April 28, 1906, O’Conor to Grey.

⁵⁶ FO416/27, no. 294, 15450, May 1, 1906, O’Conor to Grey.

⁵⁷ Hertslet, *Treaties*, p. 218.

⁵⁸ Kashani-Sabet, *Frontier Fictions*, pp. 29-30.

⁵⁹ FO416/28, no. 480, 24978, July 13, 1906, O’Conor to Grey.

⁶⁰ FO416/28, no. 216, 28191, August 18, 1906, Grant Duff to Grey.

Nevertheless, negotiations between Iran and the Ottoman Empire began in early October 1906. The Ottoman Empire stated that the River Lahan was to be their proposed border line, which ‘would give Turkey Old Lahijan, Vezne, Naalen, Fakir, and other important places.’⁶¹ Grey considered that the proposed line, the River Lahan, would be susceptible to dispute because it was not covered by the Anglo-Russian Protocol of 1865.⁶² Eventually, the Iranian commission decided not to accept the River Lahan line,⁶³ and on 21 November 1906, it proposed Kandil Dagh as the border between Iran and the Ottoman Empire, which made Vazeh a part of Iran. This proposal was rejected by the Ottoman commission.⁶⁴ Meanwhile there were more reports from Ormiyeh that many Ottoman troops had passed through villages in the disputed area.⁶⁵ Up to the end of 1906, therefore, nothing had been achieved.⁶⁶

b. The withdrawal of Ottoman troops in 1907

Half a year later, the border dispute arose again. On 9 June 1907, Ormiyeh was occupied by Ottoman troops,⁶⁷ and Iranian forces also fought Ottoman ones at Mandali on 13 June.⁶⁸ Disputes this time took place in a broader area covering both the northern and southern sections of the border. O’Conor learned from the Ottoman Grand Vizier that their border was under disturbance by Iranian tribes, and the Ottomans claimed that they had no intention of encroaching on Iranian territory.⁶⁹ The Grand Vizier then suggested setting up a mixed Ottoman-Iranian commission to investigate the recent disturbances.⁷⁰ Grey instructed O’Conor to

⁶¹ FO416/29, no. 196, 33806, October 5, 1906, Barclay to Grey.

⁶² FO416/29, no. 399, 33806, October 11, 1906, Grey to Nicolson.

⁶³ FO416/29, no. 326, 37133, November 3, 1906, Spring-Rice to Grey.

⁶⁴ FO416/29, no. 764, 39625, November 21, 1906, Barclay to Grey.

⁶⁵ FO248/878, no. 58, November 24, 1906, Wratislaw to Spring-Rice.

⁶⁶ FO416/29, no. 785, 41364, December 4, 1906, Barclay to Grey.

⁶⁷ FO248/899, no. 144, 18846, June 9, 1907, Spring-Rice to Grey.

⁶⁸ FO416/32, no. 72, 19588, June 13, 1907, O’Conor to Grey.

⁶⁹ FO416/33, no. 384, 21520, June 25, 1907, O’Conor to Grey.

⁷⁰ FO416/33, no. 110, 26720, August 9, 1907, O’Conor to Grey.

urge the Ottoman Empire to withdraw their troops completely.⁷¹ On 17 August 1907, the Ottoman Sultan replied to O'Connor that 'there had been no act of aggression committed except by the Persians, who had crossed the frontier and pillaged the country, and that the Turks had occupied no place not heretofore under Ottoman jurisdiction.'⁷² O'Connor disagreed with this statement. In his view, 'there could be no doubt whatsoever that such places as Mergevar, Sujboulak, and the district of Baradost and village of Ban, close to Urumia, were well within Persian territory.'⁷³ The Sultan did not fully accept O'Connor's reply, and instructed a commission to investigate the disputed area, in order to decide whether to withdraw or not. On 18 August, Mohammad 'Ali Shah agreed to the Sultan's proposal of a commission, but he wanted Britain and Russia to join the commission.⁷⁴ Grey did not accept Iran's invitation directly, saying rather that it would be better to wait to see the results of the Ottoman-Iranian border commission just in case it failed.⁷⁵ Isvolsky, the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs, did not object to Iran's suggestion either, but he doubted whether the commission could reach a satisfactory outcome.⁷⁶ Both the British and Russian governments therefore maintained a reserved attitude to the proposed commission.

On 24 August 1907, a telegraph from the British consul in Ormiyeh, H. F. Stevens, reported a statement by Ottoman troops that 'we have no orders to return; whenever we are ordered to do so, we shall of course obey. And we do not think that such (an) order will be forthcoming, for sixty years ago these districts formed part of Turkish territory,'⁷⁷ The Ottoman Grand Vizier also said to O'Connor that he:

⁷¹ FO416/33, no. 99, 27441, August 15, 1907, Grey to O'Connor.

⁷² FO416/33, no. 114, 27659, August 17, 1907, O'Connor to Grey.

⁷³ FO416/33, no. 513, 28505, August 17, 1907, O'Connor to Grey.

⁷⁴ FO248/899, no. 224, 27654, August 18, 1907, Spring-Rice to Grey.

⁷⁵ FO416/33, no. 143, 27654, August 19, 1907, Grey to Nicolson.

⁷⁶ FO416/33, no. 157, 28068, August 21, 1907, Nicolson to Grey.

⁷⁷ FO416/33, 28753, enclosure, received August 24, 1907, Prince Ala-es-Saltaneh to Mirza Mehdi Khan.

had strongly advocated the withdrawal of the Turkish troops from the places recently occupied outside the contested zone, but that the Minister of War, basing himself on Dervish Pasha's map, refused to admit that the places occupied were in Persian territory or outside the zone.⁷⁸

Iran, therefore, refused to send a commission to meet the Ottoman commissioners if the Ottoman Empire did not withdraw its troops.⁷⁹

At that time, Britain had two concerns with the border issue. The first was the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, which agreed a Russian zone in northern Iran, a British one in the south, and a neutral one in the centre. Generally the two powers agreed their role in the development of Iran remained economic rather than political. The main disputed areas of the Ottoman-Iranian border were included within the Russian zone. Grey telegraphed O'Connor, declaring that, 'we have just signed a Convention with Russia agreeing to respect the integrity and independence of Persia. If the Turkish advance continues, as is probable, unless checked by energetic representations, it will create a most difficult situation for the Russian Government, and indirectly for ourselves.'⁸⁰ Thus, Britain in fact had no right to engage in disputes in northern part of the border. Britain had another preoccupation, however, and that was the Mesopotamian oil fields, which led to Britain being involved in the southern part. O'Connor considered that a mixed commission of Britain, Russia, Iran, and the Ottoman Empire to deal with the issue might be rejected by the Ottomans. This would make the border issue even more difficult to deal with and 'will leave a feeling of great irritation which will

⁷⁸ FO416/33, no. 524, 29266, August 28, 1907, O'Connor to Grey.

⁷⁹ FO416/33, no. 525, 29267, August 28, 1907, O'Connor to Grey.

⁸⁰ FO416/33, 30273, Further Memorandum on the Turco-Persian Boundary Question, Annex (3) no. 117, September 14, 1907, Grey to O'Connor.

seriously militate against our general interests, especially the Mesopotamian oil-fields.⁸¹ Eventually, a new development emerged. After the discussion on 17 September 1907 between O'Connor, the Ottoman Sultan, Izzet Pasha, and the Ottoman Grand Vizier, the British concluded that the Sultan had been misled by Izzet Pasha into thinking that there had been no encroachment on Persian territory.⁸² The Grand Vizier promised that any Ottoman troops would be withdrawn soon.

c. Disturbances and the Ottoman-Iranian commission: 1907-1908

In September 1907, Spring-Rice, the British Minister, and Hartwig, the Russian Minister, in Tehran urged Moshir al-Dowleh to appoint immediately an Iranian commissioner to deal with the border dispute.⁸³ Meanwhile, Wratislaw, who as Consul of Ormiyeh was assigned to deal with the border dispute, asked the Ottoman commissioner, Tahir Pasha, to deal with any requests of the Iranian commission on their arrival, and to follow the 1869 map.⁸⁴ O'Connor claimed that he had 'no desire to see an inch of His Imperial Majesty's (the Ottoman Empire) territory transferred to Persia, just as he is far from wishing that an inch of Persian territory should, in violation of the *status quo*, be occupied by Ottoman troops.'⁸⁵ This statement represented that a main concern of Britain's was over Iran's integrity and independence. Thus, Spring-Rice in Tehran, Wratislaw at Ormiyeh and O'Connor in Istanbul all made efforts to maintain Britain's policy to Iran, and the 1869 map was considered as the only significant source as regards the border issue. Iran was in agreement with Britain on this. On 7 October, however, the

⁸¹ FO416/33, 30273, Further Memorandum on the Turco-Persian Boundary Question, Annex (4) no. 121, September 15, 1907, O'Connor to Grey.

⁸² FO416/33, 30273, Further Memorandum on the Turco-Persian Boundary Question, Annex (6) no. 122, September 17, 1907, O'Connor to Grey.

⁸³ FO248/900, no. 270, 31339, September 19, 1907, Spring-Rice to Grey.

⁸⁴ FO416/33, no. 128, 32070, September 23, 1907, O'Connor to Grey.

⁸⁵ FO416/34, no. 641, 33256, October 2, 1907, enclosure, Draft Note to be communicated to Ghalib Pasha for direct communication to the Sultan (Drafted for literal translation into Turkish).

Iranian President of the Majles expressed a preference for strong measures involving military resistance to the Ottomans. Marling thought otherwise, and considered such action to be disastrous.⁸⁶ Of course from Iran's point of view the help of Britain was essential and the British wished to mediate in the border issue, but any decision related to it had sensitive implications, and in particular the British not want to see the situation deteriorate into armed conflict.

The disturbances worsened when Ottoman troops made an attack on Savojbolagh on 21 January 1908, which Grey described as 'the most distinctly aggressive act the Turks have as yet committed'.⁸⁷ Though the area was close to the Russian border, Isvolsky, told Nicolson, the British Ambassador in St. Petersburg, that so far he had received no evidence of an imminent Ottoman attack on Savojbolagh.⁸⁸ The Russian Prime Minister, Pyotr Arkadyevich Stolypin, preferred to adhere to a strictly defensive policy in dealing with the Ottomans instead of taking military action.⁸⁹ Russia was inactive, and so the Ottoman Empire had an opportunity to maintain their strong attitude on the border issue, denying that any attack had been carried out by their troops.⁹⁰ The Ottoman Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mustafa Asim Turgut, assured Isvolsky that military preparation on the border 'were actuated by no unfriendly spirit to, and in no wise directed against, Russia, and the Turkish Government wished to assure the Cabinet in St. Petersburg of their pacific and friendly disposition.'⁹¹ On 29 February some Ottoman troops were withdrawn from Savojbolagh,⁹² a gesture that clearly intended to show good will on the part of the Ottoman Empire towards Russia, in order to avoid their intervention, rather than towards Iran.

⁸⁶ FO248/900, no. 290, 33415, October 7, 1907, Marling to Grey.

⁸⁷ FO371/495, no. 22, 2303, January 21, 1908, Grey to Nicolson.

⁸⁸ FO371/495, no. 46, 3632, January 27, 1908, Nicolson to Grey.

⁸⁹ Geyer, *Russian Imperialism*, p. 252.

⁹⁰ FO371/495, no. 26, 3452, January 31, 1908, O'Connor to Grey.

⁹¹ FO371/495, no. 29, 5900, February 19, 1908, Nicolson to Grey.

⁹² FO371/496, no. 60, 12634, March 19, 1908, Marling to Grey.

As regards the Ottoman-Iranian border negotiations in Istanbul during March 1908, the two commissions did not come any closer at all. In the first account of the negotiations, the Ottoman commission argued that Iran had bound itself not to interfere with areas now referred to in treaties which had been signed previously, and so Iran's interference in the disputed areas was not based on any rights. Iran, on the other hand, claimed that the 1847 Treaty was the only reference point for the current dispute.⁹³ The Ottoman Empire, meanwhile, insisted that all treaties between the Ottoman Empire and Iran remained valid. In the second round of negotiations the Iranian commission continued to argue that according to the 1847 Treaty, Iran had not encroached on any areas in Ottoman territory. The Ottoman commission criticised Iran for not being able to provide any substantive proof indicating the legitimacy of its claims that particular areas belonged to Iran, and merely claiming that Ottoman actions were unjustified.⁹⁴ Again, the two commissions did not in fact display any mutual understanding at all.

Iran had its own difficulty, which was lack of proof. In a memorandum of 25 March 1908, addressed to Moshir al-Dowleh by Mohtasham al-Soltaneh, the latter complained that the Ottomans had transparently ignored the stipulations of the 1847 Treaty. However, Mohtasham al-Soltaneh admitted that it was difficult to adduce proof,⁹⁵ and for this reason, Moshir al-Dowleh admitted that:

The point which Mohtashem-es-Sultaneh appears to wish to make is that, so long as the Turks are in occupation of Persian territory—by which I presume he means the territory under Persian administration previous to the Turkish move on Lahijan and Vasneh—it will be impossible for the Persians to obtain

⁹³ FO371/496, no. 45, 9634, March 6, 1908, Marling to Grey.

⁹⁴ FO371/496, no. 58, 12632, enclosure, no. 3, February 22, 1908, Wratislaw to Marling.

⁹⁵ FO371/496, no. 102, 15999, enclosure, March 25, 1908, Mohtashem-es-Sultaneh (Persian Commissioner on the Turco-Persian Frontier) to Moshir-ed-Dowleh.

evidence in support of their (Iran's) claim, or, in other words, Mohtashem-es-Sultaneh desires a return to the status quo ante, a quite impracticable proposition.⁹⁶

Without proofs, though, Iran could not sustain its position. Unfortunately Iran had no tradition of preserving documents in archives, and therefore the only documentary evidence at its disposal was that belonging to the British and the Russians. Yet, these two European powers took no action. Iran could do nothing effective. Meanwhile, a report from Van to the Iranian Ministry for Foreign Affairs stated that the situation was not at all favourable.⁹⁷ On 26 April 1908, on the part of the Ottomans, Tahir Pasha argued that 'parts only of the frontier are dealt with by the Treaty of 1847, so that earlier Treaties must be the basis of negotiations respecting the remainder,' and that 'the Agreement of 1869 (by Britain and Russia) as to the status quo was merely provisional.'⁹⁸ On 1 July 1908, he claimed 'all districts east of the status quo frontier (which was viewed as Iranian territory), basing this claim principally on long possession and Article 3 of the Treaty of Erzeroum.' The Iranian commissioner demanded damages for the aggression of Turkish troops, and that the troops should be withdrawn,⁹⁹ also claiming that the Iranian government was ready to adopt the measures necessary to repel any aggression and plunder, in accordance with Article 8 of the Erzerum Treaty of 1847.¹⁰⁰ However, Tahir Pasha replied that 'it was impossible for him to

⁹⁶ FO416/36, no. 102, 15999, April 24, 1908, Marling to Grey.

⁹⁷ No. 1022, As Karpardaz-e Van beh Vezarat-e Kharejeh dar Mowred-e 'Asaker-e 'Osmani dar Sarhad, 3 Rabi'ol Avval, 1326, in Vahed-e Nashr-e Asnad, *Gozideh Asnad-e Siyasi-ye Iran va 'Osmani: Dowreyeh-e Qajariyeh*, Jeld-e 6, Tehran: Mo'asseseh-ye Chap va Entesharat-e Vezarat-e Omur-e Kharejeh, 1372/1993, p. 31. (henceforth *GASIO*)

⁹⁸ FO371/496, no. 97, 14221, April 26, 1908, Barclay to Grey.

⁹⁹ FO371/496, no. 156, 23082, July 5, 1908, Barclay to Grey.

¹⁰⁰ Shomareh 1105, Madeh-e Hashtom-e Qarardad-e Erzerum 1263, 20 Jamadi Assani, 1326, *GASIO*, p. 287.

Article 8: All the two ealted States undertake to do what is requisite in the case of any kind of trepass occurring within the territory of each other, such as robbery, plundering, or murder.

ask the Porte to give him fresh instructions on a point which had already been settled, and which his present instructions covered.¹⁰¹ As can be seen, there was thus no conciliation between the Ottoman and the Iranian commissions,¹⁰² and the Iranian commission kept claiming that the demarcation had been recognised since ancient times.¹⁰³

After the Ottoman Revolution of July 1908, Sir G. Lowther, the British Minister in Istanbul, was anxious that the new Ottoman regime might be unwilling to settle the border dispute.¹⁰⁴ Lowther's anxiety, though, was soon assuaged. On 22 August 1908, the Ottoman Grand Vizier decided to resolve the dispute with Iran, and subsequently indicated that he would send instructions to withdraw Ottoman troops from all areas which were incontestably in Iranian territory.¹⁰⁵ It seemed that the 1908 revolution had caused the Ottoman Empire to change its attitude to the dispute over the Ottoman-Iranian border. As a result of this assurance, the British and Russian governments both believed that Iran could solve the dispute without the assistance of the two powers.¹⁰⁶ For this reason, they no longer felt the need to discuss joint communications with the Ottoman government,¹⁰⁷ and were inclined to leave the dispute to Iran and the Ottoman Empire alone.

d. The formation of the Anglo-Russian commission: 1908-1911

On 27 August 1908, when the Ottoman commission left Ormiyeh, there was no defined border,¹⁰⁸ and more disputes soon became apparent. Even though most

¹⁰¹ FO371/496, no. 195, 26296, July 28, 1908, Barclay to Grey.

¹⁰² No. 1109, Ajtenab as Tasarrof-e Khak-e Iran va Beyan-e Hodud-e Van va Erzerum, 13 Rajab, 1326, *GASIO*, p. 295.

¹⁰³ No. 1112, Ta'yin-e Hodud, 17 Rajab, 1326, *Ibid*, p. 302.

¹⁰⁴ FO371/496, no. 232, 28890, August 19, 1908, Lowther to Grey.

¹⁰⁵ No. 1024, Ekhtelaf-e Sarhad-e Iran va 'Osmani, *GASIO*, p. 34.

¹⁰⁶ FO371/496, no. 150, 29683, August 26, 1908, Nicolson to Grey.

¹⁰⁷ FO371/496, no. 329, 29683, August 29, 1908, Grey to Nicolson.

¹⁰⁸ FO371/496, no. 527, 30963, enclosure 2, no. 52, August 26, 1908, Wratlaw to Lowther.

Ottoman troops were instructed by the Ottoman government to withdraw from the border on 30 August,¹⁰⁹ military camps continued to be maintained in some areas. Tewfik Pasha, the Ottoman Minister for Foreign Affairs, claimed that ‘there is no intention of committing aggressions or encroachments on Persian territory, troops now stationed or subsequently to be stationed in the vicinity of the Persian border are destined solely to maintain the status quo,’¹¹⁰ In reality this referred to the developing Kurdish independence movement, which the Ottoman government of the Young Turks was determined to suppress.¹¹¹ Arf‘a al-Dowleh in Istanbul argued that Ottoman troops had in fact invaded Iran, but the Ottoman Foreign Minister said that no harm at all had been done.¹¹²

On 4 November 1908, ‘Ala’ al-Saltaneh, the Iranian Minister for Foreign Affairs, told Barclay, the British Minister in Tehran, that ‘although the Turkish troops have been diminished in certain points, no place has been evacuated, and further encroachments have been made on certain places, among which is the district of Baranduz (in west Azerbaijan)’¹¹³ The Ottoman Ambassador in Tehran informed Barclay that their movements on the border were for the protection of Ottoman subjects in Ormiyeh and Khoi rather than an advance into Iranian territory.¹¹⁴ News of the advance of Ottoman troops into Iranian territory remained in the following months. Ottoman troops were reported arriving in Dilman in the Salmas district in June 1909 and in Ormiyeh in July, when Iran was in a highly disturbed state owing to the abdication of Mohammad ‘Ali Shah, and in December, Mahmediyar. The purpose of the Ottoman troops at that time was partly to resist the attacks on Ottoman consuls by the Kurds, but their actions were

¹⁰⁹ FO371/496, no. 244, 30039, August 30, 1908, Lowther to Grey.

¹¹⁰ FO371/496, no. 708, 37940, enclosure 1, August 20, 1324 (6th Shaban, 1326) (September 3, 1908), Note verbale communicated by Tewfik Pasha to the Persian Embassy at Constantinople.

¹¹¹ W. G. Elphinstone, ‘The Kurdish Question,’ *International Affairs*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (Jan., 1946), p. 94.

¹¹² No. 1192, Ekhtelafat-e Sarhadi, 1 Sha‘ban, 1326, *GASIO*, p. 556.

¹¹³ FO248/931, no. 296, 42815, enclosure, November 4, 1908, Ala-us-Sultaneh to Barclay.

¹¹⁴ FO248/956, no. 81, 5196, February 8, 1909, Barclay to Grey.

viewed by the Iranians as an encroachment on their territory. The reasons given by the Ottoman government, thus, in response to Iran's protests were always that the Ottomans 'had no intention of permanently occupying territory belonging to Persia,'¹¹⁵ and 'have no desire to do more than protect their own subjects, and disclaim any intention of seeking territorial aggrandizement in Persia'¹¹⁶ In addition, the weakness of Iran also created an opportunity for Ottoman encroachment. Incidents of encroachment into Iranian territory at Ormiyeh, Khoi, Salmas, and Pasaveh were continuously reported by British consuls over the next few months.

The Ottoman government, though, had another proposal on the border issue, namely to submit the dispute to the Hague Tribunal.¹¹⁷ The existence of this Tribunal might account for the confidence with which the Ottoman Empire acted against the wishes of Britain and Russia on the matter of the Ottoman-Iranian border. It was also true that Germany made an impression as a strong power at the Second Hague Peace Conference in 1907,¹¹⁸ and the close relations in the early twentieth century between the Ottoman Empire and Germany in terms of the economy and in particular of railway construction might prove advantageous to the Ottomans at the Hague Tribunal. Grey professed not to understand why the submission of the border dispute to the Hague Tribunal might be the best way forward in search of a solution.¹¹⁹ In fact, Britain did not want to lose its prestige in the border issue, and neither did Russia. The two powers therefore decided to

¹¹⁵ FO371/710, no. 202, 21751, June 10, 1909, Lowther to Grey.

¹¹⁶ FO416/41, no. 242, 26867, July 16, 1909, Lowther to Grey.

¹¹⁷ FO248/1016, no. 134, 15101, April 22, 1911, Barclay to Grey.

The Tribunal had been established in 1899 by the First Hague Peace Conference, which aimed to establish a recognized law throughout the world, and to seek a more reliable justice for civilized peoples and the modern development of international litigation. See James L. Tryon, 'Proposals for an International Court,' *The Yale Law Journal*, Vol. 23, No. 5 (Mar., 1914), p. 428, and Denys P. Myers, 'The Origin of the Hague Arbitral Courts,' *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (Oct., 1914), p. 791

¹¹⁸ Steiner, *The Foreign Office*, p. 115.

¹¹⁹ FO416/48, no. 129, 15101, April 24, 1911, Grey to Buchanan.

assert more control over the border issue, in order to avoid loss of prestige. The objectives of the Anglo-Russian mission were to examine how far the occupied districts had been brought under Ottoman administration and the feeling of the local people towards the Ottomans; and to establish as far as possible what the de facto frontier in 1905 had been.¹²⁰ 'The de facto frontier in 1905' here referred to the situation before the beginning of the whole dispute over the Ottoman-Iranian border in 1905, that is, before the Ottoman occupation of Vazneh and Lajan.

Meanwhile, the Ottoman Empire began to take action to oppose the Anglo-Russian border commission. The Ottoman Minister in Tehran wished to establish an Ottoman-Iranian commission on 1 May 1911. The Treaty of Erzerum in 1847 would be the basis for their negotiations, given its role in Iran's claims in the previous negotiations. The two countries agreed to meet in Istanbul.¹²¹ To the Iranians, this meant that the Ottomans had eventually agreed to pay attention to the 1847 Treaty. Although this might have been a temporary strategy by the Ottoman Empire to conciliate Iran in order to win its support against the Anglo-Russian commission, Iran accepted the proposal to form a commission with the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman government purposely attempted to exclude the Anglo-Russian commission from any influence on the matter. The Ottoman Grand Vizier claimed that he did not see any useful purpose in the Anglo-Russian commission, as its claims regarding territory had not acquired any recognition.¹²² Given this situation, an Iranian report from Azerbaijan expressed the view that it seemed that no resolution was possible.¹²³ The Ottoman Grand Vizier went on to claim that Iran would not be given permission to enter Ottoman territory with the Anglo-Russian commission,¹²⁴ meaning that Britain and Russia

¹²⁰ FO416/48, no. 69, 21716, enclosure, May 9, 1911, Barclay to the Persian Government.

¹²¹ Kurt, 'Contesting Foreign Policy,' p. 973.

¹²² FO248/1011, no. 158, May 18, 1911, Grey to Lowther.

¹²³ No. 1029, Mas'aleh-e khatm-e Omur-e Sarhad, 26 Jamadi Alaula, 1329, *GASIO*, p. 56.

¹²⁴ FO248/1017, no. 188, 20345, May 26, 1911, Barclay to Grey.

had to carry out the work of the commission themselves. When the Russians said that they expected Iran's commissioners to be part of the Anglo-Russian commission, Iran declined.¹²⁵ The Anglo-Russian commissioners, thus, duly arrived in Khoi on 15 June 1911.

2. Signing of protocols and transfer of territories

With the commissions that Britain and Russia undertook from 1911, the Ottoman-Iranian border issue entered a stage of signing agreements. Obviously the two European powers needed to protect their interests in Iran over the border issue. Maintaining Iran's independence and integrity had been a principle of British policy, agreed to by the Russians. It was also stipulated in the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907. Nevertheless, as British interests came increasingly under challenge, notably in the Ottoman-Iranian border issue, as will be explored below, the principle of maintaining Iran's independence and integrity was put to a challenge.

a. The Protocol of Tehran in 1911

Meetings in Tehran on the border issue between Iran and the Ottoman Empire took place in the second half of 1911. A protocol between the Ottoman ambassador in Tehran, H. Hassib, and the Iranian Minister for Foreign Office, Vusuq al-Dowleh, was signed in Tehran on 21 December 1911. This protocol agreed that a commission would meet at Istanbul, that the purpose of its final meeting would be to settle any disagreement on the basis of the Treaty of Erzerum of 1847, and that any remaining problems over the border would be submitted to the Hague Tribunal, if negotiations could not reach a successful conclusion within

¹²⁵ Ateş, *The Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands*, p. 273.

six months.¹²⁶ Although the idea of disputes being submitted to the Hague Tribunal was an Ottoman one, the 1847 Treaty was to be a reference for the border issue, which also fulfilled the wishes of Iran. Mos'ud Kuhestani-Nejad comments that this was a sign that the Ottoman Empire and Iran were finally resolving their nineteenth-century disputes, which was very significant.¹²⁷ It was not the end of the border dispute, but at least the protocol gave the possibility of a breakthrough.

Grey, though, preferred to try and reach a settlement in Istanbul before the expiry date, because it would be undesirable, in his view, for the dispute to go to the Hague Tribunal.¹²⁸ Grey's insistence on reaching a resolution of the Ottoman-Iranian border issue is clear from the way that Britain, as well as Russia, attempted to use their prestige to resolve Ottoman-Iranian differences. The Iranian delegates thus arrived in Istanbul on 10 March 1912, with discussion sessions on the border issue to begin a week later.¹²⁹ With regard to submission to the Hague Tribunal, Buchanan in St. Petersburg was aware that the Ottomans were collating their documents, while the Iranians did not have any to support their case.¹³⁰ The bombardment of the Majlis in June 1908 had led to the loss of Iran's own copies of material relevant to the Treaty of Erzerum of 1847.¹³¹ This circumstance was still advantageous to the Ottomans.

b. Disputes over Mohammerah and the involvement of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company

During the negotiations at Istanbul in early 1912, in which the Ottoman,

¹²⁶ The French version of the Tehran Protocol of 1911 is stored in FO416/51, no. 254, 1960, enclosure, and its English version can be seen in Rezanian, *Iran-Ottoman/Iraq Conflict*, Appendix 2, p. 286.

¹²⁷ Mos'ud Kuhestani-Nejad, *Chaleshha va Ta'amolat-e Iran va Iraq dar Nimeh-e Nokhost-e Sadeh-e Bistom*, Tehran: Markaz-e Asnad va Khadamat-e Pazhuhesi, 1386/2007, p. 18.

¹²⁸ FO416/51, no. 79, 8437, March 2, 1912, Grey to Lowther.

¹²⁹ FO371/1428, no. 52, 10369, March 10, 1912, Lowther to Grey.

¹³⁰ FO371/1428, no. 104, 10967, March 13, 1912, Buchanan to Grey.

¹³¹ FO371/1428, no. 49, 2462, January 17, 1912, Barclay to Grey.

Iranian, British, and Russian delegates took part, the 1848 Note (regarding Mohammerah and the Shatt al-Arab) was then the subject of discussion. From the beginning of the negotiations in 1912, the Iranian delegates argued that their government had no knowledge of the 1848 Note, but in the following sittings they were under pressure to accept its premises. On the other hand, the 1848 Note was not mentioned in the Protocol of Tehran in 1911, which stipulated only that the 1847 Treaty formed the basis for the border. This was probably related to arguments between Britain and the Ottoman Empire on the subject of their respective interests in the Baghdad-Gulf railway line, on which there had been no agreement,¹³² and therefore the Ottomans were using the Iranian border issue to bring pressure on Britain by other means. The 1848 Note eventually did, though, have an impact on the Ottoman-Iranian border in to the Mohammerah area and in connection with the APOC, and this will be discussed below. This area was close to Britain's oil works in Iran, and therefore at this point Britain was paying closer attention to the 1848 Note.

(a) Mohammerah

Mohammerah became specifically involved in the border issue in January 1908, when encroachment by Ottoman troops in the Ottoman-Iranian border area spread southwards. Sheykh Khaz'al, the Sheykh of Mohammerah, was unhappy that the Iranian government had not provided him with any supplies with which to deal with the Ottoman encroachment,¹³³ and Britain, meanwhile, was concerned with Mohammerah because of its long and traditional relationship with the area. Grey telegraphed the following to O'Connor in Istanbul

¹³² Zara Steiner, 'The Foreign Office under Sir Edward Grey, 1905-1914,' in Hinsley (ed), *British Foreign Policy*, p. 50.

¹³³ FO371/495, no. 17, 5428, January 28, 1908, Marling to Grey'

In this district (Mohammerah) His Majesty's Government are not prepared to recognize any other frontier than that laid down by the mediating Commissioners in 1850, as indicated in red (Map 6, the black bold line) on the accompanying sketch map; and the Turkish Government laid no claim whatever to Mohammerah.¹³⁴

The red line (the black bold line) drawn by Britain and Russia on the map represented their mediation between Iran and the Ottoman Empire, and it showed that Grey was attempting to protect Mohammerah from involvement in the border issue. In May 1909 a report by Lieutenant Wilson referred to the 1869 map and stated that no border had been marked on it because the two mediating powers claimed that the two states, Iran and the Ottoman Empire, should mark the border themselves.¹³⁵ On the Ottoman side, the government claimed that 'the town of Mohammerah only is Persian territory, but not on good authority,'¹³⁶ implying that the Ottomans could have authority over the Mohammerah area. According to the British Consul in Mohammerah, W. McDouall, the Ottomans were claiming that they had the right to collect duties in Mohammerah, as the town was not recognised as Iranian by the Treaty of Erzerum of 1847.¹³⁷

The discovery of oil in the South-West of Iran in May 1908 constituted an additional, and important, reason why the British had become more concerned with the southern part of the Ottoman-Iranian border. In July 1909, the APOC also signed an agreement with the Sheykh for to lay pipelines and construct refineries. Obviously, the British needed their interests, such as oil, in the area secured. According to Wilson's survey in March 1910,

¹³⁴ FO371/710, no. 75, 5428, February 25, 1908, Grey to O'Conor.

¹³⁵ IOR/L/PS/10/266, no. 169, 35732, enclosure 2, no. 60, May 26, 1909, Wilson to Cox.

¹³⁶ FO371/496, no. 166, 26811, enclosure 3, no. 56, June 6, 1908, McDouall to Cox.

¹³⁷ IOR/L/PS/10/266, no. 169, 35732, enclosure 4, no. 65, June 12, 1909, McDouall to Cox.

The mediating commissioners' line strikes the Shatt-el-Arab on the east bank, thus placing the sheikh's court-house and official quarters at this point in Turkish territory, and giving to Turkey the control of the head of this important canal on which extensive date groves depend. Even the sheikh's palace and his two other residences would all fall in Turkish territory.¹³⁸

It seems clear that the line drawn up by the mediating powers (in 1850) was not taken seriously by the local people. Grey's preoccupation was with protecting the integrity of Mohammerah from Ottoman claims to sovereignty over it or any part of it. It was vital to the British to maintain the goodwill of Sheykh Khaz'al. In addition, some relevant documents and maps dating from 1850 'were lost in an accident (in 1851) which occurred at the mouth of the Thames to the ship which was bringing them to England,'¹³⁹ and had never been recovered.¹⁴⁰ In August 1910, Grey claimed that 'His Majesty's Government should insist on the recognition of the line at present locally admitted in preference to that laid down by the mediating commissioners.'¹⁴¹ Grey's statement demonstrated that Britain needed goodwill from Sheykh Khaz'al, in order to secure their interests at Mohammerah and its neighbourhoods.

In March 1912, the Iranian delegates in Istanbul, however, thought it feasible to 'lose something near Mohammerah, but gain something in the north if they can come to terms by carrying out the arrangement proposed by the mediating

¹³⁸ FO371/948, no. 2, 18938, enclosure 2, March 12, 1910, Wilson to Cox.

¹³⁹ FO371/948, 18938, June 4, 1910, Foreign Office to India Office.

¹⁴⁰ The accident was also mentioned in Alwyn Parker's memorandum in 1906. FO881/8800, Memorandum on the Turco-Persian Boundary Question (1833 to 1906) by Alwyn Parker, p. 10.

¹⁴¹ FO371/948, 27727, August 12, 1910, Foreign Office to India Office.

Powers.’¹⁴² The Iranian delegates intended to accept the 1848 Note, and lose some of the eastern bank, in return for the withdrawal of Ottoman troops along the border.¹⁴³ Perhaps, to the Iranian delegates, the disputes on the northern part of the border, which arose from 1905, causing conflicts between Iran and the Ottoman Empire, and then Russia, were more serious than Mohammerah. Britain thought otherwise. Grey did not want Iran to abandon anything in the Mohammerah region without first informing the British Minister in Tehran, as Britain was anxious that no change in the *status quo*, as locally recognised, should take place at Mohammerah.¹⁴⁴ Owing to British interests in the Persian Gulf and especially oil, which had been found close to Mohammerah, the British were unable to accept the attitude of the Iranian delegates. The British also sent a note to the Ottomans that Iran’s territorial rights over Mohammerah could not be violated.¹⁴⁵

During the negotiations over the border issue in 1912, the Iranian delegates considered that the 1848 Note did not correspond to the 1847 Treaty, while the Ottoman delegates replied that Iran had to provide a clear answer as to whether it accepted the 1848 Note or not, or else the disputed point would have to be submitted to the Hague Tribunal.¹⁴⁶ On 8 April 1912, Vusuq al-Dowleh instructed the Iranian delegates to oppose the 1848 Note, claiming that the Iranian delegates could not give up Mohammerah in exchange for advantages in the northern section of the border.¹⁴⁷ On the same day, the Ottoman delegates told the Iranian delegates that it was their right to oppose the Note, but that they would still consider submitting the question to the Hague Tribunal.¹⁴⁸ The Ottomans had no

¹⁴² FO371/1429, no. 73, 13599, March 29, 1912, Lowther to Grey.

¹⁴³ Strunk, *The Reign*, p. 232.

¹⁴⁴ FO248/1044, no. 230, April 1, 1912, Grey to Lowther.

¹⁴⁵ Kurt, ‘Contesting Foreign Policy,’ p. 974.

¹⁴⁶ FO248/1044, no. 251, April 5, 1912, Lowther to Grey.

¹⁴⁷ FO371/1429, no. 241, 14625, April 8, 1912, Barclay to Grey.

¹⁴⁸ FO371/1429, no. 85, 15119, April 10, 1912, Lowther to Grey.

interest in agreeing to the Iranian position, because they were confident that the Hague Tribunal would find in their favour. Grey's intention was to maintain the *status quo* at Mohammerah. This formed part of a British strategy to preserve the integrity of Iran, and more specifically, to protect their growing oil interests in the south. Cox of Bushehr, furthermore, claimed that the Mohammerah area, which included the Shatt al-Arab, was not assigned to the possession of the Ottomans in any document,¹⁴⁹ and he endeavoured to keep Mohammerah and the eastern bank of the Shatt al-Arab in Iranian territory.

In July 1912, the Iranian government was for the second time under the regime of the Bakhtiyari Khans, who had had in 1909 been in dispute with the Sheykh of Mohammerah over his agreement with the APOC on oil works. In 1909 and 1910 Sheykh Khaz'al and the Bakhtiyaris also had their differences over local tribal conflicts in Shushtar, and in 1912 there were arguments over the appointment of the governorship of Shushtar.¹⁵⁰ Sheykh Khaz'al believed that the Bakhtiyari government had no knowledge of his territories, and feared that his interests would probably be sacrificed in the border negotiations.¹⁵¹ This was perhaps simply a worry of Sheykh Khaz'al, given that the Iranian Legation in London argued that the Note would not be accepted by Iran as regards Mohammerah.¹⁵² It is also unlikely that Iran would have agreed to cede its own territory in any case.

(b) The Anglo-Persian Oil Company

Negotiations on the Mohammerah question began to involve the APOC. In July 1912, Marling, the British Minister in Istanbul, argued that if the Ottomans

¹⁴⁹ FO416/52, 22056, enclosure, May 23, 1912, Cox to Government of India.

¹⁵⁰ Strunk, *The Reign*, pp. 229-230.

¹⁵¹ FO416/53, no. 741, 30654, July 18, 1912, Cox to Grey.

¹⁵² No. 1040, Omur-e Sarhad-e Iran va 'Osmani, 24 Sha'ban, 1330, *GASIO*, p. 94.

accepted the locally observed line of Mohammerah, there had to be compensation that the Ottomans would expect from Iran elsewhere.¹⁵³ The transfer of the district of Zohab to the Ottoman Empire was one option under consideration by Britain.¹⁵⁴ After all, this area had been in question between the Ottoman Empire and Iran in the 1847 Treaty, and the Ottomans desired to obtain it. However, the APOC possessed oil wells in Qasr-e Shirin, located in Zohab. Grey considered whether the transfer of the area to the Ottoman Empire would affect the APOC or not.¹⁵⁵ In August, Lorimer, the British Consul in Mohammerah, was of the opinion that ‘oil works which are in the tribal country and exposed to attack would enjoy a greater measure of safety under Turkish than under Persian rule.’¹⁵⁶ Lorimer’s opinion indicated the most important consideration for British policy, which was the security of the oil interests.

The Manager of the APOC, Greenway, also considered the transfer of Qasr-e Shirin to the Ottomans to be advantageous. Qasr-e Shirin was part of the oil works area at Chah Shurkh, the first oil well struck in Iran, in 1903. In his view, if Chah Shurkh became part of Ottoman territory this would assist the APOC in its objective of ‘maintaining their wells at Tchiah Sourkh to provide for future local consumption in Mesopotamia’¹⁵⁷ Greenway did, though, make two conditions:

- (1) that the Turkish Government shall recognize our rights by granting to us a concession for the exploitation of oil and the laying of pipe-lines in the ceded territory (Qasr-e Shirin) on exactly the same terms and conditions as those contained in the Persian concession (of 1901), and (2) that the Turkish

¹⁵³ FO416/53, no. 252, 31450, July 24, 1912, Marling to Grey.

¹⁵⁴ FO416/53, no. 259, 31850, July 27, 1912, Buchanan to Grey.

¹⁵⁵ FO416/53, no. 408, 32896, August 7, 1912, Grey to Marling.

¹⁵⁶ FO371/1431, no. 698, 35855, August 20, 1912, Marling to Grey.

¹⁵⁷ FO416/53, no. 405, 34847, August 29, 1912, Grey to Marling.

Government grant to Mr. D'Arcy a concession for the exploitation of oil and the laying of pipe-lines in the provinces of Mosul and Bagdad on the same terms as in the Persian concession (the Oil Concession of 1901).¹⁵⁸

Greenway was, therefore, careful to protect the Company's rights to the 1901 Oil Concession. The proposed supply of oil to the British Admiralty by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company from 1912 led to increased concern in Britain over oil interests. On 20 April 1913, Lowther told Grey that the Ottoman Empire would gain no benefit from the transfer of the territory under Article 10 of the 1901 Concession,¹⁵⁹ which clearly stipulated that oil shares were meant to be paid to the Iranian government only. Oil interests in the Qasr-e Shirin area thus remained secure under the 1901 Oil Concession, and the British would not incur any losses through this article. Initially, Grey reiterated his intention of retaining Chah Shurkh: 'if this region became Turkish, it might be difficult to secure and to maintain the rights acquired by this British company from the Persian Government against possible disregard by the Power in whose territory the field of their operations would then lie.'¹⁶⁰ Eventually Grey assented to the proposed cession of the district to the Ottoman Empire when he became aware that the Ottomans would not benefit under the 1901 Oil Concession, and that it might take place on the condition that the rights of the British company there were duly safeguarded. Qasr-e Shirin, which was part of Iran, would thus have come to form part of Ottoman territory,¹⁶¹ and the ideal of maintaining the independence and integrity of Iran as enshrined in the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 was ceasing to have any weight at all in the complex scenario of international politics.

¹⁵⁸ FO416/53, 37308, September 3, 1912, Anglo-Persian Oil Company to Foreign Office.

¹⁵⁹ FO371/1713, no. 200, 18111, April 20, 1913, Lowther to Grey.

¹⁶⁰ FO416/56, 18556, April 28, 1913, Grey to Benckendorff.

¹⁶¹ Dashtaki, *Engelis*, pp. 166-167.

c. The Protocol of Istanbul in 1913

Under the pressure of circumstances unfavourable to Iran, on 20 August 1912 Vusuq al-Dowleh instructed the Iranian Ambassador in Istanbul, Ehtsham al-Saltaneh, 'not to accept (the) explanatory note until the Persian Government had been fully informed of the nature of the concessions which Persia might be called on to make in the Zohab district.'¹⁶² The Ottoman Ambassador in London, Tewfik Pasha, insisted that the Ottoman Empire would take over the Zohab area, as had been agreed in the Erzerum Treaty of 1847.¹⁶³ However, in the seventeenth session (no date provided), the Iranian delegates suddenly accepted the 1848 Note and announced that

Although the Iranian government does not in principle agree with the Explanatory Note, as a sign of good faith and a sensible response to the efforts which the mediating parties have made for the last seventy years, the Iranian delegation accepts the Explanatory Note as a part of the Erzerum Treaty.¹⁶⁴

This decision by the Iranian delegates might merely be attributable to the long-drawn out sittings over a single issue, along with pressures from the other three countries. Of course Britain and Russia were not on the side of the Ottoman Empire, but the two powers did intend to compromise so as to prevent the issue from being presented to the Hague Tribunal.

During the negotiations, the Ottoman commission made an offer under which Iran could continue to hold jurisdiction in Mohammerah if it would accept the

¹⁶² FO416/53, no. 469, 35623, August 22, 1912, Townley to Grey.

¹⁶³ No. 1043, Ta'in-e Hodud-e Iran va 'Osmani, 23 Ramazan, 1330, *GASIO*, p. 110.

¹⁶⁴ Cited in Rezanian, *Iran-Ottoman/Iraq Conflicts*, p. 53.

Ottoman claims on the whole of the Shatt al-Arab.¹⁶⁵ In August 1912, the Ottomans also agreed to transfer all the mountainous regions of Zohab to Iran, on condition that in return Iran should cede to the Ottoman Empire all the lowlands, the western part of Zohab.¹⁶⁶ The purpose of the Ottoman Empire was therefore to control the whole area around the Shatt al-Arab, where it joined the mouth of the Persian Gulf. In addition, as Kurt's article shows, there were differences over the question of Mohammerah between the Ottoman delegates from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of War. The latter saw Mohammerah as belonging to the Ottomans, which was not accepted by the British. However, a coup in the Ottoman Empire in January 1913 created a new situation. The new Ottoman government following the line advocated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs restarted negotiations with Britain. Britain took advantage of the Ottoman weakness, and responded with a conditional offer that it would provide economic assistance if certain political issues were resolved in Britain's favour; one of these was Mohammerah.¹⁶⁷

Therefore, under the 1913 Protocol, which was signed in Istanbul on 17 November 1913,¹⁶⁸ the Ottoman Empire obtained the Zohab region, which was later to prove to have one of the most important oil reserves,¹⁶⁹ while the question of Mohammerah became quiet. Article I of this Protocol stated that, from the point where the land border joined the Khayin (a branch of the Shatt al-Arab), the border should follow the course of the Shatt al-Arab as far as the sea, leaving under Ottoman sovereignty the river and all of the islands therein, subject to the following conditions and exceptions: "(a) a few islands shall belong to Iran; (b)

¹⁶⁵ Kaiyan Homi Kaikobad, *The Shatt-al-Arab Boundary Question: A Legal Reappraisal*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988, p. 34.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

¹⁶⁷ Kurt, 'Contesting Foreign Policy,' pp. 982-983.

¹⁶⁸ The French version is to be found in FO416/58, no. 921, 51683, enclosure 2, and the English version can be seen in *League of Nations Official Journal*, pp. 201-206.

¹⁶⁹ Kuhestani-Nejad, *Chaleshha*, p. 31.

the port and anchorage of Muhammerah shall remain within Iranian jurisdiction; (c) Ottoman jurisdiction shall not extend over the parts of the Iranian coast, while Iranian jurisdiction shall not be exercised over lands (not specified – but probably on the western bank); (d) the Sheikh of Muhammerah shall continue to enjoy in conformity with the Ottoman laws his rights of ownership in Ottoman territory.” With the Protocol, Ottoman sovereignty over the Shatt al-Arab was confirmed, with the exception of certain islands and of Mohammerah itself. In addition, the Ottomans agreed to regard as Iranian the border city of Qutur, and the Ottomans also gave up their claim to Qasr-e Shirin, in return for certain territory farther north.¹⁷⁰ Eventually, Iran regained control of Qasr-e Shirin under the 1913 Protocol, and Mohammareh was also secured.

Another important article, particularly relevant to the APOC, was Article 7. The Ottoman Empire agreed that the Oil Concession of 1901 should remain in full and unrestricted force throughout the territories transferred by Iran to the Ottoman Empire, in virtue of the provisions of the present Protocol and of Annex (B). The Ottoman Empire also declared its recognition that the (Oil) Concession should be maintained in full force and validity in the transferred territories, and that no other concession of the same nature liable to harm or prejudice the rights and privileges of the APOC would be granted. The Ottoman Empire declared that it had no right to claim the APOC shares paid to the Iranian government, and, in return, the Iranian government waived its right to claim benefits resulting from the exploitation of the Concession within the transferred territories.¹⁷¹ From a British point of view, the 1913 Protocol would favour its interests in Mesopotamia and lead to no losses for the APOC,¹⁷² and was thus highly satisfactory.

¹⁷⁰ Potter, ‘The Evolution,’ p. 67.

¹⁷¹ BP88332, Turco-Persian Frontier Agreement, Translation of Protocol, Annex (B).

¹⁷² Marian Kent, *Oil and Empire: British Policy and Mesopotamian Oil 1900-1920*, London and Basingtoke: The MacMillan Press, 1976, p. 11.

A border commission began work in the Mohammerah area in January 1914, and ended in October 1914. (Map 7) The commission erected 227 boundary pillars, the last of which was put in place just one day before the Ottoman Empire and Russia entered into military conflict in October.¹⁷³ The effects of this commission were strikingly illustrated by the fact that it completed the entire work in well under twelve months, a great deal less than the three years taken by its predecessor.¹⁷⁴ However, the Iranian government never ratified the 1913 Protocol because it did not consent to the outcome in the Zohab area, and neither was the Ottoman ratification ever confirmed, owing to the Empire's entry into World War I, against Britain and Russia.¹⁷⁵ The border as it already stood therefore lasted until subsequent negotiations, which were to be a question between Iran and Iraq in 1937.

Conclusion

The Ottoman-Iranian border dispute was a complex issue that had remained unresolved since the sixteenth century. It consisted of territorial disputes between Iran, the Ottoman Empire and Russia, and also latterly came to involve the rivalry between Russia and Britain. None of the treaties and protocols signed really satisfied any of the states involved, and neither did the Protocol of Istanbul in 1913. On the outbreak of World War I, the disputes inevitably remained unsettled.

After the Ottoman encroachment on the Ottoman-Iranian border in 1905, other cities and towns, such as Ormiyeh, Khoi, and Tabriz, came into question. In 1905, the disputed parts along the northern section of the border were in the area under Russian influence. Owing to disturbances caused by the Kurds in these

¹⁷³ Al-Izzi, *The Shatt Al-Arab Dispute*, p. 36.

¹⁷⁴ G. E. Hubbard, *From the Gulf to Ararat: An Expedition through Mesopotamia and Kurdistan*, Edinburgh: W. Balckwood & Sons, 1916, p. 16. See also Melamid, 'The Shatt al-'Arab,' p. 353.

¹⁷⁵ Schofield, *Evolution*, p. 50.

areas, the Ottoman Empire needed to resolve the border issue, and yet it was not possible for Iran and Russia to leave the Ottomans in control of in areas which were part of Iran and important to the prestige of Russia. However, Russia did not get involved deeply because of its weakness after the Russo-Japanese War of 1904 and its 1905 Revolution. During that period, thus, the Ottoman Empire enjoyed more advantages than Iran as regards the border issue, and the only concrete action taken by the two major powers was to send a mixed commission to the border in 1911. This was because the Ottoman Empire was keen to submit the issue to the Hague Tribunal, which would have proved harmful to the prestige of Britain and Russia.

In the early twentieth century, two agreements had an impact on Anglo-Iranian relations with regard to the border. The first was the Oil Concession of 1901, which granted Britain the right to drill oil in Iranian territory for 60 years. In all the events abovementioned, it can be seen that the British focused on their oil interests along the Ottoman-Iranian border, such as at Qasr-e Shirin, Zohab and Mohammerah, especially the latter. The second agreement was the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, which meant that the British paid less attention to the northern section of the Ottoman-Iranian border. However, there was a significant issue with the southern part of the border in that it, with Mohammerah included, was in the neutral zone. Therefore Britain had to be more assertive over this part of the neutral zone, which by implication would undermine the Convention. Fortunately, for Britain, Article 3 of the 1907 Convention secured previous treaties and agreements as valid, and which meant that the Oil Concession of 1901 was not affected by the Convention. Therefore Britain was able to be more reasonable than might otherwise have happened in its demands over the border.

The British Foreign Office did not become seriously involved in the border issue until 1912, when the 1848 Note was introduced in the negotiations in

Istanbul: this was because it now involved the Mohammerah region, which had played a significant role in British trade for decades. The border dispute became a more serious problem for the British mainly because of the discovery of oil in the South-West of Iran and oil pipelines and refineries at Mohammerah and its neighbourhoods. Britain used the proposals for the transfer of territories such as Qasr-e Shirin as a means of smoothing over its difficulties with the Ottoman Empire, though the APOC was also involved in the transfer. Although Mohammerah and Qasr-e Shirin were both secured as part of Iranian territory in the 1913 Protocol, other areas were ceded to the Ottoman Empire.

In terms of Anglo-Iranian relations, Britain generally supported the maintenance of the territorial integrity of Iran by the 1907 Convention, but when it came to protecting its own vital interests, namely oil, this principle was quickly sacrificed. Britain's involvement in the border issue also saw their strategy of increased interest protection. Annex B attached to the Istanbul Protocol of 1913, securing Mohammearh as a part of Iran and the transfer of another part of Iranian territory to the Ottoman Empire, can be judged a test of Britain's commitment to the 1907 Convention. The Annex in effect secured the oil interests of the APOC in Mohammerah and the whole South-West of Iran. Moreover, it can be seen that the security of Mohammerah and its region remained the highest priority in British policy.

Iran had little influence over the outcome of the border dispute. During its revolutionary period, Iran did not have enough strength to deal with the border issue, influenced as it was by foreign countries. Iran and the Ottoman Empire had different views regarding the demarcation of the border, with Iran preferring to use Anglo-Russian agreements and maps as their reference, while the Ottoman Empire insisted that the 1848 demarcation by Dervish Pasha was the only reliable source. When it came to the 1848 Note, which Iran rejected, in the Istanbul

Protocol of 1913, the outcome was different. The Iranian Minister for Foreign Affairs strongly opposed the terms of the 1848 Note, but in Istanbul the Iranian delegates eventually accepted it owing to great pressure from the other powers. However, Iran's real strategy was not to actually ratify the 1913 Protocol, and the outbreak of World War I in 1914 made any settlement of the border issue most unlikely.

Chapter VI The Employment of Foreign Advisors in Iran and British Policy 1911-1914

Introduction

After the re-establishment of the Iranian constitutional government in July 1909, the quest of the Iranian government for foreign advisors for financial and military purposes impinged upon Iran's foreign relations. At that time, the British and Russians did not want subjects from strong European powers involved in the politics of Iran as it might have had a negative impact on their own power and interests. Iran, therefore, had to search for advisors from powers that were either politically not interested in Asia or from minor powers. As a result, from 1911, an American financial advisor, Morgan Shuster, and several Swedish officials for Iran's gendarmerie, who were respectively helpful to Iran's finances and order in the South of Iran, were recruited by the Iranian government. The effect, however, was that they caused disputes between Britain and Russia, and between both countries and Iran. By the outbreak of the First World War, as will be seen, the employment of foreign advisors in Iran resulted in an international dispute.

Foreign advisors had been recruited in Iran since the nineteenth century. For example, military advisors from European countries were brought in to support modernization and state-building, not least against foreign power interference. The most successful military mission was that of the Russian Cossack Brigade established in the 1880s, and lasting for 41 years.¹ Further advisors from European countries appeared in the Iranian administration. From the end of the

¹ Stephanie Cronin, 'Importing Modernity: European Military Missions to Qajar Iran,' *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (Jan., 2008), pp. 197-201. See also Uzi Rabi and Nugzar Ter-Qganov, 'The Military of Qajar Iran: The Features of an Irregular Army from the Eighteenth to the Early Twentieth Century,' *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 3, May 2012, pp. 333-354, and 'The Russian Military Mission and the Birth of the Persian Cossack Brigade: 1879-1894,' *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 3, June 2009, pp. 445-463.

nineteenth century, a Belgian, Joseph Naus, played an important part in restructuring the customs and postal tax system of Iran.² Although the dismissal of foreign advisors was a goal pursued by the constitutional movement in 1905, in reality their expertise was indispensable to the Iranian government in putting the finances into order. The dismissal of Naus in May 1907 was the sign of the diminishing of foreign influence. Nevertheless, Iran still needed advisors from foreign countries. In 1908, a French adviser, Monsieur Bizot, was brought in to organize the tax-collecting system and make it centralized and accountable, so as to persuade the British and Russians to grant a loan for the financial reform scheme.³ A new director general of the customs, Joseph Mornard, who was the successor of Naus, was considered by some to be pro-Russian.⁴

In addition, after the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, a mutual understanding on Iranian affairs between the European powers was essential, and decisions relating to foreign advisors by Iran were complicated and sensitive matters that had an impact on Anglo-Russian relations. If decisions made in Tehran were to affect Russian interests, Russia would respond seriously and more effectively than Britain did, but the Russian response was nevertheless significant for Britain. Thus Britain, generally to maintain the 1907 Convention and Russia's goodwill, would attempt to ease tension between Russia and Iran, whilst at the same time guarding its own interests.

Regarding foreign advisors, such as Shuster and the Swedish Gendarmerie, there has been some, though not wide, in depth research. Especially notable has been Robert McDaniel's work, *The Shuster Mission and Persian Constitutional Revolution*,⁵ the only book so far to cover the matter in detail. McDaniel studies

² Mongol Bayat, *Iran's First Revolution: Shi'ism and the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1909*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1991, pp. 42-43.

³ Martin, *Islam and Modernism*, p. 170.

⁴ Bonakdarian, *Britain and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution*, p. 102.

⁵ Robert A. McDaniel, *The Shuster Mission and Persian Constitutional Revolution*, Minneapolis:

the Mission against the background of Iran's reform and revolution at the beginning of the twentieth century, and the long tradition of the rivalry between Britain and Russia in Iran. In McDaniel's view, Shuster was inflexible, and did not see, or did not choose to see, the significant implications of Russia's influence. However, the author does not consider the reason why Shuster insisted on his policy of reforms in Iran, and the essential factors that formed British policy towards the incident. In her PhD thesis, *South Persian Rifles*,⁶ Floreeda Safiri looks at the formation of South Persian Rifles in the South of Iran by the British from 1916, with a few pages on the Swedish Gendarmerie as the historical background. Safiri shows that, due to disturbances in the South of Iran from 1908, and that British subjects were being attacked by robbers in 1910, the British had a scheme for a gendarmerie and pressed the Iranian government for a military force in the disturbed area. Stephanie Cronin provides a clear summary of Iran's military development from the nineteenth century to the twentieth century by many studies.⁷ Cronin considers the development of the Cossack Brigade, sponsored by the Russians, and the establishment of a national army under Swedish officers by the Majles from 1910. On the question of the national army, the author argues it was a means for state-building. Cronin mainly looks at Iran's army in the context of the rivalry between Britain and Russia. She does not explore the issue specifically from the perspective of the employment of foreign advisors, and how the British, and the Russians viewed the prospect of Swedish officers in Iran. Generally, the studies provide much information from a single

Bibliotheca Islamica, 1974, p. 206.

⁶ Safiri, *The South Persian Rifles*, 1976.

⁷ Stephanie Cronin, *The Army and the Creation of the Pahlavi State in Iran, 1910-1926*, London and New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 1997; 'Building A New Army,' pp. 47-87; 'Britain, the Iranian Military and the Rise of Reza Khan,' in Martin (ed), *Anglo-Iranian Relations since 1800*, London and New York: Routledge, 2005, pp. 99-127; 'The Constitutional Revolution, Popular Politics, and State-Building,' in H. E. Chehabi and Vanessa Martin, *Iran's Constitutional Revolution: Popular Politics, Cultural Transformations and Transnational Connections*, London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010, pp. 81-97.

dimension, either on Shuster or the Swedish officials, but do not see a broad picture of the Iranian constitutional government struggling to find foreign advisors in the context of great power rivalries and mutual suspicion. This chapter will endeavour to assess the employment of Shuster and the Swedish officials in Iran from the point of view of Iran's resistance and subsequent failure owing to British and Russian pressures.

Therefore, this chapter would take Iran's foreign advisors as the main topic, including the Shuster Mission and the Swedish Gendarmerie, to see what were the key factors having an impact on its foreign relations. It will also discuss how British policy manipulated the issue, and how Anglo-Iranian relations were subjected to Russian influence.

1. Looking for foreign advisors

From 1910, the Iranian government was looking for foreign advisors for both financial and military purposes, with a view not only to putting its affairs in order but also to ensure its independence and resistance to foreign influence. However, Iran, in its state of weakness, particularly financial, did not have the power to achieve its aim. Despite its right to implement its own policies, realistically it still needed to consult with foreign powers, namely Britain and Russia. Anglo-Russian joint approval was the key many of Iran's decisions regarding foreign advisors.

Iran's financial difficulties had been a significant problem for a long time, and the newly-established government of 1909 believed that a foreign financial adviser might be one means of dealing with their predicament in early 1910. Britain and Russia suggested that the Iranian government should select a national of a third power, that was to say, a nation other than Britain or Russia.⁸ Iran had

⁸ FO416/43, no. 42, 3351, January 23, 1910, Nicolson to Grey.

first had Bizot, but he decided to go back to France early in 1910,⁹ and did not want to extend his contract in Iran at all.¹⁰ Grey's preference was for Iran to choose a small, neutral European country.¹¹ Though Iran was keen to extend Bizot's contract, with the addition of seven French experts destined for the Ministry of Finance,¹² Britain and Russia wanted Iran to choose Belgians or advisors from another minor European power.¹³ Meanwhile, France replied that they were indifferent to Iran's finances,¹⁴ and later Belgium replied that they too were not interested.¹⁵ Iran did not want to accept a Belgian advisor, as that would have looked like capitulation to Britain and Russia's suggestion to employ an advisor from a small neutral European country.

On 7 September 1910, in any case, the Majles decided to invite America to send an advisor,¹⁶ a decision based on the desire of Iran to eliminate British and Russian influence on policy decisions. The Russian government was concerned with Iran's choice of an American advisor, despite the fact that the Russian Minister in Tehran, Poklewski-Koziell, had pointed out to his government that America had no political interests in Iran. Barclay, on the other hand, was of the opinion that 'unless we were prepared to insist, it would be useless to raise objections,'¹⁷ but the Russian government still considered that the Iranians were not following the advice given by Russia and Britain,¹⁸ and still preferred a subject from a small neutral European state, and opposed the choice of America.¹⁹ Iran's decision to go to America in any case was partly a form of retaliation

⁹ FO416/43, no. 116, 9331, March 17, 1910, Barclay to Grey.

¹⁰ Telgeraf-e Poklewski-Koziell, 17 March, 1910, *Ketab-e Narenji Jeld-e 4*, p. 64.

¹¹ FO416/43, no. 61, 9431, March 17, 1910, Grey to Barclay.

¹² FO416/44, no. 232, 17830, May 19, 1910, Marling to Grey.

¹³ FO416/44, no. 251, 17830, May 21, 1910, Grey to Nicolson.

¹⁴ FO416/45, no. 234, 30915, August 24, 1910, O'Beirne to Grey.

¹⁵ FO416/45, no. 341, 31147, August 26, 1910, Barclay to Grey.

¹⁶ FO416/45, no. 355, 23652, September 7, 1910, Barclay to Grey.

¹⁷ FO371/963, no. 359, 32944, September 10, 1910, Barclay to Grey.

¹⁸ Sazonoff to the Russian Minister at Teheran. Telegram, Aug. 26-Sept. 8, 1910, *Entente*, p. 95.

¹⁹ FO416/45, no. 291, 34930, September 29, 1910, Grey to Innes.

against the Russian attitude. Russia and Britain did eventually, though, reach a mutual understanding that they would drop their objections to American advisors, given that America did not indeed have any interests in Iran.²⁰ Nevertheless, Sazonov retained his suspicion of America.²¹

Regarding military advisors, the British and Iranians each had the intention to build an army for their own interest. In the South of Iran, the Province of Fars, the British experienced disturbances, such as robberies and murders of British subjects, which had an impact on the security of trading activities. It was a cause of considerable concern to the British, who developed a scheme in 1909 of providing road guards.²² Owing to Britain's concerns with the security of their interests in the South of Iran, which connected to India, good order was the main goal to be reached. Nicolson, the British Ambassador in St. Petersburg, considered that the British government might be forced, much against their will, to intervene in the anarchy in the South of Iran. Otherwise it was at least necessary to give a loan to the Iranian government.²³ In early 1910, Grey was thinking of a small advance to the Iranian government with the condition of the formation of an efficient gendarmerie under foreign instructors throughout the whole of Iran.²⁴ Nicolson telegraphed to Grey that the Russian government argued that the Iranian government could only employ officers from a foreign nationality other than Russian or British after a preliminary agreement with Russia and Britain, and under their supervision.²⁵ Nicolson then suggested to Grey that instructors for the gendarmerie must not be selected by the Iranian government.²⁶ In fact, the British intended that the Iranians control the situation themselves. The increase of force

²⁰ Abraham Yeselson, *United States-Persian Diplomatic Relation 1883-1921*, New Jersey, Rutgers University Press, 1956, p. 111.

²¹ FO371/1185, no. 35, 5156, February 7, 1911, Buchanan to Grey.

²² Safiri, *South Persian Rifles*, p. 20.

²³ FO416/43, no. 13, 1746, January 6, 1910, Nicolson to Grey.

²⁴ FO416/43, 47086, January 3, 1910, Foreign Office to Board of Trade.

²⁵ FO416/43, no. 12, 1372, January 12, 1910, Nicolson to Grey.

²⁶ FO416/43, no. 24, 1756, January 12, 1910, Nicolson to Grey.

by the British in the South of Iran was not a well-judged measure, said Marling.²⁷ Grey agreed that Shuster would be employed in Tehran, while the Swedish officers would be in the neutral zone.²⁸ On the other hand, Iran, of course had wished to give responsibility to their own troops, but, despite the urgency, debates in the Majles ending in nothing.²⁹ By August 1910, however, Iran had not come to a decision to appoint military advisors. As with financial advisors, Marling preferred Iran to choose military advisors from minor European countries.³⁰ Italy was a choice of Iran, but after negotiations between the British and the Italians, the latter refused Iran's request because the Italians learnt that Britain did not regard them as a small power.³¹

In October 1910, thus, Barclay, the British Minister in Tehran, informed the Iranian government that the British government would organize a local force under British officers for the security of the roads if order was not restored within a three month period.³² In some academic studies, this note to the Iranian government is called 'the British ultimatum.'³³ The Iranian Minister for Foreign Affairs told Barclay that it was not possible for a government that was out of money, to improve the conditions of the southern roads. Barclay therefore replied that Britain, and Russia, would accept Iran's application for a loan to restore order in the South of Iran.³⁴ This was supported by the Russians.³⁵ Grey, in fact, viewed Barclay's method as a threat to Iran, and suggested avoidance.³⁶ However,

²⁷ FO416/44, no. 240, 18628, May 25, 1910, Marling to Grey.

²⁸ FO416/44, no. 170, 81862, May 25, 1910, Grey to Marling.

²⁹ Cronin, 'The Constitutional Revolution,' p. 95.

³⁰ FO371/963, no. 330, 29985, August 17, 1910, Marling to Grey.

³¹ FO371/963, no. 139, 33490, enclosure, September 5, 1910, The Marquis di San Giuliano to Rodd. See also Cronin, *The Army*, p. 19.

³² FO416/46, no. 406, 37339, October 14, 1910, Barclay to Grey.

³³ Ahmad, *Anglo-Iranian Relations*, pp. 151-176. See also Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution*, pp. 303-305.

³⁴ FO416/46, no. 413, 38087, October 19, 1910, Barclay to Grey.

³⁵ Cronin, *The Army*, p. 18.

³⁶ FO416/46, no. 301, 38917, October 26, 1910, Grey to Barclay.

Barclay remained his attitude.³⁷ Grey's concern was that if they introduced any kind of military control in southern Iran, it would be an excuse for Russia to continue the presence of their troops in northern Iran.³⁸ Grey preferred to establish a certain military force after communication with Russia.³⁹ Grey insisted that the actions of their military force would not extend their influence into the interior of Iran, but simply provide necessary protection for British subjects and British trade.⁴⁰ In November, Barclay informed Grey that a number of Swedes were designated to organise the road guards. A minor power was much more likely to provide a good impression, in Barclay's view.⁴¹ Subsequently, a gendarmerie in Fars Province under foreign officers, called 'the Government Gendarmerie', was announced by the Iranian Minister for Foreign Affairs in the Majles in January 1911.⁴² Therefore, as a result of Iran's efforts and in this case Britain's pressure, the Swedish Gendarmerie for the South of Iran eventually emerged as a reality.

Thus, the quest for foreign advisors for financial and military purposes by the Iranian constitutional government from 1911, could not overlook the views of Britain and Russia. Iran was fully aware of the pressures from Britain and Russia, and therefore neutral countries which had no ambitions in the country and which would be under Iran's control, should be good choices.⁴³ This implied that, with the two European powers' approval, the employment of foreign advisors would not result in intervention by foreign powers. Indeed, the Swedish officials were actually introduced with the support of Britain to protect its interests.

³⁷ FO416/46, no. 428, 39148, October 27, 1910, Barclay to Grey.

³⁸ FO416/46, no. 165, 39179, October 21, 1910, Rodd to Grey.

³⁹ FO416/46, 39398, November 4, 1910, Grey to M. de Etter.

⁴⁰ FO416/46, 40001, no. 328, November 7, 1910, Grey to Barclay.

⁴¹ FO416/46, no. 466, 41288, November 12, 1910, Barclay to Grey.

⁴² FO416/47, no. 6, 424, January 4, 1911, Barclay to Grey.

⁴³ Cronin, 'Building A New Army,' p. 71.

2. The Shuster mission and the Stokes incident

a. The employment of Shuster

On 25 December 1910, the Iranian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hosein Quli Khan Navab, instructed the Iranian Legation in Washington to make a request to the American government to suggest a financial expert for Iran.⁴⁴ Since the need to reform the finances was acknowledged as a pressing problem, and America had no particular interest in Iran, the British made no objection. The American President Taft announced on 28 December that Morgan Shuster was the best choice for a financial advisor for Iran.⁴⁵ President Taft had confidence in Shuster because he was a lawyer and financial expert with experience in Customs, in Cuba from 1899 to 1901, and in the Philippines in 1906. In terms of sending financial advisors abroad, American foreign policy at the time was to encourage and support American capitalists abroad to bring home significant profits and to provide an incentive for American investments.⁴⁶ On 14 February 1911, Shuster was appointed Treasurer-General of Iran.⁴⁷ In his memoirs, Shuster did not mention why he accepted the post, simply saying that he had never dreamt of going to Iran.⁴⁸ McDaniel's work provides many details about Shuster's mission, but sheds no light on Shuster's motives, and Yeselson provides evidence why the American government considered Shuster to be the best choice, but, again, not the reason why Shuster accepted the mission.⁴⁹

The State Department of the United States dissociated the American government from any connection with Shuster and his team, who were instead held to be private citizens employed by a foreign government.⁵⁰ It seemed that

⁴⁴ Shuster, *The Strangling of Persia*, p. 3.

⁴⁵ Yeselson, *United States-Persian Diplomatic Relation*, p. 112.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 112-113.

⁴⁷ FO416/47, no. 42, 6679, February 14, 1911, Bryce to Grey.

⁴⁸ Shuster, *The Strangling of Persia*, p. 4.

⁴⁹ Yeselson, *United States-Persian Diplomatic Relation*, pp. 112-113.

⁵⁰ Mehdi Heravi, *Iranian-American Diplomacy*, New York: Theo. Gaus' Sons., 1969, p. 31.

American advisors abroad were all sent as private citizens, rather than as representatives of the American government, and Shuster himself recalled that he understood that he was not going to Iran as a representative of the American government.⁵¹ The American government's indifference to the mission was probably because, in terms of foreign affairs, they were more interested in Latin America, and did not have political or economic interests in Iran.⁵² Eventually, in any case, Shuster left for Iran with seventeen members of staff in April 1911.⁵³ An American newspaper, the *New York Times*, revealed that there had been a number of instances when the United States had sent experts to assist other countries with financial or administrative problems, but Shuster was without an exact precedent as an American citizen as he was assigned a high-ranking position in Iran.⁵⁴

As soon as he arrived, in May 1911, Shuster submitted a bill on foreign loans to the Iranian government. This was passed by the Majles on 30 May 1911, with the purpose of 'the collection of Government revenue and taxes of all kinds,' 'the control of expenditure of all kinds, and the keeping of the accounts pertaining thereto,' as well as 'banking affairs, the Mint, exchange relating to the loan, interests, sinking fund.' The final version consisted of four articles, the most significant of which were:

Article 2: Until the new system has been introduced into the Ministry of Finance, control respecting the loan and the above-mentioned expenditure will be provisionally entrusted to a branch which will be specially formed

⁵¹ Shuster, *The Strangling of Persia*, p. 4.

⁵² Arthur C. Millspaugh, *Americans in Persia*, New York: Da Capo Press, 1946, pp. 17-18.

⁵³ Seyyed Ali Mujani, *Barrasi Monasebat-e Iran va America (1851 to 1925 Miladi)*, Tehran: Mo'asseseh-ye Chap va Entesharat-e Vezarat-e Omur-e Kharejeh, 1375/1996, p. 78.

⁵⁴ Five Young Yankees will Reform Persia's Finances, *The New York Times*, April 16, 1911, p. SM9.

under the supervision of the Treasurer-General; Article 3: At the end of every month the Ministry of Finance will include in his report presented to the Government a financial statement regarding the loan'⁵⁵

Shuster was authorised by the bill to know all the details regarding loans, and a law on financial regulation, in twelve articles, was then passed by the Majles on 12 June 1911. Article I stated that Shuster was 'charged with the direct and effective control of all financial and fiscal operations of the Persian government,' while Article IV enabled him to 'establish the services he may consider essential for the organization of each of the different provinces.' Article V gave him power of authorisation, stating that 'no Government expenditure shall, without his signature—in the case of direct mandates, –or without his authorization—in the case of credit orders, –be made.'⁵⁶ This law, which was passed in the Majles with an overwhelming majority,⁵⁷ thus brought all the financial issues of Iran under the supervision of Shuster.

As a result of the June 1911 Law, the Imperial Bank of Persia had to refuse to recognise a cheque from Mornard because it had not been signed by Shuster. Owing to the close relationship between Mornard and the Russians, the latter objected to this sudden change having been made without their having been notified in advance,⁵⁸ and Mornard argued that he was only responsible to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance of Iran.⁵⁹ The Iranian cabinet decided to invite both him and Mornard to a meeting to settle their differences in July. The

⁵⁵ FO416/49, no. 84, 25669, enclosure, The Medjliss, May 30, 1911, Bill for the Control of the Loan Money. See also Shuster, *The Strangling of Persia*, p. 356.

⁵⁶ FO371/1191, no. 95, 25678, enclosure, Finance Minister's Bill presented to the Medjliss at the Sitting of the 8th June, 1911, and passed 13th June, 1911. See also Shuster, *The Strangling of Persia*, pp. 356-357,

⁵⁷ *FRUS*, no. 891.51/71, no. 132, Extract, June 13, 1911, The American Minister to the Secretary of State, p. 682.

⁵⁸ McDaniel, *The Shuster Mission*, p. 131.

⁵⁹ FO371/1192, no. 233, 26368, July 6, 1911, Barclay to Grey.

meeting concluded with a pledge of cooperation between Shuster and Mornard, but in fact the two men's hostility remained.⁶⁰ Mornard believed that he would be supported by Russia on this issue,⁶¹ but the British government took the view that Russia should accept Shuster's policy, as it might well lead to improvements in Iranian finances.⁶² This dispute showed that Shuster's task was a difficult one, given that it involved not only Iranian finances but also complex Anglo-Russian relations both with each other and with Iran.

b. The Stokes incident

As regards the country's finances, it was Shuster's view that they were very tangled, and indeed that 'there were no Persian finances in any ordinary sense of the word.'⁶³ In the opinion of Shuster, on the other hand, the officials of the Ministry of Finance were inexperienced, and this situation was the same throughout the provinces.⁶⁴ Shuster's proposal to reform Iran's finances, then, involved setting up an armed group, the Treasury Gendarmerie, to collect tax throughout the country.⁶⁵ Shuster decided to appoint Claude B. Stokes, a British Major in the Indian Army, to lead the Treasury Gendarmerie, a decision which was accepted by the Majles on 6 July 1911. Stokes's duties would involve assignments in northern Iran, which had been part of the Russian zone under the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, where Britain had no right to undertake any action.

Barclay realised that this appointment would lead to disputes, and so he telegraphed Shuster on 14 July 1911 to point out that the appointment of Stokes

⁶⁰ McDaniel, *The Shuster Mission*, p. 131.

⁶¹ FO416/49, no. 233, 26368, July 6, 1911, Barclay to Grey.

⁶² FO371/1192, no. 203, 27547, July 13, 1911, Grey to Barclay.

⁶³ Shuster, *The Strangling of Persia*, p. 38.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 49.

⁶⁵ Cronin, *The Army*, p. 20.

might give rise to international jealousy, and that a subject of some other minor power would be easier for the Russians to accept. Barclay asked Shuster to find an alternative,⁶⁶ but Shuster replied that he had chosen Stokes on the basis of his 'military training, four years' sojourn in Persia, knowledge of the country, of the Persian language, ' Shuster emphasised that his decision was not influenced by political considerations.⁶⁷ On the part of Russia, Neratov, the Russian Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs, had no objection to the Treasury Gendarmerie as long as it was led by an officer from one of the smaller nations, and a Russian or British officer could only be appointed as a last resort.⁶⁸ On 19 July 1911, however, the British Foreign Office agreed that Stokes should be in charge of the Treasury Gendarmerie, though Barclay informed Shuster that Stokes had to resign his commission in the Indian Army before accepting the post in the Gendarmerie.⁶⁹ Grey was aware that the presence of a British subject in the Russian zone in Iran would cause problems, but he did not wish to prevent Shuster from employing Stokes for his reforms. The Russian Ambassador in London, Count Benckendorff, telegraphed Neratov that Grey did not want to see himself be accused of having placed obstacles in the way of the financial reorganisation of Iran.⁷⁰ It may be argued that Shuster's insistence on his views, such as on the appointment of Stokes, was because he felt that Iran was running out of time for reform, and thus Stokes was his only choice. The Majles's attitude was that the presence of Shuster and Stokes would help to fulfil their anti-Russian strategy, as well as carrying out the desired reforms. It was not so much that Shuster was inflexible in his ignoring of Russian influence in Iran, but more that

⁶⁶ Shuster, *The Strangling of Persia*, p. 373.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ FO371/1192, no. 148, 27233, July 11, 1911, Buchanan to Grey.

⁶⁹ Shuster, *The Strangling of Persia*, p. 377.

⁷⁰ The Russian Ambassador at London to Neratoff. Telegram, July 13-26, 1911. No. 160, *Entente*, p. 106.

the Majles used Shuster as a strong complement to their anti-Russian policy.

Count Benckendorff, on the other hand, was not in favour of the presence of a British official in the Russian zone, even though Grey explained that Shuster's appointment had no political implications at all.⁷¹ Stokes decided to resign his post in the Indian Army on 30 July 1911.⁷² Neratov was of the opinion that Russia should also have a Russian official with the same responsibilities as Stokes in northern Iran, if Stokes was employed in the Treasury Gendarmerie.⁷³ He asked for Britain's support for giving Russia freedom of action, within a framework of respect for Iranian independence.⁷⁴ Neratov instructed Poklewski-Koziell, the Russian Minister in Tehran, to tell the Iranian government that: 'The Russian Government would regard the appointment, if made, as an unfriendly act, and reserve to themselves the right to take such measures as they may consider necessary to safeguard Russian interests in Northern Persia.'⁷⁵ Neratov's concern over the security of Russian interests was reasonable, though Grey said that he could do nothing, insisting that Britain had no right to object to a British subject accepting a post in another part of the world. Grey, nevertheless, did advise that Shuster should select an official from a small, neutral European state. On 8 August 1911, Barclay warned the Iranian government that it could insist on employing Stokes only if his activities did not extend to the Russian sphere of influence.⁷⁶ Grey did not give further instructions, while Barclay in Tehran expressed clearly his view that Stokes should not accept the new position.

From August 1911 onward, Grey's position on the Stokes appointment gradually shifted. He increasingly advanced the opinion that Stokes's activities

⁷¹ FO371/1192, no. 210, 30212, July 26, 1911, Grey to Buchanan.

⁷² FO371/1192, no. 300, 29917, July 30, 1911, Barclay to Grey.

⁷³ FO371/1192, no. 172, 30512, August 2, 1911, Buchanan to Grey.

⁷⁴ Marina Soroka, *Britain, Russia and the Road to the First World War: The Fateful Embassy of Count Aleksandr Benckendorff (1903-16)*, Surrey: Ashgate, 2011, pp. 207-208.

⁷⁵ FO371/1192, no. 176, 30953, August 5, 1911, Buchanan to Grey.

⁷⁶ Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia*, p. 588.

should be restricted to the South of Iran,⁷⁷ and Barclay was also of the view that ‘the general European situation (meaning thereby the Moroccan question) was such that the British Government felt compelled to take this attitude.’⁷⁸ On the part of Iran, Vusuq al-Dowleh, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, declared that his country would not let Stokes take part in any military operations.⁷⁹ Vusuq al-Dowleh’s statement had the aim of persuading Russia to agree to Stokes’s appointment, and he did not want to adopt Grey’s earlier suggestion ‘to restrict Stokes’s work to the south,’ because this would suggest that the Iranian government had acquiesced to the division of Iran into three parts as agreed in the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907.⁸⁰ The Iranian Majles assured Barclay that Stokes’s term in the Treasury Gendarmerie would be for a maximum of three years, and after that an Iranian or another alternative from a small, neutral European power would continue with the work. If Russia would not agree to Stokes’s presence, then Shuster would assign Stokes to Tehran alone, and not to other parts of northern Iran.⁸¹ Apparently Vusuq al-Dowleh and the Majles soon noticed the emerging risk emerging, and responded to Russian objections.

Shuster also became gradually more aware of the complex situation of Iran’s foreign relations, and changed his decision on Stokes. On 21 August 1911 Shuster informed Barclay that Stokes’s work in northern Iran would be confined to Tehran, that he would stay in Tehran for less than six months and that at the end of his tenure he would be sent to Shiraz. Shuster also agreed a counter appointment of a Russian officer in the northern zone,⁸² telling Poklewski-Koziell that ‘in his future activity in Persia he would duly consider the interests of both Russia and

⁷⁷ Shuster, *The Strangling of Persia*, p. 78.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

⁷⁹ FO371/1192, no. 318, 31422, August 9, 1911, Barclay to Grey.

⁸⁰ FO371/1192, no. 319, 31524, August 9, 1911, Barclay to Grey.

⁸¹ FO371/1192, no. 326, 31830, August 12, 1911, Barclay to Grey.

⁸² FO371/1192, no. 348, 33048, August 21, 1911, Barclay to Grey.

England,⁸³ Beckendorff in London also telegraphed Neratov noting that Shuster's attitude was changing.⁸⁴ Both the Russian Ministers in Tehran and London were aware of the change in Shuster's attitude to the Stokes event. Nevertheless, Shuster would not yield further. On 2 September 1911, Poklewski-Koziell asked Shuster, whether, after his six-month term, Stokes was to work in a post outside the Russian zone.⁸⁵ Shuster argued that Stokes could only be under his orders and could pursue no other policy than one which he himself might direct.⁸⁶ Shuster could accept a shorter term for the employment of Stokes, but he insisted that he did not want to give up on the appointment. Poklewski-Koziell, though, did not accept this reply. Shuster was unable to convince Russia that there was no political intention behind the appointment.

Eventually, Stokes's resignation note to the Indian government was refused on 2 October 1911,⁸⁷ as a result of pressure applied by the British Foreign Office.⁸⁸ Britain thus came round to the view that Stokes should not be appointed, in order not to endanger its relations with Russia as enshrined in the 1907 Convention. Russia, meanwhile, was concerned about its prestige in Iran if a British official was allowed to work in the north. Nevertheless, Benckendorff argued that 'a close understanding with England is more important and more necessary for us than ever.'⁸⁹ The two powers had to co-operate with each other, and the British government asked Stokes to leave Tehran as soon as possible,⁹⁰ which he eventually did on 14 December 1911,⁹¹ returning to his regiment in

⁸³ The Russian Minister at Teheran to Neratoff. Telegram, Aug. 9-22, 1911. No. 703, *Entente*, p. 108.

⁸⁴ The Russian Ambassador at London to Neratoff. Telegram, Aug. 10-23, 1911. No.193. *Ibid*, p. 109.

⁸⁵ Shuster, *The Strangling of Persia*, pp. 391-392.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p. 393.

⁸⁷ FO416/50, 39056, October 11, 1911, Foreign Office to India Office.

⁸⁸ McDaniel, *The Shuster Mission*, p. 177.

⁸⁹ The Russian Ambassador at London to Neratoff. Letter, Oct. 7-20, 1911, *Entente*, p. 111.

⁹⁰ FO416/50, no. 418, 48277, December 5, 1911, Grey to Barclay.

⁹¹ FO371/1192, no. 691, 50091, December 14, 1911, Barclay to Grey.

India. Russia was well aware that the appointment of Stokes was a reasonable one, but it also knew that it would be viewed as a diplomatic victory for Britain if Stokes was appointed.⁹² In other words, for Russia the issue was one of prestige, and in the end Russia won.

c. The dismissal of Shuster

The Stokes incident did not end Shuster's disagreements with the Russians. On 21 October 1911, Shuster published a letter in the (London) *Times*. He began by criticising Russia for not being neutral as far as Iranian affairs were concerned, as was demonstrated by its support of the ex-Shah, despite the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, and he then went on to argue that the British government had threatened him over the appointment of Stokes by 'warning the Persian Government that they ought not to persist in the appointment of Major Stokes, unless he is not to be employed in Northern Persia. If the Persian Government do persist, His Majesty's Government will recognize Russia's right (sic) to take such steps as she thinks are necessary in order that her interests in Northern Persia may be safeguarded.'⁹³ Shuster also complained that Britain had displayed very different attitudes to Stokes's appointment in July and August 1911.

In his memoir, though, Shuster revealed that he had read a document written by Spring-Rice in Tehran in 1907 which interpreted the spirit of the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, in Edward Browne's *The Persian Revolution 1905-1909*.⁹⁴ This 'document,' according to Shuster, outlined two fundamental points in the Convention: 'Firstly, neither of the two Powers will interfere in the affairs of Persia unless injury is inflicted on the persons or property of their

⁹² McDaniel, *The Shuster Mission*, p. 147.

⁹³ Shuster, *The Strangling of Persia*, p. 366.

⁹⁴ In fact this 'document' was produced in the newspaper *Habl al-Matin* and purported to be a translation from an original in English addressed to the Persian Minister for Foreign Affairs. See Browne, *The Persian Revolution*, pp. 190-192.

subjects; secondly, negotiations arising out of the Anglo-Russian Agreement must not violate the integrity and independence of Persia.' The 'document' supposedly also recorded Isvolsky's statement that, with the support of the Convention, 'Persia aided and assisted by these two powerful neighbouring States, can employ all her powers in internal reforms,' concluding that 'in the future Persia will be forever delivered from the fear of foreign intervention, and will thus be perfectly free to manage her own affairs in her own way, whereby advantage will accrue both to herself and to the whole world.' However, the British Foreign Office had never seen the document.⁹⁵ It should be noted that Shuster did not question the sentiments expressed in the document, or whether they were likely to be in accordance with reality. It may also be argued that there was no proof indicating whether Shuster had indeed seen the document in Browne's book before his mission to Iran, or whether he studied it after his return to America, given that Shuster's memoir was published after this, in 1912. The mention of Spring-Rice's 1907 document in his memoir in 1912 may perhaps be viewed as a means to justify his actions in Iran.

Shuster continued to dispatch British officials from the Treasury Gendarmerie to Tabriz, Shiraz and Isfahan, and Russia strongly objected in the case of Tabriz, which was in the Russian zone.⁹⁶ To Russia this practice was also not acceptable, since, as with Stokes, it changed the *status quo*.⁹⁷ Russia threatened to occupy northern Iran and to dispatch troops to Tehran,⁹⁸ and Iran received an ultimatum from Russia on 11 November 1911 demanding an apology, and threatening that, should it not be forthcoming, Russian troops would be sent to Tehran.⁹⁹ It was Grey's view that, in order to avoid Russian troops entering

⁹⁵ Shuster, *The Strangling of Persia*, p. 275.

⁹⁶ FO416/50, no. 265, 43926, November 6, 1911, O'Beirne to Grey.

⁹⁷ Soroka, *Britain*, p. 207.

⁹⁸ Yapp, '1900-1921,' p. 15.

⁹⁹ Shuster, *The Strangling of Persia*, p. 161.

Tehran, Shuster must leave.¹⁰⁰ On 16 November 1911, the Iranian Prime Minister, Samsam al-Saltaneh, whose cabinet had been convened in July 1911, ordered Shuster to withdraw the Treasury Gendarmerie by 26 November.¹⁰¹ Samsam al-Saltaneh's action was to decrease Shuster's authority in order to ease the tension between Iran and Russia. America, meanwhile, had no intention of becoming involved in the problems Shuster had caused by his actions in Iran.¹⁰² On the part of Britain, Grey regretted his former attitude that America would not cause any political disputes in Iran. 'But it had turned out that Mr. Shuster went to such an extreme of political innocence that he disregarded the peculiar situation in Persia, and by not taking any political considerations into account'¹⁰³

On 21 November 1911, after Russia's first ultimatum, Samsam al-Saltaneh and Sardar As'ad communicated to Barclay their view that the Majles and Shuster had not only contributed to the Iranian government's inaction, but had also gravely endangered Iran by provoking Russia. Samsam al-Saltaneh told Barclay that they could not remain spectators of the ruin of their country, and were hesitating as whether to use their position to set up a *coup d'état* and take power into their own hands.¹⁰⁴ In the view of the Bakhtiyari Khans, they were the only force capable of stopping the disturbances. Barclay did not wish to comment on this.¹⁰⁵ Grey had no appetite for any dramatic change in Tehran, and he limited himself to stating that a strong and independent Iran was what Britain wanted, even though it was impossible.¹⁰⁶ Grey also believed that Russia should not simply make complaints against Shuster, but should make a formal demand to

¹⁰⁰ Viscount Grey of Fallodon, *Twenty-Five Years 1892-1916 Volume I*, New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1925, pp. 163-164.

¹⁰¹ FO416/50, no. 578, 45672, November 16, 1911, Barclay to Grey.

¹⁰² FO416/50, no. 299, 46677, November 21, 1911, Grey to Buchanan.

¹⁰³ FO416/50, no. 472, 47960, November 23, 1911, Grey to Bryce.

¹⁰⁴ FO416/50, no. 592, 46540, November 21, 1911, Barclay to Grey.

¹⁰⁵ Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia*, p. 638.

¹⁰⁶ Grey, *Twenty-Five Years Volume I*, p. 163.

have him removed.¹⁰⁷ Shuster's letter in the *Times* was turned into a pamphlet that was circulated in Tehran, which led to Russia considering formulating new demands on Iran and not withdrawing the Russian troops at Qazvin.¹⁰⁸

On 25 November, Vusuq al-Dowleh sent a telegraph informing Washington that Russia was trying to destroy Iran's independence: 'I am certain that the proposal which they (Russians) will make to us would be the dismissal of Mr. Shuster, and on this matter the affair of Persia and Russia will reach the point of extreme difficulty, in such a manner that we might either consent to Mr. Shuster's removal or to the actual, immediate destruction of the country.'¹⁰⁹ There was no response from America. On 26 November 1911, Neratov duly announced a second ultimatum to Iran, which demanded the following:

1. Mr. Shuster to be dismissed, and the engagement to be given by the Persian Government in accordance with demand No.2 to apply to all other foreign officials already appointed by Mr. Shuster.
2. The Persian Government must give an engagement that they will obtain the consent of the Russian and British Legations before offering any post in the Persian service to persons of foreign nationality.
3. Expenses incurred by the present (Russian) military expedition to be reimbursed by the Persian Government.¹¹⁰

The principal purpose of the first ultimatum was to ask Iran for an apology, but the second included three serious demands, detailed above. The British hoped that once the Iranians had complied with the two original Russian demands, the

¹⁰⁷ Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution*, p. 329.

¹⁰⁸ Neratoff to the Russian Ambassador at London. Telegram, Nov. 10-23, 1911. No. 1861, *Entente*, pp. 124-125.

¹⁰⁹ *FRUS*, no. 761.91/18, no. 64, November 25, 1911, The Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Persian Legation, p. 683.

¹¹⁰ FO416/50, no. 303, 47134, November 26, 1911, Buchanan to Grey. See also Neratoff to the Russian Ambassador at London. Telegram, Nov. 13-26, 1911. No. 1881, *Entente*, p. 127.

Russian troops would be withdrawn from Qazvin.¹¹¹ The attitude of the American government to the incident, meanwhile, was that it was inappropriate to offer any suggestions,¹¹² and they assured Russia that they were not be concerned with Shuster much,¹¹³ and certainly did not want to break off their friendly relations with either Britain or Russia because of the Shuster incident.¹¹⁴ On 29 November 1911, the second Russian ultimatum was received by Iran, accompanied by a demand that the latter comply within forty-eight hours.¹¹⁵ It was Barclay's view that Iran should yield to Russia's demands,¹¹⁶ and Grey was also of the same opinion.¹¹⁷ Nevertheless, Shuster told the American Legation in Tehran that the Majles had not revoked his contract,¹¹⁸ and on 1 December the Majles also rejected the second ultimatum.¹¹⁹ The American government stated that they had no will 'to interfere or advise as to the present decisions and political questions of paramount importance to Persia and directly affecting other powers must be clearly understood by the Persian Government.'¹²⁰ On 7 December 1911 the Majles asked America for help, stating that:

The ultimatum of the Russian Government, threatening our independence, having been rejected with one accord by a country which, jealous of its liberties (sic), tries to preserve it at any price, the Russian Government would impose it (sic) upon us by armed force. Our one offense is, perhaps, that we

¹¹¹ FO416/50, no. 301, 47132, November 26, 1911, Buchanan to Grey.

¹¹² Heravi, *Iranian-American Diplomacy*, p. 33. See also *FRUS*, no. 761.91/10, Aide Mémoire, November 27, 1911, The Department of State to the Persian Legation at Washington, pp. 683-684.

¹¹³ No Move by us to Save Shuster, *The New York Times*, November 29, 1911, p. 3.

¹¹⁴ Mujani, *Barrasi Monasebat-e Iran va America*, p. 85.

¹¹⁵ FO416/50, no. 610, 47828, November 29, 1911, Barclay to Grey.

¹¹⁶ FO416/50, no. 611, 47834, November 29, 1911, Barclay to Grey.

¹¹⁷ FO416/50, no. 315, 48522, December 2, 1911, Grey to Buchanan.

¹¹⁸ *FRUS*, no. 761.91/12, November 30, 1911, The American Minister to the Secretary of State, p. 684.

¹¹⁹ FO416/50, no. 619, 48064, December 1, 1911, Barclay to Grey.

¹²⁰ *FRUS*, no. 761.91/12, December 1, 1911, The Secretary of State to the American Minister at Tehran, p. 685.

have understood the necessity of a new regime and wish to enter upon an era of reform and organization. Convinced of our perfect innocence and of not being guilty of any aggressive act, we appeal to the humanitarian sentiment of the United States in saying to them: You who have tasted the benefits of liberty, would you witness the fall of any people whose only fault was to sympathize with your system to save its future? Would you suffer that Persia should fall for having wished to preserve its national dignity and for having understood the sentiments so dear to a free people? Trusting in the sentiment of honor and justice of the generous people of which you are the representatives, we are sure that our appeal will penetrate directly to your ears and will gain for us your precious aid in a solution consistent with the dignity and independence of Persia.¹²¹

There was no response to this request from the Americans. On 24 December, the Bakhtiyari Khans, together with the Regent and the cabinet, announced the Majles had to be closed. Subsequently, on 26 December, 1911, Shuster was formally dismissed.¹²² On 28 December, the American Legation in Tehran simply reported to their Secretary of State that the Iranian cabinet had accepted the second Russian ultimatum.¹²³ In the end, Shuster left in January 1912. There was no protection for Shuster from America at all.

As regards the Shuster mission, Grey concluded that 'his aims were admirable and just, but he had not realized that Russian interference in the north of Persia could only be ousted by force.'¹²⁴ This was probably true as the disorders which led to the interference could only have been quelled by a military

¹²¹ Cited in Yeselson, *United States-Persian Diplomatic Relation*, pp. 119-120.

¹²² *The New York Times*, December 26, 1911, p. 1.

¹²³ *FRUS*, no. 891.51/124, December 28, 1911, The American Minister to the Secretary of State, p. 686.

¹²⁴ Grey, *Twenty-Five Years Volume I*, p. 164.

force which the Iranian government could not afford. Buchanan in St. Petersburg also considered that 'Mr. Shuster's disregard of Russia's privileged position in Persia provoked a still more serious crisis.'¹²⁵ The event has been also discussed by Mehdi Heravi who claims that Shuster did not understand Anglo-Russian relations in Iran and had not studied the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907.¹²⁶ The successor as Treasurer-General was Monard, who was pro-Russian and was an opponent of Shuster, demonstrating that Russia's influence remained strong in northern Iran.

Shuster did, in fact, have no desire to irritate either of the two powers, but he simply had his own views on Iranian affairs and Anglo-Russian relations. From his perspective an expert like Stokes was an essential prerequisite for the completion of the tasks that the Iranian government had requested. Shuster was not wrong in his perception of the requirements, and he was flexible as regards the difficulties that he encountered. Although it was Russia that demanded Shuster's dismissal, it may be argued that the main factor behind it was the refusal of the Majles to comply with the Russian ultimatums. In addition, the two powers were concerned about achieving a balance within the broader sphere of international politics, which led Britain in particular to focus on its own interests and to choose not to object to the Russia's high handed-actions.

3. The end of the Majles in 1911

When the first ultimatum reached the Iranian government on 11 November 1911, the Prime Minister, Samsam al-Saltaneh, was anxious about Russian military activity, given that Shuster refused to comply with Russia's demands. Both Samsam al-Saltaneh and Vusuq al-Dowleh then resigned, and after the

¹²⁵ Buchanan, *My Mission to Russia Volume I*, p. 99.

¹²⁶ Heravi, *Iranian-American Diplomacy*, pp. 31-32.

remaining ministers followed suit,¹²⁷ about ten days passed without a cabinet. Neratov viewed 'the resignation of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs as (a sign of) a refusal to submit to Russian demands.'¹²⁸ Naser al-Molk, the Iranian Regent, then pressed for the formation of a cabinet,¹²⁹ and a new one was duly set up under the leadership of Samsam al-Saltaneh on 19 November 1911, with a view to accepting Russian demands.¹³⁰ Its purpose in doing so was to obtain the withdrawal of Russian troops at Qazvin, too.

Neratov argued at this point that it would not now be possible for Russia to withdraw its troops until relations with Iran had been normalised to their satisfaction.¹³¹ Grey, however, was of the opinion that if Russia acted in too exacting a manner in Iran it would have a most unfortunate effect on its foreign policy in general.¹³² Though Grey had come to accept the dismissal of Shuster, it was his view that Russia's strong reaction regarding his mission might have an impact on Anglo-Russian relations, as enshrined in the 1907 Convention. He had no wish to see Anglo-Russian relations deteriorate owing to Shuster's role in Iranian affairs, and so he endeavoured to make Iran realise that 'they must govern with a good disposition towards Russian interests, instead of in opposition to them.'¹³³ In the meantime, the news reached Tehran that 4,000 Russian troops were heading towards Iran from the Caucasus,¹³⁴ despite Benckendorff's warning the Russian government that marching on Tehran would harm Anglo-Russian relations and end the Triple *Entente*, which in turn would mean the demise of the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907.¹³⁵

¹²⁷ Ramin Yelfani, *Zendeganiyeh-e Siyasi-e Abu al-Qasem Khan Naser al-Molk*, Mo'asseseh-ye Motale'at-e Tarikh-e Mo'aser-e Iran, 1372/1993, p. 253.

¹²⁸ Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia*, p. 626.

¹²⁹ Yelfani, *Zendeganiyeh-e Siyasi-e Abu al-Qasem Khan Naser al-Molk*, p. 256.

¹³⁰ FO416/50, 46322, enclosure, November 19, 1911, Persian Government to Mirza Mehdi Khan.

¹³¹ FO416/50, no. 294, 46682, November 22, 1911, Buchanan to Grey.

¹³² FO416/50, no. 737, 47770, November 29, 1911, Grey to Buchanan.

¹³³ FO416/50, no. 315, 48522, December 2, 1911, Grey to Buchanan.

¹³⁴ Ramazani, *The Foreign Policy of Iran*, p. 100.

¹³⁵ Stieve, *Isvolsky*, p. 49.

After Russia's second ultimatum on 29 November 1911, yet another new cabinet was formed, led by Samsam al-Saltaneh, and Vusuq al-Dowleh still Minister for Foreign Affairs.¹³⁶ To the Majles, the cabinet's acceptance of the Russian demands caused Iran to lose its dignity.¹³⁷ Vusuq al-Dowleh, meanwhile, attempted to persuade the Majles to accept the second Russian ultimatum but in vain,¹³⁸ complaining to Poklewski-Koziell that 'some of them (the demands) are clearly contrary to the independence of the State (Iran), while the time (allowed) is so little that it is physically impossible to give them the necessary consideration and examination',¹³⁹ Vusuq al-Dowleh attempted to delay the time of acceptance of the second Russian ultimatum, even though it could not change the result. Russia, of course, insisted on Iran's acceptance of the ultimatum.¹⁴⁰ On 7 December 1911, it was Grey's intention to communicate to Russia that Shuster's successor must be accepted by the two powers.¹⁴¹ This was seen as a possible way to prevent similar cases to that of Shuster from taking place again in the future. The response of Poklewski-Koziell was that 'this form of wording would, in practice, achieve the desired result and would not so clearly attack Persia's independence.' Poklewski-Koziell also asserted that the Majles should be dissolved if it refused to comply with the ultimatum,¹⁴² demonstrating thereby that Russia had been seriously disturbed by the Majles's actions since July 1909. On 9 December 1911, the cabinet had the intention of accepting the Russian demands in return for the withdrawal of the Russian troops from Qazvin.¹⁴³ The main *raison d'etre* of the cabinet was indeed to eliminate the Russian threat, and

¹³⁶ Yelfani, *Zendeganiyeh-e Siyasi-e Abu al-Qasem Khan Naser al-Molk*, p. 257.

¹³⁷ Shuster, *The Strangling of Persia*, p. 182.

¹³⁸ Yelfani, *Zendeganiyeh-e Siyasi-e Abu al-Qasem Khan Naser al-Molk*, p. 260.

¹³⁹ FO371/1198, no. 237, 50545, enclosure 1, December 2, 1911, Vosuk-ed-Dowleh to Poklewski.

¹⁴⁰ 'Ali Akbar Velayati, *Tarikh-e Ravabet-e Khareji-ye Iran dar Dowreh-ye Avval-e Mashruteh*, Tehran: Vezarat-e Omur-e Kharejeh, 1370/1991, p. 27.

¹⁴¹ FO416/50, 49055, December 7, 1911, Grey to Buchanan.

¹⁴² FO416/50, no. 670, 49202, December 8, 1911, Barclay to Grey.

¹⁴³ FO416/50, no. 331, 49434, December 9, 1911, Buchanan to Grey.

on 11 December, Vusuq al-Dowleh, in an attempt to negotiate on the ultimatum, stated that:

the Cabinet had decided to make the immense sacrifice of dismissing the treasurer-general, and would agree to the second demand in the Russian ultimatum if it were modified as follows: 'In engaging foreigners in Persian service, Persian Government will try to avoid any difficulties which might injure the interests of the Powers.'¹⁴⁴

The second demand of the second Russian ultimatum seriously affected Iran's right and independence to control its own domestic affairs. Vusuq al-Dowleh's intention was to cut Iran's losses by complying with the ultimatum. Buchanan attempted to suggest an amendment to the second demand whereby the word 'consent' might be replaced by the word 'consultation.' Neratov refused, but he did try to find a formula less wounding to Persian susceptibilities. He was of the opinion that the Russian government would not insist on the use of the term 'engages to' or of the word 'consent,' and believed that Russia would be satisfied if Iran committed to not engaging foreigners without previously coming to an understanding or agreement with the Russian and British Legations.¹⁴⁵ With negotiations thus in progress, on 19 December 1911, the Iranian Minister in London, Mehdi Khan, stated Iran's conditions with regard to Russia's demands were:

that some modification were made in the article respecting the engagement of foreign advisers, for which they suggested a formula,; and that the

¹⁴⁴ FO416/50, no. 676, 49672, December 11, 1911, Barclay to Grey.

¹⁴⁵ FO416/50, no. 334, 49883, December 12, 1911, Buchanan to Grey.

Russian troops were withdrawn from Kazvin immediately after the demands had been accepted.¹⁴⁶

Russia was indeed taking a more conciliatory attitude towards Iran. On the same day, the second demand was amended to 'would enter into an exchange of views for the purpose of arriving at an understanding.'¹⁴⁷ On 22 December 1911, the Iranian cabinet accepted Russia's demands,¹⁴⁸ and on 24 December, the Regent issued a rescript ordering the closure of the Majles.

The end of the Majles was a result that could be foreseen, but the modification of the second demand of the second Russian ultimatum represented a small success in securing Iran's rights by *Vusuq al-Dowleh*. On the other hand, the closure of the Majles was meant to stop any further advance on Tehran by Russian troops, even though it was a sign of the strengthening of Russian influence in Iran, to which Iran was relentlessly to concede. In terms of the Iranian Constitution, the Regent did not have the right to issue the rescript, but in that extreme situation in Iran's foreign relations, it was one way to ease tensions. On 27 December 1911, the Iranian government informed Shuster of his dismissal, and the condition of his departure was the withdrawal of the Russian troops at Qazvin, which had previously been promised by Russia. Neratov, however, argued that the troops would be withdrawn only when a successor to Shuster had been appointed,¹⁴⁹ and it certainly seemed that Neratov (and the Russian government) had no inclination to withdraw the troops. Nevertheless, Russia announced in return that normal relations would resume in January 1912.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ FO416/50, no. 161, 50455, December 19, 1911, Grey to Barclay.

¹⁴⁷ FO416/50, no. 379, 51353, December 19, 1911, Buchanan to Grey.

¹⁴⁸ FO416/50, no. 727, 51211, December 22, 1911, Barclay to Grey.

¹⁴⁹ FO416/50, no. 761, 52156, December 28, 1911, Barclay to Grey.

¹⁵⁰ The Russian Ambassador at London to Sazonoff. Extract from a Personal Letter, Jan. 15-28, 1912, *Entente*, p. 139.

The closure of the Majles left Iran without a strong man in the government. The Regent should have been the one. On 22 September 1910, the first Iranian Regent 'Azod al-Molk died. Naser al-Molk, who was in Paris, was elected by the Majles two days later as the new regent. However, Naser al-Molk argued that 'people in Tehran and in (the) provinces expected him to put everything right. This showed a misapprehension of his position. By (the) constitution cabinet responsibility to (the) Medjliss was (the) proper agency for this.'¹⁵¹ Neratov expressed the opinion that 'In the present state of things Naser-ul-Molk was not a strong enough man to cope with the difficulties of the situation.'¹⁵² Shuster, in his memoir, also mentioned that Naser al-Molk was 'a most unfortunate choice for Regent.'¹⁵³ In January 1912, the Regent argued that he had no right under the Constitution to interfere in internal affairs,¹⁵⁴ and he expressed a wish to leave Iran for Europe for health reasons. In April, he told Barclay that he retained the right to sign decrees, and to give advice on Iranian affairs from abroad.¹⁵⁵ It seemed, then, that Naser al-Molk did not want to be directly involved in the country's internal politics or foreign relations. He left for Paris on 11 June 1912,¹⁵⁶ and returned to Iran in September 1913. However, after the coronation of Ahmad Shah took place in July 1914, and a new cabinet was formed, Naser al-Molk soon left Iran.¹⁵⁷ The Regent took a firm line through his refusal of the resignation of the cabinet and by forcing the closure of the Majles in 1911, but after 1912 he attempted to remain outside any situation involving the country, owing to his ill health, and his weariness with the long and tiresome period of the tense situation in his country.

¹⁵¹ FO371/1187, no. 73, 8042, March 5, 1911, Barclay to Grey.

¹⁵² FO416/50, no. 331, 49434, December 9, 1911, Buchanan to Grey.

¹⁵³ Cited in Shuster, *The Strangling of Persia*, p. 239.

¹⁵⁴ Yelfani, *Zendeganiyeh-e Siyasi-e Abu al-Qasem Khan Naser al-Molk*, p. 276.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 277.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 314.

4. The establishment of Iran's Gendarmerie under Swedish officers

After the decision to establish a gendarmerie under Swedish officers in early 1911, Grey telegraphed to Cecil Spring-Rice, who was then the British Minister in Stockholm, that the decision must be left to the Swedish government. Whether Swedish officers were considered effective or not, the British had no objection on political grounds.¹⁵⁸ In fact some Swedish officials were anxious to volunteer,¹⁵⁹ and the Swedes did not communicate with the British alone. They were aware that their intention of going to Iran necessarily needed Russia's goodwill. A reply to the proposal by the Russian government in April 1911 was that they did not object to the employment of Swedish officers in the South of Iran.¹⁶⁰ An agreement for the Swedish officers to travel to Iran was ready on 18 April, and a few weeks for preparation were required.¹⁶¹ In May, the Majles approved the contract for the Swedes.¹⁶² In June, three Swedish officers were selected by the Swedish government: Captain Hjalmarson, Lieutenant Skjöldebrand, and Lieutenant Petersen.¹⁶³ They arrived in Tehran on 15 August 1911.¹⁶⁴ In the nascent period of the Swedish Gendarmerie, there was British financial support.

Barclay enquired from Grey whether advice should be given to the Iranian government that the Swedish officers could be employed as the Treasury Gendarmerie.¹⁶⁵ The Russian Minister in Tehran concurred with Barclay's advice that the Swedish officials employed as the Treasury Gendarmerie.¹⁶⁶ The Swedish

¹⁵⁸ FO416/47, no. 4, 643, January 6, 1911, Grey to Spring-Rice.

¹⁵⁹ FO416/47, no. 2, 780, January 7, 1911, Lord Kilmarnock to Grey.

¹⁶⁰ FO416/48, no. 56, 14051, April 11, 1911, Lord Kilmarnock to Grey.

¹⁶¹ FO416/48, no. 4, 14468, April 18, 1911, Lord Kilmarnock to Grey.

¹⁶² Cronin, *The Army*, p. 19.

¹⁶³ FO416/48, no. 103, 23909, June 16, 1911, Lord Kilmarnock to Grey.

¹⁶⁴ FO416/49, no. 331, 32277, August 15, 1911, Barclay to Grey.

¹⁶⁵ FO416/49, no. 337, 32490, August 17, 1911, Barclay to Grey.

¹⁶⁶ FO416/49, no. 244, 33256, August 20, 1911, Grey to Barclay.

officers were a much better choice as far as the Russians were concerned than Stokes. However, Grey intended that the Swedes should simply organize a gendarmerie distinct from the Treasury Gendarmerie.¹⁶⁷ Grey strongly believed that the Swedish officers would end up under Russian control, and that Britain would consequently lose prestige.

Barclay, on the contrary, insisted that the replacement of Stokes by the Swedish officers was a possible solution to the present deadlock.¹⁶⁸ In early October 1911, Barclay telegraphed Grey that the Iranian government intended to engage a number of Swedish officers to organize a small Iranian army in the North of Iran,¹⁶⁹ and on 11 October, the Majles approved the project for the engagement of 20 Swedish officers to organize such an army.¹⁷⁰ However, this might not be favoured by the Swedish government, or by Britain and Russia. Spring-Rice in Stockholm telegraphed Grey that the Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs had not heard of an engagement of 20 officers to organize an Iranian army yet, and there would not be any steps taken by the Swedish government without consulting Britain and Russia.¹⁷¹ Whether or not the Swedish government received requests for 20 officers from the Iranian government, this statement by the Swedes showed that they did not want the proposed army to lead to pressure from Britain and Russia over their officers in the service of Iran. Doubtless the Swedish government had heard of the result of Stokes incident, and did not want to irritate the Russians in the north.

Also, the Swedish Minister in Tehran did not regard this project of a small army optimistically because it might end up in conflict with the Cossack

¹⁶⁷ FO416/49, no. 244, 33256, August 20, 1911, Grey to Barclay.

¹⁶⁸ FO416/49, no. 345, 33042, August 21, 1911, Barclay to Grey.

¹⁶⁹ FO416/50, no. 461, 38747, October 3, 1911, Barclay to Grey.

¹⁷⁰ FO416/50, no. 483, 39970, October 11, 1911, Barclay to Grey.

¹⁷¹ FO416/50, no. 15, 40966, October 17, 1911, Spring-Rice to Grey.

Brigade.¹⁷² On 14 November 1911, Neratov informed the Swedish government that Russia would not agree that the Iranian government establish a small Iranian army under Swedish officers. The Swedish government acquiesced to Neratov's argument. In addition, Neratov emphasized that the Cossack Brigade was the only organized force in northern Iran, and any future increase of the Iranian armed forces in the north must be under the Cossack Brigade. No independent force in Iran would be welcome to Russia.¹⁷³ O'Beirne, the British Chargé d'Affaires in St. Petersburg, telegraphed Grey that this particular Iranian project of Iran should not be further pursued.¹⁷⁴ Neratov's hard position must have resulted from the Shuster Mission, which had irritated the Russians owing to the appointment of Stokes. In addition, the idea of Swedish officers in the service of a small army at Tehran, which might be a competition to the Cossack Brigade at that time, was not popular with the Russians at all. After the second Russian ultimatum to Iran on 29 November, Article 2 became a consideration of concern to the Swedes. In January 1912, the British Minister in Stockholm, Lord Kilmarnock, was worried that Article 2 of the second Russian ultimatum applied to foreigners already in Iranian service.¹⁷⁵ Later, Grey said that the British and Russian Legations in Tehran should inform the Swedish government that Article 2 of the second Russian ultimatum had no bearing on the case.¹⁷⁶ On 10 January, an Aide-memoire by the Russian government asserted that Article 2 of the second Russian ultimatum did not apply to the Swedish officers in the Iranian service because it had had the preliminary assent of the Russian and British governments.¹⁷⁷ Article 2 of the second Russian ultimatum was thus not necessarily relevant to the Swedish officer

¹⁷² FO416/50, no. 679, 44528, November 10, 1911, Grey to O'Beirne.

¹⁷³ FO416/50, no. 278, 45345, November 14, 1911, O'Beirne to Grey.

¹⁷⁴ FO416/50, no. 280, 45359, November 14, 1911, O'Beirne to Grey.

¹⁷⁵ FO416/51, no. 1, 682, January 4, 1912, Lord Kilmarnock to Grey.

¹⁷⁶ FO416/51, no. 14, 682, January 5, 1912, Grey to Buchanan.

¹⁷⁷ FO416/51, no. 11, 1894, enclosure, December 28, 1911 (January 10, 1912), Aide-memoire communicated to Sir G. Buchanan by Russian Government.

issue. On 9 January, however, the Swedish government decided not to take any further steps in Iran without previously consulting the British and Russian governments.¹⁷⁸ Obviously the Swedish government wished to avert a disaster such as that of the Shuster mission and Stokes.

In the following months, both the British and the Swedish officers found difficulties. One was regarding the funds from the loan by the British and Russians had already been spent in early 1912.¹⁷⁹ Captain Hjalmarson often mentioned the want of funds to Townley, the British Minister in Tehran.¹⁸⁰ On the other hand, order in Iran was not easily restored. Although the gendarmerie had its success in Qazvin and Hamadan, in the South of Iran the Swedes did not prove so effective.¹⁸¹ By December 1912, it was known that the Swedish Gendarmerie had not completely succeeded in Shiraz, the capital of Fars province. The most significant reason was money.¹⁸² The British Consul at Shiraz also said that there was a problem because the Swedes had no experience dealing with eastern peoples, and that a British loan was necessary.¹⁸³ Townley, in January 1913, informed Grey that Britain needed to undertake a prolonged scheme of financing the Swedish Gendarmerie because without well-armed power order could not be restored, and that would have disadvantageous effects on Britain's commerce in the South of Iran.¹⁸⁴ He also emphasized the need for a loan to the Swedish Gendarmerie in order to retain these excellent Swedish officers.¹⁸⁵ Furthermore, Townley asserted that Britain should be more energetic in the gendarmerie issue.¹⁸⁶ Grey did not respond to the request for a loan, which showed that he,

¹⁷⁸ FO416/51, no. 2, 1335, January 9, 1912, Lord Kilmarnock to Grey.

¹⁷⁹ Safiri, *South Persia Rifles*, p. 23.

¹⁸⁰ FO416/53, no. 470, 35692, August 23, 1912, Townley to Grey.

¹⁸¹ Cronin, *The Army*, p. 22.

¹⁸² FO416/55, no. 265, 647, enclosure, no. 178, December 20, 1912, Townley to Smart.

¹⁸³ FO416/55, no. 271, 1662, enclosure, no. 215, December 23, 1912, O'Connor to Townley.

¹⁸⁴ FO416/55, no. 41, 4790, January 30, 1913, Townley to Grey.

¹⁸⁵ FO371/1707, no. 22, 6256, January 17, 1913, Townley to Grey.

¹⁸⁶ FO416/56, no. 59, 15869, March 17, 1913, Townley to Grey.

and the British government, did not want to make any extra expenses on the Swedish Gendarmerie.

In the view of Hjalmarson, his work was to prevent the situation of Iran from getting worse. In February 1913, Hjalmarson proposed a considerable extension in the sphere of his Gendarmerie, to include Isfahan, Tehran, Kermanshah and Mashhad.¹⁸⁷ In April 1913, Townley telegraphed Grey that some schemes proposed by Hjalmarson were feasible because it was clear that the small Gendarmerie force at present would be quite incapable of taking effective action.¹⁸⁸ From June 1913, some Swedish officers were sent to Kerman, Isfahan and Hamadan as well.¹⁸⁹ In July, the Iranian government officially decided to extend the scope of the operations of the Gendarmerie.¹⁹⁰ By February 1914, more Swedish officers could be seen in Isfahan, Yazd and Kerman. In Townley's view, the more the force was increased the better chance there was for an improvement of the country.¹⁹¹ However, Grey informed Townley that the British government would not find funds for paying the Swedes, and the Iranian government must take this responsibility,¹⁹² and took no action. By March, Townley kept warning Grey that without funds coming for the gendarmerie there would be no security of roads and British trade in the South of Iran.¹⁹³ Grey argued that they indeed realized the worsening situation did no good to their trade, but that he still preferred that the Iranian government should deal with the situation themselves.¹⁹⁴ On the part of Iran, the payment to the Swedish officers was limited and not in regular.¹⁹⁵

¹⁸⁷ FO371/1707, no. 41, 11030, February 19, 1913, Townley to Grey.

¹⁸⁸ FO416/56, no. 169, 18751, April 23, 1913, Townley to Grey.

¹⁸⁹ FO416/56, no. 249, 29341, June 26, 1913, Townley to Grey.

¹⁹⁰ FO416/57, no. 157, 34586, July 8, 1913, Townley to Grey.

¹⁹¹ FO416/59, no. 31, 4719, February 2, 1914, Townley to Grey.

¹⁹² FO416/59, no. 28, 4719, February 3, 1914, Grey to Townley.

¹⁹³ FO416/59, no. 80, 10264, March 8, 1914, Townley to Grey.

¹⁹⁴ FO416/59, no. 67, 12564, March 25, 1914, Grey to Townley.

¹⁹⁵ Cronin, 'Britain, the Iranian Military and the Rise of Reza Khan,' p. 102.

From 1914, the operations of the Swedish Gendarmerie in Iran gradually led to a dispute between Britain and Russia. On 26 February 1914, the Russian government said they wished to see a considerable development of the Cossack Brigade in northern Iran. However, the Iranian Minister for Foreign Affairs did not think this idea was practicable. He argued that accepting the proposal of Russia equaled accepting the partition of Iran. He also added that the actions of the Cossack Brigade should be restricted to Tehran and Tabriz only.¹⁹⁶ In March 1914, the Russian Minister in Tehran asserted that if the Iranian government allowed the Brigade to operate in the five northern Iranian provinces, rather than Tehran and Tabriz only, the Russians would not object to the Swedish Gendarmerie being employed in those provinces.¹⁹⁷ Grey, then, telegraphed Buchanan, the British Ambassador in St. Petersburg, to let Russia know that the British must be involved in the operations of the Swedish Gendarmerie in the South of Iran owing to Britain's interests, but the British also recognized Russia's special position in northern Iran, and Russia would be informed of any extension of sphere of the Gendarmerie to the North of Iran. In addition, Grey had no objection to the extension of the Brigade to more places in the North of Iran, but only on condition that Russian troops were withdrawn from Iran.¹⁹⁸ It can be seen that Grey endeavoured to negotiate with Russia, though it was likely he realised there would be no Russian troop withdrawal from Iran. However, Sazonov replied to Buchanan that he did not agree to the presence of the Swedish Gendarmerie in northern Iran because Russian troops had already made northern Iran quiet and prosperous. In the meantime, there were Ottoman troops near the Russian border making it impossible for Russia to withdraw their troops from those districts. He also argued that the British governed the South of Iran. Thus, Iran would be wise

¹⁹⁶ FO371/2066, no. 57, 8631, February 26, 1914, Townley to Grey.

¹⁹⁷ FO371/2066, no. 82, 10725, March 10, 1914, Townley to Grey.

¹⁹⁸ FO371/2066, no. 132, 10725, March 12, 1914, Grey to Buchanan.

consent to the extension of the Brigade and the withdrawal of Russian troops would not be possible.¹⁹⁹

Grey would not agree to any reorganization and expansion of the Cossack Brigade unless it was under the Iranian authorities, like the Swedish Gendarmerie.²⁰⁰ Grey thus resisted the suggestion of any expansion of Russian influence, and strongly maintained his position on the Swedish Gendarmerie in order not to prevent Russia from further expanding their Cossack Brigade. It also showed that Grey realized that the expansion of the Gendarmerie could only be bought at the price of the expansion of the Cossack Brigade, and of keeping the Russian troops in the north. On 29 April 1914, Sazonov argued that he did not consent to the Gendarmerie extending to districts that were in occupation by Russian troops, or to replace Russian troops after they were finally withdrawn. He astutely did not deny that Swedish officers could be employed in northern Iran, but made the unacceptable condition that only the reorganized Cossack Brigade could be based in the districts where Russian troops were presently stationed. He concluded that Russian influence must be maintained in the north, and the British had their freedom in the south, sending troops to occupy ports on the Persian Gulf if they wished to.²⁰¹ Both Britain and Russia did not intend to clash with each other, but in reality stood firmly for their own interests at the expense of Iran.

As the dispute between Russia and Britain had not ended, the Swedish Gendarmerie saw its end owing to lack of funds. Esme Howard, the British Minister in Stockholm, telegraphed Grey that the Swedish government preferred their officers to be recalled since there was no use in their remaining in Iran without money.²⁰² Grey replied to him that the Swedish officers did not need to

¹⁹⁹ FO371/2066, no. 71, 11457, March 15, 1914, Buchanan to Grey.

²⁰⁰ FO371/2066, no. 154, 16181, April 23, 1914, Grey to Buchanan.

²⁰¹ FO416/60, no. 121, 19569, April 29, 1914, Buchanan to Grey.

²⁰² FO371/2067, no. 91A, 28915, June 17, 1914, Howard to Grey.

return to Sweden. Britain would give them support.²⁰³ Grey did not refer to what kind of support it was, but as it would absolutely not be financial support, the offer was diplomatic but meaningless. It can be understood that the Swedish government just wanted to ensure that the task of the Gendarmerie was carried out in peace. They paid attention to what their officers did, so that any incident like that of Shuster and Stokes would be avoided. The Swedish government did not act indifferently to their officers as the American government had done in the case of Shuster. They also did not want to do anything that was not to the satisfaction of Britain and Russia.²⁰⁴ Their attitude was thus conscientious but ineffective in the face of Anglo-Russian interests and prestige. In July 1914, the Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs considered that the Swedish officers should leave Iran by 1 March 1915.²⁰⁵ At the beginning of the First World War, some Swedish officers returned to Sweden.²⁰⁶

Generally, therefore, financial difficulties were a serious factor in causing the Swedes to fail in their mission;²⁰⁷ however in reality Iran's problems derived from the financial crisis, so this issue was not peculiar to the position of the Swedish Gendarmerie. As a result of Russia's opposition in its sphere of influence, in addition, the Swedish Gendarmerie could not establish its force throughout Iran.²⁰⁸ From the Iranian point of view, by 1914, the north part under Russian influence had not decreased at all. A problem for Iran was the fact that in June 1914 the Russians were collecting taxes at Tabriz. To the Russians, collecting taxes had become a habit.²⁰⁹ As James Clark argues, the Russians had in fact been

²⁰³ FO416/60, no. 5, 27930, June 25, 1914, Grey to Howard.

²⁰⁴ FO416/60, no. 95, 28918, June 22, 1914, Howard to Grey.

²⁰⁵ FO416/61, no. 13, 30946, July 8, 1914, Howard to Grey.

²⁰⁶ FO371/2067, no. 303, 60135, October 16, 1914, Townley to Grey.

²⁰⁷ Safiri, *South Persia Rifles*, p. 29.

²⁰⁸ Cronin, 'Building A New Army,' p. 71.

²⁰⁹ A telegraph of the Iranian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, in November 1909, to the Russian Legation in Tehran, had already argued that since the Iranian Constitution Revolution, Azerbaijan had become a place that was controlled by foreigners. Pasokh Maraseleh-e Safarat-e Rusiyeh dar Tehran Tavassoteh Vezarat-e Omur-e Kharejeh-e Iran, 20 Shavval, 1327, *ADHERI*, p. 96.

in Tabriz since 1911, in the guise of taking responsibility for bringing security to the city.²¹⁰ After the outbreak of war in 1914, Iran suffered from the clashes between Russia and the Ottoman Empire. In October 1914, battles between the Russians and the Ottomans took place in Baradost, Soma and Ormiyeh.²¹¹ In November 1914 Ahmad Shah issued an Imperial *farman* stating Iran's neutrality and the maintenance of friendly relations with the powers.²¹² Yet, Iran's efforts to remain neutral and prevent more conflict between Russia and the Ottoman Empire on its soil were thus futile.

Conclusion

By 1914, foreign advisors under the Iranian constitutional government encountered serious obstruction by Russia. It can be understood that Iran was in a weak position, with its empty finances and ineffective army, and there was no possibility to reverse the situation. The endeavours of the Iranian government to make progress with its reforms were unsuccessful. In the meantime, British policy stood firm on the issue of foreign advisors in Iran, for example. The British insisted that only choices from small powers could be considered, and therefore Shuster and the Swedish officers chosen by Iran fitted in with British policy.

Foreign advisors in this period could not serve Iran effectively. In fact the key point was that the state was too weak to manage its domestic problems, such as an empty treasury and the disorders in the southern area. At the same time, foreign advisors in Iran encountered Britain and Russia's entrenched interests,

²¹⁰ James D. Clark, 'Constitutionalists and Cossacks: The Constitutional Movement and Russian Intervention in Tabriz, 1907-1911,' *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 2, June 2006, p. 225.

²¹¹ On 6 October 1914, 200 Ottoman soldiers encroached on the Baradost and Soma, leading to deterioration in the situation. No. 7, *Telgeraf-e Vezarat-e Omur-e Kharejeh beh Sefarat-e Kobra-ye Iran*, 14 Ziqā'deh, 1332, Reza Quli Nezam Mafi, *Ketab-e Sabz*, Tehran: Nashr-e Tarikh-e Iran, 1336/1957, p. 6. On 8 October, 60 people in Ormiyeh were killed by Russian troops. No. 8, *Telgeraf-e Karguzar-e Tabriz beh Vezarat-e Omur-e Kharejeh*, 18 Ziqā'deh, 1332, *Ibid*, p. 6. On 16 October, Russian and Ottoman troops were still in Baradost and Ormiyeh. No. 20, *Telgeraf-e Vezarat-e Omur-e Kharejeh beh Sefarat-e Kobra-ye Eslambul*, 26 Ziqā'deh, 1332, *Ibid*, p. 10.

²¹² *Sazman-e Asnad-e Melli-ye Iran*, 293-18765, November 1, 1914.

which the Iranian constitutional government had no effective means of overcoming, especially in the case of Russia, despite its endeavours to support Shuster's reforms, and to operate the Swedish Gendarmerie under the Swedish officials.

With regard to British policy, the Shuster incident provided an obvious example of Britain permitting Russia to apply pressure on Iran through its two ultimatums. Shuster, who had support from the Majles, attempted to reform Iranian financial affairs by employing a British official in which his intentions were worthy, but misguided. The Majles's intention to resist Russian pressure was justified but Russia, which followed the 1907 Convention according to its own purposes, could not agree that British influence be strengthened or even appear to be strengthened in the Russian sphere of influence. However, it cannot be argued that Britain's policy on Iran was characterised by ever greater accommodation towards Russia because of a growth in Russian power. The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 played a significant part in shaping British policy, and even more so did its underlying purpose of permitting Britain to foster as well as protect its increasingly significant interests in the south.

The second demand of the second Russian ultimatum of 1911 played a significant role in Iranian affairs. Owing to the experience of the Shuster Mission, Russia did not want to see any possible threat caused by other advisors employed by the Iranian government. Foreign advisors employed by Iran, hence, must be approved by Britain and Russia. This expectation represented a serious violation of Iran's independence. With the 1907 Convention, the independence and integrity of Iran was ostensibly pursued by the British and Russians. However, the demand, to the Iranians, implicitly undermined Iran's rights and independence. In subsequent incidents, the interests of Britain and Russia were placed well before those of Iran, so that respect for Iran's independence and integrity was often

non-existent.

The British learnt from the experience of the Shuster mission. The Stokes incident put Grey in an awkward position because he had no right to intervene in the decisions of Shuster and the Majles. After the strong opposition of Russia, Grey used diplomatic means to stop the appointment of Stokes. With regard to the Swedish officers, Grey endeavoured to support the operations of the Swedish gendarmerie. Although there was no substantial British offer of funding, Grey still supported their extension to the north, but without much conviction or effective opposition to Russian resistance. Still, it can be seen that the British did not agree to all Russian proposals or objections, if the matter was in the interest of the stability of Iran, and thus of their own concerns.

British policy at the outbreak of the First World War was thus essentially to keep Russia's goodwill and to intervene in the affairs of the South of Iran where its own interests were stronger. Owing to the 1907 Convention, the British had no right and power over Russia's actions. In the Swedish officer issue, it can be seen that the British provided diplomatic and financial support, in order to secure their interests in the south. To the Iranians, the Swedish Gendarmerie was a means to achieve independence and freedom from foreign intervention. Even though the Gendarmerie did have success in certain places, lack of funds and foreign rivalry meant that the Gendarmerie could not operate effectively. Fortunately the Swedish officers and the Swedish government were careful in their relationship with Britain and Russia, in order to make sure that their mission to Iran did not result in disaster.

Chapter VII Conclusion

British policy towards Iran during the period between 1908 and 1914 has not been explored so far in detail in academic studies. The existing literature has tended to focus on British policy with regard to relations between London and Tehran, but has paid little attention to the margins. It has also seen the subject more in terms of Anglo-Iranian relations rather than examining British policy as such. In addition, particular events and trends have been highlighted, such as the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906, the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 and Anglo-Russian domination in Iran. This thesis, by contrast, looks more at the margins, whilst also not neglecting the role of British policy at the centre and British relations with the government in Tehran. The thesis considers the above mentioned significant events, not so much in themselves but in particular from the point of view of British policy.

Since great power rivalry was still the main long term factor shaping British policy, its implications need to be summarized and assessed before more detailed aspects of British policy are discussed. Right up to the beginning of World War I and beyond, British control of India and the route to it was a major factor influencing British decisions. The result was that Britain concentrated as much on the manoeuvres of Russia as on the politics of Iran. Indeed, from the British perspective, the two were inextricably linked. The two countries had already had their own areas of influence in Iran since the nineteenth century; the north was under Russia while the south was under Britain. Britain's prime objective had been the protection of its colony, India; lack of other interests and feared costs prevented it from wishing to extend its power further in Iran, which resulted in the adoption of a policy of non-intervention in Iranian affairs, provided its main purpose was maintained. Russia's possible expansion southwards towards the

Persian Gulf and India, however, represented an ongoing threat to Britain. By 1900, nevertheless, the two powers, whilst remaining mutually suspicious, had achieved a form of consensus on how they operated in Iran. Prompted by the situation in Europe, and the rising power of Germany, this consensus produced in 1907 the signing of the Anglo-Russian Convention, which attempted to settle their differences in Iran and elsewhere. The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 represented a clear political relationship between Britain and Russia. It eventually agreed the exact sphere of influence in Iran of the two European countries, with a respect to Iran's independence and integrity.

The 1907 Convention made the British keep out of the North of Iran. They had no rights in the north, while they mainly paid attention to the south. Although the Convention stipulated that the British zone was in the South-East of Iran, British influence covered the whole South of Iran, which included the neutral zone. Russia did not deny the fact because the area traditionally was under control of Britain. This was the main reason why the British were able to take action freely in the neutral zone over the issues of the Iranian railways and Ottoman-Iranian border. In the view of the British, their concerns in the South-West of Iran were obviously relevant to their interests of oil. Thus, expanding their transportation in the area by railway construction and mediating in the Ottoman-Iranian border issue were all helpful to the British to secure themselves. In certain cases, the British seriously intervened in Iranian affairs in the South-West of Iran. When issues came to affect British interests in the area, the 1907 Convention maintaining Iran's independence and integrity became non-existent. The two powers continued to guard their own interests rigorously, and at the same time each was vigilant that the other might not gain an undue advantage. A crucial factor was prestige, with each concerned that they might lose prestige in the eyes of the Iranians, and thus to the advantage of the other.

This thesis has looked at British policy in Iran from 1908-1914 from a number of different perspectives, the first was oil. Britain and Iran signed an Oil Concession in 1901, with Iran allowing the British to have a 60 year period to discover and use oil from Iran. Although at that time the two countries had no idea how the discovery of oil would go, this indicated that a new and significant step between the two countries had been taken. The Oil Concession of 1901 and the discovery of oil in 1908 were in fact a turning point in Anglo-Iranian relations, and would have a lasting effect, unlike previous concessions. The discovery of oil in Iran was also an issue as regards Anglo-Russian relations. The Oil Concession of 1901, which did not grant Britain any rights in the five northern provinces of Iran, was aimed at avoiding any Russian opposition, showing that both Britain and Iran paid attention to Russia's reactions. During the process of prospecting for oil, the Anglo-Russian Convention was signed in 1907. It also related to oil by stipulating that all conventions signed previously were valid and were not affected, which secured Britain's 1901 right to drill oil in the Russian Zone. The Oil Concession of 1901 was therefore protected by the 1907 Convention. Britain was still able to proceed with oil works in most provinces of Iran. The 1907 Convention was thus significant in the evolution of British oil development in that it secured Russian acceptance of Britain's rights over this matter.

Britain had been seeking oil for seven years when promising oil wells were eventually found at Masjed-e Soleyman, in the Bakhtiyari territory in 1908. This was important with regard to the shaping of British policy from 1908 when the discovery of oil produced a change in that policy which gradually shifted to focus on the South-West of Iran. In addition, largely owing to the weakness of the Iranian government during the revolutionary period, the British preferred to negotiate with the local powers for their oil works, such as digging, laying pipelines, and constructing refineries. The Bakhtiyari Khans and the Sheykh of

Mohammerah, Sheykh Khaz'al, were therefore the main figures with whom the British had to communicate. These negotiations resulted in agreements such as the Bakhtiyari Agreement of 1905 and the Mohammerah Agreement of 1909. Although the Iranian government did not accept the Bakhtiyari Agreement of 1905, Britain still considered it to be a legitimate one between themselves and the Khans; and although the Mohammerah Agreement of 1909 was never ratified by the Iranian government, both the Sheykh and the British viewed it as a means of maintaining their mutual goodwill. It can be seen that the British bought land in the Bakhtiyari territory in 1911 and signed another agreement with Sheykh Kaz'al in 1914 to protect their oil interests and to maintain their prestige in the area. These agreements thus expressed the fact that the British considered their relationship with the local powers to be more important than their relationships with the Iranian central government. The discovery of oil then enhanced the importance of the South-West of Iran in British policy in the country. Furthermore, the agreements they signed over oil signaled that the non-intervention policy begun in the nineteenth century was non-existent in the area.

The most significant consequence in relation to oil development was the supply of oil to the British Admiralty from 1914, which placed Britain in a competitive position in relation to the other countries, such as America and Russia, as regards oil, and ensured that the APOC, established in 1909, would avoid the risk of being absorbed by other oil companies. It also provided the British Admiralty with oil in the First World War. The purchase of the APOC by the British government and the supply of oil to the British Admiralty increased Britain's influence in most regions of Iran, and certainly in a much larger one than the British zone as agreed in the 1907 Convention.

Oil also changed British relationships with foreign powers. With regard to Russia Britain became especially concerned in maintaining a balance in terms of

advancing its oil interests, whilst staying on amicable terms with Russia and not antagonizing that country. With regard to the loan proposed by the APOC in 1910, Russia's concern obliged Britain to be careful to satisfy Russia that there were no additional implications. Britain also had to deal carefully with its other rival, Germany, when it came to oil. German activities at Mohammerah caused the British concern regarding their potential supremacy in the South-West of Iran, and led to further assurances by the British to Sheykh Khaz'al. Furthermore, oil supply was an international issue, given the competition faced by the APOC, and the signing of the Admiralty Agreement in 1914 and Britain had to take care to secure its new interests in the international arena. By 1914, oil had already exerted a significant impact on Anglo-Iranian relations.

This thesis also examines the relations of the British with Mohammad 'Ali Shah and his role in the constitutional revolution as well as his response to them. The thesis in addition sees the perspective of Mohammad 'Ali Shah stabilising his country instead of blocking its development. The weakness of the new constitutional central government resulted in instability in the country, both in the political centre and the marginal regions. Mohammad 'Ali Shah, who came to the throne in 1907, only saw his country in a state of disturbance everywhere and governed by a toothless cabinet and a Majles. For this reason, the Shah preferred the model of a constitutional government under his supervision, and his aim in the bombardment of the Majles in June 1908 was actually to end the chaos, rather than to repeal the constitution. Whilst not exactly sympathizing with the Shah's point of view, the British, on the one hand followed their policy of non-intervention over the Shah's coup. The prospect of a new attempt to restore order had some merit in their eyes. After the bombardment of the Majles, most of the Shah's rivals in fact came from the provinces, such as the Bakhtiyari Khans from Isfahan and Sepahdar's force from Gilan, and it was they who effected the

abdication of the Shah in July 1909. The new constitutional government was then re-established with a very young Shah and a regent in July 1909, though it must be stated that the new government had no effective means of stabilising the country in a short space of time, given its state of oppression by foreign powers and its empty treasury, which meant from the British point of view that there was no change to central policy with regard to effecting security. The return of the ex-Shah, however, in 1911 therefore gained support among the Iranian people. Mohammad 'Ali Shah was not an anti-constitutionalist, but rather, the leader of a country which faced a crisis but had lost his battle against the opposition. Although the constitutionalists obtained political power once more, it could not be seen as a sign that Iran was on a path towards improvement.

The Iranian constitutional nationalists expected the British to provide assistance to their revolutionary movement and to their anti-Russian actions, but were much disillusioned by the 1907 Convention, which showed that the British simply looked to their own interests. With the return of the ex-Shah in 1911, the Iranian constitutional government also complained that the British did not prevent the Russians from assisting the ex-Shah by the 1909 Protocol. However, there was no proof that the ex-Shah received official support from the Russians. The activities of the ex-Shah were mostly in the Russian zone, and the British could not take any action beyond communicating with their Russian colleagues. They also refrained from giving support to the Bakhtiyari Khans over their intention to organize a coup in 1911.

In the North of Iran, the British had no right to argue with Russia's actions. In this case, however, the British had different attitudes to different cases. One was being suspicious of the actions of Colonel Liakhov in the bombardment of the Majles in June 1908, and the role of the Shah in the matter with regard to Russia. The British did not have clear evidence on the incident, but instructions from the

Russian government to Liakhov could be conceived of as not impossible, even though Isvolsky denied of the fact. The British were also not happy about the circumstances of the ex-Shah's return in 1911. However, there were always rumours and reports that the ex-Shah received Russian financial and military support, no matter whether it was a fact or not. Although the 1909 Protocol signed by Britain and Russia indicated neutrality towards the ex-Shah and preventing him from returning to Iran, the British did not completely trust the Russians.

The discovery of oil in the South-West and their relations with the local powers became highly important concerns to the British for a variety of reasons, and one was the influence of other powers in the area, particularly Germany. The Germans already had close connections with the Ottomans, and were developing friendly relations with Iran. Therefore Iranian foreign relations and projects in the area touched closely those of Britain. This point is reflected in the British attitude to the construction of the German sponsored Baghdad Railway from 1903, which approached the Persian Gulf via Mesopotamia. The Persian Gulf had been under Britain's influence and control for a long time, and connected British trade to India. From the end of the nineteenth century Germany and Britain were rivals over naval power and colonies in the world. The emergence of the Baghdad Railway from Europe to the Middle East had a major impact on Britain's prestige in the area, especially the Persian Gulf. Britain was not only concerned to protect its interests in the Persian Gulf from German intrusion via the railway, but also to prevent any pressure on India from Germany.

Britain had also to consider Russia in the matter, as with any other major issue relating to Iran. With regard to the Baghdad Railway, Russia was concerned about a German branch line reaching the North of Iran via Khanaqin. At that time, there was a prohibition on railway construction in Iran following the 1890 agreement between the two countries, which expired in 1910. During this period

Britain had continued to consider schemes for railway construction in the South-West of Iran. In the wake of the discovery of oil in 1908, Britain attempted to discuss the railway issue with Russia, in order to strengthen its position in the South-West of Iran. When the veto expired in 1910, it can be seen that a contest took place between Russia, Germany and Britain. The latter planned railway routes connecting Mohammerah, Khorramabad and some neighbouring cities and towns. Mohammerah was located in the oil work areas, and doubtless the railway line had the purpose of protecting oil interests by developing transportation. As Russia and Germany were negotiating an agreement in Potsdam 1910-1911, Britain and Iran were also in the process of signing a contract for railways. A concession for a Mohammerah-Khorramad railway granted to the British by the Iranian government in 1913 was a start in the railway issue.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, generally, the failure to build railways was caused by commercial rivalry between Russia and Britain. The railway issue, however, made little progress in this period, and British concerns were one of the main impediments. Because of rivalry the major powers and their mutual attitudes, even the impact of the Baghdad Railway project in the early twentieth century, the Potsdam Agreement of 1911, the contract between the Persian Railways Syndicate and the Iranian government in 1911, and the Trans-Persian Railway scheme in 1912, did not produce any specific progress on the Iranian railway issue by 1914. Iran itself, to which railways would have meant a considerable advantage, was weak owing to its poor financial state, which prevented it from constructing railways. An indication of this point is that Britain took steps to obtain a railway contract from the Iranian government, which focused on railways in the South-West of Iran.

Not only Britain but also Russia was concerned with German plans for the Baghdad Railway even though it did not include a planned route into Iran. Britain

made some attempts to negotiate with Germany, but without results, while Russia signed the Potsdam Agreement with Germany in 1911. This was of some concerns to Britain, which adopted a wait-and-see policy to the event. Russia did not intend to damage the interests of the *Entente*, or undermine the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907. Nor did it intend to give Germany any advantage. All of Russia's actions were to diminish Germany's influence on Iran in general, and in relation to Russia's prestige in northern Iran in particular. However, the Potsdam Agreement did represent a kind of rapprochement with Germany at the expense of British interests.

In terms of railways, the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 remained relevant. Russia was concerned to keep the Convention intact in its negotiations with Germany, and it provided Britain with a favourable framework in terms of monitoring Russia's relations with Germany. In the Potsdam Agreement of 1911 Russia also caused all the agreed articles to be restricted to the Russian zone of Iran. British policy was also something of an impediment to the development of Iran in terms of railways. For example, the negotiations over the Trans-Persian Railway in 1912 between Britain and Russia were ineffective due to Britain's opposition to the lines passing through the British zone. The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, therefore increasingly became less a means of preventing Anglo-Russian conflict in Iran, and more a means by which each country secured its own interests, at the expense of Iran.

The Ottoman-Iranian border dispute mediated by the British was another matter in the said period which was also connected to the discovery of oil. This dispute was largely down to the fact that Iran and the Ottoman Empire never had a mutual understanding of their borders. From the sixteenth century onwards, the two countries were demarcated only by an approximated border area; however, after mediation by Britain and Russia with the Erzerum Treaty of 1847, the border

area was narrowed further, but even the Treaty and Explanatory Note of 1848 did not result in a precise and satisfactory solution. The British had been concerned with it over Mohammerah since the 1847 Treaty and the 1848 Note. In the early twentieth century, Mohammerah became important to the dispute owing to the Ottomans claiming that they controlled the Shatt al-Arab, Mohammerah and its neighbouring area, but the British did not agree, owing to the Oil Concession of 1901 and subsequent arrangements over oil extraction. This caused the British to focus on their oil interests in places along the Ottoman-Iranian border, such as at Qasr-e Shirin, Zohab and Mohammerah, especially the latter. The Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1907, on the other hand, meant that they paid much less attention to the northern section of the border, which they left to Russia to resolve. When the Ottomans proposed to submit the border dispute to the Hague Tribunal in 1911, the British were worried that their prestige would suffer. The result was a common front with the Russians in the form of a commission to survey the border and mediate the issue later on at Istanbul from 1912. During the negotiations in 1912, the 1848 Note was an important document that was relevant to the demarcation at Mohammerah and along the Shatt al-Arab, where Britain had important economic interests, such as oil. The British endeavoured to prevent the Iranian government from giving Mohammerah to the Ottomans. On the other hand, the Iranian government had never acknowledged the 1848 Note at all. Yet, the transfer of the Iranian territory by the British eventually took place. Qasr-e Shirin in Iran was ceded by Britain to the Ottoman Empire in 1912. The cession was a condition of negotiations with the Ottomans. With this action, one can see Britain's concern to ensure that Mohammerah remained in Iranian territory, in accordance with the interests of the APOC, at the expense of yielding other Iranian territory. In the view of the British, however, it was a means to secure Mohammerah as part of Iran. In the end, in the Istanbul Protocol of 1913, Mohammerah was given up by

the Ottomans and in return another part of Iran's territory close to Zohab transferred to the Ottomans.

The new Iranian government formed in July 1909 was unable to overcome its main problem, that of inadequate financing. The Majles was searching for a new financial advisor from abroad, and not accepting any suggestions made by Britain and Russia; they were keen to obstruct the influence of foreign powers, especially Russia. Morgan Shuster, an American with financial experience, was the Majles's choice in 1911, and he was granted the highest authority to reform the country's finances. The Majles used Shuster to build up Iran's independence in the face of Russia, in particular by attempting reform of the finances. Shuster, however, believed that, to help Iran, he needed to employ a British official, Stokes, because of his knowledge of the Iranians and the Persian language. However, under the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, by which Russia had its sphere of influence in northern Iran where Britain could not interfere in any way, Stokes's proposed work in the Russian zone, which could possibly have increased Britain's prestige in the north, was a source of irritation. Russia feared loss of prestige from it. In November 1911, the second Russian ultimatum, requesting Shuster's dismissal and the appointment of Iran's foreign advisors by Britain and Russia was rejected by the Majles, and this led to the dispatch of Russian troops to Tehran, the announcement of the closure of the Majles by the Regent, and the coup by the Bakhtiyari Khans in December 1911. Russia, which followed the 1907 Convention to its own purposes, could not agree that British influence be strengthened or even appear to be strengthened in the Russian sphere of influence. However, it cannot be argued that Britain's policy on Iran was characterised by ever greater accommodation towards Russia because of a growth in Russian power. The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 played a significant factor in shaping British policy. The Shuster incident took place in Tehran, and it could be

understood that the British had no power to be in a hard position against the Russians. The Shuster incident, however, proved the strength of Russian influence in northern Iran.

Although the closure of the Majles in 1911 represented the strong influence of foreign powers, especially Russia, this was the only way that Iran could eliminate any more serious loss. Then, Iran was not only without a proper representative political institution, it was also without a strong leader. Britain, it is to be noted, sacrificed the effective reform of the administration of the north, and its own limited interests there, as well as its own official, to maintain what it considered most important – good relations with Russia. The essential problem of the weakness of Iran, however, was not only that of foreign influence. The fact was that the country was too weak for the foreign advisors to effectively improve Iran's deteriorating financial situation and deal with disorder in the country. With regard to the Swedish officers, as Sweden was a small European power agreed by Britain and Russia, Grey endeavoured to support the operations of the Swedish Gendarmerie, particularly in the South of Iran. He also argued to the gendarmerie operating in northern Iran, and strongly supported them against Russian opposition in 1914. The Russians were anxious to prevent a repeat of the Shuster experience. However, the requisite funding from the Iranian government to keep the Swedes was not available, and the British government thought that it was Iran's responsibility to provide it.

Owing to the weakness of the Iranian government in the twentieth century, Britain's policy of non-intervention continued but gradually applied only to Iranian affairs in the political centre. The British attempted to retain their traditional policy of non-intervention, but simultaneously were drawn more deeply into Iran by their interest in the oil producing areas. The discovery of oil began changes in British policy in Iran's marginal area and in their international

politics. It can be seen that some issues taking place in Tehran and the North of Iran were met by Britain's indifference, and the British would adjust their policy if they encountered arguments with the Russians. For example, the British did not provide assistance to the constitutional movement and the constitutionalists from 1905. When the acceptance of the *bastis* in the British legation in Tehran was designated by the Iranians and Russians as intervention, the British stopped it and asked the *bastis* to leave immediately. Regarding the Shuster Mission with the Stokes incident in 1911, the British had no intention of intervening in the appointment of Stokes by Shuster in the beginning, but owing to the serious opposition by the Russians, Britain found the necessity of recalling Stokes. Yet, to the affairs outside Tehran, such as the South-West of Iran, it can be seen that the British were concerned to ensure their oil interests in the area by signing agreements with the Bakhityari Khans and Sheykh Kha'zal. The British did not care about Iran's opposition at all. In addition, the railway schemes planned in the South-West of Iran were part of a strategy of the British against the Baghdad Railway. The Mohammerah-Khorramabad line was to block the Baghdad Railway stretching into the South of Iran. The British thus were desirous to obtain a concession from the Iranian government. Furthermore, on the disputes of the Ottoman-Iranian border, the British tended to mediate, so as not to risk their prestige. The issue of the need to restore order in Iran also became more pressing, though Britain had other interests in the South and South-West, especially trade, which led it to be concerned with solutions to Iran's security problem. Britain was thus closely involved in the introduction of the Swedish Gendarmerie in the South of Iran from 1911, to which it gave support. British actions on the margins of Iran as a result of oil this connected to a variety of issues in their policy.

Agreements signed outside the Iranian political centre before the War were new in nature in the context of Anglo-Iranian relations. Bakhtiyari Agreement of

1905 and the Mohammerah Agreement of 1909 were not acknowledged by the Iranian government. In the view of the Iranian centre, the local powers had no right to sign any document with foreigners. The agreements were both relevant to oil, but the Oil Concession of 1901 should have been the only point of reference; in other words, the British should only have obtained benefit from the Iranian government. The two agreements were signed at sensitive times, which were the constitutional movement in 1905 and the abdication of Mohammad 'Ali Shah in July 1909. This shows that the British government was fully aware that the Iranian government was weak and unstable. The Bakhtiyari Agreement of 1905 remained valid between the British and the Khans, while the Mohammerah Agreement of 1909 was reached through mediation by Preece with Sardar As'ad and Sheykh Khaz'al. The APOC even signed another agreement with Sheykh Khaz'al in 1914, which meant an even the closer relationship between the Sheykh and the APOC. With the agreements, the British had more powers in the South-West of Iran.

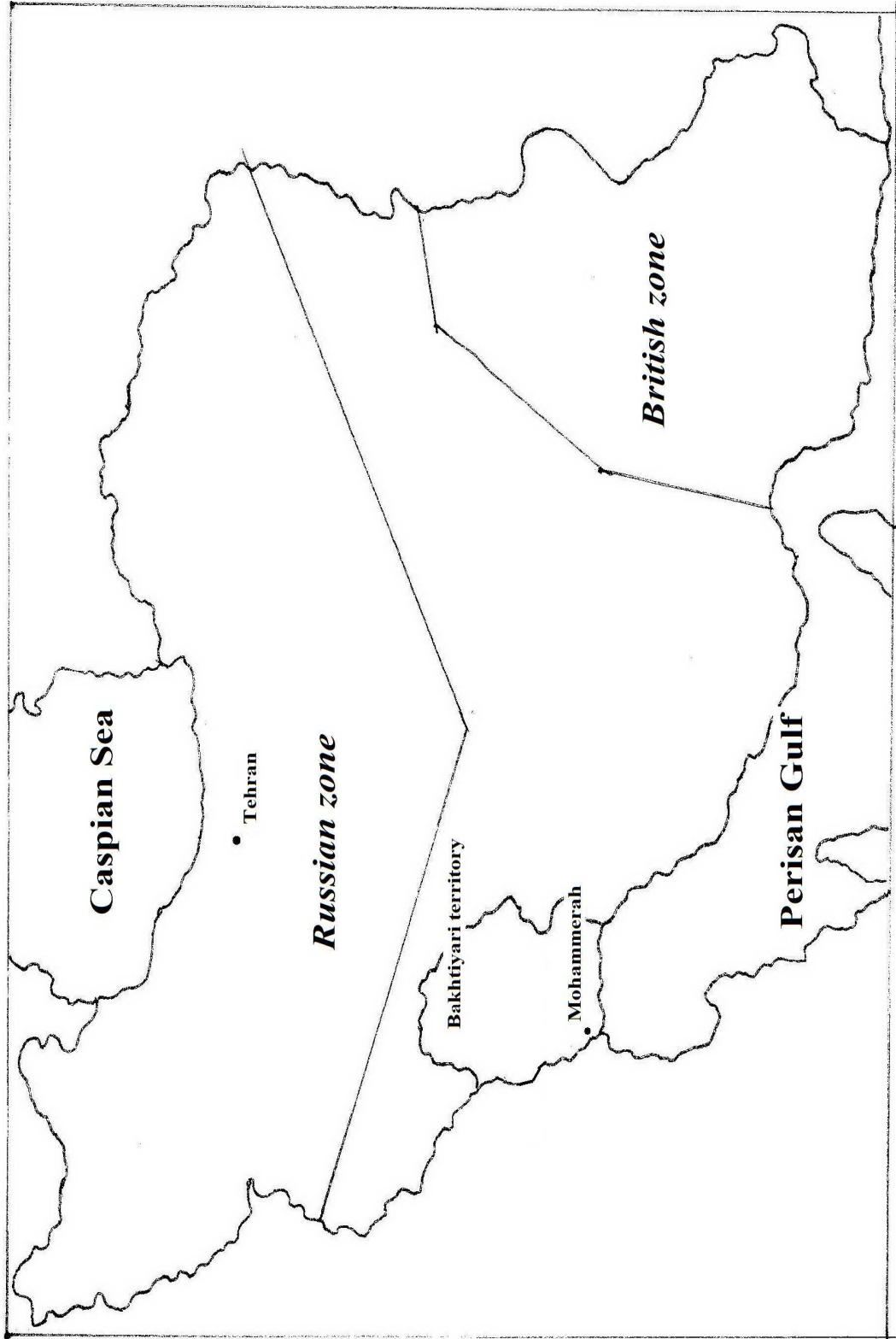
Many events during 1908 and 1914 created multiple dimensions in British policy to Iran. The Oil Concession of 1901, the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906 and the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 were key factors. The Oil Concession made the British pay much attention to the oil fields, such as those in the Bakhtiyari territory. Paying much attention to Iran's marginal area increased its importance in British policy towards Iran. The constitutionalists in Tehran did not receive Britain's support at all. British policy in Iran could not be viewed as one solid entity, but in fact it assumed various characteristics in different regions. Thus, in the South-West of Iran it can be seen that the British were very active owing to their oil interests by signing agreements with the local powers, making plans for railway routes and mediating in the dispute of the Ottoman-Iranian border on the part of the Shatt al-Arab and Mohammerah.

British policy towards Iran from 1908 to 1914 is best viewed from a broad

perspective, given that Russia and Germany, were important factors in this relationship. Germany represented a new threat, replacing Russia, to Britain in the Middle East and Iran. Germany mainly strengthened itself by the Baghdad Railway from 1903, owing to the fact that the terminal of the Baghdad Railway was Baghdad, that is to say, close to Kuwait and the Persian Gulf. In the meantime, Germany also attempted to befriend Sheykh Khaz'al, which became a threat to the British. Russia and Britain both sought to prevent an increase in German influence in the area resulting from the Baghdad Railway's extension towards the Persian Gulf and the Russian zone in Iran. Thus the German threat was hardly to be neglected. In 1911, Germany had the most influential effect to Britain over a number of incidents, such as the possible submission of the Ottoman-Iranian border dispute to the Hague Tribunal in June and the signing of the Potsdam Agreement by Russia and Germany in August. This situation continued to develop up until the outbreak of war.

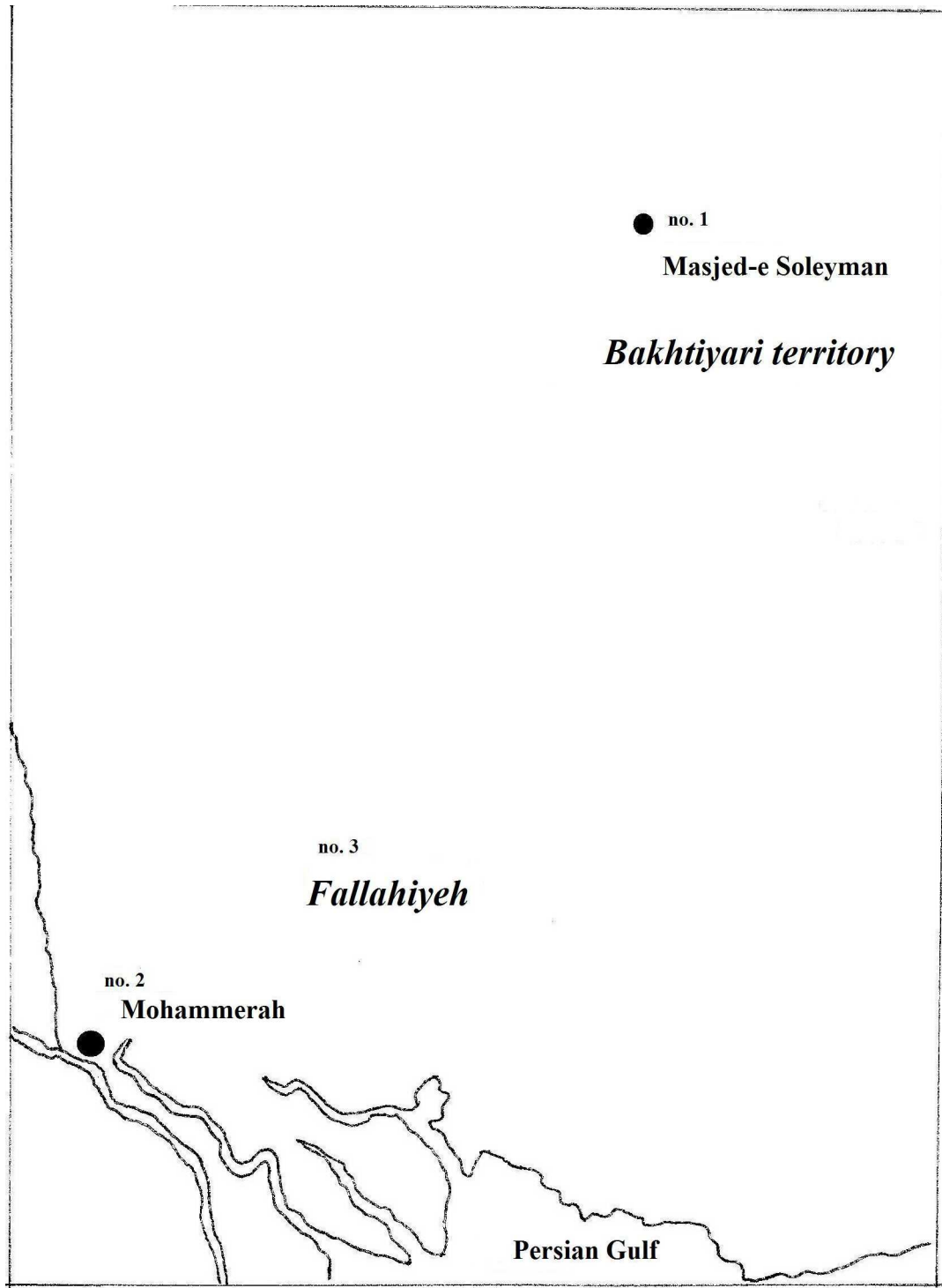
To sum up, the course of Anglo-Iranian relations between 1908 and 1914 was marked by the major effect on Iran's international relations caused by the internal changes in the country. The changes in Iran, however, could not quell the disturbances in the short term, and similarly it proved impossible to resolve all of the accompanying political and financial problems, despite the strong action taken by individuals such as Shuster. Neither could European countries achieve a sustainable balance of power, given that Britain, Russia and Germany were involved in growing rivalry both in Europe and in Iran itself. All of these powers were keen not to lose their prestige in Iran at any cost, and thus Iran found it impossible to avoid becoming embroiled in their rivalries. By 1914, therefore, Anglo-Iranian relations still retained some features from the nineteenth century, while new factors were emerging as a result of tensions between Britain and Iran, and Russia, Germany and the Ottoman Empire.

Map 1



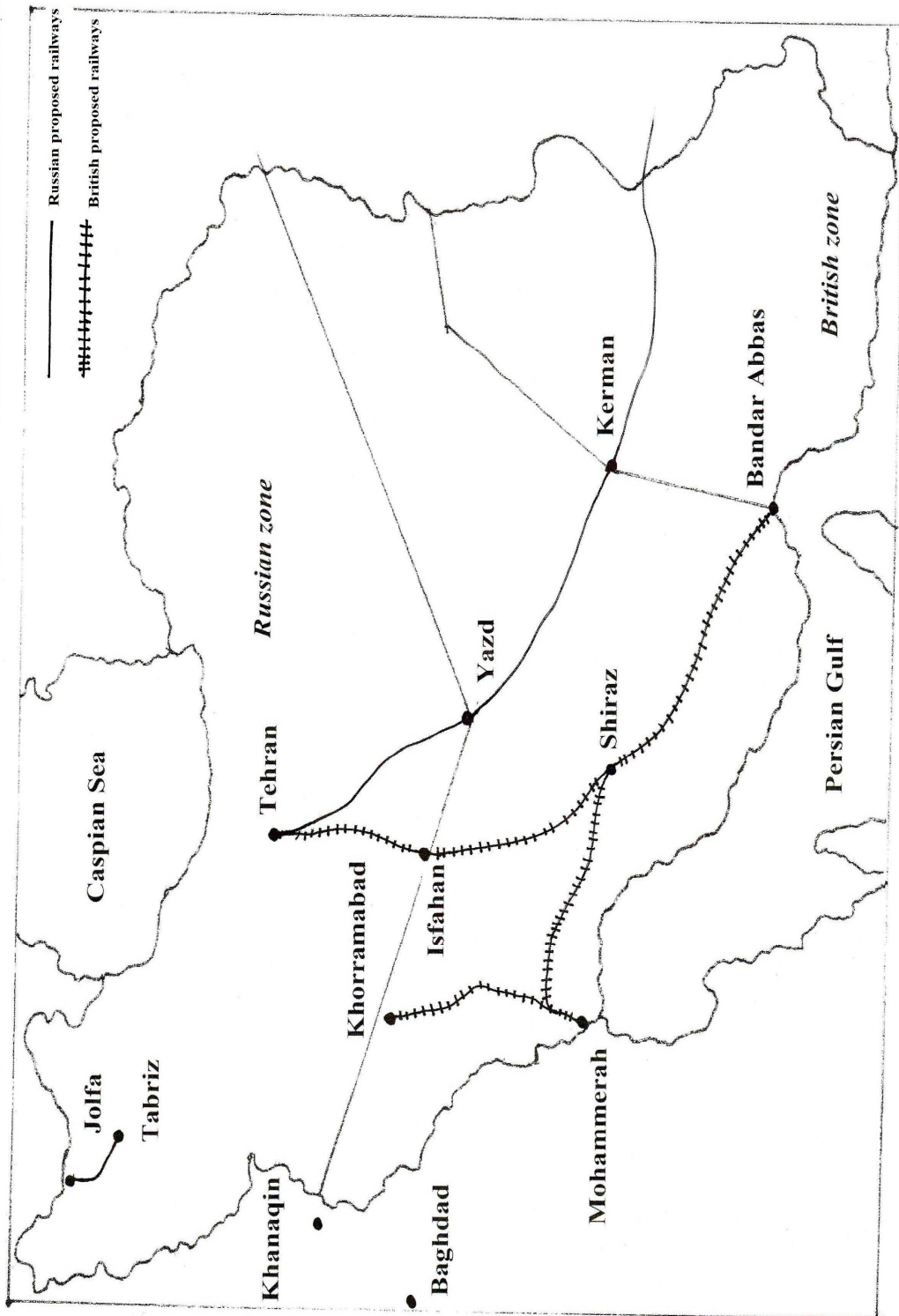
Iran

Map 2



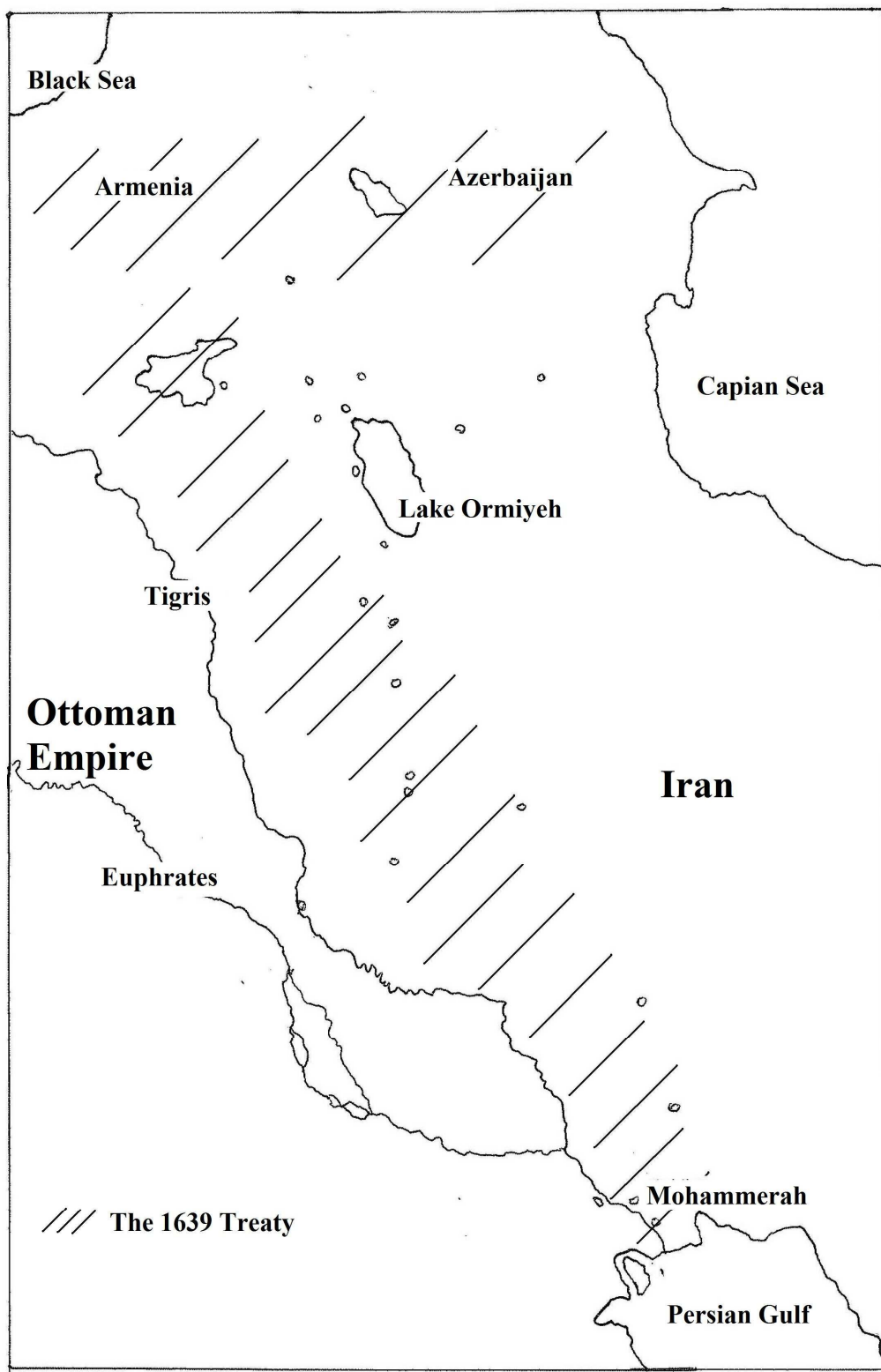
Oil fields in the province of Khuzestan (Reproduced from FO248/962)

Map 3



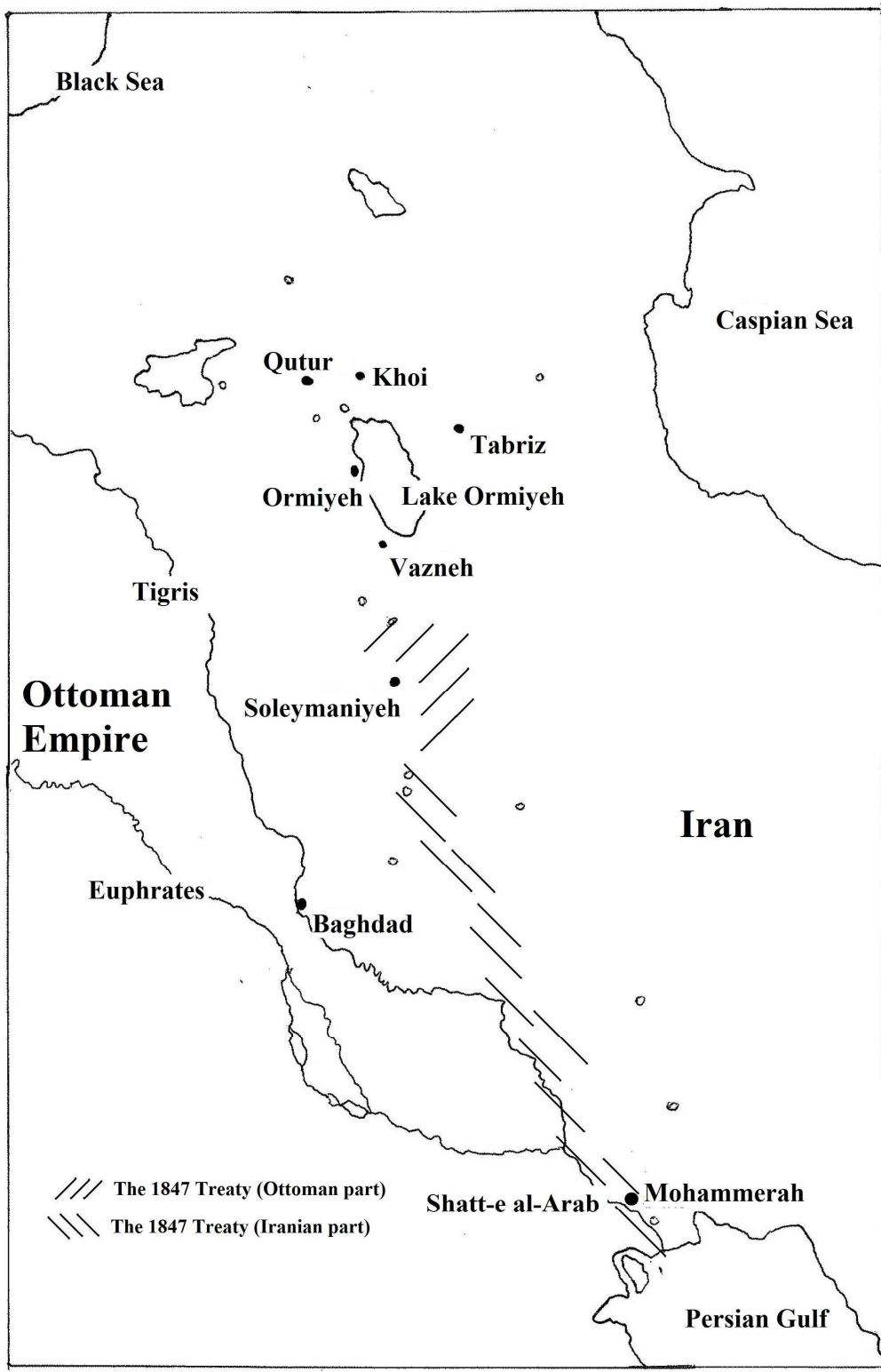
The British and Russian proposed railways 1913-1914

Map 4

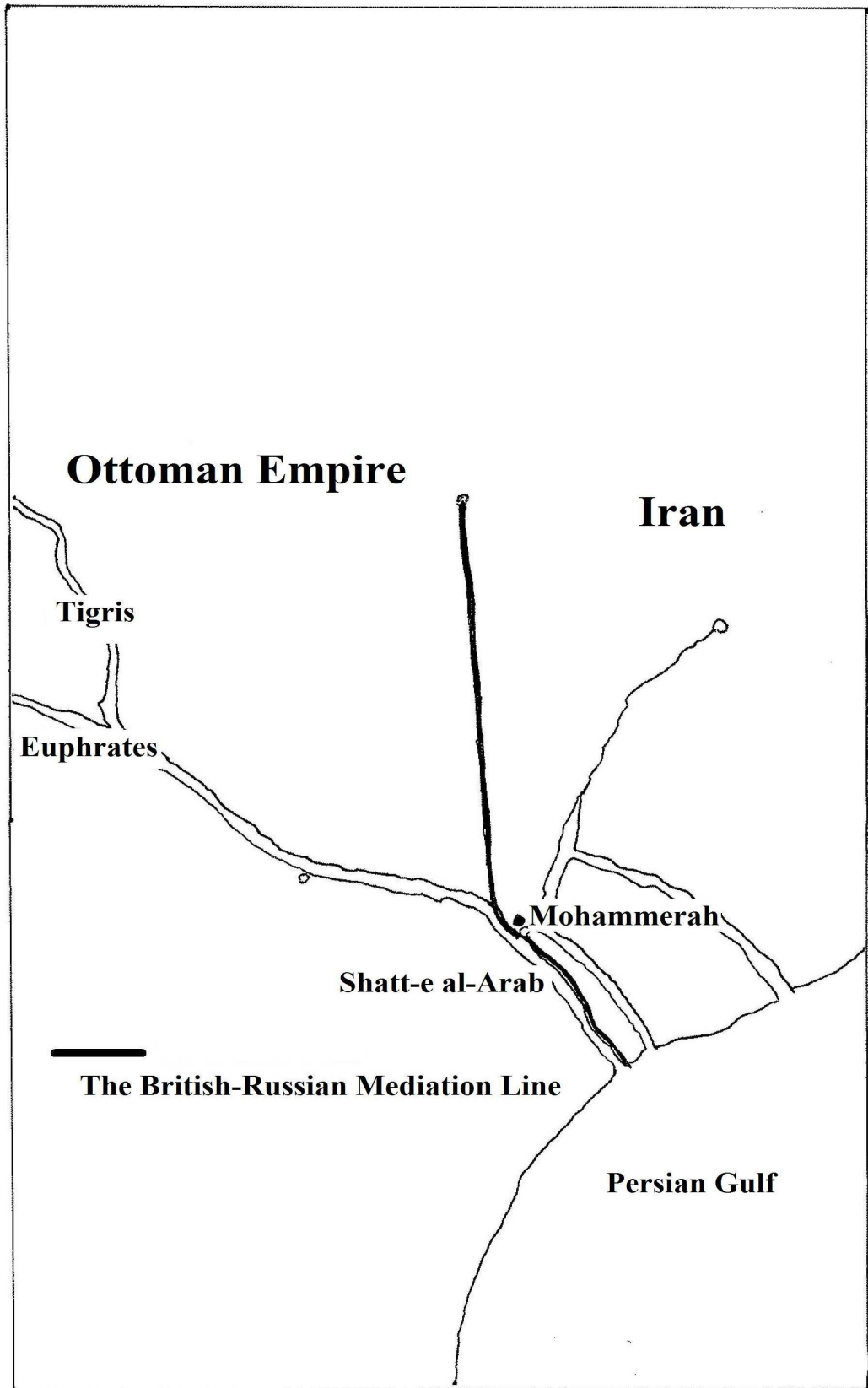


The 1639 Treaty between Iran and the Ottoman Empire

Map 5

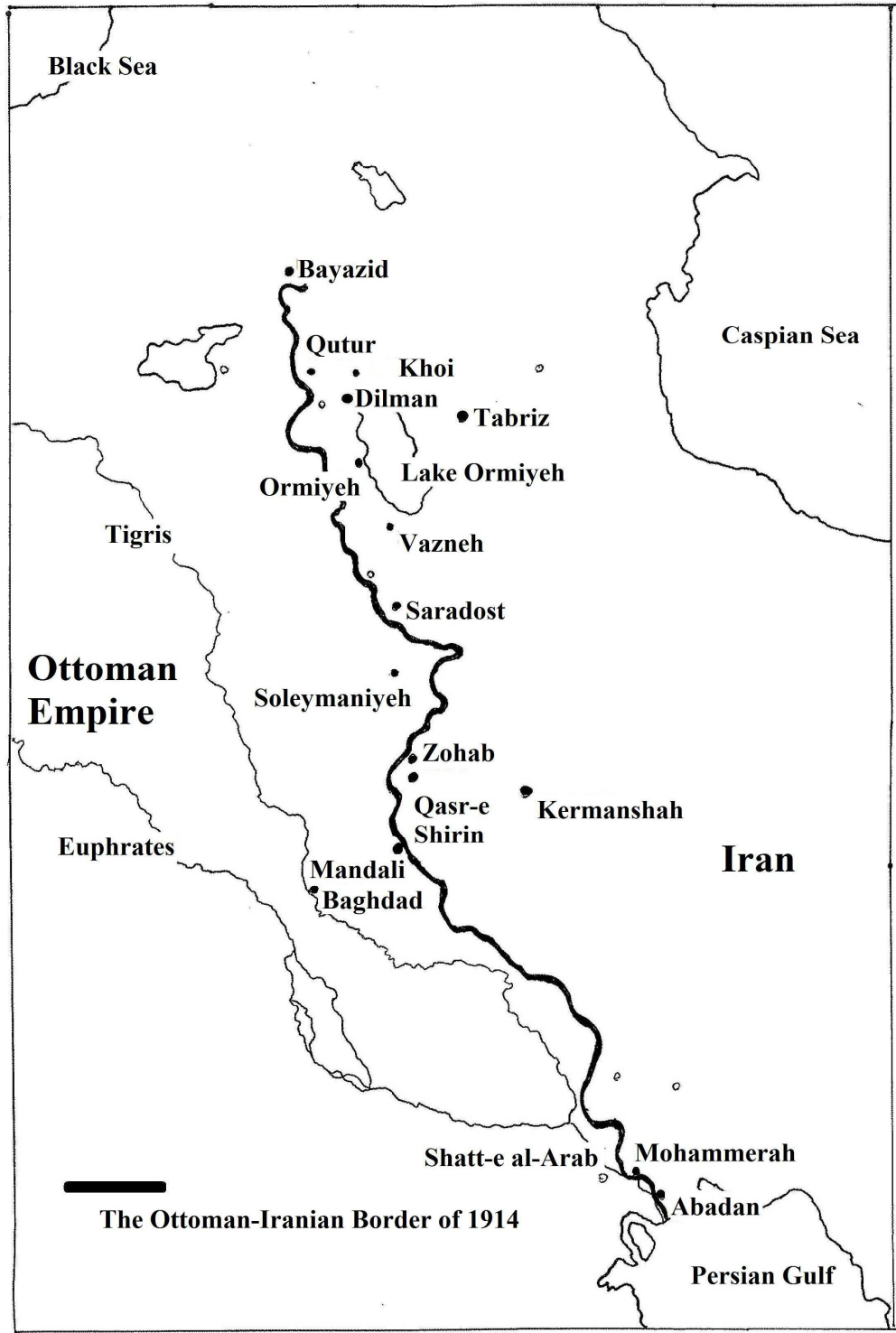


The Erzerum Treaty of 1847



The Mediation Line of 1850 (Reproduced from FO881/8800)

Map 7



The Ottoman-Iranian Border of 1914

(Reproduced from C. H. D. Ryder, 'The Demarcation of the Turco-Persian Boundary in 1913-1914,' *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 66, No. 3 (Sep., 1925), p. 231.)

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