RESURRECTING EMPIRE:
IRANIAN IMPERIAL NATIONALISM IN 1919

Philip Henning Grobien

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews

2022

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.17630/10023-25391
http://hdl.handle.net/10023/25391

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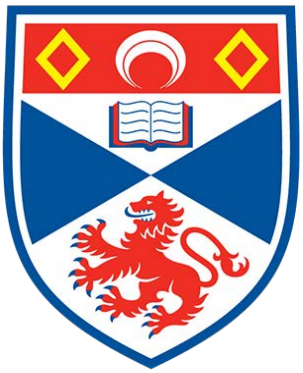
Resurrecting Empire:

Iranian Imperial Nationalism in 1919

Philip Henning Grobien



University of
St Andrews

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

at the University of St Andrews

November 2021

Abstract:

Narratives of the late Qajar period have considered Iran a country in decline, unable to engage effectively with British and Russian modernity, spearheaded by imperial practices. Yet, in truth, this account requires a re-appraisal. This thesis examines the dialectic between a pre-modern Iran and the modern forces Iran faced and will show how Iran engaged with and applied western achievements which were eventually used in an Iranian paradigm.

This thesis focuses on Iran's diplomacy after the First World War and, in particular, Iran's attendance at the Peace of Paris in 1919. It will show that Iran followed a persistent and lengthy pursuit to reclaim territory and was to put forward a nationalist programme which sought a sovereign and independent Iran. This nuanced nationalism, an *imperial nationalism*, used modern methods and sought integration into the post-war world order.

Using previously unused primary sources, this thesis will interrogate Iran's loss of territory and examine how this informed Iran's post-war diplomacy. In doing so it will highlight an under-researched area and show that Iran espoused a far more consolidated nationalistic approach in 1919 which included an increasingly modern and professional diplomatic approach. Modernity and imperialism helped to precipitate the loss of territory, however, the loss of territory informed Iran's distinct nationalism in 1919. An *imperial nationalism*, which was founded on a framework of empire locked into ideas of sovereignty.

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I, Philip Henning Grobien, do hereby certify that this thesis, submitted for the degree of PhD, which is approximately 80,000 words in length, has been written by me, and that it is the record of work carried out by me, or principally by myself in collaboration with others as acknowledged, and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for any degree. I confirm that any appendices included in my thesis contain only material permitted by the 'Assessment of Postgraduate Research Students' policy.

I was admitted as a research student at the University of St Andrews in September 2015.

I confirm that no funding was received for this work.

Date 18/11/2021 Signature of candidate

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Ali Ansari, for navigating me through this process and for patiently allowing me to realise a better methodology for writing my thesis. Indeed, it was Ali who first suggested I look at Iran's decision to send a delegation to the Peace of Paris. My thanks also to Dr Hurivash Ahmadi, who patiently got me to reconnect to the Iranian language after many years and was instrumental with sourcing various Iranian texts. Thanks also to Dr Alison Carrol and Professor Astrid Swenson for helping to re-ignite my passion for history and to teach this old dog new tricks.

I am what someone might call an academic re-tread, having gone back to study history many years after a BSc in Economics. I have enjoyed the process enormously and owe much thanks to my wife, Fiona, for patiently allowing me to test my text on her, for helping me find new ways of saying similar things and for editing my work!

Transliteration and Dates

This thesis uses a simplified form of Persian transliteration and follows the *Iranian Studies* criteria. Exceptions remain transliterations of common names. Unless otherwise indicated, all Persian translations are my own.

Every effort has been made to refer to spellings of places as commonly known today as well as adhering to originally used spelling. As many of the sources are nineteenth century and use vague transliterations of Persian words, some odd and unusual orthography will appear. Indeed, the reader will note that the footnotes will reflect the English used by the writer and may reflect outdated grammar and orthography. These have been left in their original form but where necessary have been annotated with [*sic*] (*sic erat scriptum).*

Reference will be made to "Iran" and "Iranians" throughout, though reference to "Persia" in original material, treaties, etc., has been preserved. The ill-defined transition from Ottoman to Turkey, circa 1911, has required an inexact change of reference from Ottoman to Turk.

All dates are provided as the Gregorian equivalent. Every effort has been made to ensure that the transposing of these dates is correct.

Abbreviations

FO	Foreign Office files, U.K National Archives
WO	War Office files, U.K National Archives
IOR	India Office Records, British Library
BDFA	British Documents on Foreign Affairs
DBFA	Documents on British Foreign Policy
FRUS	Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States
TIIB	Schofield, R.N. (ed), *The Iran-Iraq Border 1840-1958* (Farnham Common: Archive Editions, 1989)
AI	*Amal-e Iraniyan: Az konferans-e sol-e Paris ta qarardad-e 1919 Iran va Englis*

Maps

This thesis uses maps to illustrate territories and borders under discussion. Original documents from source materials are used together with traces and reformulations by the author if needed to assist the text.

Map 1. **Map of Armenia, Arran and Azerbaijan**
Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Muhammad al-Farisi al-Istakhri, Kitab ul-Mamālikva al-Masālik. MS dating from the 950 CE. Bodleian Library MS Ouseley 373, f.80a. Verbal permission 9/10/2019.

Maps 2, 3 and 4.
Sections of a larger map attached to *Claims of Persia before the Conference of the Preliminaries of Peace at Paris* (Cadet, Paris, March 1919).

Map 5. **Sketch map of Sarakhs**
Map drawn by the author based on written sources.

Map 6. **The disputed area of Mekran (Makran)**.
Map drawn by the author based on Percy Badger's political map of the Persian Gulf (IOR/L/PS/18/C68) and Sir Frederick Goldsmid's map outlining the contested area as he saw it (Mss Eur F126/33). Source: British Library.

Map 7. **The disputed area of Khanaqin**
Map drawn by the author overlain on a sketch map of the Zohab area, outlining disputed territory. Source: Volume 2, R.N Schofield, (ed), The Iran-Iraq Border 1843-1844. p.211.

Map 8. **Chia Surkh & Qasr-i-Shirin** (Chia Sorkh & Qasr-e-Shirin)
Map created by Mr. Soanes in 1912. Source: FO416/169.

Map 9. **Sketch map of the Frontier between Shemiran and Mandali**
Map created by Mr. Soanes and Mr. Orloff (Russian Consul General in Bagdad).
Source: FO416/170.

Map 10. **Sketch map of Muhammerah to indicate Turco Persian Boundary**
This map shows the delimitation which followed the Iranian banks of the Shatt al-Arab and then the Thalweg line to allow for the commercial exploitation of Muhammerah.
Source: FO416/171.

Map 11. **Carte Identique (1869)**
Map outlining the contested areas between Iran and the Ottomans.
Source: FO 416/153.

Map 12. **Frontier map showing districts visited by British and Russian Delegates**
Source: FO416/167.

Map 13. **Sketch map showing Persian territory (Red) on which Turkey has designs**
Source: FO371/3262, pp.23-25.

Map 14. **Territory designated for Russian building**
Map drawn by the author to illustrate discrepancy between Iran and Russia's reading of the agreement.

Map 15. **Copy of map furnished by Russian Minister in Tehran to Persian Government for negociation [*sic*] of Akhla-Khorassan [*sic*] boundary question. December 1881.**
Source: FO925/2682.

Map 16. **Tracing showing the direction of the Russo-Persian border between Baba Dormaz and Sarakhs.**
Source: Referred to in FO60/486 p.71 and FO60/490 p.17. MFQ1/831.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The war has ended, the allies have won.
The era of justice and humanity has begun in the history of politics.
What will happen to Iran?[1]

In the aftermath of the First World War, Iran sent a commission to attend the Paris Peace Conference. In *Claims of Persia before the Conference of the Preliminaries of Peace at Paris*,[2] Iran set forward a case for the return of territories lost since the Treaty of Turkmanchai in 1828. Iran's territorial claims relied on, and were part of, a nuanced nationalism. This thesis has described this approach as a policy of *imperial nationalism.* This nationalism looked towards resolving issues of sovereignty and independence by using methods of the modern world.

Iran's efforts in 1919 were defined by the nature and extent of its loss of territory over 100 years and also prescribed how halting and reversing that process would now form a large part of its diplomatic agenda. Reclaiming the territories lost was vital to Iran's nationalist programme. However, just as important was how these territories and lands had been lost in the first place. The manner in which lands had been appropriated through war, one-sided

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[1] Mohamad Ali Foroughi, *Notq-e Foroughi dar konferans-e sol-e Paris dar 1919*, *Vaz'e keshwar-e Iran qabl as jang – hyn-e jang- va bad az jang* [Foroughi's address to the Conference of the Peace of Paris in 1919, condition of the country of Iran before, during, and after the war] *Yaghma*, Farvardeen 1342 [1963] – no.177, p.15.
[2] *Claims of Persia before the Conference of the Preliminaries of Peace at Paris* (Cadet, Paris, March 1919)

treaties and imperial hegemony fed directly into the narrative of how badly the Iranians had been treated. It also contributed to the narrative of how Iran had succumbed to British and Russian interference.

By examining the delimitation of Iran's land-based borders, this thesis will show how the containment of Iran's borders fuelled Iran's diplomacy and the new nationalist agenda to be presented at the Peace of Paris (Paris Peace Conference). In doing so, it will elicit the issues of modernity and imperialism and how these issues informed Iran's irredentist[3] claims and nationalism. It will show that as Iran embarked on a policy of *imperial nationalism*, Iran sought no less than a resurrection of its previous Empire.

Iran's perspective at the Peace of Paris and its immediate post-war policies have been insufficiently studied and it is hoped that this thesis will aid research in this respect. The bedrock of this thesis has been the extensive research and evaluation of primary sources in both Persian and English. The English source material has allowed a deeper understanding of British intentions and strategies. Some of the Persian sources give a new insight into the aims and attitudes of the Iranian government and the delegation at the Peace of Paris.

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[3] Iran's territorial claims were sometimes termed "irredentist" by British politicians. In this thesis, "irredentist" and "irredentism" is used in the vernacular as a common description of, and reference to, Iran's frequent territorial claims.

Central thesis

The diminishing of Iran's territories and the concomitant decline in Iran's sovereignty will be assessed against the background of Iran's encounter with modernity and imperialism. This analysis will trace, therefore, the factors which helped to construct Iran's new nationalism. How and why Iran's territory receded gave breath to a nuanced application of modernity and nationalism.

Iranian territorial claims are examined against a specific transformation in its geo-political outlook. Namely, that during this period, Iran would form an increasingly important role in the imperial strategies of both Britain and Russia. Military victories over Iran in 1813 and 1828 meant that Russia shared a border with Iran and was the predominant imperial power in the region. Britain's political designs now included the need to protect India following the capitulation of the last Indian state to the East India Company in 1799. Iran's new geo-political outlook can only be examined in view of the diplomatic "confrontation" between Russia and Britain, commonly referred to as the *Great Game*.[4] A contest which, as far as the British were concerned, was necessitated by the protection of India, and for the Russians, their territorial expansion in India's direction.

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[4] Arguably, there is no definitive study of the Great Game in relation to Iran. However, the issues are sufficiently defined in Firuz Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia: Imperial Ambitions in Qajar Iran* (London; New York: I.B.Tauris, 2013)

As a result of this engagement with Britain and Russia, Iran, a pre-modern Empire, was to face the modern British and Russian imperial powers. Iran was confronted by a modernity which espoused achievements in politics, culture, and technology.[5] Developments which had been rooted in the Enlightenment.[6] These modern methods of diplomacy, bureaucracy, discoveries, science, and underpinned by the Rule of Law were displayed in trade and the use of superior military force in imperial practices.

In contrast to this modernity, Iran, a largely agrarian and non-industrial economy, remained a traditional society under dynastic rule which therefore can be defined as pre-modern. Iran lacked a modern state infrastructure, but modernity, for a large part, was predicated on a development towards a modern state and, therefore, on an acceptance of delimited and fixed borders. Ostensibly, this narrative, the confrontation of pre-modern and modern worlds, was to result in the loss of territory, sovereignty, and integrity. Testing this theory has necessitated an examination of how Iranian territory had been lost in the preceding years.

In Paris, the Russians were blamed extensively as they appropriated more territory, however, what is notable is how persistent and organised

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[5] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London; New York: Routledge, London 2005) Author's introduction, p.xxxiv.
[6] Immanuel Kant, *An Answer to the Question: 'What is Enlightenment?* translated by H.B. Nisbet (London; New York: Penguin Books, 2009) p.3.

their encroachments were. Over nearly 100 years they exhibited a single-minded objective for a larger Empire, which was achieved through a perfect dovetailing of military and diplomatic cadres.

British political strategies will also be examined, but in contrast to the Russians, British diplomacy appeared more passive and less resolute. Sir Edward Grey was to remark that foreign ministers were "guided by what seemed to them to be the immediate interest of this Country without making elaborate calculations for the future".[7] Certainly, in relation to Iran, Lord Salisbury's comment may have proved a useful policy description: He declared that British policy was "to float lazily down stream, occasionally putting out a diplomatic boat-hook to avoid collisions".[8]

Imperial strategies, particularly of Lord Curzon and to a lesser degree Sir Edward Grey, will show how high-minded ideals of international law and border delimitation were to be subject to the practicalities of imperial hegemony. To what extent an inconsistent approach to the "Persian Question" had served to encourage, and in some cases allow, Russian aggression requires further investigation. In addition, contradictory views to the threats and security of India and other British assets have been well

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[7] Requoted in Kenneth Bourne, *The Foreign Policy of Victorian England, 1830-1902* (London: Clarendon Press, 1970) p.3.
[8] *Ibid.*, *The Foreign Policy of Victorian England*, p.132.

documented.[9] It is likely that these contrasting strategies emanating from the Foreign Office and India government[10] caused confusion. As Foreign Office and India government personnel and resources were employed in Iran, differences in policy and attitudes seemed to manifest on the ground. Despite a gentlemen's agreement reached in 1860 to prevent overlapping interference,[11] in which consular and diplomatic posts were divided between the India government and the Foreign Office, differences were to continue. It suggests that though the failure of the Anglo-Persian Agreement (1919) exemplified, finally, that Britain did not either understand, or have an answer to, the "Persian Question", it was in reality only the culmination of inappropriate policies followed over previous years. Of course to expect Iran to be of paramount importance to the British Empire would be naïve, however, given their need to protect India, an argument could be made that a greater allowance should have been made to formulate a more coherent Iranian policy.

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[9] For a rounded view of the debates around the defence of India see:
G.J Alder, 'Britain and the Defence of India - The Origins of the Problem 1798-1815', *Journal of Asian History*, Vol. 6, No.1 (1972), pp.14-44: Edward Ingram, 'Approaches to the Great Game,' *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.18, No.4 (Oct., 1982), pp.449-457: Rose Greaves, *Persia and the Defence of India, 1884-1892* (London: University of London, 1959). For a military view as to whether India could be conquered by Russia see R. Murdoch, 'The Strategy of Russia in Central Asia: From the Persian Point of View', Lecture March 13th, 1873, *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Collection*, 1873.
[10] This thesis will refer to the separate administration in India as the India Government. In reality, as part of the East India Company it was called the India Board (of Control) and after 1858 when the British Government took control of Indian affairs, the India Office.
[11] Elizabeth Monroe, *Britain's moment in the Middle East, 1914-1956* (London: Chatto & Windus 1963) p.12.

While Iran was to be increasingly dependent on British and Russian imperial strategies, its relationship with the Ottoman Empire during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was also subject to modification. Conflict between the Iranians under the Safavids and the Ottomans over territory and political influence had been sectarian – formed through the distinction between Shia and Sunni. In the nineteenth century this rivalry would become more secular, modified by the influence of the British and Russians. This thesis contradicts Sabri Ateş's analysis of Ottoman aims during the early twentieth century and First World War and contends that Ottoman aims remained secular, and a religious shroud was only used to wrap more nationalistic and sectarian aims.[12] Significantly, given Iran's military decline under the Qajar's, the Ottomans were to come to see the Russians as a greater threat to their own territorial aims in the region.

Less broadly, this thesis will elicit some of the diplomatic narratives which helped to underline the loss of territory. These include the methodology behind Russian expansion in the Caucasus and Transcaspian which utilised a mixture of brute force, annexations, treaties, and the use of modern methods to enable further Russian expansion. Also of note, is how

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[12] See Chapter 5 in Sabri Ateş, *The Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands: Making a Boundary, 1843-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013)

the diplomatic strategies and secrecy behind some agreements were to work to the advantage of the Russians.

By examining, in detail, the territories that Iran wanted returned and by evaluating how they were 'lost', this investigation will examine the foundations for the many claims the delegates presented. Sources show that the Iranian delegates in Paris re-imagined an Empire that was based on new methods and ideas of state infrastructure within a renewed sense of nationalism. In this respect, ideas of modernity were interpreted to fit into an Iranian conception. This *imperial nationalism* formed the backbone of Iran's *desiderata* at Paris. Imperative was the return of territories essential for both promoting a nationalist, and confirming, an imperial agenda. The *desiderata* put forward in Iran's *Claims of Persia before the Conference of the Preliminaries of Peace at Paris* therefore demands to be considered more fully within the narrative of Iranian nationalism.

Undoubtedly, Iran played a large role in the dwindling of its territory. Iran's ever-increasing weakness in protecting its own borders remained the principle problem. Iran's army, boosted only in times of war by irregular and informal forces,[13] was largely ineffectual in controlling its borderlands and borders. The Iranian army remained a largely pre-modern force. Ultimately,

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[13] Uzi Rabi and Nugzar Ter-Oganov, '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, pp.333-354.

military reforms in Iran failed because modern state building reforms failed.[14] Iran remained a kingdom based on patrimonialism,[15] venality and ambivalence to modernity. This, and a lack of modern state infrastructure, had put Iran at the mercy of Britain, Russia and, indeed, the Ottomans.

Over the course of the nineteenth century Iran, however, did appear to demonstrate some ability to play off Britain and Russia against each other and achieved meagre diplomatic victories now and again.[16] This, together with the contest known as the *Great Game*, potentially saved Iran from even greater territorial losses.

The end of the First World War has been perceived as a juncture in the question of Iran's modernity. More particularly, the Iranian delegates, all nationalists, appeared to put forward a plan for a progressive Iran, desiring and expecting a place in the new world order after the First World War. This thesis will examine Iran's approach at Paris and determine the scope of its professionalism as regards diplomatic and planning skills. In doing so it will touch on some of the narratives concerning Iran's diplomatic approach and arguments regarding the relative importance of Ahmad Shah, Vosuq al-Dowleh and the delegates in Paris.

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[14] Stephanie Cronin, 'Building a new army: military reform in Qajar Iran', in Roxane Farmanfarmaian (ed), *War and Peace in Qajar Iran: Implications past and present* (London; New York: Routledge, 2008), p.49.
[15] See Chapter 1, Hadi Enayat, *Law, State and Society in Modern Iran: Constitutionalism, Autocracy, and Legal Reform, 1906-1941* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013)
[16] Abbas Amanat, *Pivot of the Universe* (London; New York: I.B Taurus 2008)

As we shall see, Iran's arguments for irredentism were coherent and, as the British found out, persistent. Fundamentally they desired to turn back the clock to an Empire where Iran could control its own destiny.

Literature review

This thesis has necessitated research into a wide range of literature and numerous archives. To understand the nature of Britain and Russia's agency in Iran a substantial literature concerning the Enlightenment, modernity, orientalism, geography, law, the nature and politics of imperialism and trade has been accessed. The issue of Iranian nationalism also formed part of the research.

At its core this thesis has built on the recent research in two areas: The political narratives involved in Iran's attendance at the Peace of Paris and research on the delimitation of Iran's borders.

This thesis has built on the work of Homa Katouzian[17] and in particular Oliver Bast,[18] and has developed themes which suggests that significant diplomatic and political "progress" was possible in the Qajar era rather than a

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[17] Homa Katouzian, *State and Society in Iran: The Eclipse of the Qajars and the Emergence of the Pahlavis* (London; New York: I.B Tauris, 2006)
[18] Oliver Bast 'British imperialism and Persian diplomacy in the shadow of World War I (1914-1921)' in Nick Wadham Smith and Danny Whitehead (eds), *Didgah: New Perspectives on UK-Iran cultural relations* (London: British Council, 2015) pp.83-124.

discourse of disintegration[19] which has remained the predominant discourse. In fact, the period of nationalism investigated here points to a significant corner being turned in Iranian nationalism prior to Reza Shah. An argument which has been supported by previously unused Iranian sources. This has included diaries[20] and the excellent archive which Kaveh Bayat and Reza Azari Shahrzayee have assembled on Iranian diplomatic communications.[21]

Research into Iranian borders has seen a shift from geographers to historians. What can be categorised as an American/Turkish school,[22] has challenged official histories and tackled "the history of empires from their peripheries or borderlands rather than their imperial centres".[23] Sabri Ateş provides the most comprehensive examination of Iran's western borders to date,[24] examining the roles of British and Russians as mediators in delimiting the Ottoman-Iranian border over a *longue duree*. His contention, that British

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[19] 'Disintegrating the 'Discourse of Disintegration': Some Reflections on the Historiography of the Late Qajar Period and Iranian Cultural Memory' in Touraj Atabaki (ed), *Iran in the 20th Century: Historiography and Political Culture* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2009), pp.55-68.
[20] For example, Mohamad Ali Foroughi, 'Yaddashtha-ye montasher nashodeh, az safar-e konferans-e sol-e Paris' [Unpublished memoirs, from my travels to the Peace Conference in Paris] Mohammad Afshin Vafaei va Pejman Firuzbaksh, *Bokhara,* sal-e [year] 16, nomereh-e [number] 102, Mehr-Aban, 1393 [2014]
[21] Kaveh Bayat, Reza Azari Shahrzayee, *Amal-e Iraniyan az konferans-e sol-e Paris ta qarardad-e 1919 Iran va Engelis* [Iranian activity from the Conference at the Peace of Paris to the Anglo-Iranian Agreement of 1919] (Iran: Pardise Danesh, 1392) Henceforward abbreviated to AI.
[22] See special issue of *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 52, 2019, resulting from series of conferences on Ottoman/Iranian encounters in Retz, Istanbul, and Vienna.
[23] Fariba Zarinebaf, 'Commercial, Confessional, and Military Encounters in the Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands in the Early Modern Period', *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 52, Nos.3-4, 291-297.
[24] Sabri Ateş, *The Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands*.

and Russian diplomacy was largely non-confrontational and a Concert of Zagros, needs testing against the delimitation of Iran's other borders.

Kashani-Sabet[25] has provided the predominant study which attempts to locate ideas of Iranian nationalism within the context of territory. Kashani-Sabet has suggested that there has been a continuous link between land and culture, which eventually took a more nationalistic path. A vital contribution to our understanding of the development of Iranian nationalism, it does, however, fall short in several areas. Broadly, her research relies heavily on an ahistorical assumption of an Iranian Empire existing in some form over 2500 years. In addition, she relies on Benedict Anderson's ideas of nationalist development which is problematic in the Iranian context as it presages nationalism with modernity.[26] More specifically, there are issues regarding her emphasis on Iranian agency in the creation of borders and the importance of the impact of the Dar al-Fonun, which in truth, had been anticipated by the actions of the British and Russians. Her narrative of the Peace of Paris and Iranian agency also suffers from inaccuracies.

Much of the border methodology has been based on either European or American research and, while theoretically useful, has been used guardedly.

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[25] Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, *Frontier Fictions: Shaping the Iranian Nation, 1804-1946* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2000)
[26] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London; New York: Verso, 2006)

Assessing the development of Iran's borders through the prism of "western" methodology invites quixotic comparisons and local agency where none existed. Nevertheless, the work of Anssi Paasi,[27] and Peter Sahlins,[28] amongst others has been accessed. As the delimitation of the borders at the instigation of the British and Russian imperial powers stands at the centre of this narrative, investigations into China and India [29] have been utilised.

Sources

Both Persian and English primary sources have been used extensively. British diplomatic correspondence and memoranda have been accessed at the British National Archives and the British Library. Research relating to the Peace of Paris has been supplemented by archives in the United States and collections such as Documents on British Foreign Policy. In regard to issues concerning the delimitation of borders, British Documents on Foreign Affairs have been accessed, together with the superb archive by Richard Schofield.[30]

Despite the use of previously untapped Persian sources the use of

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[27] Anssi Paasi, *Territories, Boundaries and Consciousness: The Changing Geographies of the Finnish-Russian Border* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 1996)
[28] Peter Sahlins, 'State formation and national identity in the Catalan borderlands during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries', in Thomas M. Wilson and Hastings Donnan (eds) *Border Identities: Nation and State at international frontiers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)
[29] Lucy P. Chester, *Borders and Conflict in South Asia: The Radcliffe Boundary Commission and the Partition of Punjab* (Manchester; New York: Studies in Imperialism, Manchester University Press, 2013)
[30] Schofield, R.N (ed), *The Iran-Iraq Border 1840-1958* (Farnham Common: Archive Editions, 1989) Henceforward abbreviated to TIIB.

British sources has been extensive. Russian source material has been unavailable and Persian sources remain scarce. British sources have been used in full knowledge of their limitations. They fall short, for example, in addressing British interactions with other factions in Iran such as tribes. They also have a natural and understandable bias towards British intentions. However, these archives have been regarded as honest when they describe the intentions, strategy, and diplomacy of Britain. Essential has been multiple readings of the same sources and corroboration from Persian sources.

This thesis has relied on Persian primary source material in archives, collective works, diary sources and Iranian newspapers. The diary sources and newspapers have been used selectively and carefully, noting their possible embroidery and the need for corroboration. Important has been the interpretation of not only the context but the intention behind the written word. The semi-official newspaper *Iran* has been utilised as representative of the Iranian government's position.

Maps have been used throughout this thesis to support memoranda and to provide a visual representation of what are sometimes complex written descriptions. These maps have been interpretated carefully, corroborating where possible their origin and accuracy. This thesis notes that maps have a power in their own right and are not simply factual but always remain contextualised documents which create reality on the ground.

Scope and methodology

The aim of this thesis has been to introduce and provide new insights into the delimitation of Iran's borders and how these circumscribed borders informed Iran's diplomacy in 1919. The border narratives explored have been largely determined by the *desiderata* put forward in Paris. Even so, there has been no attempt to provide a full or comprehensive analysis of all the borders of Iran, or indeed all the issues that could illustrate certain themes. For example, the saga of the Ottoman-Iranian border has been treated selectively. Also, the extension of British power and influence substituting Iranian sovereignty in the Persian Gulf has not been analysed even though it provided many instances were Iranian claims to Persian Gulf states and islands had been arguably overridden by British priorities. The question of these regions remains, in this thesis, only valid in the way they have been ignored in order to curry favour with the British.

In taking a broad case study approach, this thesis has discussed narratives as wide-ranging as the development of the telegraph in Iran and post-war treaties. These issues are linked through the development of borders and provide a good view of the themes which punctuate the development of Iran's borders. The remainder of this introduction and the following chapter will establish some of the themes and provide an umbrella narrative of the Iran's geo-political position.

Claims of Persia before the Conference of the Preliminaries of Peace at Paris

This document, prepared by the Iranian delegation sent to the Peace of Paris, provides the greatest source of the Iranian perspectives and *desideratum.* It comprehensively listed all the ills and losses from 1828 to 1918. In it, the delegation pointed towards the plight of Iran within the context of a pernicious imperialism and a modernity which the imperial powers used to the detriment of Iran. Iran's grievances in this document listed and outlined an approach which argued for a development of state institutions and Iranian sovereignty within a nationalist framework which required the return of Iranian territory lost over the last 100 years. This strategy of border rectification was such that this document served to light the way towards a two-year period where irredentism defined Iranian foreign policy.

In look, format, and presentation this document was by no means original. Other nations and would be states produced similar looking documents, sometimes by the same printing firm, putting forward their case for representation. In fact, these documents bear clear similarities in their aims and wishes.[31]

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[31] See for example *The claims of the Assyrians before the Conference of the preliminaries of Peace at Paris* (Paris: Imp. Ph. Rosen, 1919]

Nationalism and progress

Claims of Persia before the Conference of the Preliminaries of Peace at Paris advocated sovereignty and independence from the whims of the imperial powers of Britain and Russia. Significantly, the delegation declared that the "Powers" had consistently violated Iran's "independence and integrity" and "thereby prevented the development of Persia, both from the viewpoint of administrative reforms and that of developing her natural wealth".[32] Moreover, the Iranians argued that the British and Russian imperial strategies had been purely self-serving. Critically they argued that:

> This ancient nation has...been weakened for more than one century, and its march to progress arrested by the fact that that when it desired to adopt the new methods of European Civilization, it found itself face to face with stronger neighbours who only thought of weakening her and suppressing her independence.[33]

This central statement defined, for the delegates, both the motivations and underlying methodologies of the imperial powers in Iran. At the root of this statement lay an understanding by the writers of the complexities of the centrality of the Enlightenment and the modernity of the British and Russians in their encounters with Iran. Equally, it established a foundation for a defined Iranian nationalism. Their argument was based on the recognition that Iran was in reality defining freedom from practical colonialism, in the full knowledge that they had never been a colony of

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[32] *Ibid*., *Claims*, p.1.
[33] *Ibid*., *Claims*, p.1.

Britain or Russia. Despite the difficulties in arguing for freedom from imperial control and what could be defined as semi-colonialism, the delegates argued for a nationalism without colonial interference.

"Progress" and "European Civilization", intimated a course of development along the lines of the European Enlightenment and what has been called modernity. This Enlightenment necessitated an outlook that used the foundational concepts of man's freedom to reason and rationality.[34] A concept underpinned the scientific advancement, methods of utilising labour and accumulation of capital which would lead to the developments of industrialisation, the pursuit of capitalism, free trade, and system of laws. In short, modernity suggested new concepts of economic, social, political, and institutional developments which were all interrelated. European definitions of "civilisation" were also rooted in Greece and Rome. Historians such as Edward Gibbon, in eulogising Rome as an exceptional civilisation, depicted an Iranian *civilisation* which had become stale and decadent.[35]

"Progress" as a valued part of the Enlightenment, was an integral component of reaching "civilisation." Not only are we to imagine that this linear equation is quite uniform, in that each country must cling to the same definition of civilisation in order to be civilised, but also that it is a universal

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[34] Immanuel Kant, *An Answer to the Question: 'What is Enlightenment?* p.3.
[35] Edward Gibbon, *The decline and fall of the Roman Empire* (London; New York: J.M Dent and sons, 1936) pp.205-206.

notion.[36] In this way, the idea of progress "in its Enlightenment form represented the first theory of modernization".[37] However, it would be a miss-reading to suggest that the Iranians were either suggesting or lamenting the loss of blanket progress on European lines. They were suggesting the adoption of "new methods of European Civilization", but not its wholesale implementation. More to the point, they were suggesting that Iran could benefit from the journey towards civilisation rather than civilisation, particularly a European one, as the end product. Methods of European progress could affect an Iranian enlightenment or modernity, but a European modernity was not to be emulated. The impact of Japan as an example of a successfully modernising Asian state should not be minimised. Here was proof that an Asian state could progress on its own terms and still achieve sovereignty independent of western imperialism.[38]

This understanding of Iran's political needs can be further amplified given the reasonable conjecture that at least four of the delegation were French speakers and that the *Claims of Persia before the Conference of the Preliminaries of Peace at Paris* had originally been translated from French into English. Whilst progress appears to be universal in both languages, ideas of

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[36] See Chapter 4, Brett Bowden, *The Empire of Civilization: The Evolution of an Imperial Idea* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014)
[37] Requoted in *The Empire of Civilization*, p.69.
[38] Anja Pistor-Hatam, 'Progress and Civilization in Nineteenth-Century Japan: The Far Eastern State as a Model for Modernization', *Iranian Studies*, Winter - Spring, 1996, Vol. 29, No. 1/2 (Winter - Spring, 1996), pp.111-126.

civilisation and particularly "patrimony" are not. French ideas of civilisation were rooted in religion and the French Revolution of 1789.[39] As far as the Iranians were concerned, a foreign religion was unwanted, and the regicidal violence of the French Revolution was equally to be avoided.

The issue of patrimony, however, signposts a number of important elements in Iran's nationalist plan. The French understanding of "patrimone", at the time was linked to ideas of inherited culture and heritage. "Patrimonie" appears to broadly translate into *vatan*, which means homeland in Persian. However, *vatan* had been a contested term with diverse definitions in Iranian literature,[40] but in the nineteenth century it developed, in addition to emotional, social and cultural facets, a territorialised dimension which situated *vatan* in a bounded territory.[41] By suggesting that losing territory was tantamount to having "a portion of her patrimony … wrested from her",[42] the Iranians were crucially linking heritage with territory and consequently the necessity for the reclamation of territory.

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[39] *The Empire of Civilization*, pp.26-30.
[40] Mohammad Reza Shafaee Kadkani, 'Naqd-e adaby: Talaqy-e qodama az vatan' [Literary criticism: Treating the ancient as homeland], *Adabiyat va Zabanha*, Farvardeen va Teer 1389 [2010], shomareh-e [number] 75.
[41] For a nuanced discussion of *vatan* see Afsaneh Najmabadi, 'The Erotic Vatan [Homeland] as Beloved and Mother: To Love, to Possess, and To Protect', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (Jul., 1997) pp.442-467.
[42] *Claims*, p.7.

In addition, this nationalist view, would be formed by a response to British and Russian imperialism and international law, subjects which are discussed below.

Imperialism, the fusion of trade, power, and international law

The nationalist delegates argued that progress for Iranians had not been value neutral. They outlined an economic and political hegemony that had suppressed Iran's ability for progress. The very engagement of the "Powers", they argued, had been detrimental to the country. The 1907 Convention splitting the country into spheres of influence and the dismissal of Morgan Shuster (The American brought in to re-organise Iran's finances) were examples of violations of Iran's independence. The imperial powers were also accused of meddling in Iran's internal matters. Iran had not been allowed to institute a nationwide police force. Economically, Iran had been forced to accept a crippling customs convention in 1901 and had allowed concessions that had failed to "aid in the economic progress of Persia'.[43]

Multifaceted, and seemingly borne on the back of imperialism, progress proved to have hegemonic dimensions:

Increasing trade with Britain and Russia, supported by favourable trading statuses, played a part in the demise of indigenous industries.

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[43] *Ibid*., *Claims*, p.5.

Increasingly, trade through companies such as The East India Company appeared an extension of British foreign policy. As we will see, the issue of concessions had their own considerable effect on Iran's encounter with modernity but as a facet of imperialism seemed to help Iran little except for increasing the political stranglehold over a "semi-colony". Imperialism also brought and exposed pre-disposed attitudes towards Iranians and Islam from the British and Russians which tended to reinforce Iranian attitudes towards foreign involvement in Iran. (Chapter 2)

The Iranians looked towards international law to enable them to assert their sovereign rights and asked for a

> new Era of Justice and Equity which is dawning in every country and which adumbrates the advent of the reign of Humanity and Justice under the aegis of the League of Nations[44]

to be acknowledged. Their vision of progress assumed therefore that the improvement of human condition would follow changes and improvements in international law. Furthermore, it followed that as a natural progression territory lost by Iran would be returned. Iranians were calling for laws to work in their favour and not against them. This fed into a narrative that exists to this day, in which Iran has frequently and unhappily found herself 'on the wrong side' of international law and treaties.

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[44] *Ibid., Claims.*

As we will see in greater detail in Chapter 2, the growth of international law would be bedevilled by contrasting applications to both European and other countries. At times they formed part of plans to "civilise the savage" and would be tinged by theories of superiority. Nevertheless, for the delegates, the notion that international law might indeed serve Iran was enticing.

The complication was that international law logically meant in turn that there existed state territorial limits, where one sovereign state ended and the other began. In turn this meant that international law was supported by concepts of a modern state, which were also a consequence of the Rule of Law.

The Rule of Law, discussed more fully below, was essential to the running of a modern state bounded by defined borders. In Europe, state functions developed to provide the executive with the means to carry out policy. As the state grew, in the main to provide for protection, education and infrastructure in exchange for taxation, it gradually expanded its functions to the outer reaches of its domain. As a result of this, boundaries between states needed to be recognised and delimited. In this way the development of the modern state was grounded not only in the establishment of sovereignty, but also by fixed borders. The Treaty of Westphalia (1648) represented the coming together of these issues and is seen as the grounding of modern international law.

It would be a mistake, however, to see this progression of state function purely within the context of modernity. In France, for example,

modern notions of the state and territory predate the French Revolution in 1789 and can be traced to the thirteenth century.[45] Indeed, issues revolving around the introduction of boundaries can be quite nuanced.[46]

The nationalist delegates

Whilst the Iranian delegation described how Iranian progress had been stunted by the implementation of concessions borne on the back of imperial practices, allied with dubious laws, it was not entirely clear what they had in mind to replace this paradigm. Certainly, they wanted to select specified aspects of progress to help Iran along the road towards their idea of civilisation, but this also implied the desire to affect a modern state. Gauging this necessitates an understanding of the make-up of the delegation itself.

The entire delegation was made up what can be defined as nationalists. The delegation was led by Moshaver al-Mamalek (Ali Qoli Khan Ansari), and included Mohammad Ali Foroughi, Mirza Hossein Khan Ala, Momtaz al-Saltaneh, Mirza Ali Qoli Khan and Entezam al-Molk. These men were to form the nucleus of the commission, which was then supplemented

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[45] Malcolm Anderson, *Frontiers: Territory and State Formation in the Modern World* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997) p.21.
[46] Peter Sahlins, 'Natural Frontiers Revisited: France's Boundaries since the Seventeenth Century', *The American Historical Review*, Vol.95, No.5 (Dec, 1990) pp.1423-1451.

by advisors such as the French jurist Adolphe Perni.[47] In all, some 15 people left Iran as part of the commission.

Two people stood out. Moshaver al-Mamalek, the Iranian Foreign Minister and leader of the delegation, was a noted nationalist. The other, was Mohammad Ali Foroughi, another nationalist and thinker who would go on to play a considerable role in the Pahlavi Dynasty. Moshaver al-Mamalek, was viewed as more of a diplomat than politician and descriptions of him varied widely. On the one hand, he was characterised as a time server and a man without diplomatic skills, his only advantage as a delegate was his ability to speak French.[48] On the other hand, he was considered a good, if mild man, who conducted himself admirably in diplomacy. His legacy has unfortunately been determined by the hostility of Vosuq al-Dowleh, the Iranian Prime Minister, and the British view of him. Harsh judgements ignore his major role in successfully negotiating with the Russians 1921.[49]

Moshaver al-Mamalek had been born into a diplomatic family. Educated in a Jesuit school in Trabzon he would have been exposed to

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[47] Peter Avery writes that Adolphe Perni was engaged to help organise the Ministry of Justice in 1911 and presented the first Iranian Penal Code to the Majlis in 1912. See *Modern Iran* (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1965) p.151.

[48] Abdollah Mostowfi, *Shehr-e zendegany-e man, tarikh-e ijtema'i-ye va idari-e dowreh-e Qajariyeh* [My life story: The administrative and social history of the Qajar period] All volumes (Tehran: Zovar, 1384 [2005]) volume II, p.102.

[49] He negotiated the treaty with the Soviet Union which confirmed certain delimitations: *Iran and Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Agreement concerning the settlement of frontier and financial questions*, signed in Tehran, December 2, 1954, No 6497.

foreign ideas. A true servant to the Iranian government, little is known of his ideas as he did not put pen to paper,[50] but his energy in spearheading the Iranian programme in Paris speaks to his credentials as a *vatanparast* (patriot). In contrast, Mohammad Ali Foroughi, was the obvious *roshanfekr* (intellectual) in the group. More famous as an educator and Prime Minister under Reza Shah, his previous liberal leanings have been somewhat clouded by his extensive role in the Reza Shah government. Prior to his acceptance of the need for a "strongman" to drive through much needed reform, his writings show that not only did he believe that Iran could not survive without independence, but also that he believed in and promoted the benefits of broad liberalism, and a constitution that encompassed rights for the individual under a Rule of Law.[51]

Hossein Ala, Mohammad Ali Foroughi's friend, inspired considerable animosity from the British. He had been educated in Britain when his father replaced Malkom Khan as Ambassador. Returning to Iran after the *Enqelab-e Mashruteh* (Constitutional Revolution) by the end of the First World War,

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[50] The biographical facets of Moshaver al-Mamalek has been established through two main sources: *Etela'at*, Number 2361, Monday 5 Ordibehesht 1385 [2006] and Mahmoud Taher Ahmadi, 'Ali Qoli Masoud Ansari, Moshaver Al-Mamalek', *Nameh-e Anjoman*, Paiz 1384 [autumn 2005], shomareh-e [number] 19.

[51] See particularly, *Hoquq-e assasi-e (ya'ni) adab-e mashrutiat-e doval* [Fundamental rights, namely the conduct of constitutional states] (Iran: Koyer, 1382 [2003])

Hossein Ala ran the Iranian Foreign Office. After his work as part of the Iranian delegation in Paris, he became Ambassador to Spain.[52]

Momtaz al-Saltaneh, was Ambassador to France from 1905 to 1926. Choosing never to return to Iran, little is known about his ideas apart from his Francophile tendencies. Mirza Ali Qoli Khan was Chargé d'affaires in the Iranian Embassy in Washington and had been in the United Sates from 1901. In 1915 he was also appointed Consul General in New York.[53] He married an American, Florence Breed, and remained in the United States for the rest of his life.

The nationalist credentials of Moshaver al-Mamalek and other delegates was also reflected in the hostility towards them by the British. In addition to disliking Moshaver al-Mamalek, they regarded Mirza Hossein Khan and Mohammad Ali Foroughi as patriots with "visionary ideas as to Persia's ability to reform herself",[54] and likewise nationalist troublemakers. These delegates certainly exhibited common characteristics and ideals that bound them. Participants in the Constitutional Revolution, they were educated in the politics of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and had developed views which encouraged sovereign independence. They were multilingual and able to translate European philosophy and modernity

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[52] Baqer Aqeli, *Shehr-e hal-e rajal-e siyasi va nezami mo'aser-e Iran (2)* [Biography of contemporary and distinguished Iranian political and military figures] (Tehran: Goftar, 1380 [2001]) p.1011.
[53] *New York Times*, 22 September, 1915.
[54] Sir Percy Cox to Foreign Office, January 14, 1919, FO371/3858, p.65.

texts. They were active freemasons, which allowed them access to networks of European thought and reforms. Conversant with European philosophy, many had either travelled abroad or had been stationed abroad.

The official delegates were augmented by "unofficial" participants who promoted Iran's cause. Hasan Taqizadeh was the most prominent. An active participant in the Constitutional Revolution and still a member of the *Majles* (parliament), he lived in Berlin during the war, editing the newspaper *Kaveh* (1916-1922). Both his past and his role in Kaveh, which was funded by the German government, did little to endear him to the British.

These nationalists also took part in the increased dialogue in Iran on the nature of Iranian polity. The slow integration into the world economy, the increased level of European concessions in Iran and discourse through the newspapers, *bazaars*, and coffee houses of Iran, had raised national consciousness. Public spheres had developed, each of which were "as a carrier of public criticism, in the critical debate of political issues".[55]

Of course, though the Iranian delegates were part of this national awakening it does not mean that their nationalist plan represented all the bourgeoning public spheres. These delegates were part of that conversation, yet also separate from it, as they worked for the government as diplomats

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[55] Jürgen Habermas (translated by Thomas Burger), *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2001) p.65.

and were part of the government machinery. It is this nuanced position that informed their views. An important example of this would be how their understanding of the role of religion in Iran did not come close to those of some of the major intellectuals of the time such as Al-Afghani who subscribed to pan-Islamism.[56] However, they formed part of a pattern where nationalist sentiments and loyalty to the state (rather than the Shah) were increasingly permeating the Iranian bureaucracy.[57]

Imperial Nationalism

At the outset these delegates had established a nationalism in counterpoint to the Europeans, highlighting the problems of progress and imperialism. However, the basis for establishing a sovereign and independent state owed much to what can been defined as "classical" nationalism. *Claims of Persia before the Conference of the Preliminaries of Peace at Paris* advocated on the basis of a shared culture and ethnicity within a bounded territory.

The elements of what was needed to be defined as Iranian, or at least part of the Iranian Empire, can best be described as an *ethnie or ethnic community* - a categorisation which brings "out the differences and similarities between modern national units and sentiments and the collective cultural

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[56] Nikki Keddie, *An Islamic Response to Imperialism: Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamal ad-Din "al-Afghani"* (Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 1983)
[57] This is the tenor of Abdollah Mostowfi, in volume III of *Shehr-e zendegany-e man, tarikh-e ijtema'i-ye va idari-e dowreh-e Qajariyeh.*

units and sentiments of previous eras".[58] More specifically, the concept of an *ethnie* would spread to incorporate facets which entails a collective name, a common myth of descent, a shared history, a distinctive shared culture, a sense of solidarity and an association with a specific territory.[59] A specific territory here is not a defined space, but described purely as a homeland or locus. Here, a shared culture could be characterised by what has become defined by Marshall Hodgson as *Persianate* and in reference to the Transcaspian, as the "great number of illustrious Persians- poets, men of letters, savants, philosophers… [who] had their origin in this province".[60]

These cultural and ethnic links were appropriated within an idea of Empire and an imperial ethnicity. The roots of which lay in long-term notions of cultural unity and an Iranian narrative of Empire that stretched back at least over 2500 years. This myth of Iran encompassed a continuation of enduring facets of imperial dynasties which could be sourced back to the Sasanian Empire. The cultural glue for these Empires has, of course, been reflected over the years in the *Shahnameh*. Thus, this primarily cultural paradigm has enabled the idea of Iran to be both continually adaptable and at the same time continuous. The Safavids, Zands, Qajars, and other dynasties, all from different ethnic backgrounds, absorbed themselves into

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[58] Anthony D Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988) p.13.
[59] *Ibid*., *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, pp. 22-30.
[60] *Claims*, p.8.

the idea of Iran. In this way each successive dynasty has been yet another story and link in the development of the idea of Iran and therefore Empire. The framing of Iran's irredentism and Iran's future was, therefore, linked to the past and the continuation of Iran as a long running concept.

However, certain characteristics were minimised by the delegates and the link between language and cultural unity was one aspect. One can interpret a reticence to characterise the Persian language as a binding element. This was perhaps reasonable given that though many of the languages used throughout the Empire may have had Persian roots, they were not consolidated under one obvious language.[61] Another interpretation could be the acceptance of Renan's argument where language was downplayed and cultural memory exaggerated.[62] In claiming non-ethnic Turkmens as Iranian by virtue of similarity to tribes who lived in Iran and claiming that Kurds were "a people Persian in race and language",[63] the delegates were casting a wide net.

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[61] Even at the beginning of the 20th Century only 55% of the population spoke Persian. See Lois Beck, 'Tribes and the State in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Iran' in Philip S Khoury and Joseph Kostiner (eds), *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East* (Los Angeles; Oxford: University of California Press, 1990) p.186.
[62] It is very likely that the delegates knew about Renan's What is a Nation?, especially given Renan's interaction with Al-Afghani. See Ernest Renan, 'What is a nation?' (translated by Iain Hamilton Grant) in Stuart Wolf (ed) *Nationalism in Europe 1815 to the present* (London; New York: Routledge, 1996)
[63] *Claims*, p.9.

Save for some Muslim credentials in Persian culture and characteristics, the issue of religion was also downplayed. The document did however make a significant reference to having a say in the management and plan for the Shia shrines in Karbala, Najaf, Kazmein and Samarra. A nod to religious ties to holy places that resided outside Iranian control but not its orbit, it did however, fall well short of the pan-Islamic ideas of some of the greatest thinkers of Iran during that period. This did not imply a secular nationalism. Low-key Islam was in keeping with the mores of the time, where frequent intermarriage between elites and clergy had established an unquestioned role for religion.[64]

Consolidating the characteristics of a *lateral ethnie* within the idea of an Iranian Empire appear to mirror the current concept of the *Civilisational State*.[65] These are an imperial past, racial exceptionalism and a unique culture, a unique language and long-term geography and a modern-state, the promotion of the "group harmony" and rejection of individualism.[66] Vital to a functioning *Civilisational State* is acquiescence to varying illiberal attitudes and some authoritarianism for the good of the many. Russia today, it can be argued, symbolises a downgrading of democratic values in exchange for a

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[64] A.K.S. Lambton, *Qajar Persia: Eleven Studies* (London: I.B. Taurus, 1987) pp.220-221.
[65] For a polemical view of China as a Civilisational state see Zhang WeiWei, *The China Wave: Rise of the Civilizational State* (Hackensack: World Century, 2012)
[66] This is a summation of the historical tenets of a civilisational state as presented in Christopher Coker, *The Rise of the Civilizational State* (Cambridge; Medford: Polity, 2019)

more comfortable life. It is important to note, however, that illiberalism works to the advantage of the powerful elite.

The *Civilisational State* promotes the rejection of and insulation from western values,[67] something in harmony with the concept of *Gharbzadegi* (westoxication). G*harbzadegi* [68] established a hostility to western modernisation. Both are modern concepts and descriptors of modern, non-western ideas of nationalism. And both concepts help to establish a narrative whereby "an image of modernity that could only be realized in the context of Iranian national settings".[69] Clearly, these concepts can be backdated, at least to the Qajar period.

Moreover, a modern state without an extension of national polity is certainly in keeping with a pragmatism which permitted some authoritarianism 'for the good of the many'. Aspects of oriental despotism can be found in discussions of Qajar Iran. However, as Ervand Abrahamian pointed out, arguments can only go so far, as Qajar Iran had the personality but not the means to have its rule defined as oriental despotism.[70] Though out of the scope of this paper, it is the Pahlavi dynasty which encourages many more parallels with the definitional *Civilisational State,* China. Evident

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[67] *Ibid*., *The Rise of the Civilizational State*, pp.124-125.
[68] See English translation of Jalal Al-e Ahmad's polemic by R. Campbell, *Occidentosis: A Plague From the West* (Berkley: Mizan Press Berkeley, 1984)
[69] Ali Mirsepassi, *Intellectual Discourse and the Politics of Modernization: Negotiating Modernity in Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 2000) p.77.
[70] Ervand Abrahamian, 'Oriental Despotism: The case of Qajar Iran', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol.5, No.1 (Jan., 1974), pp.3-31.

there, is the tendency to see Iranian exceptionalism as illiberal in nature, and to think that Iran is better off in the hands of an authoritarian figure.

Of course, there was a model *Civilizational State* in existence – Imperial Japan. Japan's military defeat of Russia in 1905 raised awareness in Iran (as elsewhere in the Middle East) that an Asian state could defeat a "European" power.[71] However we cannot be sure if the Iranian delegates were planning to echo Japans Meiji Restoration in 1868 which sought aspects of modernity in order to "save its cultural heritage, not transform it".[72]

Critically, the idea of Iran at this point was not yet defined by Western modernity or western ideas of nationalism. Iran's official title as the *Mamalek-e mahrose-ye Iran (*Guarded domains of Iran*)* "clearly predated the rise of a distinct nationalist ideology".[73] In this way, assumptions linking modernity and identity together, based on the work of Benedict Anderson[74] and Ernest Gellner[75], are problematic when it comes to a pre-modern Iran as they presage identity with modernity. If anything, looking back over the twentieth century we can see identity following and incorporating aspects of modernity.

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[71] Abbas Amanat, Iran: *A Modern History* (Newhaven; London: Yale University Press, 2017) p.360.
[72] *The Rise of the Civilizational State,* see p.93 in particular, pp.92-96.
[73] Ali Ansari, *The Politics of Nationalism in Modern Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) p.19.
[74] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*
[75] Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 2nd Edition (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006)

"Historicity of a territory and territorialisation of a history"[76]

Essential to this *imperial nationalism* was the requirement of being defined or territorialised within a bounded territory, as befitted a nation in the modern age. Territorialisation, described as the extension of the modern state apparatus establishing borders, has been integral to definitions of nationalism.[77] Despite unfortunate connotations with nationalism in Nazi Germany, it remains a worthy description of how connections between the periphery and the state are made and defined.

Up to 1919, Iran's idea of territory was based on a pre-modern cultural Empire. John Chardin had remarked that,

> One can scarce more precisely point out the Limits of this vast Kingdom, which is not like the States of petty Sovereigns, whose Frontiers are marked out with a Brook or a Rivulet, or some little Monument of Stone.[78]

Territory had been a flexible concept and there was surety in understanding that the Empire would contract and expand but would be ever present. In this respect Iranians always had an affinity with land.[79]

However, now, for the first time, these delegates were establishing a defined territory of what the Iranian Empire meant in geographic terms.

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[76] Nicos Poulantzas, *State, Power and Socialism* (New Left Books, 1978) re-quoted from R.J. Johnston, David B. Knight, Eleonore Kofman (eds), in *Nationalism, self-determination and political geography* (London; New York: Croom Helm, 1988) introduction, p.5.
[77] See introduction and Chapter 8, David B. Knight 'Self –Determination for Indigenous Peoples: The Context For Change' in *Nationalism, self-determination and political geography*.
[78] *Sir John Chardin's Travels in Persia* (New York; Amsterdam, NL: Da Capo Press, 1971) p.125.
[79] In *Frontier Fictions*, Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet established a link between land and culture. This author suggests that such a link has always been established but took a more nationalistic path.

They were defining borders suitable for the modern age. If borders were now to be fixed, then they needed to be positioned adequately as befitted the Empire of Iran. Of course, in the event, forcible territorialisation took place under the Pahlavi dynasty and based on Iran's 1919 borders, but the definitions were being established by the delegates in 1919. They seemed to understand the importance of establishing a distinct *Persianate* connection between their idea of nationalism and territory.

On one hand, they understood that the greatness of Empire had always been intrinsically linked to territory and that the loss of territories over the last 100 years which had damaged Iranian perceptions needed to be addressed. On the other hand, they had now learnt the necessity of a territorial state, with fixed borders as a necessary element in building a modern nation state. Arguably, these delegates were very aware of this, as they had also learned the lesson that the delimitations that had already taken place, had helped raise the consciousness of the nation.[80]

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[80] *Ibid*., *Frontier Fictions*. While Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet links the idea of territory and growing nationalist tendencies she ignores how the actual process of imposing of fixed borders affects ideas of independence based on sovereignty.

An interpretation of empire and borders

The delegates, as they promoted a furtherance of *the* Iranian Empire, were doing so in the light of what Empire meant to them. However, an interpretation of a bounded Empire implied borders. Three principles are of note.

Firstly, there is the concept of Iran and *Aniran* and how it related to the othering of non-Iranians.[81] The source of this discourse was the *Shahnameh*, where the myths and legends of Iran's past were described by Ferdowsi. One of the sources for the *Shahnameh* "places Iranshahr within a mythical geography" stretching from the Oxus River to the Egypt river (assumed to be the Nile).[82] *Iranshahr*, or Greater Persia was eventually to be located as *Iranzamin*.[83] Though the *Shahnameh* gave a vague idea of Iran's geographic limits, it was not a specific territory.[84] It would appear that this confusion may have been intentional. Notions of geographic limits were flexible and non-specific. Within this idea of Iran was the more specific othering of *Turan*. *Turan*, Iran's mythical enemy, allowed a border of the mind to exist. With this perception, Iran's borders ended where Turan's began.

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[81] Abbas Amanat, 'Introduction: Iranian Identity Boundaries: A Historical Overview', in Abbas Amanat and Farzin Vejdani (eds) *Iran Facing Others: Identity Boundaries in a Historical Perspective* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012)
[82] *Ibid*., *Iran Facing Others*, p.5.
[83] *Ibid*., *Iran Facing Others*, p.4.
[84] For another example of how Iran and Turan and their associated myths are linked to poems, see Mana Kia, 'Imagining Iran before Nationalism: Geocultural Meanings of Land in Azar's Atashkadeh' in Kamran Scot Aghaie, Afshin Marashi (eds), *Rethinking Iranian Nationalism and Modernity* (Austin: University of Texas, 2015)

Secondly, this idea of mental frontiers chimed with Islamic and Arabic terms involved in cartography. Ralph Brauer, accepted that

> while recognizing the concept of boundaries as such, [they] did not accept the idea that these were sharply defined boundary lines separating either, as internal boundaries, one Muslim state from the next.[85]

In effect, there was a distinction between believers and non-believers, or to be succinct, "concepts of frontier and of separation between lands of Islam, or dar al-Islam, and the lands of disbelief, or dar al-harb".[86] Over time, the othering of *Turan* in the *Shahnameh* would take on a positional othering against Sunni's (as opposed to Iranian Shia's under the Safavids) and then European powers such as the Russians. The othering of non-Iranians was slowly to have more tangible borders.

Thirdly, there existed a symbiotic relationship between the idea of *Iranshar*, Empire and borders, and this relationship helped to form ideas of Empire that resonated deep into the Qajar dynasties. In the *Shahnameh* the link of Empire to territory seemed non-specific, yet mapmakers inevitably had to conceive maps in which one territory ended and another one began.

Ralph Brauer, in researching Arab-Islamic geographers, reached some interesting conclusions. Very few maps, between 820 and 1350 AD, though distinguishing between frontiers as concepts of separation (Map 1), showed

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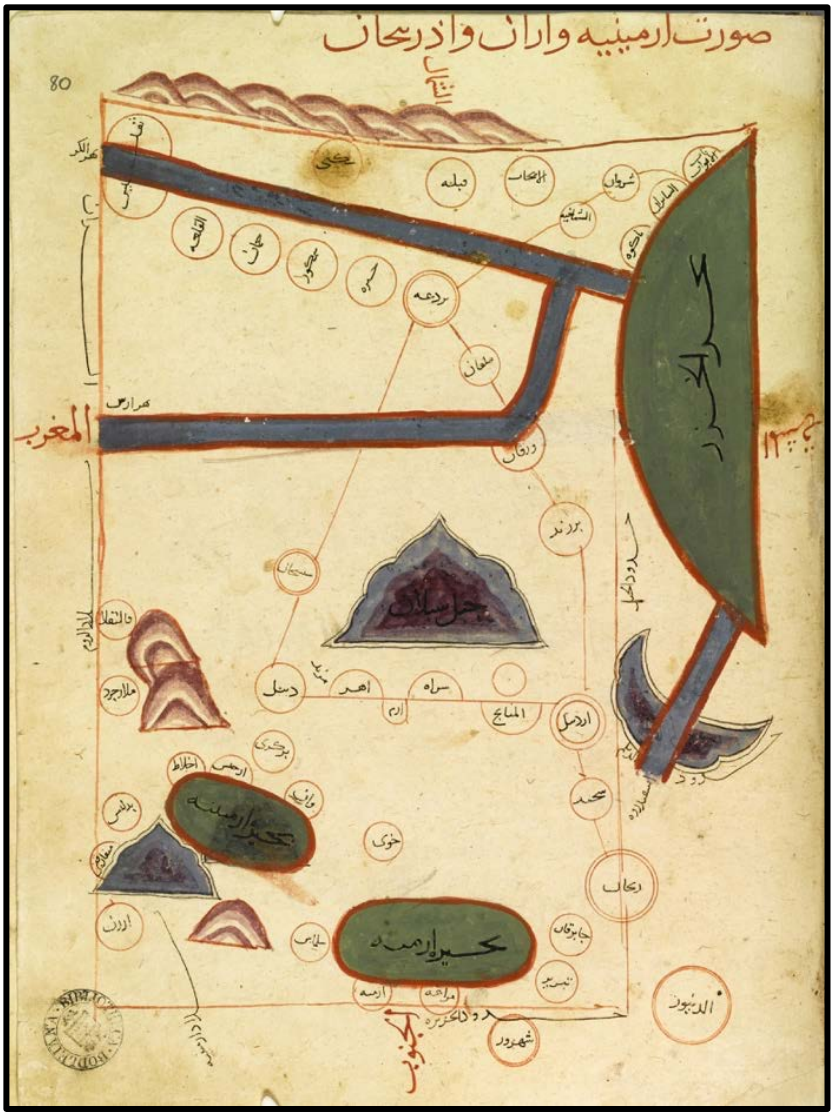
[85] Ralph W. Brauer, 'Boundaries and Frontiers in Medieval Muslim Geography', *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, New Series, Vol. 85, No.6 (1995) pp.27-28.
[86] *The Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands*, p.10.

sharp borders. Borders equated more to loosely drawn border zones and regions and, as a result, border delineation on maps were shown as double lines. Documentary control for people leaving one region to another was the



Map 1. Map of Armenia, Arran and Azerbaijan
The large green half-oval is the Caspian Sea and the smaller ovals Lake Van and Urumieh. The large mountain is Mount Sabalan. The thick blue lines show the Aras and Kura rivers. Arran lies between the Aras and Kura. Unusually for the period, north and south have not been inverted.
Source: al-Istakhri's map entitled The Map of Armenia, Aran and Azerbaijan, from his book entitled Kitab ul-Mamālikva al-Masālik. MS dating from the 950 CE. Bodleian Library MS Ouseley 373, f.80a

concern of nearby towns as no frontier controls existed. Ralph Brauer,

pertinently, describes these border regions as places where lawlessness was expected, as they were so far from the centre of the Empire.[87]

This explanation of borders goes a long way to describe the imperial mind-set of Iranian rulers where broad border zones were to be expected. This was a perception which had long been put aside by medieval Europe, but continued in Iran. These zones reflected the periphery of the ruled space and the centre represented the core. The core, probably an urban centre, radiated its influence out to the periphery and its power got weaker the farther the periphery was from the urban centre.[88] Indeed, there is much to suggest that the Empire of Iran was represented by *Iranshahr*, a concept of Empire embedded in the idea of a core, an urban centre. It is perhaps no wonder that these concepts would be drawn in geometric, spatial drawings which though geographically utterly inexact, epitomised the political realities of empire.

All maps reflect the author's perspective and purpose. However, whereas European maps were being developed to show the absolute relationship between geographical features and locations, Arab-Islamic maps of the tenth century were not a "territorial representation of a given space".[89]

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[87] This synopsis is from a detailed study of maps in Ralph W. Brauer, 'Boundaries and Frontiers in Medieval Muslim Geography'.
[88] Ralph W. Brauer uses Immanuel Wallerstein's concept of core and periphery.
[89] Luigi Farrauto and Paolo Ciuccarelli, 'The Image of the Divided City Though Maps: the Territory without Territory', 2011, *Researchgate*, p.30.

Maps, such as the al-Istakhri map (Map 1), showed graphical representations of features and locations only relatively positioned. That is in a proxemic relationship. The positioning of features was only intended to guide travellers to their ultimate destination. Following a line from one feature or town to another would ultimately take you to your destination.[90]

European definitions were similar; however, their perspectives were very different. Lord Curzon (George Nathaniel Curzon) was indeed correct, however disparaging, to write that the absence of Iran's wishes to implement borders stemmed from an Asian attitude that

> there has always been a strong instinctive aversion to the acceptance of fixed boundaries, arising partly from the nomadic habits of the people, partly from the dislike of precise arrangements that is typical of the oriental mind, but more still from the idea that in the vicissitudes of fortune more is to be expected from an unsettled than from a settled Frontier.[91]

Evidence suggests that Iran had little interest in establishing fixed and permanent borders, as "Delimitation and demarcation also meant the end of the notion of frontier as an outer limit open to state expansion".[92] Iran always hoped that her imperial past was not at an end and that re-expansion might one day be possible.

However, there were competing notions of why borders needed to be delimited. As a facet of modernity, frontiers, were considered by Lord

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[90] *Ibid*., 'The Image of the Divided City Though Maps', p.5.
[91] George Curzon (Lord Curzon), *The Romanes Lecture 1907, Frontiers* (Milton Keynes: Dodo Press, 2008) p.32.
[92] *The Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands*, p.5.

Curzon as "an agency of peace",[93] and essential for trade. Much of what he understood about the efficacy and nature of borders had been derived from the *modus operandi* of the East India Company and the British Empire in general and, as such, had strategic roots.

In the first place, it was almost impossible to negotiate or deal with a state that had no recognised frontiers, therefore, if such a "sovereign state" did not exist, it had to be constructed. Thereafter, the creation of borders was intrinsically linked to notions of buffer zones, spheres of influence and "a threefold frontier".[94] In turn, these notions underpinned the British narrative of protecting India. Allied to the overriding tenet that "demarcation has never taken place except under European pressure and by the intervention of European Agents",[95] Lord Curzon openly linked the need for tranquil borders in India and Iran with the flourishing of European influence. In doing this, Lord Curzon incorporated borders as an integral part of British geo-political strategy. It is sometimes less obvious to see why the Russians were keen on establishing fixed borders, as in many ways it would have curtailed their own aspirations. As we will see however, treaties and delimitations were also opportunities for the Russians. They may have also felt the need to keep an eye on the British.

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[93] *Frontiers*, p.32.
[94] *Ibid.*, *Frontiers*, p.27.
[95] *Ibid.*, *Frontiers*, p.33.

In the face of these different interpretations, the exertions of Iranian diplomats between 1919 and 1920 at the Treaty of Paris, set forth the re-establishment of greater Empire within a bounded territory. They would have reasoned, correctly, that the days of fluctuating borders lay in the past. As with the idea of a phoenix Empire and the mythology of Iran and *Turan*, one can only imagine what visualisation of Iran they had in their mind. It is possible that instead of borders (*marz* and *hudd*) they imagined a series of linked *tagur* (tugur), which were fortified places. These *Tagur* not only differentiated Iranian territory from the unbelievers,[96] but could have been linked in certain places with walls. [97] They could have imagined a reconstituted Empire, ringed as it was in the past by defendable fortresses.

Towards a definition of borders

This research will consider contemporary concepts of borders. One is the notion of "natural frontiers". Lord Curzon argued that natural borders such as mountains, deserts and rivers were primitive and pre-modern concepts of borders. As commerce, industry and military forces grew it became necessary to "supplement or to replace them by artificial frontiers".[98] Rivers

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[96] 'Boundaries and Frontiers in Medieval Muslim Geography', pp.14-16.
[97] Indeed, such an idea has grounding in the past. The Great Wall of Gorgon, sometimes called Sadd-e Eskandar [Alexanders Wall], stretched from the Caspian eastwards for 195 miles. Jebrael Nokandeh et al, 'Linear Barriers of Northern Iran: The Great Wall of Gorgan and the Wall of Tammishe', *Iran*, Vol. 44 (2006), pp. 121-173. Also, see Wall of Derbent in the Caucasus.
[98] *Frontiers*, p.8.

did not need to be surveyed and could serve as borders. The reality was, however, that one tribe could occupy both sides of a river.[99] This was the case for many Iranian tribes. Also, critically, rivers tend to find new routes and delimitating on the bases of rivers can, therefore, be problematic. In 1903, the British were asked to revisit the Sistan delimitation in eastern Iran because the Helmand River had changed course.[100]

Delimitation committees did have recourse to natural borders, which made their job easier. However, there is no such thing as a natural border. A river or a mountain may be an impediment to travel but that does not mean it should automatically be considered a border. A border only comes into existence following delimitation. In this way all borders were artificial as they separate one nation from another. Where Lord Curzon's explanation of artificial borders was important, was as a matter of imperial policy and, therefore, as an explanation of buffer zones or neutral zones "to keep apart two Powers whose contact might provoke collision".[101] In this case it represents not so much a useful definition of a border, but more of an indication of future imperial policy to use Iran as a buffer state between Russia and India.

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[99] *Ibid*., *Frontiers*, p.13.
[100] Pirouz Mojtahed-Zadeh, Emergence and Evolution of Sistan Boundaries in Pirouz Mojtahed-Zadeh (ed), *Boundary Politics and International Boundaries of Iran* (Boca Ratan: Universal Publishers, 2006) See in particular pp.226-227.
[101] *Ibid*., *Frontiers*, p.19.

Frontiers are frequently used to describe a line of demarcation. Unfortunately, a "frontier" can mean the exact point of delimitation or "a moving zone of settlement",[102] or a zone of indefinable measurement. Research into the western borders of Iran led Richard Schofield to assume that "The Iran-Iraq boundary has long displayed the classics of a Political Frontier zone or a Border March."[103] The assumption here is that a Political Frontier can be defined as a general political geographical area and a Border March as a militarised region. However, there are problems with these definitions. Firstly, given the autonomy of tribes around Iran, the idea of a militarised area as in a Border March allowed for too much control from the centre that was not in evidence. Secondly, any sense of a political frontier implied control that was rarely exercised by, in this case, Iran or Ottoman Iraq. The nomadic nature of the tribes raises other issues. Does a Border March include the total territory in which a tribe may roam? If it does and the area is large, at what point will it become too large to be considered a Border March or Political Frontier?

Given the Iranian context, neither of these definitions are specific enough. Overall, the extremely fluid nature of "sovereign" ownership in and around Iran and the movement of tribes and their fluctuating allegiances,

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[102] *Frontiers: Territory and State Formation in the Modern World*, p.9.
[103] R.N Schofield, TIIB, General Preface, p.xvi, vol.1.

does not render any of the above definitions as satisfactory. The criticisms above must lead to a simple and obvious definition of these contested areas as "Borderlands"; areas that surround a border that need not have been fully defined. The definition of a "Border" is thus a specific and delimited point, and a point which divides political, administrative, and sovereign state control.

Towards a nation state?

As these delegates illustrated a nationalism based on territory and nuanced definitions of cultural and ethnic glue, they appeared to also promote government functions that approximated to a modern state. They encouraged a revision of laws (at least towards foreigners) and the "formation of a national force capable of assuring order and tranquillity".[104] This emphasis on the state is of no surprise given that these nationalists were diplomats in the Iranian government. Mirza Ali Qoli Khan, Ambassador to the United States, would have been well versed in the usefulness of a modern state machinery. Mohammad Ali Foroughi, would go on to serve in the Pahlavi government for years in the highest positions and holds an important place in the history of Iran's laws and state structures.[105]

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[104] *Claims*, p.3.
[105] Ali Ansari emphasised Foroughi's civic credentials in 'Mohammad Ali Foroughi and the Construction of Civic Nationalism in early Twentieth-Century Iran' in H.E Chehabi, Peyman Jafari, Maral Jefroudi (eds) *Iran in the Middle East* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2015)

Undoubtedly, the necessity of state functions to adequately carry out laws had been learnt the hard way. During the Constitutional Revolution (1906-1911), the newly constituted *Majles* found it almost impossible to put into practice the laws it passed.[106] However, there is no discussion here to elicit what changes they sought to make to the Iranian government to give it the necessary infrastructure to carry out the governments work. Such a state structure would infer a different relationship between government, state and the people and the institution of the Rule of Law in Iran.

It is intimated, but not expressed, that the delegates envisaged a centralised state. This may, however, be reading too much into their intentions. To be sure, the lack of centralisation under the Qajars has always been used as a sign of its inherent weakness. Nikkie Keddie has much sympathy for the nature of the decentralised Qajar state viewing it as a factor of the power of the *ulema*, arid terrain with a scattered population.[107]

One of the key facets on which the European Enlightenment turned was the Rule of Law, which had become an essential component of a modern state. The Rule of Law gave protection to human rights and specifically, "the rights to life, personal security, freedom, private property, and contractual

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[106] The *Majles* lacked executive power.
[107] Nikki Keddie, 'Iranian Revolutions in Comparative Perspective' in Albert Hourani, Philip Khoury, Mary C Wilson (eds), *The Modern Middle East* (London; New York: I.B. Taurus, 2014) p.618.

autonomy, as well as political rights".[108] So the Rule of Law guaranteed both individual rights and protected society from arbitrary power.[109] The fact that people, businessmen, could operate in a known legal framework, safe from arbitrary power, enabled economic growth in Britain.

As a patrimonial kingdom, the Rule of Law did not exist in Iran.[110] The only check on the Shah's power was the limit of his ability to mediate the interests of the tribes, merchants, and the clerics. The state, such as it was, was limited to the actions of the Shah. As the Shah was both the law-giver and law-enactor, there was no state apparatus that would deal with daily government work and which could, crucially, transcend a Shah's death.

As diplomats in the Qajar government, the delegates found it safer to dwell on the continuity of the Empire, rather than issues of constitutionalism, a constitutional monarch, and people's rights. It is certain, however, that Mohammad Ali Foroughi had formed distinctly more liberal ideas along these lines.[111] Of course, whilst this cannot be expected from a formal document such as this, ultimately sanctioned as it was by Ahmad Shah, the lack of any direct reference to either Ahmad Shah or the Qajar dynasty throughout the document may imply two things. Firstly, that the Qajar

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[108] Danilo Zolo, 'The Rule of Law: A Critical Reappraisal' in Pietro Costa, Danilo Zolo (eds), *The Rule of Law: History, Theory and Criticism* (Netherlands: Springer, 2007) p.4.
[109] *Ibid*., *The Rule of Law*, p.8.
[110] *Law, State, and Society in Modern Iran*, p.24.
[111] See *Hoquq-e assasi-e (ya'ni) adab-e mashrutiat-e doval.*

dynasty was already on its last legs and, secondly, that the Qajar dynasty was but a small component of an Iranian Empire established over many thousand years.

Thesis structure

The structure of this thesis has emanated from two narratives. Firstly, the programme of territorial claims embarked on in 1919 and secondly, a critical analysis of the nature of territories and borders that had been brought into being by the Russians and British and which the Iranians wanted rectified.

Accordingly, Chapter 2 examines the geo-political realities faced by Iran and how Iran was to engage with Russian and British diplomacy and modernity. It will discuss and expand on some of the recurring factors of imperialism which underpins the research in this thesis. Chapter 3 analyses how the Iranian commission at the Peace of Paris conducted its business and its efforts to get a hearing at the Peace Conference. It also traces the subsequent programme to redefine Iran's borders. Chapter 4 examines other facets of modernity such as concessions and how they made the delimitation of Iran's borders contingent. The subsequent chapters chart the diminishing of Iran's borders as a result of Russian and British military and diplomatic pressure and concentrate on themes that were to form the basis of Iran's irredentist push. Chapter 5 analyses how the borders in north-west Iran had

diminished over the years to the First World War. Chapter 6 assesses the nature of Russia's push in the Transcaspian and the loss of territory in that region.

Chapter 2: The struggle for supremacy over the moribund and unguarded domains

This investigation necessitates a broad understanding of the diplomatic and political forces which were becoming progressively more apparent in nineteenth century Iran. This chapter reflects on the background and historical context of Iran's relations with the empires of Britain and Russia and will articulate Iran's new geo-political position. It will further examine and expand on foundational factors such as the nature of British and Russian imperialism and modernity. More specifically, it will describe some of the narratives that the delegates had come to accept as Iran's lot in 1919.

The new geo-political implications of British and Russian imperialism

Crucially, many of the of the earliest diplomacies and contacts with Britain and Russia were to set patterns for the future, patterns from which Iran was unable to escape. Russia was to become an aggressive neighbour. Britain's control of India, via the East India Company, would now involve a role for Iran which would be inadequately handled. Iran, a pre-modern country with pre-modern ideas, faltered in its diplomacy with Russia and Britain. Increasingly Iran would be consigned to work in a diplomatic sideshow that owed more to European preoccupations than local ones.

Much of the academic investigation regarding the role of Russia and Britain in Iran has sought to explain the nature of this relationship in broad

paradigms. One such description has analysed Iran as part of the wider theories of the *Great Game*, where strategies towards Iran were almost incidental to the confrontation between Russia and Britain. Analysing Iran in terms of British strategies and relations with India, has also allowed this context for analysis. Panning wider still, the confrontation between Russia and Britain can be analysed in the context of European power politics, though, throughout, Britain and Russia found much to agree about as well. By definition, all these broad paradigms have relegated Iranian agency to bystanders.

Normative narratives pointed more towards the loss of a "greater" Iran than to questions of its very survival. Iran's loss of territory did not result in a disbanding of constituent elements, such as Kurdish territories and Khuzestan. This points to a discourse suggesting she survived because, and not in spite of, the rivalry between the European imperial powers. Moreover, that in the final analysis, Iran endured because its break-up was not a contingency that the British and Russians had conceived. This thesis will provide some evidence that Iran's territorial integrity was a goal accepted by both. This was certainly the case for the British who considered an informal empire as a better and cheaper mode of imperialism.

European and Iranian texts have generally emphasised the decadence of the Qajar dynasty, a notion which was reinforced by Pahlavi narratives.[112] Though the ability of successive Shahs is questioned in this thesis, their adaption of pre-modern precepts to a new geo-political paradigm is more nuanced. For example, Abbas Amanat has argued that Naser al-Din Shah did rather well in playing off the Russians and British against each other and ameliorating the effects of their contest.[113] So Iran's ever-growing weakness might have also aided its survival. There is no doubt that many of these concepts used to explain Iran's circumstances during this period are contradictory. Also, unhelpfully, they depend, at times, on framing the Iranian question within a European centric framework.

Russian expansion southwards

Prior to the early nineteenth century, Iran's major preoccupation was the Ottoman Empire. Wars between Iran and the Ottomans over the domination of Mesopotamia had been numerous and frequent, and the Ottomans were arguably still the dominant imperial force at the beginning of the nineteenth century. However, the trading and particularly the political relationship between Iran and the Ottoman Empire was increasingly influenced by the

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[112] Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton; Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1982) p.143.
[113] *Pivot of the Universe.*

British and Russians.[114] As a result of being on the wrong end of wars with Russia, and their war with Iran in 1823, Ottoman domination of Persia had also come increasingly under threat. The importance of the Ottoman and Iranian antagonism was to become less relevant after 1830 though there was a resurgence between 1905 and 1919.

The first important shift at the beginning of the nineteenth century was Russian expansion southwards. Peter the Great, in the eighteenth century, had made sporadic forays into the Transcaucasus and Transcaspian before retreating until the reign of Catherine the Great who reignited an interest in expanding Russian interest in these territories for good. Russian diplomacy and military aggressiveness grew and become more concentrated between 1801 and 1828 as they expanded southwards. Muriel Atkin has suggested that the Russian policy of expansion in the region turned on two justifications. The first was a pre-occupation with taking revenge on what they saw as unlawful attacks on people they had vowed to protect and, secondly, a bourgeoning special interest in the Christian communities under either Ottoman or Iranian rule.[115] Also to be considered was the wish to strengthen the Russian frontier against the Ottomans.

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[114] Zohra Alizadeh Birjandi, 'Avamel-e mooser bar ravabet-e Iran va Osmani dar dowreh-e Qajari-ye' [Factors effecting Iran-Ottoman relations in the Qajar period] *Mahnameh-e andeshe va Tarikh-e siyasi Iran mo'aser*, sal-e [year] 5, eshareh-e [issue] 50, Aban 1380 [2001] pp.39-42.
[115] Muriel Atkin, *Russia and Iran, 1780 -1828* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980) p.6.

This suggests that Russian operatives in the region were following a grand plan set down by St. Petersburg. However, Moritz Deutschmann, has argued that Russian foreign policy was shaped by "more local arrangements and the dynamics of Qajar society than by grand geopolitical schemes".[116] Pacification of Iranian borderlands was a more decisive factor than contesting for regional domination. However, the argument that Russia was expanding because it successively came upon unruly peoples without some direction from St. Petersburg is overly simplistic. Local Russian operatives frequently launched aggressive military campaigns, defying orders from St. Petersburg, and as Firuz Kazemzadeh has shown, there was no disconnect between the combative policies of Russian officials on the ground in growing the Russian Empire and in St. Petersburg.[117] In fact, the suggestion here is that there was always a tacit understanding of extending domination that underlined all Russian regimes from 1801 to at least 1881. In addition, it has been shown that a process of colonisation through settlements, a long-standing method of Russian expansion, took place in Asterabad and Mazandaran. Official Russian support was extended to these migrant settlers

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[116] Moritz Deutschmann, *Iran and Russian Imperialism: The ideal anarchists, 1800–1914* (London; New York: Routledge, 2016) p.26.
[117] *Russia and Britain in Persia: Imperial Ambitions in Qajar Iran.*

in 1914.[118] The paradigm of imperial expansion and colonisation more successfully conforms to Russian methods as far as Iran was concerned.

Analysing Russian expansion in isolation is also unhelpful. Russia was the quintessential example of what has been defined as *social imperialism*, where conquest and expansion eased social and political discord at home. Dietrich Geyer formulated this link between domestic and foreign policy as a synergy between economic and social weakness preying on an anxious state and resulting in an expansionist foreign policy.[119] Expansion in Europe to the west was becoming more difficult, first because of Napoleonic France, and then because of the Concert of Europe that determined that European countries should not fight each other in the European theatre. Difficulties were to be resolved by consensus, or more originally, by going to war in another region such as the Crimea. It was the perpetual expansion of the state that defined Russia as an imperial power during this period.

Paradoxically, it was the Iranian policy of bolstering its interests in the Caucasus that gave the Russians the opportunity to increase their dominance. The sacking of Tbilisi by Shah Aqa Mohammad in 1795 sparked a new Russian attitude towards the Georgians. The reality of this Qajar

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[118] Elena Andreeva & Morteza Nouraei, 'Russian Settlements in Iran in the Early Twentieth Century: Initial Phase of Colonization', *Iranian Studies*, 46:3, 415-442.
[119] Dietrich Geyer, *Der russische Imperialismus: Studien über den Zusammenhang von innerer und auswärtiger Politik 1860-1914* [Russian imperialism: Studies of the relationship between domestic and foreign policy 1860-1914] (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977)

success was that from now on "Russia had to play a role in Georgia for Russia's sake as much as Georgia's".[120] Annexation of Georgia (18 December 1800) meant that Russia for the first time had a physical presence in a disputed region near Iran. It also meant that, as Georgia now needed to be defended, Russia viewed all the territory towards the Aras River as part of that defendable territory.[121] In this way, and as early as this, the Aras River was seen as a limit for Russian expansion before the second war with Iran and the Treaty of Turkmanchai.

The European states system

As both Britain and Russia were European as well as Asiatic powers, policies towards Iran were to be tempered by those in Europe and vice versa. This was to hamper Britain's diplomacy and as a result Britain seemed never destined to have an Iranian policy devoid of European political considerations. Viscount Palmerston's dispatch to Henry Ellis in Tehran described the tightrope in which he was to operate to "neither indicate unfriendly feelings, nor unnecessarily imply suspicion", but to realise "against her [Russia] that the defensive arrangements of Persia should be directed".[122]

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[120] *Russia and Iran, 1780 -1828*, p.43.
[121] *Ibid*., *Russia and Iran, 1780 -1828*, p.59.
[122] See no 14, Palmerston to Ellis, 25 July, FO60/36 in *The Foreign Policy of Victorian England, 1830-1902*, pp.225-226.

The first *raison d'etre* of British policy was not protection from the Russians but from Napoleon. The British intention was to keep France out of the region and by doing so help them win the Napoleonic wars in Europe. If there was a symbiotic need to protect Iran from French invasion in the 1801 Treaty fashioned by Sir John Malcolm it seemed of little relevance to the Iranians when the Russians invaded the regions around and below Georgia in 1804. The British failed to help, as they were now the allies of the Russians against Napoleon in Europe. This led to the Iranians entering into a treaty with the French in 1807 meant to guarantee Iranian territorial integrity. The Iranians had backed the wrong horse, however, as Napoleon's rather insubstantial foray into the Middle East also ground to a halt. Iran was to be again isolated diplomatically when, despite the Definitive Treaty (*A'hdnameh-e Mofasal*) which offered British assistance to Iran in the event of war Iran with a European power, the Russians again became Britain's ally when Napoleon invaded Russia in 1812. Given that Russia remained a major threat to Iran during this period, it is easy to see how the diplomatic relationship between Britain and Iran had suffered. It was perhaps the Definitive Treaty that should have rung alarm bells for the Iranians.

The treaty of 1809, adjusted and ultimately finished as the Definitive Treaty of 1814, was not only a very one-sided treaty but also epitomised the confused nature of British intentions in Iran. Concluded by Sir Gore Ouseley, Ambassador to Iran, the Definitive Treaty voided and superseded other

treaties with European nations. It necessitated Iran to protect India and allowed, if necessary, British soldiers on Iranian soil. In exchange for British political primacy in Iran and the possibility of having foreign troops in Iran, the Iranians received only one thing of substance in return. That was the certainty that the British would come to Iran's aid if invaded by a European country or provide funds to provide for Iran's defence. Though Sir Gore Ouseley had bound Britain to a policy that it was to be problematic and for which he was not thanked, much of the next 15 years was taken up by attempts to not provide this help or funds.

At the end of the first Russian and Iranian war, Sir Gore Ouseley went to St Petersburg to advocate on behalf of the Iranians in the Treaty of Golestan. However, Foreign Office correspondence makes it manifestly clear that he was anything but an honest broker. After all, a quick resolution kept the Russians onside, crucial given the war against Napoleon, and meant that the East India Company need not pay a subsidy to the Iranians.[123] This would not be the last time that short-term attitudes would circumvent the wider strategy of obstructing Russian intentions in Iran.

Hampered by the demand to keep Russia on board in Europe, British diplomacy suffered from see-sawing political interest in Iran up to 1828, epitomised by Richard Wellesley, George Canning, and Robert Castlereagh,

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[123] Sir Gore Ouseley to Lord Buckingham, Tehran, February 17, 1814, FO60/9.

all at some point in the Foreign Office. Richard Wellesley, wished to turn Iran into a protectorate without antagonising the Russians.[124] George Canning, who became Foreign Minister in 1822, was more than happy to take a back seat and give control of the Iranian Mission to the India government.[125] Robert Castlereagh, who had taken over from Richard Wellesley in 1812, feared that turning Iran into a protectorate would undoubtedly divert Russia from the Grand Alliance in Europe against Napoleon,[126] and decided to withdraw the British military mission.[127] Moreover to Iran's detriment, by 1818, Robert Castlereagh assumed that mediating between Iran and Russia meant asking the Iranians to do what the Russians were asking.[128]

The misreading of these foreign secretaries of Russian intentions towards Iran was more acute given their understanding of Russian threats to the Ottoman Empire, where Russian expansion at Ottoman expense was viewed as a threat to British interests in the Near East. Not only did they not assume the same anxiety when it came to Iran and therefore India, but they

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[124] See Instructions to Sir Gore Ouseley His Majesty's Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary at the Court of Persia, London, July 13, 1810, FO60/4.
[125] George Canning to Mirza Abdul Wahab, His Persian Majesty's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Foreign Office, May 27, 1823, FO60/23.
[126] Edward Ingram, *The Beginning of the Great Game in Asia 1824-1834* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979) p.31.
[127] *Ibid*., *The Beginning of the Great Game*, p.31.
[128] Castlereagh to Earl Cathcart, Secret Enclosure No.3, Foreign Office, February 2,1819, FO181/17.

were slow to understand the nature of Russian expansion, which was not only about protecting Christians in the Ottoman Empire, but about expanding wherever and whenever they could. British inaction in this respect led to a realisation as late as 1828 that Russia was now able to dominate Iran politically and was thus an even greater threat to India.

Britain's connection to Iran

British political policy towards Iran was to turn on the success of private enterprise in the Indian states and set out, in broad terms, a strategy based on its antipathy towards Russian expansion and the security of the trade routes to India and the security of India. The genesis of a "Persian Question", therefore, lay in 1799 when the East India Company became the sole power in India.

It was an East India Company man, Sir John Malcolm, whose early contribution began a new phase of British policy in Iran. Sir John Malcolm's mission to Iran in 1800 to engage with Iranians and to procure a commercial and political treaty was intended to solve the problem of military engagements between the Iranians and the Afghans.[129] Whilst in Iran, Sir John Malcolm made an assessment of Persia's strategic position given an attack from a "Northern Power", which could come overland through the

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[129] Rose Greaves, 'Iranian relations with Great Britain and British India, 1798-1921', in Peter Avery, Gavin Hambly, Charles Melville (eds), *The Cambridge History of Iran*, Volume 7 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) p.377.

Euphrates or the Caspian and then via the Gulf or the Red Sea.[130] This assessment alerted the British that Iran could serve as a military passage for Russia to India. In this way, both trade and the need for secure borders and Iran's strategic position were related to the protection of India.

Any British policy towards Iran would be influenced by the fact that Britain was first and foremost a seaborne Empire. Naval supremacy had become an unquestioned policy instrument and shaped policies. In practice, this meant a reticence to put an overstretched army in the field. This, allied with reservations about the capability of the Indian Army taking the field against a European army,[131] meant that policy planning did not usually include land-based troops.

More importantly, British political strategy in Iran was to suffer from several issues which meant that Britain never had the single-minded strategy evinced by the Russians. From the outset, the British strategy towards the Russians, was never formulated into a distinct Iranian policy. As Edward Ingram suggested, policies ranged from using Iran as an ally for India, a protectorate under British control, a strategic barrier or no-man's land or even a military desert or a buffer state.[132] It was the idea of the buffer state that was

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[130] *Ibid*., 'Iranian relations with Great Britain and British India, 1798-1921', p.378.
[131] Despite action in the First World War, the Indian Army's abilities and expectations were questioned during the nineteenth century. See summation, *The Beginning of the Great Game*, p.334.
[132] Edward Ingram, *Britain's Persian Connection, 1798-1828: Prelude to the Great Game in Asia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press Oxford, 1992) p.6.

to gain some traction as the years wore on and which invited two differing approaches in protecting India from the Russians. Masterly activity,

> wanted to promote relations with the border tribes, and to provide for the defence of India outside India – that is, to utilise Persia, Afghanistan, and Baluchistan as outworks in Indian defence.[133]

Closely related to masterly activity was the idea of having a forward policy where the bulwark or buffer to Russia was as far from India as possible. Its antithesis, masterly inactivity, assumed a laissez-faire attitude best described as a "stationary or defensive policy… and a 'wait and see' policy towards Russia".[134] These methodologies expressed much about the haphazard methods upon which India's security relied. Moreover, even masterly activity was not particularly militarily aggressive. Overall, the competing strategies did nothing more than lead to confusion in policy and compelled the British to be reactive to situations and events rather than being proactive and setting the policy agenda.

During this period, British view towards policy was beginning to establish more permanent fault lines. The muddled approach, epitomised by the see-sawing responsibilities towards Iran by the Foreign Office and the India government, resulted in differing views of Russian intentions. Officers of the East India Company and the India government were more prone to be concerned with the Russian threat than those at the Foreign Office. This

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[133] *Persia and the Defence of India, 1884-1892*, p.195.
[134] *Ibid., Persia and the Defence of India, 1884-1892*, p.194.

protracted issue was to remain until 1919. The Foreign Office and the India government rarely seemed to agree on Iranian policy.

Disjointed and confused policies were also obvious on the ground. Whether officials came from the Foreign Office, or the India government fundamentally altered how policies were enacted. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, success in selecting "their man" ensured that "their argument" carried the day. As India government officials were often relied on, given their experience in India and their ability to cope with harsh conditions, policies were often carried out by them even if it had emanated from the Foreign Office. Adroit in numerous skills; explorers, engineers, and diplomats, they would provide boots on the ground.

Relations and attitudes

It has become *de rigeur* to examine the actions of empires towards their supplicants in the context of orientalism. Whilst there is a recognition of entrenched and pre-disposed attitudes colouring the diplomacy of Iran and Britain, or the Iranians and the Russians or Ottomans, assumptive characterisations are, in line with this thesis, only useful as to how they influenced events, diplomacy and the evolution of Iran's borders. British and Russian attitudes in Iran were, more often than not, in line with contemporary mores. Imperialist values, Victorian ideas and ethnic

classifications all had a role to play. However, there were differences between British and Russian attitudes towards Iranians.

Generally, British travellers and commentators of Iran portrayed a country and peoples with a rich cultural past who had fallen on hard times. Initial impressions, in line with the *Saidian*[135] philological context, probably changed when they came into actual contact with Iran and Iranians.[136] In other words, their pre-conceptions might have been tested. Others, such as those from the East India Company and the India government came to Iran schooled in Asiatic diplomacy and possibly flawed assumptions that Iranians could be treated as Indians were.[137] One constant, the diplomatic opinion of Qajar shahs and leaders, was particularly damning. Sir Malcolm referred to the ministers and chief officers who "speak any language but that of flattery and deceit; and who are, in short, condemned, by their condition, to be venal, artful and false".[138] Though kinder to other inhabitants, this overall assessment was echoed throughout the years. Lord Curzon wrote that Naser al-Din Shah was "the best existing specimen of a moderate despot".[139]

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[135] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin books, 2003)
[136] Ali Ansari, ''Persia' in the Western imagination' in Vanessa Martin (ed), *Anglo-Iranian relations since 1800* (London; New York: Routledge, 2005)
[137] See Denis Wright's note of de Gobineau's description of India government agents in Chapter 11, *Some Travellers, The English Amongst The Persians: During the Qajar Period 1787-1921* (London: Heinemann, 1977) This chapter also serves as excellent general background for the British who came to Iran.
[138] John Malcom, *History of Persia*, Vol.2 (London: John Murray 1815) p.628.
[139] Hon. George N Curzon (Lord Curzon), M.P, *Persia and the Persian Question Volume 1* (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1892) p.391.

Russian attitudes towards Iranians were, identified as

> Disparagement of the Iranians in the travelogues is overwhelming – many of the travelers mercilessly ridicule and criticize every facet of life in Iran, including habits and traditions, people's morals and manners, their religion, culture, education and even the Iranian landscape.[140]

Moreover, it is likely that, as Elena Andreeva argues, Russian attitudes evinced a moral superiority based on presenting themselves as Christian Europeans. These attitudes were concomitant with what the Russians considered their civilising mission in and around Iran. More recently, Denis Volkov, has shown the intertwining of academic research, the state, and the military in terms of achieving state objectives.[141] Both these pieces of research use Said's concept of orientalism and *Foucauldian* concepts of power and knowledge[142] respectively to give context to their arguments.

Iranian attitudes towards the Russians had progressed from equating them with nasty, uneducated, and clownish Uzbegs in the seventeenth century,[143] to a people to be feared and even hated at the turn of the nineteenth century.[144] It is apparent, particularly in the question of border delimitation around the Transcaspian (Chapter 6), that what the British

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[140] Elena Andreeva, *Russia and Iran in the Great Game: Travelogues and Orientalism* (London; New York: Routledge, 2007) p.11.
[141] Denis V. Volkov, *Russia's Turn to Persia: Orientalism in Diplomacy and Intelligence* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 2108)
[142] *Ibid*., *Russia's Turn to Persia*, Chapter 1.
[143] *Sir John Chardin's Travels in Persia,* p.89.
[144] See Rudi Matthee, 'Facing a Rude and Barbarous Neighbor: Iranian perceptions of Russia and the Russians from the Safavids to the Qajars in *Iran Facing Others: Identity Boundaries in a Historical Perspective.*

mistook as intimacy was actually a closeness based on fear. Iranian imagination of the British was quite different. In the beginning admired for their abilities and power, they were soon to lose that admiration as the British became a threat to Iranian sovereignty after the Constitutional Revolution.[145] Indeed, the only consistent Iranian attitudes were towards the Ottoman Turks. Years of fighting over contested territory had given them a level of mistrust unmatched in the region and was hardened by adoption of the Caliphate by the Ottomans and the Safavid dynasty formalising Shiism as the official religion of Iran.

Imperialism; commerce and trade

Both Russia and Britain shared an interest in increasing trade and commercial involvement in and around the Caspian. Commercially, Britain, in the shape of The East India Company,[146] had become more powerful than the countries with whom it traded. This company's capabilities had, in addition, been supercharged with the advent of improvements in warfare and trading infrastructure such as commercial credit.[147] To make matters worse for Iranian industry, Britain was also aided by a favourable trading status. In 1841, Britain

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[145] This is a brief summation. See Abbas Amanat, 'Through the Persian Eye: Anglophilia and Anglophobia in Modern Iranian History' in *Iran Facing Others: Identity Boundaries in a Historical Perspective.*
[146] Charter Granted by Queen Elizabeth to the East India Company, 31 December 1600.
[147] Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging The Nation 1707-1837* (London: Pimlico, 1994) p.56.

was allowed to pay only a 5% tariff on exports to Iran. Internal trade was further disadvantaged by the fact that the British did not have to pay duties that Iranian traders had to pay.[148]

As Jeremy Suri has suggested, from Peter the Great onwards, Russian rulers had also wanted to connect with lucrative Asian markets.[149] Russian trade with Iran grew exponentially, and aided by capitulation rights gained by the Treaty of Turkmanchai, accounted for 70% of total trade and 50% of all imports by 1914.[150] During the same period, Iran's trade with its immediate neighbours lessened considerably, further isolating Iranians from more local trading options. [151] Unable to shelter from these imports, Iran's small industries succumbed and Iran became an exporter of raw materials.

In time, as trade progressively intertwined with the British crown's ambition to develop markets overseas,[152] The East India Company became a law unto itself; an extension of British foreign policy with a willingness to back up its

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[148] Nikki Keddie, 'The Economic History of Iran, 1800-1914, and its political impact: An Overview', *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 2/3 (Spring - Summer, 1972), pp. 58-78, p.64.
[149] Jeremi Suri, 'Rethinking Imperialism in a Comparative Context: Early Modern British and Russian Expansion in Asia', *Portuguese Studies*, Vol. 16 (2000), p.232.
[150] Charles Issawi, 'Iranian Trade, 1800-1914', *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 3/4, Studies on the Economic and Social History of Iran in the Nineteenth Century (Summer - Autumn, 1983), pp. 229-241, p.235.
[151] Nikki Keddie has pointed out that the economic engagement with the West was not entirely negative. See Nikki Keddie, *Qajar Iran and the rise of Reza Khan 1796-1925* (Costa Mesa: Mazda, 1999) p.36.
[152] 'Rethinking Imperialism in a Comparative Context', pp.218-239.

will to trade with violence. For example, in 1821, General Smith led an expedition to the Persian Gulf to defeat Arab pirates working out of Iranian territory.[153]

In part, British imperialism might have been described by Machiavelli as an extension of the state.[154] This vision of imperialism was applicable to both Britain and Russia. Unfortunately for the Iranians, the superiority of the "powers" in terms of technology, logistics, organisation, and military hardware had started to become obvious. Russian military superiority had been felt first-hand. Two wars between Russia and Iran had resulted in two defeats[155] and two penal treaties. Iran lost many of its Caucasian provinces in the Treaty of Golestan in 1813 and further territories in the Treaty of Turkmanchai in 1828.[156]

A further method of Russian and British engagement in Iran was the implementation and use of capital investment and commercial ventures by securing concessions from the Qajar crown.[157] Investment entailed the building of railways (not realised in the nineteenth century), steam shipping,

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[153] Henry Willock to Lord Castlereagh, Tehran, May 15, 1821, FO60/20.
[154] Trans. By Julia Conaway Bondanella & Peter Bondanella, introduction p.xvii, *Niccolò Machiavelli, Discourses on Livy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)
[155] For the first war, *Russia and Iran, 1780 -1828* Chapter VII, and for the second, which was brief see Sir Percy Sykes, *A History of Persia*, Volume II (London: Macmillan and Co, 1921, Second Edition) Chapter LXXVI.
[156] For details of these treaties in English see C.U. Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements, and Sanads relating to India and Neighbouring Countries*, Vol. X, (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, India, 1892) Appendix. For Persian see Abbas Ramzani, *Ma'aahedat-e tarikhy-e Iran* [History of Iran's treaties] (Tehran: Tarfand, 1386 [2007])
[157] See John S. Galbraith, 'British Policy on Railways in Persia, 1870-1900', *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 25, No.4, pp.480-505.

a telegraph system, and roads. This method of informal imperial control followed by both Britain and Russia had limited degrees of success. Together with a banking infrastructure, also in the hands of the British and Russians, these investments had both a strategic and diplomatic intent that was unique to Iran as a "semi-colonial" country. Concessions were asked for and gained, the most notorious being The Reuters Concession (1872) which was withdrawn after criticisms in Iran and Britain.[158] Iran could have been used as an example by Lenin who pointed out that imperialism saw a "personal union of industrial and bank capital".[159]

Increasing commercial hegemony was aided by concurrent increasing diplomatic engagement in Iran. The British had an almost permanent presence at court and a modern bureaucracy which reached areas of Iran which were seemingly out of the government's reach. The British and Russians developed a system of Political Residents and Consul Generals in major towns. The flexible nature of Qajar state relations with tribes allowed the British to insinuate themselves into the governmental system and they communicated with tribal leaders and landholders directly to promote their own interests.[160] In this way, the British made their own regional affiliations as a result of the

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[158] *Qajar Iran and the rise of Reza Khan*, pp.37-39.
[159] V.I. Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (London: Penguin, 2010) p.157.
[160] H. Lyman Stebbins, 'British Imperialism, Regionalism, and Nationalism in Iran, 1890-1919' in *Iran Facing Others: Identity Boundaries in a Historical Perspective*.

weakness of the Qajar state in managing and controlling the outer reaches of its Empire. This control increased with the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 which separated Iran into spheres of influence.[161]

Britain and Russia also followed a policy of pacification more generally associated with the Pahlavi dynasty and not Qajar Iran. Never overt, it was most certainly effective. Tribal pacification accompanied economic penetration. For example, when surveying and drilling for oil, the British company, dissatisfied with the ability of the Bakhtiari to guard the sites,[162] drafted in Indian soldiers.[163] Ultimately, it was felt that it would "frighten them [Bakhtiari] and have a good moral effect in general".[164] The pacification policy was, therefore, part of the dual approach of diplomacy and trade. Diplomatic, pacification and commercial functions were intertwined and inseparable.

Such operations were made possible with the least visible facets of progress and modernity – surveying, mapping, and cartography. Enthusiastic explorers, most famously Lord Curzon in 1889, who either went on their own volition or were sent, ended up increasing British understanding of Iran. Wherever the British travellers went, they recorded

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[161] For text of this convention and reaction to it see Negin Nabavi, *Modern Iran: a history in documents* (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 2016) pp.25-29.
[162] Marling to Secretary of State (assumed to be Edward Grey), Foreign Office, 10 June, 1908, FO248/923, p.94.
[163] Telegram from Edward Grey to D'Arcy Oil Syndicate representatives, 29 November, 1907, FO248/923, p.272.
[164] Letter from Captain Lorimer to Sir Cecil Spring Rice, Teheran, 14 September 1907, FO248/923, p.297.

and mapped out villages, populations, ethnicities, and cultures. This understanding was essential for British diplomatic and strategic planning in Iran. Henry Layard in particular roamed about the border region and his expertise was subsequently made use of by Stratford Canning, when he made it to Constantinople.[165] Others would use this knowledge to affect British policy in Iran to a large extent. For Lord Curzon, assessments made of Iranians and Iranian politics in the short periods he was in Iran determined his outlook for his entire career, despite altered political trends in Iran.[166]

International law

As mentioned in the introduction, the Iranian delegates in Paris identified international law as enabling the hegemonic aspects of imperialism. In the nineteenth century, interactions between countries were balanced by an "international society".[167] The period between the Congress of Vienna in 1815 and the First World War represented the apogee of this interaction between states and a continuation of this ideal, despite the Crimean War, but also the rise of international law to replace this longstanding practice of keeping the

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[165] Sir Henry Layard, *Early Adventures in Persia, Susiana, and Babylonia: Including a residence among the Bakhtiari and other wild tribes before the discovery of Nineveh* (London: John Murray, 1894) pp. 387-390.
[166] For a concise yet balanced piece concerning Lord Curzon's relationship with Iran, see 'Curzon and Persia' Sir Denis Wright speech at the Royal Geographical Society reprinted in *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 143, No.3, (Nov., 1987) pp.343-350.
[167] Hedley Bull, Benedict Kingsbury, Adam Roberts (eds), *Hugo Grotius and International Relations* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2002) p.71.

peace. The implementation of international law was beginning to provide a meaningful legal framework for states and people's rights.

For countries such as Iran, the practice of implementing international law outside Europe was more nuanced. It appeared that international law was not to be fully incorporated into the imperial project and European lawyers were not averse to having one rule in Europe and another for the "Orientals".[168] They argued that Europeans

> were sufficiently similar for there to be an international law among them, and sufficiently different from non-European peoples so as to preclude the extension of such law to the latter.[169]

In this way the development of international law was beginning to be seen as part of the cultural process in Europe only. However, this did not stop the introduction of "laws" that could be used to civilise the savage and to aid "the conversion of non-Europeans into "civilized" behaviour".[170]

When it came to imperialism, aspects of Social Darwinism, survival of the fittest, and even Aryanism[171] were inculcated with the use of force in the determination of the fate of other peoples.[172] Social Darwinism as a driving force for imperialist practices did exist, but was probably used to reinforce pre-

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[168] Martti Koskenniemi, *The Gentle Civilizer of Nations: The Rise and Fall of International Law 1870-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2008) pp. 70-71.
[169] *Ibid*., *The Gentle Civilizer of Nations*, p.72.
[170] *Ibid*., *The Gentle Civilizer of Nations*, p.74.
[171] *Ibid*., *The Gentle Civilizer of Nations*, p. 77.
[172] *Ibid*., *The Gentle Civilizer of Nations.*

existing beliefs and its importance was overstated by liberals.[173] The question of Aryanism, originally rooted in the intellectual pursuits in India and eventually to promote racial superiority within the imperial context,[174] had specific connotations when it came to Iran. Iran was, supposedly, the country of a superior race of Aryans with recognizable ethnic, cultural, and linguistic facets.[175] A much derided concept today,[176] in practice, this meant that Iranians shared the same roots as Europeans and were therefore superior to other Asiatic races. Nevertheless, this general concept may have fed into notions that Iranian civilisation had degenerated and become despotic.[177]

More fundamentally perhaps in view of Iran, was how Victorian ideals permeated British ideas of imperialism and legality. In 1899 this spirit was described by Mr. J. Lawson Walton a Q.C and M.P as,

> Imperialism [is] a principle or formula of statesmanship for interpreting the duties of government in relation to empire. The formula is compounded – to use the language of the analyst – of an emotion, a conviction, a determination, and a creed… The Imperialist feels a profound pride in the magnificent heritage of empire won by the courage and energies of his ancestry, and bequeathed to him subject to the burden of many sacred trusts. This is his emotion. He is convinced that the discharge of the duties of his great inheritance has an educational influence and a morally bracing effect on the character of the British people, and that the spread of British rule extends to every race brought within its sphere the incalculable benefits of just law, tolerant trade, and considerate government. This is his conviction. He is resolved to accept readily the burden of inherited dominion, with every development and expansion to which the operation of natural and legitimate causes may give rise, and to use the material forces of government to protect the rights and advance the just interests of all

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[173] Paul Cook, 'Historical Monkey Business: The Myth of a Darwinized British Imperial Discourse', *History*, Vol.84, No.276, pp.633-657.
[174] T Ballantyne, *Orientalism & Race: Aryanism and the British Empire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002)
[175] George Rawlinson, *The seventh great oriental monarchy*, Volume 1 (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1882), Chapters 1 and 2.
[176] *The Politics of Nationalism in Modern Iran*, pp.13-14.
[177] *Ibid*., *The Politics of Nationalism in Modern Iran*, pp.9-13.

> the subjects of the Queen. This is his determination. He believes that the strength and resources of our race will be equal to the weight of any obligation which the sense of duty of our people may call upon our Government to undertake. This is his creed. [178]

Even though there was specific movement towards a framework for international law, its application appeared particularly one-sided. Hugo Grotius, for example, justified the VOC's[179] policies against the Portuguese, including the capture of the Santa Catarina and its cargo and other aggressive policies as based on the "natural right of self-preservation".[180] It would seem that ideas of international law chimed more with pragmatism and the methodology of imperialism and colonialism, rather than developing a legal framework based on fairness. In the final analysis, it would appear that "Empire is never an advocate of an international law that can seem only an obstacle to its ambition".[181] The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, was clearly an example of international law giving away to imperial imperatives.

The diplomatic complications and patterns discussed above dictated how the British and Russians were to address Iran's borders between 1828 and 1919. Iran had to engage with these issues as its Empire diminished in size. The nature of Iran's shrinking borders will be examined in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. Firstly, however, Iran's attendance at the Peace of Paris will be

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[178] 'What is Imperialism?', The Review of Reviews; March 1899; *British Periodicals*, p.242.
[179] The Dutch East India Company.
[180] Martti Koskenniemi, 'International Law and the Emergence of Mercantile Capitalism: Grotius to Smith' in Pierre-Marie Dupuy, Vincent Chetail (eds), *The Roots of International Law / Les fondements du droit international* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill – Nijhoff, 2013) p.18.
[181] *The Gentle Civilizer of Nations*, p.34.

examined. As Iran contemplated sending a mission to the Peace of Paris, they hoped and to some degree expected their *desiderata* to be acknowledged. In Paris they were to show that whilst their ideas of an Iranian Empire had been adapted to modern methods, they had not given up on their grievances.

Chapter 3: The First World War and Iranian irredentism

Iran's entry to the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 was deemed crucial for the well-being of the nation. For some, such as the Iranian Minister to The Hague, admittance represented the difference between Iran's survival as an independent state or a very different outcome, to perish in political slavery.[182] Territorial claims formed a major part of Iran's *desiderata* in Paris. This chapter will investigate how the rectification and alteration of Iran's borders formed a large part of its attempt to get a hearing in Paris. It will then look at Iran's attempts to incorporate the question of borders in the Anglo-Persian Agreement of 1919. Finally, and subsequent to the two major initiatives listed above, it will look at Prince Firuz Nosrat al-Dowleh's continuing irredentist attempts.

Iran's programme of irredentism was to be unrelenting. The Iranians never gave up hope and over a two-year period, between late 1918 to the end of 1919, followed a sustained strategy of territorial claims. During this short period, Iran attempted to raise the question of border rectification at nearly every available opportunity. Certain aspects of Iran's diplomacy will be revealed.

Firstly, the Iranian diplomats viewed the end of the war as an opportunity to carve out a singular path on the international stage and to establish a route to sovereignty independent of unwanted impositions from

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[182] 'La mission persane à la Conférence de Paix en 1919: Une nouvelle interprétation' [The Persian mission to the Peace Conference in 1919: A new interpretation] in Oliver Bast (ed), *La Perse et La Grande Guerre*, Bibliothéque Iranienne 52 (Tehran; Louvain: Peeters, 2002) p.375.

foreign powers. This view was primed by a number of factors: The tenuous government control over Iran; the recognition that the Ottomans threat had been marginalised and that the Russian revolution had turned attention inwards; the fact that now Britain had unquestionably become the strongest power in the region.

Secondly that Iran employed modern methods in its diplomacy to secure its irredentist desires.

Thirdly, that Iran's diplomacy was restricted by a dual approach: Sending a commission to the Peace of Paris and at the same time negotiating the Anglo-Persian Agreement with Britain. Both approaches maintained irredentist *desiderata*. While this chapter will not make an in-depth examination of the Anglo-Persian Agreement it will acknowledge some of the recent research which has attempted to rehabilitate the reputation of Vosuq al-Dowleh and the refutation of the predominant theme that Vosuq al-Dowleh had been deferential to the British and had merely committed to the Anglo-Persian Agreement for a large bribe. As we shall see, this argument comes under pressure given the role of Ahmad Shah, and Vosuq al-Dowleh's relationship with both Ahmad Shah and the delegates.

The Iranians were to encounter resistance from the British and were repeatedly unsuccessful in achieving any border rectifications. Certainly, it has been claimed that their proposals were far too exaggerated to succeed, but the essential element that was missing was the lack of ability and force.

Iran did not have the political or military power to, firstly, make the British listen, and secondly, facilitate any land redistribution. Iran could never defend the territories it wanted back, and it is this reality that precluded any success. Iran could not be expected to receive additional territory and then ask the British to protect it. It was a lesson that perhaps Reza Khan understood better. Borders were integral to a bourgeoning nationalism, but only if you can defend them. Reza Khan saw the Iranian army not only "as the symbol of Iran's independence and integrity, but also as the principal instrument of his country's administrative centralization and viability".[183]

A phoenix?

The Iranian political elite were energised by the shift in political imagination, particularly in the European discourse of a new epoch of justice based on new agencies of international coordination, such as the League of Nations. Iran had engaged with the widespread "Wilsonian moment".[184] Already in 1916, Ahmad Shah had been petitioned by 300 Iranians to reply to President Wilson's Peace Note of 18th December 1916.[185] In Berlin, Hasan Taqizadeh in *Kaveh* had been promoting the case for the self-determination of European

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[183] Alvin J. Cottrell, 'Iran's Armed Forces under the Pahlavi Dynasty' in George Lenczowski (ed), *Iran under The Pahlavis* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1978) p.389.
[184] Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Cary: Oxford University Press, 2007)
[185] *Iran* newspaper, 28 December 1916.

countries such as Romania for some time.[186] Iranians were obviously aware that the nascent Soviet state had also bought into ideas of self-determination as states, previously under Russian control, were recognised as independent.[187] Wilson's 14 points[188] merely confirmed to the Iranians that all the wrongs perpetuated would be redressed.

Though Iran was not the only country which had been enticed by the notion of a new post-war order,[189] Mansoureh Ettehadieh has argued that Iran had embraced these concepts without fully understanding that the world really had not changed significantly. Britain still held sway in the Middle East and British imperialism was far from dead.[190] However, as we shall see, this lack of understanding would in no way diminish Iran's entreaties to be accepted to the Peace Conference.

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[186] Timothy Nunan, 'Persian Visions of Nationalism and Inter-Nationalism in a World at War' in Marcus M. Payk and Roberta Pergher (eds), *Beyond Versailles: Sovereignty, Legitimacy, and the Formation of New Polities after the Great War* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2019) pp.202-203.
[187] *Ibid*., p.206.
[188] Woodrow Wilson, Address to a Joint Session of Congress on the Conditions of Peace ["The Fourteen Points"] Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/206651
[189] Gotelind Müller, 'Versailles and the Fate of Chinese Internationalism: Reassessing the Anarchist case' in Urs Matthias Zachmann (ed), *Asia after Versailles: Asian Perspectives on the Paris Peace Conference and the Interwar Order, 1919-33* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017)
[190] Mansoureh Ettehadieh, 'Les illusions et les faits: l'Iran et la Conférence de Versailles' [Illusions and facts: Iran and the Conference of Versailles] in Oliver Bast (ed), *La Perse et La Grande Guerre*, Bibliothéque Iranienne 52 (Tehran; Louvain: Peeters, 2002) p.428.

Undeterred, Iran set out a new path in international relations. A more informed public read about what peace might mean.[191] Regaining lost territory was not only a political objective, but an idea that was in the public domain and steadily gaining support. There is considerable evidence to suggest that the government invited support from the Iranian people for their policy. The semi-official newspaper *Iran* regularly informed the public of their policy towards the Peace Conference and Iranian *desiderata*.[192] Given this political climate, it is impossible to ignore the link between the rectification of borders and the Iranian government's desire to achieve some semblance of independence and pride.

During 1919, Iran would carry out a public relations campaign in Europe signifying Iran's "new" role in the brave new world that the end of the war appeared to portend. Hasan Taqizadeh, spoke about the importance of an agenda of independence and freedom within a new international order. He declared, "Persia is still able to contribute to the peaceful progress of civilization, if she is given a chance, which means no more than freedom".[193] In the Guildhall speech in November 1919, Ahmad Shah set out a role for

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[191] *Iran* newspaper, 20 October, 1918.
[192] See *Iran* newspaper from 20 October to 5 March in particular.
[193] S. H. Taqizadeh, Member of the Persian parliament for Teheran, 'Memorandum on Persia's wishes and her Aspirations addressed to the Peace Conference of Paris', The Hague, April 1919, reprinted in *Maqalat-e Taqizadeh*, Volume VII, ed, I Afshar, (Tehran, Shokufan, 1977) pp.722-728, p.724.

Iran in international relations that would prove favourable to the Europeans, but independent of them.[194]

British commentators were generally hostile to any of Iran's wishes. Percy Sykes argued, completing his History of Persia contemporaneously with events in Paris, that Iran's *desiderata* had been fanciful.[195] Others supported Iran's position, drawing comparisons between the fate of Belgium and Iran during World War One.[196] Iranians were cognisant of these arguments. If neutral states such as Sweden were left out of the negotiations, what then when neutrality was violated by both sides? Equally, Iran, as a neutral country, had been afflicted far more than China who went to war but suffered little?[197] Despite Iranian arguments having some moral justification, it is difficult to find any vocalised backing by the British in view of Iran's plight in World War One. Though, more discreetly, in a government publication, the British did conclude that Iran "had suffered almost as much as Belgium".[198] Occupying the moral high ground was not going to be enough to achieve Iran's objectives.

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[194] Ahmad Shah's speech was widely syndicated throughout Britain, the reference used here is from *The Scotsman*, Monday, 3 November, 1919.
[195] *A History of Persia*, pp.518-520.
[196] George Brandes, *The World at War* (New York: Macmillan, 1917) pp.250-259.
[197] *Iran* newspaper, 5 March, 1919.
[198] *Persia*, Handbooks prepared under the direction of the historical section of the foreign Office, no.80 (Confidential), June 1919, FO373/4/16.

Whilst achieving territorial restitution was an obvious aim for the Iranians, its importance was lost on the British. As Iran was unable to defend its own territory, let alone new ones, they pragmatically saw no reason to accede to the Iranian requests. However, with some imagination the British could have gained much, and indeed made the Anglo-Persian Agreement slightly easier to swallow, had some border rectification been made.

Not for the first time, Britain seemed to occupy a confused position in the Iranian paradigm. Having never adhered to a consistent strategy in relation to Iran, they now differentiated between policies in Europe and in the Middle East. They were protagonists of a new world order in Europe but clung to what had become supposedly outmoded imperial strategies in the Middle East. The Sykes-Picot Agreement to carve up territories between France and Britain post-war and the Anglo-Persian Agreement of 1919 were examples of Britain seeing value in longstanding imperial virtues. In contrast Iran's irredentism had firm foundations. There was consensus in the irredentist goal. Unanimity in strategy was, however, to be found wanting between those who went to the Peace of Paris and those who sought success through the Anglo-Persian Agreement.

Preparing the ground for Paris

Although the Iranian government was scarcely in control of the country, issues of sovereignty were still paramount. In January 1918 Ahmad Shah,

rather impetuously, asked the British to leave Iran. Arthur Balfour, British Foreign Secretary, felt that such a move would "expose the country to further violations of neutrality on the part of their enemies".[199] Arthur Balfour, entirely correct in his assessment of Iran's weakness, was merely highlighting the reality of Iran's circumstance and vulnerability. However, Ahmad Shah's request also underlined how Iran's wish to re-establish sovereignty eclipsed a realistic assessment of its inability to protect itself from incursions by other countries.

If there was any semblance of sovereignty during the First World War, it was further eroded by the annexation of Nakhichevan and Julfa in September 1918 by Ottoman forces (see Chapter 5). To make matters worse, Ottoman propaganda proposed a separate peace between the Allies and the Ottomans in exchange for Iranian Azerbaijan being transferred to the Turkish Empire.[200] Not only was Iran at the mercy of an Ottoman army, itself on the brink of defeat, but they were also faced with the possibility of losing territory to a country destined to be on the losing side of the war.

In late Summer 1918, Iran, willing or not, was moving to a closer association with Britain. On 10 September, Iran felt compelled to ask the British for assistance in the event of a Bolshevik invasion.[201] In the same month,

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[199] Arthur Balfour to Sir C. Marling, Tehran, January 10, 1918, FO371/3262, p.179.
[200] Sir Percy Cox to Foreign Office (assumed), October 13, 1918, FO371/3262, p.353.
[201] Secretary of State India Office to Foreign Office, September 10, 1918, FO371/3262, p.58.

discussions took place between Sir Charles Marling (British Resident in Iran) and the Prime Minister, Vosuq al-Dowleh, regarding the possibility of Iran abandoning its neutrality.[202] On 30 September, the Eastern Committee of the War Cabinet, even discussed the feasibility of an alliance with Iran.[203] However, as a communication in October made clear, Allenby's prospective victory in Palestine lessened the need for an alliance. It was pointed out that Iran's

> sole motives for coming in would be in order to appear at Peace Conference as a belligerent with hope of getting her independence guaranteed internationally and also of receiving a slice of Turkish territory in neighbourhood of frontier as compensation for injuries suffered.[204]

Against this background, the Iranians and the British were slowly turning their minds to their post-war policies. Sir Charles Marling's view was that to maintain an Iran friendly to Britain, the 1907 Convention should be abrogated, the South Persia Rifles should be placed under neutral officers and Iran should be admitted to the Paris Peace Conference.[205]

This was a minority view, however, as the British responded to Iranian moves. The Iranians had already unilaterally decided to nullify all treaties made with Russia over the last 100 years.[206] Though not specifically indicated by the Iranian announcement, this would have included the Treaty

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[202] Sir Charles Marling to Foreign Office, September 5, 1918, FO371/3262, p.51.
[203] Eastern Committee Memorandum, Political Department, India Office, September 30, 1918, FO371/3262, p.244.
[204] Sir Percy Cox to Foreign Office (assumed), October 1, 1918, FO371/3262, p.257.
[205] Memorandum Oliphant, October 18, 1918, FO371/3262, pp.385-386..
[206] The decision was made on the 27 July but seems to have been formally communicated in October. See Nadjaf Gholi, Persian Legation, London, October 24, 1918, FO371/3262, p.470.

of Turkmanchai and all treaties concerning the Transcaspian. For reasons that will become clear below, they did not consider also nullifying the Treaty of Golestan. However, the British were more exercised by the abrogation of the Foreign Office Tribunal and Karguzari Courts and the assumption that foreigners would now be dealt with by the Iranian court system. Privately, the British thought that the Iranian Cabinet had lost their minds, a thought reinforced with the knowledge that the Iranian Cabinet had debated going further and nullifying all British concessions as well. Formally, the British replied that the announcement could not "affect the existing status of foreigners in this country",[207] and determined that the action was "null and void".[208]

The Peace of Paris

It was in this post-war climate that Iran hoped that it might be successful in pushing for major boundary changes by sending a small commission to Paris to gain entry to the Peace Conference. In doing so, Iran joined a whole host of non-belligerent but smaller regional "nations" at the Peace Conference. These included Armenian, Assyrian, Azerbaijani, and Kurdish delegations, all of whom wanted to redefine their territories and borders. For most of these delegations it could have meant independence and statehood. For all these countries and Iran, it meant claiming contested territories.

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[207] Sir Charles Marling to Mushar [*sic*] es Saltaneh, August 2, 1918, FO371/3262, p.551.
[208] Sir Charles Marling to Persian Minister for Foreign Affairs, August 2, 1918, FO371/3262, p.552.

The decision to send an Iranian commission to Paris appeared to be unanimous, with both the Prime Minister, Vosuq al-Dowleh, and Ahmad Shah both understanding the necessity to do so. Certainly, the British had some inkling during the war that Iran would, if at all possible, be at the Peace Conference. In late October 1918, immediately after the Armistice with Turkey, Sir Percy Cox, Minister to Persia, was informed of their decision to form a representative committee "in regard to desiderata which Persia should seek from the Peace Conference".[209] On 21 November, Vosuq al-Dowleh submitted a memorandum listing Iran's demands to the French, British and United States governments.[210] This memorandum formed the basis for all subsequent documents put forward to the Peace Conference in early 1919. Significantly, it asked for "The ratification of Persia's frontier lines and the restoration of Persian territory wrongfully taken".[211] The Americans asked for a more precise statement concerning Iran's frontiers and received it on 7 January. In it, the Iranians specified the Russian frontier and the Caucasus. They also mentioned that Iran was also anxious to raise the recovery of certain islands in the Persian Gulf, however also stated that "the

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[209] Sir Percy Cox to Foreign Office (assumed), October 31, 1918, FO371/3262, p.496.
[210] See Cypher (coded telegraph) Sir Percy Cox to Foreign Office, November 26, 1918, FO371/3263, pp.187-188.
[211] The Persian Foreign Minister (Aligoli) to the Persian Chargé (Ali-Kuli Khan), Tehran, November 18, 1919. FRUS, 1919. The Paris Peace Conference, Volume 1, Washington, D.C: U.S. Government Printing Office, p.259. Henceforward abbreviated to FRUS.

Persian Government will probably not raise the question".[212] The Iranians had already decided not to antagonise the British.

The reaction to this document from the other allies was mixed. Raymond Lecomte, the French Minister in Tehran, ridiculed Iranian initiatives and recommended that Iran be denied entry to the Peace Conference. His successor, Charles Bonin, still in Paris at this point, also objected. He also viewed Iran's territorial claims as not credible, though he did seem to agree with some determination towards a guarantee for Iranian sovereignty and integrity.[213] *Le Temps,* however, looked on Iran's request with a great deal of sympathy as a just cause.[214] Whilst the French wanted to discourage the Iranians from sending a commission, they were willing to help facilitate their journey to the Peace Conference. Significantly, France had not occupied Iran during the First World War and their strategic interests in Iran were minimal.

The Americans, for their part, were more sympathetic. In early November, John Caldwell, Minister in Persia, had suggested that, given Iran's suffering during the war, it was only right to settle the Iranian question and that "Persia's hope is in America".[215] Also, on 20 November, at a banquet

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[212] The Chargé in Persia (White) to the Acting Secretary of State, Tehran, January 7, 1919. FRUS, 1919, Vol.1. p.263.
[213] For a fuller analysis of French reactions see page 383 in 'La mission persane à la Conférence de Paix en 1919: Une nouvelle interprétation'.
[214] Bulletin De Jour, Les Droits de la Perse, *Le Temps* (Paris), 17 February, 1919.
[215] The Minister in Persia (Caldwell) to the Secretary of State, Tehran, November 15, 1918. FRUS, 1919, Vol.1. p.256.

for the American Relief Commission held in the *Majles*, Prince Firuz Nosrat al-Dowleh had remarked to Sir Percy Cox that the United States had already maintained that they would help Iran at the Peace Conference in "very general terms".[216] It would appear that the Americans already had misgivings regarding the British attitude and believed that the vague British welcome for an Iranian delegation in Paris would at some point become a sticky diplomatic matter or even be overturned. However, the Americans were not going to make a final decision on Iran's attendance until President Wilson reached Paris.[217] Given this situation, it was now becoming obvious that Iran had to approach and get permission from all the Allied Powers, not just the British, though they needed to be convinced first.

The British were now in no doubt as to Iranian intentions. British consternation increased further when the nationalist make-up of the delegation was announced. As previously described in the introduction, British reaction to the makeup of the Iranian commission had been hostile. The commission was to be led by Moshaver al-Mamalek, a decision not made without difficulty. He was not the first choice.

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[216] Sir Percy Cox to Foreign Office, 20 November, 1918, FO371/3263, pp.133-134.
[217] The Secretary of State to the Persian Chargé (Ali-Kuli Kahn), Washington, December 2, 1919. FRUS, 1919, Vol.1. p.261.

Ahmad Shah had wanted his mentor and last regent Abul Qasem Khan Qarazuglu, Naser al-Mulk to go.[218] When Naser al-Molk declined and Mostowfi al-Mamalek also turned him down, Moshaver al-Mamalek was chosen by the Shah. Ahmad Shah was very intent on sending someone he could trust to Paris and avoided sending the Prime Minister, Vosuq al-Dowleh. Ostensibly, Vosuq al-Dowleh was required to stay at home because of the parlous nature of the country,[219] but the British, assumed correctly that this was because the Shah did not trust him.[220] Indeed, representations were also made to Ahmad Shah, asking him not to send Vosuq al-Dowleh.[221] Vosuq al-Dowleh was keen to go and the British were keen for him to go.[222] As we shall see, the reason for Vosuq al-Dowleh wanting to go to Paris probably lay with his wish to negotiate directly with the British. However, if he himself could not go, then he wanted Moshaver al-Mamalek to go. Not because he trusted or indeed shared similar convictions, but because he wanted to get Moshaver al-Mamalek as far away as possible from Iran and

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[218] Entekhab-e namayandeh-e sol, az taraf-e Iran [Choosing Iran's delegates to the Paris Peace Conference] *Iran* newspaper, 22 November, 1918.
[219] Hossein Maki, *Zendegany-e siyasi-e Ahmad Shah Qajar* [The political life of Ahmad Shah Qajar] (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1357 [1978]) p.70.
[220] Sir Percy Cox to Foreign Office, December 6, 1918, FO371/3263, pp.290-291.
[221] *Zendegany-e siyasi-e Ahmad Shah Qajar*, p.70.
[222] William J. Olson, *Anglo-Iranian Relations During World War 1* (London; New York: Routledge, 2013) p.166.

prevent any obstruction by him.[223] The choice of Moshaver al-Mamalek had two results. On the one hand, Ahmad Shah got to send someone he trusted and on the other hand, Vosuq al-Dowleh was able to isolate Moshaver al-Mamalek in Paris, hamper Iranian progress at the Peace Conference and ensure that the commission's work would suffer from the mutual distrust between these two men.

Despite an ongoing diplomatic relationship with Britain, Iran's relations with the British had soured during the war. Close collaboration with the Russians, then a debilitating control on Iran's purse strings had increased Iran's financial plight. In addition, the claims by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company for sabotaged pipelines all helped to establish the British as Iran's *bête noire*. Whilst Iranian diplomats felt hemmed in by Britain,[224] they now realised that it would be advantageous to use the Peace Conference as a means of making diplomatic connections with other major countries in order to avoid a stultifying obedience to Britain.

In anticipation of the commission being sent to Paris, the British assembled a memorandum outlining reasons why Iran should be prevented from attending the Peace Conference.[225] Access was to be barred on the basis

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[223] Afshin Parto, 'Peyman-e 1919 va vakonesha-ye barkhoste dar barabare an' [The 1919 Treaty and reactions to it] *Etela'at siyasi-eqtesadi*, Khordad va Teer 1377 [1998], No 129, 130, pp. 86-101, p.88.
[224] 'Yaddashtha-ye montasher nashodeh', pp.309-310.
[225] 'Memorandum Regarding the Policy of His Majesty's Government Towards Persia at the Peace Conference', 17 December, 1918, IOR/L/PS/18/C193.

that Iran had been non-belligerent during the First World War and that Britain wanted to be free to "settle our post-war policy directly with the Persian Government".[226] The memorandum continued to describe the need for an Iranian policy which reflected the security of India and therefore any policy that promoted stability was ideal.[227] If access to the Paris Conference could not be rebuffed, then various contingencies were also mooted, which included mandate powers. However, any discussion regarding borders was to be strenuously resisted and their status quo observed.[228]

Nevertheless, undaunted, the Iranians methodically embarked on collating necessary information and collecting their thoughts to better plan their objectives. As early as June 1917, the Iranian cabinet established a commission to determine the damages caused by the war and the state of the nation. The *Komysiyun-e ta'yin-e khesarat* (Commission for the specification of damages) was a monumental undertaking given the state of the country and the lack of government control. Though the commission's work proved useful to diplomats establishing their lines of argument,[229] the work was not finished in time. Another important document was the so-called Green Book. This document established Iran's neutrality during the war and served as the

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[226] *Ibid*., introduction.
[227] *Ibid*., p.3.
[228] *Ibid*., p.7.
[229] Oliver Bast, 'Putting the Record Straight: Vosuq al-Dowleh's Foreign Policy in 1918/19' in Touraj Atabaki and Erik.J Zürcher (eds), *Men of Order: Authoritarian Modernization under Ataturk and Reza Shah* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004) p.261.

basis for Iranian arguments put forward at the Peace Conference. Whilst the Allies would have found this work contentious, the mere production of this commission and Green Book epitomised a considerable shift into new modes and methods of operations by the Iranians. In addition, views concerning Iran's approach were sought from Iran's embassies abroad. In particular Mirza Ali Qoli Khan had input concerning Iran's *desiderata* and related American perceptions and attitudes towards Iran.[230]

Iran's use of modern methods appeared to be spearheaded by an unlikely person. Iranian sources show that Ahmad Shah's role in determining Iran's diplomatic programme was crucial. This has been largely unrecognised by western academics. Being not only the initiator of the policy, he appeared to make all substantive decisions concerning personnel and the preparation work.[231] It is not clear how much of this had been fabricated for public consumption, nevertheless, as we will see, Ahmad Shah's role was documented.

In November 1918, Ahmad Shah set about, to the exclusion of the cabinet and Prime Minister, organising a series of meetings of former and current ministers in his palace to discuss the aim of Iran's foreign policy.[232] The result

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[230] See in particular Sanad-e [document] 19, p.117, AI.
[231] Mohammad Lashkary, 'Dar neymeh-e rah-e konferans-e sol-e Paris' [Midway through the Paris Peace Conference], *Goftigu*: faslnameh farhangy va ijtema'i, no.65.
[232] *Iran* newspaper, 13 November, 1918.

was the *Komysiyun-e ta'yin-e moqasad va amal-e Iran* (Commission to determine the aims and actions of Iran).[233] He also undertook the role to choose not only the leader of the delegation (see above), but also the main delegates.[234]

The Iranian commission arrived in Paris by the end of January and set to work. Almost immediately two things happened that were to set the tone. Firstly, at the end of January, Vosuq al-Dowleh sent a telegram to the commission asking them not to approach the Conference to appeal for access. Secondly, in early February, at an informal meeting, Arthur Balfour proclaimed how pleased he was that the Iranian government was in talks with the British government in Tehran.[235] In his diary, Mohammad Ali Foroughi recounted the unease that flowed through the commission after these two episodes. The members of the commission had always had their suspicions of Vosuq al-Dowleh and his predilection towards the British. They now feared the worse and felt that their work would be undermined.

The telegraph from Vosuq al-Dowleh to Moshaver al-Mamalek announcing the pause is noteworthy:

> In the meantime, try to delay the recruitment of the French teachers. Second, with regard to the negotiations that have been taken place recently which in total could affect the whole plan, please do not start any negotiations that could impose any kind of undertaking on the

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[233] Sanad-haye [documents], 56 to 62, pp.167-175, AI.
[234] 'Dar neymeh-e rah-e konferans-e sol-e Paris'
[235] 'Yaddashtha-ye montasher nashodeh', p.303.

> government, until necessary instructions and information are sent to you soon. Third, please inform all the delegate members to follow this.[236]

This telegraph effectively paused negotiations in Paris. Subsequent communications initiated by Moshaver al-Mamalek querying lost impetus confirm this. However, it is not clear which negotiations Vosuq al-Dowleh was referring to when he mentioned "partial negotiations". Undoubtedly these were the negotiations he was conducting in Tehran and would have confirmed the delegates' fears that negotiations had been taking place in their absence.

This communication set the scene for future exchanges where the more direct prose of Moshaver al-Mamalek was met with elliptical responses. In one particularly ambiguous telegraph, Vosuq al-Dowleh lifted the pause, but also suggested that he did not call a halt to negotiations in Paris in the first place.[237] Though he has been accused of not keeping Moshaver al-Mamalek sufficiently informed, Moshaver al-Mamalek was also guilty of not keeping the Iranian cabinet informed. In effect, as Moshaver al-Mamalek was Ahmad Shah's man,[238] communications between Vosuq al-Dowleh and Moshaver al-Mamalek were limited and terse.

This level of mistrust was not limited to Vosuq al-Dowleh and Moshaver al-Mamalek. Also evident from Mohammad Ali Foroughi's diary

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[236] Authors translation of Sanad-e 84, p.203, AI.
[237] Sanad-e 98, p.216, AI.
[238] See introduction by Kaveh Bayat, p.21, AI.

was the level of mistrust between the delegates themselves. This conspiratorial atmosphere would have been considerably heightened if they had known that Vosuq al-Dowleh was routinely showing their telegrams to Sir Percy Cox in Tehran.[239] The Iranian commission had gone to some lengths to ensure secrecy by using a separate cypher for telegrams received in the Iranian Legation in Paris. However, the Iranian Legation in Paris were deciphering these telegrams and sharing them with the British.[240]

The imagery where "Persian delegates wandered about like souls in pain, waiting to be admitted through the portals of the Conference Paradise"[241] is hard to resist. However, whilst the members of the commission enjoyed themselves in Paris, eating well, visiting theatres, zoos, and generally enjoying the city, they did what they could to press their admittance to the Conference. The telegram from Vosuq al-Dowleh, lifting the brief hiatus, was followed by a series of telegrams by Moshaver al-Mamalek in which he deprecated the loss of time and initiative.[242] One can only speculate that Vosuq al-Dowleh was using the Iranian commission to pressure the British during deliberations in Tehran, which may have reached an impasse.

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[239] Sir Percy Cox to Foreign Office (assumed), February 14, 1919, FO371/3858, p.384.
[240] Mr. Balfour to Earl Curzon, May 10, 1919, FO371/3860, p.316.
[241] Emile Joseph Dillon, *The Inside Story of The Peace Conference* (New York; London: Harper and Bros, 1920) p.4.
[242] Sanad-haye [documents], 88,91,92, pp.207-209, AI.

This research suggest that Iran was pursuing a dual diplomacy. Both channels were being used to pursue an irredentist agenda. This outcome is in line with recent research which rehabilitates Vosuq al-Dowleh's role in 1919.[243] However, it is questionable that Vosuq al-Dowleh had control over both diplomatic channels. Furthermore, as we have seen Ahmad Shah's role appears to have been greater than previously acknowledged and Vosuq al-Dowleh's fractured relationship with both Ahmad Shah and the delegates puts his role in further doubt. In addition, Vosuq al-Dowleh's relationship with both Ahmad Shah and the delegates the telegrams reproduced in *Amal-e Iraniyan az konferans-e sol-e Paris ta qarardad-e 1919 Iran va Engelis* (Iranian activity from the Conference at the Peace of Paris to the Anglo-Iranian Agreement of 1919) give additional insight into two factors: Firstly, that there were significant disagreements between Moshaver al-Mamalek and Vosuq al-Dowleh, and secondly, that Moshaver al-Mamalek seemed to disregard his instructions.[244] Given that Moshaver al-Mamalek was Ahmad Shah's choice it was more than likely that they were in communication with each other. If not, then Moshaver al-Mamalek was simply following Ahmad Shah's directions given to him before he left Iran.

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[243] 'British imperialism and Persian diplomacy in the shadow of World War I (1914-1921)'.
[244] For a summation see introduction by Kaveh Bayat, AI.

The commission began a charm offensive and invited international dignitaries and journalists to a formal reception. At the reception, Moshaver al-Mamalek claimed that President Wilson encouraged him to press for access and promised that Secretary of State Lansing would do what he could to help.[245] Indeed, Lansing might have done something to help earlier but certainly did approach Arthur Balfour in April asking for Iran to be admitted.[246] The official request for admission to the Peace Conference was put in on 14 February.[247] With the help of the Italian delegation, Iranian participation was put on the agenda on 18 February. However, when the Council of Ten met, Arthur Balfour said that the question of Iranian participation did not arise as they had not been belligerents.[248]

While the Iranian delegation waited, they attended a meeting which discussed the founding of the League of Nations and as a result became one of its founding nations. Thus, the Iranians were present at the beginning of the development of a new agency for international coordination and nation rights. That is, Iran was present as world diplomacy was undergoing its own modernity. However, it seems that the Iranian commission was not beyond

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[245] From the Journal entry of Moshaver al-Mamalek published by Abdol-Hossein Masoud Ansari (Moshaver al-Mamalek diary entries) in *Zendegani-e man va negahi beh tarikh-e mo'aser-e Iran va jahan*, [My life and a look at the contemporary history of Iran and the world] volume 1 (Tehran: Aftab, undated)
[246] Mr. Balfour memorandum, April 2, 1919, FO371/3859, p.531.
[247] See FO608/98.
[248] Baron Sonnino, the Italian representative brought this up on a Council of Ten meeting on February 19, 1919. FRUS, 1919, Vol.4. p.57.

using other methods and, to the distaste of Mohammad Ali Foroughi, money was furnished to bribe useful people – presumably to get a hearing.[249] At the end of March, Hossein Ala and Mohammad Ali Foroughi attended a meeting at the *Comité National D'Etudes Sociales et Politiques,* an intellectual pacifist think tank which promoted international arbitration and the League of Nations. The meeting was entitled "The National Aspirations of Iran".[250]

The Iranians had, in terms of approach and planning, evinced modern methods. However, it is worth noting that this approach had suffered from being politically undermined at home. In Paris, for all their work and ability to bring the Americans onside, they had failed to change British attitudes.

Iran's territorial claims

This thesis argues that British attitudes to Iran's borders and Russian aggression had been largely passive and seldom found a place within an over-arching strategy. British opposition to Iran's attendance at the Peace of Paris was not so half-hearted. They embarked on a concerted effort to prevent the Iranians from gaining entrance. As we will see, this, largely retrogressive position, considerably reduced Iranian agency.

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[249] See ''Yaddashtha-ye montasher nashodeh'. The commission tried to bribe a man called "Herbet" with 10,000 Francs. Research leads me to think it might have been Colonel Aubrey Herbert M.P an ad hoc Middle East specialist who was likely to be in Paris at the time. Overall, an unlikely bribery target.
[250] See page 775, AI.

In February 1919, the Iranian delegation published *Requête addressee par Le Gouvernement Persan à la Conférance des Préliminaires de Paix à Paris a fin d'être admis à y participer.*[251] This document was yet another which chronicled Iran's claims, and along with the memorandum of 21 November 1918, formed the basis for the *Claims of Persia before the Conference of the Preliminaries of Peace of Paris* published in March. The latter document was by no means unique, as the Armenians and Azerbaijani's had published similar documents, but it was testimony to embracing new methods of diplomatic engagement.

Claims of Persia before the Conference of the Preliminaries of Peace of Paris argued for "The right to territorial restitutions" and singled out a number of territories lost at and since the Treaty of Turkmanchai to the Russians and the Turks. Key regions included the Transcaspian Province in the north-east (Map 2), parts of the Caucasus lost to the Russians (Map 3), and in the west territories of Kurdistan lost to the Ottoman/Turks (Map 4).

The most obvious omission was the territories lost in the east, now under Afghani and Baluchi control. These were lands arguably wrested from Iran by the British. The Iranians were cautious enough not to antagonise the British and, just as the issue of the Gulf islands had been dropped quickly, the Iranians chose not to claim any territories whose original loss could be attributed to the British.

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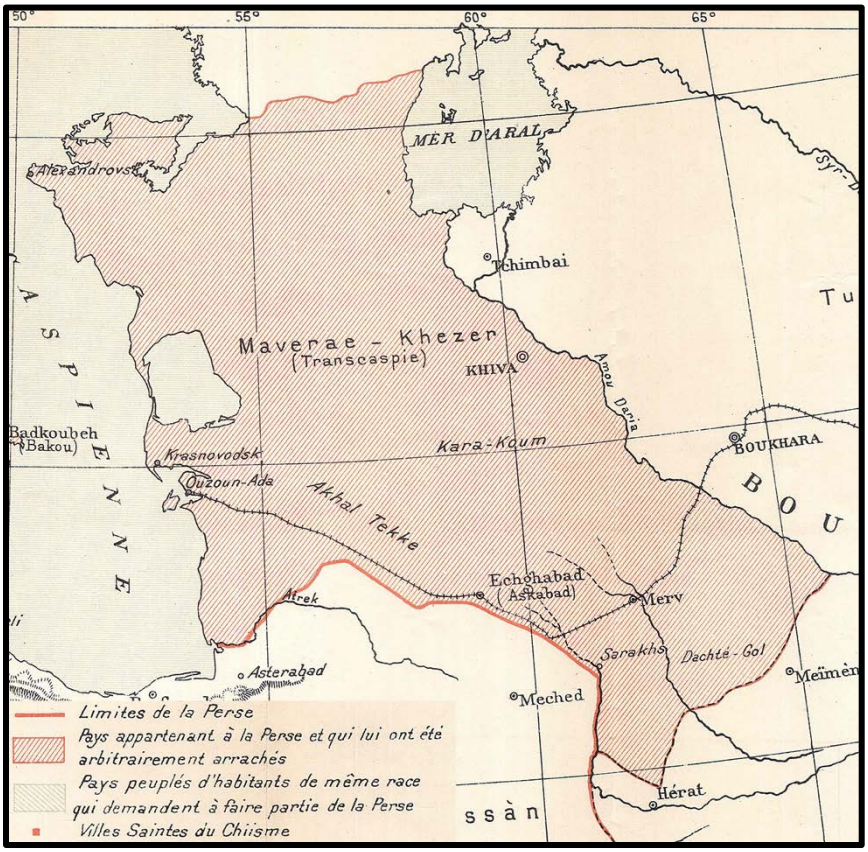
[251] See FO608/98.

The claims for territorial restitution were based on several interesting factors and judgments. In the first place, Iranians assumed that Iran as a longstanding Empire had attained "her natural limits." In reaching these limits, it had become a country of "natural frontiers".[252] These "natural frontiers" established Iran between the "river Amou Darya, the Caucasus Mountains, the river Tigris and Euphrates and the Persian Gulf".[253] This idea



Map 2. Section of Map of Transcaspian
The area shown accounts for most of the Khanate of Khiva and bears no relation to Iran's Empire at least from the Safavid dynasty and is difficult to locate within the Iranian Empire any earlier.
Source: *Claims of Persia before the Conference of the Preliminaries of Peace at Paris* (Cadet, Paris, March 1919)

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[252] *Ibid.*, *Claims*, p.7.
[253] *Ibid.*, *Claims*.

was not necessarily an idea of natural frontiers as we or indeed Lord Curzon would have understood it. Natural frontiers did not mean mountains, rivers and deserts or any other geographical impediment. Natural here meant a familiarity with the past Iranian Empire and expressed the notion that parts of the Empire, past or present, had a natural feel about them and that these parts therefore belonged to the soul of Iran.

Map 3. Section of Map of the Caucasus
Map showing the territory of Talesh, Nakhjavan, Yerevan up to Lake Gokcha and Ganjeh lost under the Treaty of Turkmanchai and part of Daghestan up to Derbent lost in the Treaty of Golestan.
Source: *Claims of Persia before the Conference of the Preliminaries of Peace at Paris* (Cadet, Paris, March 1919)

The distinction between peoples and Empire was further clouded by suggesting that "The majority of the inhabitants of this region have always been of the Iranian race; the empires founded in this country have always

been considered Iranian Empires".[254] In substance, this indicated an Empire which was fluid; just because Iran had lost parts of its Empire over the years it did not imply that these territories could not be retaken in future. Such a classification of Empire also raised the question of what actually constituted the "Iranian race".[255] Certainly, as far as these territorial claims went, it included ideas of culture, language and religion, though not always at the same time. In amalgamation they corresponded to notions of cultural unity described by Marshall Hodgson as *Persianate,* and the cultural paradigm espoused in the *Shahnameh*.

The claim to the Transcaspian hinged on the "Persian language"[256] being widely spoken, though it is not clear if this was Farsi or another derivative. From a cultural standpoint it was observed that a number of Iranian poets had come from the region. Where this classification was inadequate, as in the case of the Turkmens for instance, tribes were claimed because they were affiliated to other tribes within Iran. The Transcaspian represented the largest loss of territory to Russian military and diplomatic policy, inadequate resolve by the British and meagre deterrence by the Iranians. These issues will be dealt with in greater detail in Chapter 6. While Iranian ownership of these

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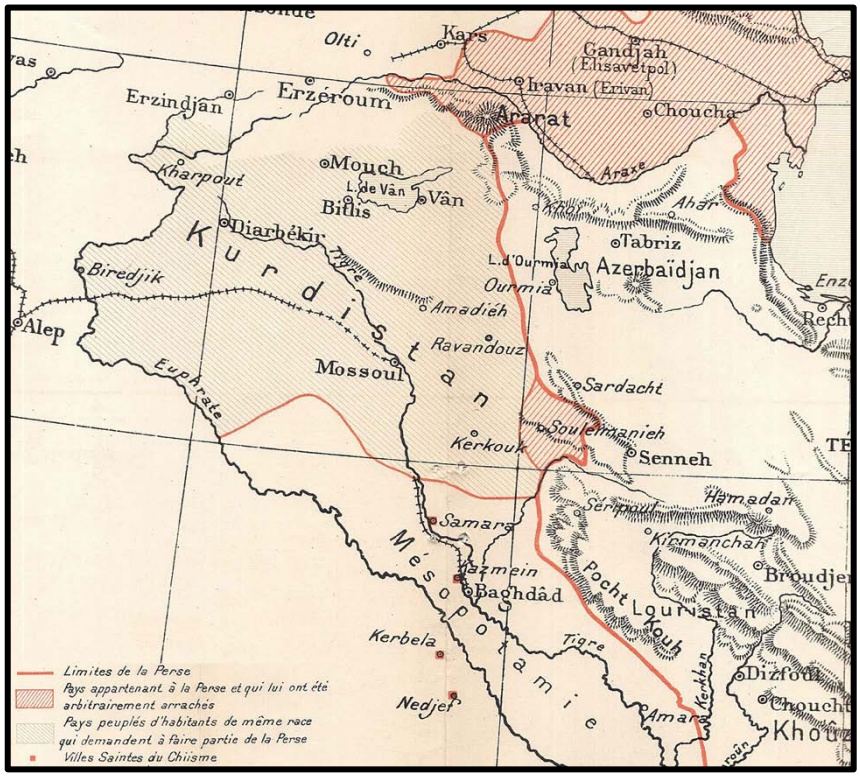
[254] *Ibid*., *Claims*.
[255] *Ibid*., *Claims*.
[256] *Ibid*., *Claims*, p.8.

wild lands might have been in doubt, annexation by the Russians represented no more than imperial expansion.

The Caucasus was claimed on account of religion, which suitably redefined the Georgian provinces as outside the Iranian Empire. Parts of the Caucasus that were to be returned to Iran were claimed on the basis of history, geography, economics and commerce, and culture. Surprisingly,



Map 4. Section of Map Kurdish and Holy Places
Map showing the territory around Suleimanieh (Sulaymaniyah) which was taken from Iran and nearly the whole expanse of indigenous Kurdistan up to the Euphrates. The Shia religious shrines of Najaf, Karbala, Samarra and Kazmein.
Source: Claims of Persia before the Conference of the Preliminaries of Peace at Paris (Cadet, Paris, March 1919)

Iran's claims in Mesopotamia were quite limited. It firmly included the territory around Suleimanieh (Sulaymaniyah), which Ottoman/Turkey had received as a result of the Treaty of Erzerum, but only nodded to the Kurdish

territories under Turkish control to be given to Iran on the basis of language, race and religion. The loss of the Caucasus to the Russians will be discussed in Chapter 5. Turkeys claims to Suleimanieh and Kurdish territories will also be discussed, as will the issues after the turn of the century which positioned the Ottomans as aggressors and a persistent danger to Iranian sovereignty.

Iran claimed the religious but not the territorial rights to the Holy Shia cities and shrines in Mesopotamia. Whilst annexing, in favour of Iran, more Ottoman territory might have been in keeping with Iranian strategies, they only requested that their "interests be safeguarded" when the time came to "adjust the Mesopotamian question".[257] In practice, this meant that Iran sought a consultative role when it came to the Shia religious shrines. The delegates reticence to include these territories may have been a nod towards British plans for the region. British plans for the Iraqi/Ottoman territories had by no means been finalised and ranged from The Bunsen Committee's resolve to divide it into five territories within a decentralised Empire,[258] to Curzon's plan to keep the Ottoman state almost intact.[259] What is more likely, however, is that this exemplifies a nationalist rather than religious agenda.

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[257] *Ibid*., *Claims*, p.9.
[258] David Fromkin, *A peace to end all peace: the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the creation of the modern Middle East* (New York: A Holt paperback, 2009) p.148.
[259] See Harold Nicholson, *Curzon: The Last Phase 1919-1925* (London: Constable & Co, 1934) pp.75-76.

The genesis of *Claims of Persia before the Conference of the Preliminaries of Peace of Paris* owed much to the irredentist desires already put forward to the British, French and the United States in 1918. These territorial claims had already been discussed at the highest levels in the Iranian Government. In December 1918, in a meeting of the *Komysiyun-e ta'yin-e moqasad va amal-e Iran* the territorial desiderata was discussed. Maximum and minimum territorial limits were set.

In the north-west this meant a maximum limit of the lands lost at the Treaty of Golestan. Midway, the return of the territory lost under the Treaty of Turkmanchai and the minimum Iranian requirement was the territory below where the Aras River joined the Kura River and emptied into the Caspian. This takes in the region of Talesh up to the Moghan Steppe. As far as the north-east and the Transcaspian was concerned, the maximum *desiderata* included all the land up to the River Jayhoun (Amou Darya). The midway target was north-east to the River Murghab, and the minimum requirement was to take the border up to the Tejen (Tejend) River. In the west, it meant pushing the Iranian frontier out to the Tigris River at the expense of the Ottomans.[260]

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[260] Nosrat al-Dowleh, Foreign Ministry, 8 December, 1918, Sanad-e 1, in Mansoureh Ettehadieh, Sa'ad Pira (eds) *Nosrat al-Dowleh, Majmu'eh-e mokatebat, asnad, khaterat…Firuz Mirza Firuz* [Nosrat al-Dowleh, Collection of correspondence, documents, memoirs… Firuz Mirza Firuz] (Tehran: Siamak, 1358 [1979]) p.83.

The work completed in Iran had furnished the commission with considerable information and a structure for negotiation. However, it also gave the delegates considerable leeway to negotiate. Ostensibly a reasonable approach, this flexibility caused disagreements between the delegates. It also brought to the fore the inherent difficulty of a commission which agreed on policy but not necessarily on details.

Clearly some of the territorial claims were still being debated whilst the Iranian commission was preparing *Claims of Persia before the Conference of the Preliminaries of Peace of Paris*. In particular, the map that was to accompany the document (sections of which are shown above) was still being adjusted in content as the cartographer drew it. The territorial claim up to the River Jayhoun and unspecified claims in the north-west were creating a rift in the Iranian commission. Both Moshaver al-Mamalek and Mohammad Ali Foroughi thought these claims were excessive, but Mirza Hossein Khan won the argument.[261]

Other documents were also printed establishing Iran's claims. It is likely, but not certain, that the Iranian commission was also responsible for sponsoring another document published in 1919. "Why The Peace Conference Should Requite Persia's Wrongs"[262] was written by M. Pierre

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[261] See Mohammad Ali Foroughi's entry for February 8, 1919, p.304 in 'Yaddashtha-ye montasher nashodeh'.
[262] Pier Patton, *Why The Peace Conference Should Requite Persia's Wrongs* (Cadet, Paris, 1919)

Crabites under the pseudonym Pier Patton. This rather polemical document set out how the "primordial rights of the Persian people"[263] had been violated and appealed for help from the international community. M. Pierre Crabites was an interesting character. An American judge working in the Egyptian court system, he had developed considerable anti-British sympathies which he was happy to indulge in his writings.

Clearly, Iranian claims attempted to turn back the clock. However, British policies were working against restitution. Not only did the question of border delimitation not fit British policy in 1919, but one can perceive that functional borders were the priority – not necessarily their specific location.

British reaction to *Claims of Persia before the Conference of the Preliminaries of Peace of Paris* was detailed in a series of communications. Lord Curzon's comprehensive reply to Arthur Balfour discounted the methodology the Iranians had used to justify reparations and restitutions as misleading and inaccurate. Lord Curzon was also scathing when it came to describe the issue of border restitution, surmising that Iranian claims were inflated in such a way as to enable eventual agreement on a smaller scale. Indeed, this was confirmed in a conversation between Moshaver al-Mamalek and Arthur Moore.[264] The claim to the eastern Transcaspian, based on

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[263] *Ibid*., *Why The Peace Conference*, p.5.
[264] Arthur Moore to Mr. Oliphant (Foreign Office), May 12, 1919, FO371/3860, pp.352-354.

language and culture was disparaged on the basis that it was occupied by fanatical Sunni tribes that Russia had barely managed to subjugate, and the Iranians had not the military capacity to contain. Lord Curzon did however countenance the Russian Sarakhs being returned to Iran. On the Caucasus and the lands lost under the Treaty of Turkmanchai, Lord Curzon argued that the mixed population of Turks, Armenians, Georgians, Tartars and Kurds were out of touch with Shia sympathies. From a political point of view the possibility of oil rich Baku under Persian misrule was not a serious question that the British would even countenance. Lord Curzon's points regarding the Caucasus were to be mirrored when it came to the Kurds, who, though of Iranian stock, had no "vestige of Persian national feeling". It is likely that Lord Curzon was probably already aligning the Kurds with northern Mesopotamia and therefore Turkey, which was to be a British mandate. The issue of Iranian influence regarding the Shia shrines in Turkey were also dismissed.[265]

In March 1919, Moshaver al-Mamalek worked on establishing closer ties with the United States. According to Mohammad Ali Foroughi, one aim of the Iranian delegation was to foster closer ties with the French and Americans and specifically to sound them out regarding financial advisors.[266]

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[265] Earl Curzon to Mr. Balfour, Foreign Office, May 1, 1919, FO371/3860, pp.107-108.
[266] This fact has been repeated often. See Mohammad Ali Foroughi's entry for March 8, 1919, p.306 in 'Yaddashtha-ye montasher nashodeh'.

This should have been no surprise as Iran had always sought to invite other influences in Iran as the Morgan Shuster experiment showed.[267] Vosuq al-Dowleh would also have been privy to such a longstanding aim. However, when Vosuq al-Dowleh showed Sir Percy Cox a letter from Moshaver al-Mamalek asking for permission to ask the Americans for help, Vosuq al-Dowleh shut down this approach quickly. He was said to reply that there was no point in substituting one enemy with another, Germany with America, and said that the whole cabinet and his majesty forbade it.[268] The only logical conclusion was that Vosuq al-Dowleh was happy to use the Iranian delegation as a pawn to ensure the British remained engaged with the bilateral communication already taking place.

At the beginning of April, the Iranian commission renewed their efforts specifically aimed at the French and resubmitted *Claims of Persia before the Conference of the Preliminaries of Peace of Paris*. According to Oliver Bast, the French were not totally against some representation of the Iranian commission at the Conference even if they resisted it publicly.[269] The Americans were once again more receptive and Moshaver al-Mamalek managed to press his claims directly with President Wilson.[270] The British

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[267] The substitution of American influence and hegemony for British began when the Iranians fostered greater American ties to confound the British.
[268] Sir Percy Cox to Earl Curzon, March 18, 1919, FO371/3859, p.430-431.
[269] 'Putting the Record Straight', p.269.
[270] *Ibid*., 'Putting the Record Straight'. p.269.

had already been concerned by Iranian approaches to the United States delegation and these concerns increased further when the subject of a meeting with Secretary of State Robert Lansing (see above) was brought up by Lord Curzon when he met the Iranian Minister to Britain on 23 March. He informed the shocked Minister that a "direct attempt to interest the United States in the financial and administrative future of Persia had been made".[271]

Also in April, the Iranian commission applied a slightly different tactic to its strategy. A communication was intercepted between the Iranian commission and Namuk Bey of Mosul regarding the future of Turkish Kurdistan. In it, the Iranian commission suggested that on the basis of religion and race, the chiefs should "take steps to ascertain the wishes of the people" and join Iran.[272] It would appear that in addition to any primordial connection, the commission had been somewhat taken by Wilson's ideas concerning self-determination. Now plebiscites were tools that could be used to further Iranian policies. The British response to this when they found out was interesting. They did not query the feasibility of it, and it should be assumed that they would have opposed it, however they appeared to be more interested in the outcome of the communication. The

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[271] Earl Curzon to Sir Percy Cox, March 26, 1919, FO371/3859, p.462.
[272] Sir Percy Cox to Foreign Office (assumed), April 6, 1919, FO371/3860, p.28.

Iranians asked that the "Reply should be sent through French channels" [273] direct to Peace Conference.

On 23 April, President Wilson brought up the question of Iran's participation at the Council of Ten meeting and remarked that Iran had appealed to him directly. Lloyd George promptly put Britain's position forward and answered that "Mr. Balfour was opposed to the admission of Persia".[274] Also in the same month, Moshaver al-Mamalek managed to meet Lord Hardinge in Paris and was told that there was no likelihood of raising the question of their participation again, though Iranian views, however, might be noted if the need arose. Moshaver al-Mamalek then proposed a more direct negotiation with Britain and was told that that depended on the progress of negotiations in Tehran. Moshaver al-Mamalek was simply rebuffed when he asked what those negotiations were about.[275]

In May, President Wilson again brought up the question of Iran's participation and reported that the Iranians were depressed as a result of not being consulted.[276] Also in that month, Balfour synthesised British objections to Iranian admittance to the Peace Conference in an internal communication. He suggested that whilst Iran might be admitted on the basis of territorial

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[273] *Ibid*., FO371/3860, p.35-38.
[274] FRUS, 1919, Vol.5. p.153.
[275] Mr. Balfour to Earl Curzon, Paris, April 23, 1919, FO371/3860, p.192.
[276] FRUS, 1919, Vol.5. p.498.

restitution, he did not see the same criteria as with other countries. The inhabitants of Azerbaijan were not Iranian in language, race, or religion and unlike Denmark's claim to Schleswig, Iran's claim could not be supported.[277] This was of course not strictly speaking true, as most Azeri's were of Shia faith and similar ethnic groups lived in Iran. Significantly, Arthur Balfour, as other British politicians, had not bought into the Iranian imagining of Empire. For most of 300 years Azerbaijan had been part of the Iranian Empire. Also, clearly if this theory of self-determination was reversed then one had to ask why Iran should not be broken up into its constituent elements. Arthur Balfour was, of course, simply laying the ground for suitable arguments for inaction on Britain's part. This internal communication is also informative as it argued that Iran might appeal for access to the Peace Conference if they became a mandate. Balfour correctly surmised that this would never happen, but significantly did not suggest by what mechanism territorial restitution could take place under a mandate. The opinion of Lord Curzon, though Balfour's junior in government, carried great weight when it came to Middle East issues, and he had of course already firmly ruled against a mandate for Iran.

Despite an extensive campaign, the Iranian commission was never to gain access to the Peace Conference. British pressure had been enough to

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[277] Mr. Balfour to Foreign Office, Astoria Paris, May 2, 1919, FO371/3860, p.270.

avoid their participation, and as we shall see the Iranian commission was working against forces in Tehran that they had no direct knowledge of, but which they clearly suspected. Even Percy Sykes had stated he had some sympathy for the Iranian cause.[278]

As we have seen, left to American and Italian devices Iran would probably have received a hearing. Mansoureh Ettehadieh has argued that the Iranians were victims of the wranglings between the British, French and the United States.[279] This has not been an unusual argument considering Qajar history in the nineteenth century. However, Oliver Bast expands on this idea and describes the lack of interest George Clemenceau had in the Middle East in comparison to French diplomats of the "colonial party"[280] and the Franco-British tensions concerning the partition of the Ottoman Empire[281] in which Iranian affairs simply disappeared off the agenda when the Ottoman Empire ceased to be discussed. Given more important Allied issues, and inter-Allied competition the likelihood of success had always been small.

The question of whether Iranian chances of a hearing would have been better if they had joined the Allies in the war, rather than fostering a neutrality that the Allies barely believed, invites a comparison with China.

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[278] *A History of Persia*, pp.518-520.
[279] 'Les illusions', p.428.
[280] 'La mission', p.396.
[281] 'La mission', p.402.

China, militarily weak, with territorial claims and having been invaded by the Japanese, attempted to increase their chances of being part of the peace process by entering the war on the Allies side in 1917. In the event, the Chinese were admitted, but after clashing with the more important questions of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance they left the conference.[282] Some countries, with similar outlooks to the Iranians, were also unsuccessful in gaining access. The Assyrians and Kurds also had delegations at the Peace Conference and were likewise not admitted. The Armenians, on the other hand, were admitted.

Sympathy for the Armenians because of the genocide raised the possibility of Armenia becoming a United States mandate. The possibility of a Christian nation, though emotively and intellectually appealing, was confronted by realities. "Armenia was far away, it was surrounded by enemies and the Allies had few forces in the Area".[283] However, given territorial and political overlaps in the region it is likely that the renaissance of Armenia could not transpire without dealing with some of the other nationalisms in the region. In a reverse domino theory, how could Armenian territories be sanctified without the Kurds and Assyrians.

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[282] See 'La mission', p.408, for a full discussion on this by Oliver Bast.
[283] Margaret Macmillan, *Peacemakers, The Paris Conference of 1919 and Its Attempt to End War* (London: John Murray, 2002) p.389.

Certainly, success was determined not only by having the support of multiple Allied powers, which arguably the Armenians had to some degree, but the question of attendance also had to fit into a geo-political strategy of one power or another and indeed the nature of discussions at Paris amongst the Big Four. Without a doubt, victorious powers were more interested in delivering a European peace and attitudes towards the Middle East were only to be driven by the Ottoman question.[284] In addition, the Conference was riven by petty rivalries, a confused atmosphere where negotiations and decisions were made on an ad-hoc basis and geographical ignorance - particularly of the Middle East.[285]

Despite some progress in "internationalising" problems and providing the forums to better access world politics, the strategic interests of the European powers still held sway. This would mean in practice that particularly where the United States had no interest, European attitudes towards imperialism were very much alive. However, though this meant that the Iranians had not been successful in their first foray two points can be made. In the first place, and for the first time, they had positioned Iran within global diplomacy and international law. They were progenitors of the League of Nations and had fully understood the nature of the post-war

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[284] An understanding gained from Margaret Macmillan, *Peacemakers*.
[285] *Ibid*., *Peacemakers*.

world. As such, they were part of the new global coordination. In the second place, not only had Iran embraced a "modern" world, but their approach had shown modern aspects of diplomacy which would subsequently put Iran in a more favourable light when the Anglo-Persian Agreement unfolded.

The Anglo-Persian Agreement

The failure of Iran to gain admittance to the Peace Conference can be attributed to the secret negotiations taking place that ultimately led to the Anglo-Persian Agreement of 1919. Prior to the Peace Conference, Britain wanted to handle the question of Iran on its own without international interference or oversight. However, once negotiations for the Anglo-Persian Agreement had begun, the work of the Iranian commission was simply deemed a hindrance. It is likely that the Iranians did not recall their delegation as the work that they were doing could force a better negotiation from the British. Fundamentally, however, both channels of diplomacy included calls to reconsider the question of Iranian territories.

The Anglo-Persian Agreement undoubtedly confirmed to the delegates that not only were some of Iran's political elite not to be trusted, but that Britain could not be trusted either. It would also have confirmed that their approach had been correct to try and foster ties with other countries. The problem was, like it or not, their fate was tied with convincing the British. Despite this, the Anglo-Persian Agreement also included calls to

reconsider the question of Iranian territories. Iranian perseverance was remarkable and stubborn given the challenges.

The Anglo-Persian Agreement was the brainchild of Lord Curzon. Lord Curzon's view of, and relationship with, Iran had always been complex. He was obviously drawn to Iran yet at the same time critical of its people, rulers, and governments. He was, however, a British imperialist and his attitudes towards the safety of India were always paramount. He was also willing to use British power to promote an agreement which would secure the safety of India, curb Russian aggression and obviate Iranian weakness. As a strategist, Lord Curzon's was firmly in the forward camp as opposed to *masterly inactivity* policy proposed by some. Iran was to be the buffer state where Russian aggression to India was to be forestalled, though it must be said that it is apparent that Lord Curzon never believed that a Russian invasion was a viable proposition.[286] He was, however, willing to prepare for the possibility. Nevertheless, the portent of Russian aggression was symbiotic with the "deplorable neglect" of Iran by the British and the conveyance of diplomatic influence from the British to the Russians.[287] In 'Lord Curzon's Memorandum on the Persian Agreement' on 9 August, he outlined his reasons why the Anglo-Persian Agreement was so important to Britain:

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[286] See Chapter 9 in George N Curzon (Lord Curzon), *Russia in Central Asia in 1889 and the Anglo-Russian Question* (London: Frank Cass, 1967)
[287] *Ibid*., *Russia in Central Asia*, p.374.

> If it be asked why we should undertake the task at all, and why Persia should not be left to herself and allowed to rot in picturesque decay, the answer is that her geographical position, the magnitude of our interests in the country, and the future safety of our Eastern Empire render it impossible for us now…to disinterest ourselves from what happens in Persia. Moreover, now that we are about to assume the mandate for Mesopotamia, which will make us coterminous with the western frontiers of Persia, we cannot permit the existence, between the frontiers of our Indian Empire in Baluchistan and those of our new Protectorate, of a hotbed of misrule, enemy intrigue, financial chaos, and political disorder.[288]

Lord Curzon's opportunity to act came when he was put in temporary charge of the Foreign Office, as George Balfour went to represent Britain at the Peace of Paris. Lord Curzon who had already carved out a niche for himself as an unchallenged Eastern expert, now had the unfettered opportunity to put through his plan to guarantee the independence of Iran, "meaning the political and national independence of the country".[289] It is doubtful whether the agreement would have come to fruition if Lord Curzon had not been left to his own devices. However, much ignored has been the role of Sir Percy Cox in enabling Lord Curzon to push through an agreement which lacked considerable foresight to eventual opposition in Iran and abroad. By 1890 as part of the Indian civil service, Sir Percy Cox had spent considerable time in the Persian Gulf and became Minister to Persia in 1918. Probably more famous for his significant role in establishing Iraq post-war, his role as the man on the ground served to support Lord Curzon's

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[288] Memorandum by Earl Curzon on the Persian Agreement, no.710, p.1121. Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, First Series, Volume iv. Henceforward abbreviated to DBFP
[289] *New York Tribune*, Sunday, 21 September, 1919.

suppositions rather than provide any objectivity regarding growing anti-British sentiment. As Harold Nicholson wrote, the failure of the agreement was fundamentally caused by a new political reality in Iran and that "[Lord Curzon] failed to observe that in 1919 those interests were no longer shared [by the Iranians]".[290]

As we have seen, the suspicions of the Iranian delegation to the Peace Conference that Vosuq al-Dowleh was negotiating behind their back were not unfounded. Vosuq al-Dowleh, together with Nosrat al-Dowleh and Sarem al-Dowleh (known as the Triumvirate) were, in secret, negotiating and signing the agreement with the British. Despite accusations of corruption by the Triumvirate in negotiating what has come to be seen as a self-serving and unpatriotic agreement (see above), the Anglo-Persian Agreement also served as an irredentist pathway.

Sir Percy Cox had already floated the idea of an Iranian mandate in November 1918 and almost immediately came into disagreement with India. The India government's objection, laid out in a memorandum by Sir Hamilton Grant at a meeting of the Eastern Committee on 30 December, made the India government's line very clear. The India government, not for the first time, wanted to take a more liberal view without getting militarily and financially entangled in Iran and decided on the option of assisting

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[290] *Curzon: The Last Phase 1919-1925*, p.129.

"Persia on a Limited Scale".[291] This memorandum is instructive. In the first place it put paid to the idea of a mandate but also put forward an alternative policy towards Iran. Though Lord Curzon agreed that a mandate was also out of the question, it was effectively the last time the Foreign Office and India government were to be on the same page. In retrospect, Lord Curzon might have paid more attention to some of the issues that the India government had brought up. Sir Hamilton Grant raised the question of public opinion and latent nationalism, both issues that Lord Curzon was to ignore in pursuit of the agreement. Sir Hamilton Grant also questioned the "frankness" with which Britain communicated with the Iranian government.

Nevertheless, Lord Curzon had already instructed Sir Percy Cox to start bilateral talks with Iran. Correspondence between Sir Percy Cox and Lord Curzon in late February and early March following discussions with the Triumvirate clearly shows that the Iranians were pushing for territorial restitutions as part of any agreement between Iran and Britain. Sir Percy Cox explained that Iran would be grateful if it could recover lands lost as a result of the Treaty of Turkmanchai and Sarakhs. Additionally, the Iranians asked for the remaining part of Turkish Kurdistan to be given to Iran rather than Armenia. Lord Curzon declared that Britain could not respond to

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[291] Memorandum by Sir Hamilton Grant, The Persian Question, December 20, 1918, FO371/3858, pp.1-4.

these claims as any response would be used by Iran to lever itself into the Peace Conference.[292]

Lord Curzon's decision went unquestioned by Sir Percy Cox, who realised that Iranian territorial claims could not be rebuffed so easily. These issues were raised again by the Triumvirate. The cover sheet to a letter Sir Percy Cox sent to Lord Curzon makes it clear that Sir Percy Cox felt unable to brush off the inclusion of "an increase in Persian territory" being "an essential point" of the Triumvirate wishes.[293] In the letter, Sir Percy Cox went on to suggest that territorial issues should be addressed in a separate document rather than the agreement itself and certain issues could also be addressed to "humour Persian aspirations".[294] Sir Percy Cox suggested that some territorial rectification, possibly around "Kotor" or "Zohab", could take place on the basis of a gap in the frontier and on racial lines. With regards to Iran's interest in Sarakhs (this contentious area delimited in 1881), Iran might be done a good turn "when the boundaries of Georgia, Armenia, Turkestan and Azerbaijan come up for decision". Finally, Sir Percy Cox suggested that the transfer of territories could be made on the basis of self-determination, or a present in lieu of reparations from either Turkey or Iraq.

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[292] See correspondence, FO371/3859, pp.10-13.
[293] Sir Percy Cox to Earl Curzon, April 10, 1919, FO371/3860, pp.61-62.
[294] *Ibid*., p.62.

These solutions to Iranian irredentism, which Sir Percy Cox proposed, trampled on many long-held views and policies of the British government towards Iran. If Sir Percy Cox was being serious, then it is hard not to be critical of his suggestions. The British had for years suggested that the issue of the Ottoman-Iranian border was closed. At the same time, it is unclear on what basis self-determination could be granted. The idea of a present in lieu of reparations cut a swathe through British-Iranian diplomacy for the last hundred years and it would have also established a precedent for Iran as a non-belligerent nation to receive reparations.

Arnold Wilson, at the time Sir Percy Cox's assistant, developed some possible modifications of frontiers to keep the Iranians happy.[295] He suggested that following the ratification of the work of the 1913/1914 Boundary Commission they could make some modifications on the basis of "the desires of the local inhabitants and local considerations of expediency". In the "Pusht-i-Kuh", at the foothills of the Alborz mountains to the east of present-day Kermanshah, he suggested that the delimitation could be adjusted to run along the foothills of the Turkish side rather that the mountain crests. Whereas the crests of mountain ranges had been a usual method of delimitation as shown in Europe in the Treaty of the Pyrenees in 1795, where the Pyrenees was delimited between France and Spain, the

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[295] A.T Wilson memorandum, April 16, 1919, FO371/3860, p.149.

general practice had become to delimit along the mountain watershed. Iranian tribes in the "East of Halebja" in Turkish Kurdistan could be handed over as they were "Persian by race and patriotic", though unlikely to pay Iran any taxes. Wilson went on to express the view that the British could not help north of latitude 36 on the Turkish frontier and suggested that the existence of oil in the Mendeli-Zohab region made it impossible to suggest any rectification there (see next chapter). All recommendations were made on the basis that these changes would "do us no harm".

The draft of the agreement followed the next day. Item 6 of the draft merely waved at the issue of border adjustments and revisions, alluding only to "the examination of existing treaties with a view to their revision in conformity with present-day requirements".[296] Attached in a letter were two secret clauses which may have bound Britain to territorial restitution. The first clause, Part A of the letter, proposed that Britain would support Iran in claiming compensation and war reparations suffered by Iran if Britain was indemnified. The second clause, Part B, proposed that Britain would look at any suggestions for border changes "with an open mind" and if convinced they would do their best to assist the Iranian government.[297]

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[296] Sir Percy Cox to Earl Curzon, April 10, 1919, FO371/3860, p.74.
[297] Sir Percy Cox to Earl Curzon, April 10, 1919, FO371/3860, p.483.

There followed various correspondence in May in which Lord Curzon's antipathy towards the secret terms and item 6 in the draft agreement was ever increasingly more pronounced. Though the distance between Iran and Britain should have given Lord Curzon some objectivity which Sir Percy Cox was not able to exercise, it was Sir Percy Cox who understood the importance of the keeping some allusions to border rectification. He appeared to agree with the Triumvirate that the secret elements should be in the public agreement and that this would help the agreement to be better received by the public.[298] The final agreement dropped the vague promise of item six and the secret clauses.[299] The Agreement made no mention about borders and other Iranian *desideratum*, however in a letter from Sir Percy Cox to Vosuq al-Dowleh filed with the agreement, Britain did make some commitments. Britain was to cooperate with a view to realise "The rectification of the frontier of Persia at the points where it is agreed upon the parties to be justifiable".[300] Along with another commitment to seek compensation from "other belligerents", this seemed on the face of it a successful negotiation for the Iranians. However, the wording was so vague and so much at the mercy of British interpretation that it did not even reach the measure of Iranian *desiderata* at the Peace of Paris. Clearly, as the Iranian

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[298] Sir Percy Cox to Earl Curzon, April 19, 1919, FO371/3860, p.156.
[299] 'Agreement Between His Britannic Majesty's Government and the Persian Government', 9 August, 1919, IOR/L/PS/18/C197.
[300] *Ibid*., no.4, p.4.

commission had not been admitted and Iran had also failed to extricate any firm commitment to border changes, the dual approach of Iranian diplomacy had failed. Circumstances and British intransigence had put paid to Iran's irredentism.

Homa Katouzian has argued that the agreement was doomed as result of several interconnected issues. These included local Iranian opposition and the campaigns of the Americans, French and Russians against the agreement and the military landings by Russia in northern Iran at Anzeli. Also, that other departments, particularly that India and the India government and the War Department were not willing to back the agreement.[301] The India government had never warmed to the agreement. However, the snubbing of the Iranian delegation in Paris and the secretive negotiations around the agreement allowed opposition to build. Homa Katouzian has also pointed out that rebuffing the Iranian delegation and excluding them from the negotiations towards the agreement was a serious mistake that Sir Percy Cox could have rectified.[302] Talking to the Iranian delegation had always been an option that both Lord Curzon and Sir Percy Cox had periodically entertained. This may have forestalled many of the accusations of duplicity voiced against the British, but it would also mean that Iran was unable to successfully raise the question of borders at the Peace of Paris.

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[301] *State and Society in Iran*, p.89.
[302] *Ibid.*, *State and Society in Iran*, p.127.

The exertions of Prince Firuz

By this point Iran had been unsuccessful in their pursuit of border rectification. Both the delegations at the Peace of Paris and the Anglo-Persian Agreement had nothing to show for their efforts. Prince Firuz Nosrat al-Dowleh had replaced Moshaver al-Mamalek as Foreign Minister in early August 1919. He was, as a member of the Triumvirate who negotiated the Anglo-Persian Agreement, presumably more anglophile. He was also tainted by the accusations of bribery and fraud against him as were other members of the Triumvirate for the bribes they received from the British. Despite these issues, Prince Firuz proved consistently annoying to the British and carried on applying pressure for territorial restitution almost immediately.

Prince Firuz arrived in London having travelled via Berne and Paris and met with Lord Curzon on 23 September. The meeting, to discuss the implementation of the Anglo-Persian Agreement, also touched on the reconstitution of the Iranian commission in Paris under Prince Firuz and the Iranian hope to receive reparations from Turkey and Russia.[303] It is not known how Lord Curzon reacted to this, but it is interesting to speculate. He earlier felt that any discussion on Iranian *desiderata* should take place after the dissolution of the Paris Peace Conference.[304] He would have been

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[303] Note by Earl Curzon of a conversation with the Persian Minister for Foreign Affairs, no.789, p.1175. DBFP, Vol.iv.
[304] Earl Curzon to Sir P. Cox, Foreign Office, September 2, 1919, no.753, p.1152. DBFP, Vol.iv.

forewarned regarding the persistence of these questions as Sir Percy Cox had informed him that journalists in Tehran were already asking when the alterations to the frontiers were to take place.[305] In a meeting with Mr. Oliphant (Foreign Office) Prince Firuz brought up several of Iran's *desiderata*. He referred to the letter which included the clauses attached to the Anglo-Persian Agreement which discussed the issue of compensation (reparations) and the rectification of the frontier of Iran. In doing so it would appear that Prince Firuz had also voiced the obvious stumbling block. Iran had been told that these issues were to be addressed by the Peace Conference, precisely what Lord Curzon did not want, however Iran needed the support of Britain to put their wishes forward, which was obviously not to be forthcoming.[306] The importance for Iran was that visible progress was being made on the rectification of borders and that they were getting something tangible out of the agreement. This need was lost on the British who did not tie in the issue of borders with Iranian notions of nationalism and sovereignty. At the same meeting, Prince Firuz asked for some requisitioned ships from the Russians on the Caspian Sea to fly the Iranian flag. This simple gesture would have been a visual confirmation that Iran was achieving something out of the agreement and that issues of sovereignty were being taken seriously.

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[305] Sir P. Cox to Earl Curzon, Tehran, September 22, 1919, no.787, p.1173. DBFP, Vol.iv.
[306] Earl Curzon to Sir P. Cox, Foreign Office, September 24, 1919, no.791, p.1181. DBFP, Vol.iv.

By October, Lord Curzon changed his tune and decided that Britain could support Iran's application to the Peace Conference.[307] Exactly why is unclear. Prince Firuz decided to press the border issues. He cleverly decided to make the most of Ahmad Shah's visit to Britain and told Lord Curzon that the Shah would expect to discuss the rectification of the Iranian frontier and that it would be of great use to him if he understood what the British view was towards Kurdistan and Turkestan (Sarakhs). For his part, Prince Firuz had condensed the issues to Sarakhs and the whole of Kurdistan – deciding that the boundary between Turkish and Iranian Kurdistan to be somewhat fictitious. He was prepared to work towards any scenario concerning Kurdistan as long as Iran was to have a controlling voice or influence over the region.[308] What is most interesting is not so much the nuanced proposal of Kurdistan coming from the Iranians but the fact that Lord Curzon was asking Lord Derby, the Ambassador to France, what the British government's position was concerning the *desiderata*. Not only had Lord Curzon seemingly abrogated responsibility for the issue of border rectification, but he wanted help in deciding what to say. It would appear that Lord Curzon, given all the opposition towards the Anglo-Persian Agreement both inside Iran and out, was starting to buckle.

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[307] Earl Curzon to Viscount Grey, Washington, October 6, 1919, no.807, p.1192. DBFP, Vol.iv.
[308] Earl Curzon to Earl of Derby, Washington, October 25, 1919, no.825, p.1213. DBFP, Vol.iv.

In any case, Lord Curzon never replied to Prince Firuz and was subsequently "somewhat startled" when Ahmad Shah, who on a state visit, produced a map showing the border rectifications that the Iranians wanted to press at the Peace Conference.[309] It is not clear which map was being presented but if not the map drawn as part of the *Claims of Persia before the Conference of the Preliminaries of Peace of Paris* then it was probably similar. Two specific issues were discussed. The first, showed an annexation of a considerable amount of Kurdish territory – which took in more territory than the Kurdish regions in Turkey. Lord Curzon was noncommittal and reasonably did not understand how it would be possible to grant an action that was to lead to other nations losing territory, presumably Azerbaijan and Armenia. However, in making such a judgement he also saw the proposal "eating right into the heart of Kurdish Country".[310] This seems to be strange term given that the Kurds were as far away from nationhood as ever and if they were to be taken over by another state then why not by Iran.

The second issue was the return of a sizeable territory north of the Aras River, much of it lost to the Russians under the Treaty of Turkmanchai. The Iranian justification for this was one of "natural borders" as they were only claiming the lands in the "watershed of the River Aras". Lord Curzon

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[309] Earl Curzon to Sir P. Cox, Foreign Office, November 13, 1919, no.845, p.1225. DBFP, Vol.iv.
[310] *Ibid*., DBFP, p.1226.

hinted that such a change might not go down well with Iran's neighbours.[311] A third rectification, concerning the movement of the border north into Turkmenistan (Sarakhs) up to Marv (Merv) and the Murghab River was drawn on the map but not discussed. Lord Curzon seemed less than impressed by these *desiderata* and expected them to be looked upon unfavourably by the British government. It is, however, unclear what he expected. The Iranians wanted major changes, yet the British had only given in to discussing rectifications as long as they were minor refinements.

At the same meeting Ahmad Shah also gave Lord Curzon an undated memorandum in French which was not discussed.[312] The memorandum laid down a methodology that differed somewhat from before and showed that the Iranian argument for territorial claims had been augmented and had become more complex. Uniting *Persianate* peoples on the basis of ethnography, joint history, religion and language were still foundational reasons. However, now, whether territories had been previously occupied by Iran was important. Also, of consideration was the nomadic movement of the tribes. For the first time, military considerations were put forward by the Iranians, which one imagines they assumed fit well into the British strategies for the region.

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[311] *Ibid.*,
[312] Persian Memorandum, no.846, p.1228. DBFP, Vol.iv.

The memorandum was presumably written in conjunction with the map and suffers from a distinct lack of specificity when it came to describe proposed changes. The Iranians wanted to claim a "tongue of land" on the western frontier to help the movement of nomadic tribes. It is probable that this tract of land was the area of Zohab as mountains were indicated in the description, however it is difficult to be certain. Nevertheless, it is likely as natural mountain irrigation was also noted as a reason for the change. The Iranians supported this amendment by reasserting its natural territorial limits and the benefits that could be derived from the cessation of border violations. In the north-west, the Iranians proposed the annexation of a small part of Erivan, Nakhchivan, and the area up to the Moghan Steppe. The people here were mainly Muslim and had expressed a desire to join Iran. In the north-east, the document argued for Iranian territory to be extended to the Murghab River (presumably to extend dominium over Sarakhs) and northwards following the Attrek River to Marv. Marv was therefore to be the town on the eastern corner of Iranian domain. These last changes were to protect Iran from Turkmen incursions and resolve the issue of water for the inhabitants (See Chapter 6). This document listed fresh *desideratum* and also discussed wide-ranging and bewildering corrections to the Sistan Boundary based on the need to safeguard water supplies and the natural limits of Iran.

It is probable that this document and map, which was by this time at such a variance to Prince Firuz's own proposals, had been written by

the government in Tehran. Given the discussions that Prince Firuz had had with Lord Curzon it was unlikely that he would have pushed for such extensive *desiderata*. As we will see the differences between Prince Firuz and the Prime Minister, Vosuq al-Dowleh, were beginning to widen. Just four days later, Prince Firuz saw it necessary to back up and qualify the issues discussed and memorandum left at the last meeting.[313] On 17 November, he listed the general rights on which Iran had based their territorial rectifications. The list was the usual assortment of rationalisations though a new one was also added. Prince Firuz sought justification on the basis that certain groups lacked the wherewithal to form independent states and it would be natural to join with a country that had historical and ethnographic similarities. This was now an obvious alliteration of Empire. Where Kurds were discussed, Prince Firuz, played both cards and pointed out that Kurds had a long-standing attachment to Iran and also pointed out that they would never tolerate Armenian domination. Other *desideratum* in the Caucasus and the Transcaspian were based on the same foundations as in the *Claims of Persia before the Conference of the Preliminaries of Peace of Paris*. Overall, Iranian arguments were becoming more political and strategic rather than primordial.

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[313] The Persian Minister for Foreign Affairs to Earl Curzon, Londres, le 17 novembre, 1919, no.849, p.1235. DBFP, Vol.iv.

Lord Curzon's response to the map, memorandum, and Prince Firuz's follow up letter was delivered a few days later and copied in a letter to Sir Percy Cox.[314] Prince Firuz was told that most of the claims could not be supported and that any chance of success had been wrecked by the original claims that Moshaver al-Mamalek had included in the *Claims of Persia before the Conference of the Preliminaries of Peace of Paris*. This was a rather curious assertion since they had not been presented to the Big Four or even the Council of Ten. However, it was probable that Lord Curzon was alluding to the constant level of demands coming from the Iranians for territorial restitutions which were also continuously changing. Lord Curzon was on firmer ground when he pointed out the essential irrelevancy of Iran's *desiderata* when Prince Firuz asked why Iran could not recover lost territories if other nations could. Lord Curzon told him that other countries had the military force to defend new territories and that other countries had not professed neutrality and "now sought a wide extension of its territory, as a reward for its inaction." This must have been a stinging rebuke for Prince Firuz, but he promised to relay this response to Tehran.

Prince Firuz, pushed by the government in Tehran to get results, was not about to give up and went to see Lord Curzon again. This time he used

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[314] Earl Curzon to Sir Percy Cox, Foreign Office, November 28, 1919, no.854, p.1245. DBFP, Vol.iv.

another tactic and pushed harder for a point that had come up in the past month. He asked whether a suitable territorial solution could be found with the inclusion of Azerbaijan.[315] When Ahmad Shah and Prince Firuz had met Lord Curzon on 13 November, a further document had been left with Lord Curzon.[316] This document advocated an Azerbaijani declaration of independence yet at the same time proposed a political and economic link with Iran. The document further asked Britain to support Azerbaijan in being recognized as a free, democratic, and independent republic and to help them submit their claims to the Peace Conference. Prince Firuz clarified this document in a letter to Lord Curzon a few days later.[317] His intention was to illuminate the paradox of an independent Azerbaijan, yet closely linked politically and economically with Iran. He proposed that as Lord Curzon had no obvious wish to get involved in Caucasian affairs, and that Azerbaijan's independence was somewhat tenuous, Iran could operate a measure of control over Azerbaijan. This would help Iran in defending its northern borders. Again, Prince Firuz wanted Lord Curzon to voice his opinion on this issue. The Iranians had already had discussions with the Azeris in early November. They had even earlier concluded a treaty of friendship and

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[315] Earl Curzon to Sir Percy Cox, Foreign Office, December 6, 1919, no.865, p.1257. DBFP, Vol.iv.
[316] Enclosure in No.846, p.1231. DBFP, Vol.iv.
[317] The Persian Minister for Foreign Affairs to Earl Curzon, Londres, le 17 novembre, 1919, no.850, p.1239. DBFP, Vol.iv.

commerce in April, now, looking towards issues of security they concluded a four-point treaty whereby in recognition of Azeri independence, certain political and economic relations could be normalised.[318]

Though Lord Curzon suggested that it was wise for Iran to enter negotiations with the Azeris, he queried what they might have thought if they knew that Iran also wanted to annex and absorb so much of Russian Armenia and Azerbaijan. However, by December 1919 it was the Azeris, who following the advance of Russian troops, had advocated Iranian annexation.[319] Lord Curzon was not able to square this particular circle, though Prince Firuz was pushed to find an ambiguity, only claiming that he doubted that the Azeris would be opposed to such a prospect. Prince Firuz must have known that conversations were taking place in this context. Prince Mirza Reza Khan (Prince Arfa), Iranian Consul General in Tiflis, had written to Mr. Wardrop, British Chief Commissioner of Transcaucasus, to tell him that discussions had taken place with Azeri representatives with a view to a confederation with Iran rather than with the other Transcaucasian republics.[320] Nevertheless, the subject came to a close when Lord Curzon

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[318] 'Les illusions' p.434.
[319] *Ibid*., 'Les Illusions'.
[320] Enclosure 2 in No. 855, Tiflis, ce 28 novembre 1919, p.1250. DBFP, Vol.iv.

pointed out that the new Azerbaijani government had not yet been recognized and the conversation was irrelevant.[321]

In early December, Prince Firuz, disturbed by a communication from Tehran which suggested that the Peace Conference was soon to be adjourned, pressed again for access. It is not clear how he expected the British to support him. Lord Curzon had turned down nearly all of Iran's entreaties and Prince Firuz had already been told that Iran would not be supported by Britain unless Iran's wishes were to be severely watered down. In the middle of December, Lord Curzon reiterated the position of the British government and declared that the Iranian territorial wish list was so comprehensive in character and "so ancient in nature" that it could not hope to be supported by the British. He then went on to reinforce the two methods by which Iran could get access to the Peace Conference, either to offer "a more moderate assertion of Persian desiderata backed by the support of His Majesty's Government" or to go ahead on their own responsibility.[322] The letter went on to explain that the proposed Iranian resolution, which Iran wanted to be proclaimed at the Peace Conference, which declared,

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[321] Earl Curzon to Sir Percy Cox, Foreign Office, November 28, 1919, no.854, p.1245. DBFP, Vol.iv.
[322] Earl Curzon to the Persian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Foreign Office, December 19, 1919, no.871, p.1262. DBFP, Vol.iv.

> The Conference recognizes that the territorial claims of Persia in Transcaspia are well-founded, but that the whole of the question, depending as it does upon the solution of the Russian problem, cannot be decided at present,[323]

could for the same reasons not be supported by the British. At no point, however, were the Iranians contemplating trying to get access to the Peace Conference without British support and Prince Firuz rather meekly asked what a moderate assertion might be.[324]

The night before Prince Firuz left for Paris, he discussed Lord Curzon's last letter with Mr. Oliphant.[325] During this discussion, Prince Firuz hoped that Britain could support more limited *desiderata*. He re-argued the point regarding Nakhchivan and juxtaposed the notion of Armenians forcing the Azeris to leave Nakhchivan with the wishes of the Azeris of Nakhchivan to be incorporated in Iran. Prince Firuz was proposing nothing less than a plebiscite to decide the fate of the Azeris. The obvious utility of plebiscites was not lost on the Iranians when the need arose, however, even given ideas of self-determination, Britain was loath to help establish a precedent in the Middle East.

The other issues raised in this meeting are worth examining in more detail. Going back to the meeting in December 1918 where Iranian territorial

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[323] *Ibid*., 871, p.1263.
[324] The Persian Minister for Foreign Affairs to Earl Curzon, Carlton Hotel, le 20 décembre, 1919, no.872, p.1265. DBFP, Vol.iv.
[325] Note by Mr. Oliphant of a conversation with the Persian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Foreign Office, December 20, 1919, no.872, p.1263. DBFP, Vol.iv.

desiderata had been discussed, a minimum requirement in Turkmenistan was also discussed. The Iranians minimum demand was for the Tajan River (Tejen) which separated Sarakhs. Not for the first time the issue of Sarakhs came up again, for which Iran appeared to have a strong case according to the British.

The Russians' expansionist drive southwards through the Transcaspian had brought them to the village of Sarakhs on the Tejen River, an extension of the Hari Rud. Under the 1881 Border Convention, Russia had annexed large portions of Turkmen tribal territory. The Tejen River had become the border between Russia and Iran and Sarakhs was divided into Sarakhs on the Iranian side and Old Sarakhs on the Russian side.

The issue of how Sarakhs and indeed how the whole Transcaspian was to come under Russian control will be discussed fully in Chapter 6. However, despite Iranian arguments focusing on religious and ethnographic factors, control over the Turkmens had always remained tenuous. Even though Charles Yate acknowledged that though some Turkmen were more partial to Iranian rule,[326] they were also "devoid of all sense of patriotism or devotion to any particular country".[327] It should be noted that Iran had done nothing to buttress any feelings of Iranian identity with the Turkmen. As we

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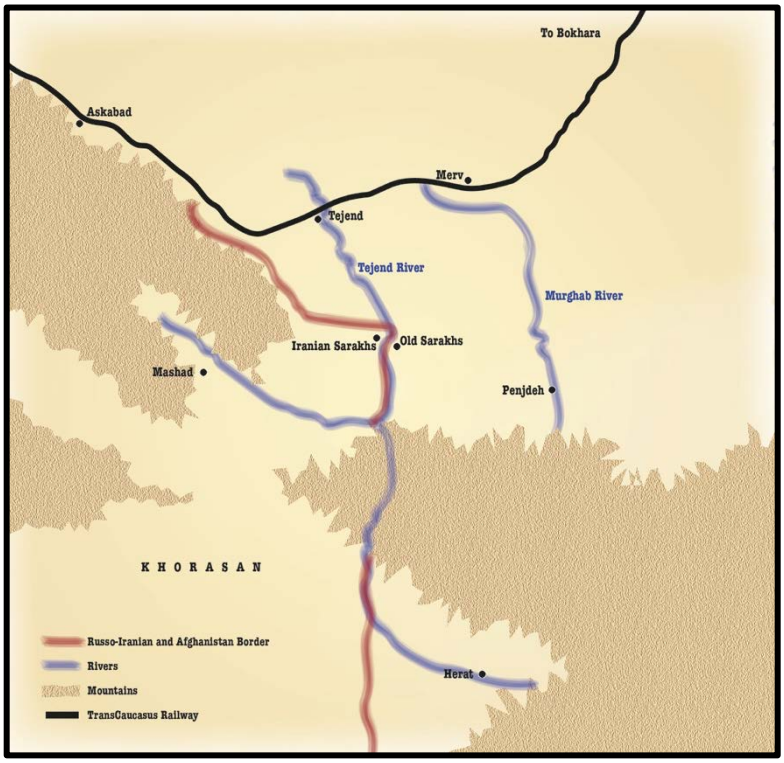
[326] Lieutenant Colonel C.E Yate, *Khurasan and Sistan* (Edinburgh; London: W. Blackwood, 1900), p.31.
[327] *Ibid*., *Khurasan and Sistan*, p.34.

will also see the lack of control and administrative infrastructure in Turkmen lands had compounded the diplomatic failings of the Iranians and the British in response to Russian expansion.

By this point, however, the principal reason for British assistance in reclaiming some or all this territory for the Iranians was simply strategic.



Map 5. Sketch map of Sarakhs
This sketch map shows the contentious area of Sarakhs. Sarakhs lies at a strategic juncture of the Russian Transcaucasus Railway at a gap between the mountains
Source: Map drawn by the author and based on various existing sources.

Sarakhs was in the middle of a plain that cut through the mountain range allowing Russia easy access to Mashad in Khorasan and indeed to Herat in Afghanistan. As of the turn of the century, the Russian telegraph lines ran to Sarakhs and linked to the line to Mashad. By the late 1880's the Transcaspian railway ran to the town of Tejen on the Tejen River on its way to Marv. The

British were concerned with the ease in which Russia could invade Iran and Afghanistan and therefore threaten India.[328]

Another issue which will be examined more fully in Chapter 6 was the loss of the island of Ashuradeh. This small, insignificant island, just off the Iranian Caspian coast was remarkable more as an example of how territory could be lost easily if not determinately protected. Nevertheless, this was another *desideratum* that Prince Firuz raised. As far as Prince Firuz was concerned Ashuradeh required a definitive settlement. However, and a sign of the level of confusion in such matters, Prince Firuz was unsure which country was presently occupying Ashuradeh. At the time it was uninhabited, though it had been over the years occasionally manned by small Russian detachments. Occupation of the island by the Iranians would have made subsequent ownership easier to promote.

Neither of these two issues were to be resolved by the British. Under the terms of the Treaty of Friendship signed between the Soviet Union and Iran in 1921, the partition of Sarakhs was agreed and the Soviets kept the strategically important town of Old Sarakhs. Ashuradeh was given back to Iran under the terms of the same treaty and is today uninhabited but a mainstay of Iranian caviar production.[329]

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[328] See George N Curzon (Lord Curzon), *The Persian Question Volume 1*, p.627 and *Russia in Central Asia in 1889*.
[329] *Boundary Politics and International Boundaries of Iran*, p.112.

The final communications between the two governments towards the end of December 1919 and early January 1920 revolved around numerous issues concerning annexations and border rectifications. Throughout these final communications it was clear that whilst Iran considered any border modifications to be a success and part of the terms of the Anglo-Persian Agreement (though as an attached letter) the British did not consider that border modifications might help to mitigate some of the opposition to the Anglo-Persian Agreement in Iran. When Prince Firuz discussed the same issues that had been brought up time and time again, Lord Hardinge replied that they were hardly minor rectifications and that British troops would be needed to be sacrificed to achieve these aims as Iran had no troops to hand. Lord Curzon felt simply that all the Iranian proposals were "utterly unreasonable".[330] Vosuq al-Dowleh, in a cable between himself and Prince Firuz, rationalised that he did not understand why the British, who always strove for tranquil border regions, did not understand the dangers of delay in settling these questions. Conflicts caused by the break-up of the Russian Empire meant "tolerating the existence in the Transcaspian provinces of a hot-bed of anarchy and unrest which threatens to spread and extend to all the neighbouring countries".[331] Clearly, though Turkestan and Nakhchivan

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[330] Earl Curzon to Sir Percy Cox, Foreign Office, December 30, 1919, no.877, p.1268. DBFP, Vol.iv.
[331] Enclosure in No.877, Translation of a cable received by Prince Firuz from the Persian Prime Minister, p.1270. DBFP, Vol.iv.

were not lands that the Peace Conference felt was within their remit, Vosuq al-Dowleh pointed out that other similar exceptions had been made, such as Finland and Poland.

Many of Iranian irredentist wishes had not changed since the beginning of the nineteenth century. Iran had been forever chasing the return of land lost up to 1919. As this chapter shows, the arguments and tools that Iran used to further their argument for border rectifications were modern in nature, albeit to promote a return to a larger Empire. In this way, Iranian nationalism was an *imperial nationalism* and not the ethnic nationalism spreading in the region. Whilst Iran used arguments of self-determination in furthering *Persianate* ideas of Empire, others were using these ideas to promote an ethnic nationalism. Turkey, which had thrown off the Ottoman cloak was following ideals of Turkish ethnicity as part of its new nationalism.[332] Iran also had to compete for territory against other nascent countries who based their nationalism on ethnicity and the claims that the Azeris, Kurds and Armenians were putting towards the Peace Conference had included areas that the Iranians coveted. The Azeris wanted nearly all the territories north of the Aras River and wanted to make Ganjeh their

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[332] Touraj Atabaki, 'Pan-Turkism and Iranian Nationalism' in Touraj Atabaki (ed) *Iran and the First World War: Battleground of the Great Powers* (London; New York: I.B Taurus, 2006)

capital. This included Baku. The Armenians wanted the areas around Mount Ararat, including Gokcha.

Finally, however, none of this was to matter as Iran was not successful in achieving any of its irredentist wishes despite all efforts. Indeed, though Iran's efforts to achieve border changes were considerable, they were to be stubbornly resisted by the only real power left in the region immediately post-war – the British. Another stumbling block to success was the somewhat haphazard nature of the Iranian *desiderata*, which appeared to be a moving target, continually changing, as they sought any opportunity to get even one border changed. This would prove unfortunate, especially as in all other respects, their approach and strategy had used modern methods to a great effect. Even though the Iranian delegation had one hand tied behind its back, this diplomatic path, along with the Anglo-Persian Agreement and Prince Firuz's entreaties, did represent a concerted effort on all fronts to fulfil Iran's irredentist wishes.

Having established Iran's project of irredentism, this thesis will define the factors which either on their own or in concert resulted in Iran's diminished borders. The issue of how borders were necessary to support progress will be assessed in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Progress and the delimitation of Iran's borders

In *Claims of Persia before the Conference of the Preliminaries of Peace of Paris*, the Iranian nationalists in the commission argued that Iran had wished to obtain modern methods and technologies but had been prevented from doing so by Russia and Britain. The position taken by the delegates reflected a growing sentiment over the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that any progress, introduced as concessions by the Russian and British, had only served their own needs. They argued further that these concessions had hindered the development and had also weakened Iran. Simply put, the position taken by the delegates was that Iran had not been allowed to progress and develop on its own terms. Effectively, they were demonstrating their wish for an "Iranian modernity". This chapter will examine Iran's relationship with modernity and using two case studies will document how it stimulated the development of fixed and delimited borders.

The delegates came from a long line of intellectuals and thinkers who had attempted to understand Iran's place and response to the ever-increasing involvement of the European powers in Iran. They also had to grapple with how this affected their own ideas of nationalism. This central issue, irrespective of their ideological leanings, would dominate their thoughts. Looking back from 1919, they were able to analyse a hundred years of failures and successes. On one hand, the growing influence of the British and

Russians, the myriad concessions and Qajar venality and feebleness and on the other hand, the growth of a national polity through newspapers and the rather heroic and forward-thinking Constitutional Revolution. For these nationalists the negatives far outweighed the positives and the situation in the latter years had become even more pronounced. The period just prior to the First World War and the war years showed the abject inability to secure Iran's borders and in particular, episodes such as the Shuster experiment to bring about an organisation of Iran's finances, showed explicitly that increased involvement by Britain and Russia had reached arrogant proportions. For a large part, *Claims of Persia before the Conference of the Preliminaries of Peace of Paris* was a call for a modern state able to defend itself. However, one can also discern an ambivalence to blanket modernisation. These delegates envisaged the use of modern methods shaped within an Iranian rather than European context. The Pahlavi dynasty and the current Islamic Republic both show that Iran was, and in fact still is, engaging with what Iranian modernity conveys.

The ambivalence of Iran towards European modernity began as early as the Treaty of Turkmanchai. The Treaty allowed for imperial privileges and consulates to be set up, opening Iran to greater foreign political and diplomatic influence. It was to be the thin end of the wedge. Before 1848, there was evidence of tentative modernising, particularly in the Army.

However, it is probably not until Naser al-Din's reign where a tentative appropriation became more apparent.

During Naser al-Din's reign, (1848-1897), one can discern a warming to new ideas and skills from Europe. This may have much to do with Naser al-Din's forward thinking Premier Amir Kabir who founded and opened the Dar al-Fonun in 1851 as a polytechnic to teach the required skills of a modern state. This included teaching and training for medicine, engineering, geology, and geography to name a few. Credit for the introduction of the Dar al-Fonun has become part of Amir Kabir's legacy. However, as Maryam Ekhtiar has suggested, while Amir Kabir may have been instrumental in establishing the Dar al-Fonun, recognition for it enduring remains with Naser al-Din Shah.[333] Though the Dar al-Fonun did not teach modern cartography it was a skill developed by mathematicians who worked there. The development of modern cartography in Iran began with translating foreign publications but under the direction of Abdolghaffar Najm al-Dowleh began to be far more technical.[334] The development of indigenous cartography skills was further encouraged by Naser al-Din himself. It was during the Shah's reign that an

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[333] Maryam Ekhtiar, 'Nasir al-Din Shah and the Dar al-Funun: The Evolution of an Institution', *Iranian Studies*, 2001, Vol.34, No. 1-4, pp. 153-163.
[334] Farshad Karamzadeh, Abdolghaffar Najm al Dowleh; gozar az joghrafea-ye sanaty beh noveen dar dowreh Qajariyeh [Abdolghaffar Najm al Dowleh: Transition from traditional to modern geography in the Qajar period] *Tarikh-e 'Elm*, Bahar va Tabestan [spring and summer] 1396 [2017], shomareh-e [number] 22, pp.107-130.
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office was created whose task was to prepare detailed maps of Iran's borders and for these maps to be kept at the newly created archive at the Document Office for the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.[335]

Despite this, Naser al-Din's record remains patchy. He showed a fascination with new developments and industries, and it is not clear why more was not done by him. Surely, he was not just a pawn in the imperial tussle between Britain and Russia as Edward Browne suggests.[336] It is possible that as with his trip to Britain, he was both impressed by the modern tools of the Industrial Revolution, but also discouraged by the filth and smog it created and therefore its appropriateness to Iran. It may also be that progress brought with it more intervention by the British and Russians. The ambivalence towards the flipside of progress was not just a contemplation of the Shah. Others in Iran showed an antipathy to change. The Bakhtiari, whilst supportive of the British initiatives such as the Bakhtiari Road Project, the Karun River Project and eventually the drilling for oil in Bakhtiari territory, also resented the British intrusion into their lives. The development of the Bakhtiari Road Project was beset with violence, as people were fearful

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[335] Hossein Hammadi-neya, 'Asnad-e tasvery (naqshe) va neveshtary-e (ketabche) manabe-e ab va Kelat Nadery dar dowreh Qajariyeh' [Visual documents (map) and written (booklet) of the sources of Kalat-e Naderi's water during the Qajar period] *Markaz-e amuzesh va pazhuhesh-haye beyn almalaly,* Vezarat-e Omur-e Kharejeh.
[336] Edward G. Browne, *The Persian Revolution 1905-1909* (Washington: Mage, 2006) Chapter II pp.31-58.

of what it might bring into their lives. The oil drilling was also troubled with opposition in some Bakhtiari quarters which boiled over into violence.[337]

As previously described, the vision of industrialisation and progress entailed and was coterminous with protection from arbitrary power[338] and a curbing of or, at least a change to, the Shah's "classical patrimonialism". But as Drummond Wolff pointed out, "the Shah fears the approach of civilization as being likely to curb his power, and to check his autocratic and arbitrary tendencies".[339] There would be no change to this attitude as long as the Qajar dynasty survived. Though the nationalist delegates blamed the imperial powers for the lack of juridicial reforms, an independent national police force and a robust financial system, the ruling structure in Iran limited progress and was also to blame.

As the delegates wove a narrative of blaming self-serving imperial concessions for Iran's modest progress, this was not a view held by all of Iran's intellectuals. Malkom Khan, wanted to make the most of Western progress, and believed it necessary to give concessions to foreign powers on whatever terms necessary to attract capital and accelerate progress in Iran.[340]

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[337] These issues have been assessed by Arash Khazeni in *Tribes and Empire on the margins of nineteenth-century Iran* (Seattle; London: Publications on the Near East, University of Washington Press, 2009)
[338] Danilo Zolo, 'The Rule of Law: A Critical Reappraisal', p.7.
[339] Drummond Wolf to Salisbury, Tehran, April 21, 1888, FO60/492, unnumbered.
[340] Hamid Algar, *Mirza Malkum Khan: A Biographical Study in Iranian Modernism* (Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 1973) p.112.

Hassan Taqizadeh called for a greater use of European modernity in Iran rather than the selective schema in *Claims of Persia before the Conference of the Preliminaries of Peace at Paris* (see above).

Nevertheless, some infrastructure initiatives such as railways were never developed, caught up as they were in the imperial politics of Britain and Russia. Successive moratoriums negotiated between Russia and Naser al-Din,[341] may have been the source for British blame. However, Naser al-Din had also played the imperial powers against each other. In the final analysis all parties were blameworthy.[342] So in one way the delegates were correct, the imperial powers had prevented Iran from developing a railway system, which ultimately had to wait for German technical knowhow in the Pahlavi years. The delegates would have wished for what might have been achieved if such an infrastructure had been allowed to develop, though it's worthwhile noting that in Egypt the development of a railway system did not lead to a modern state. While a railway system was thwarted, used as it was as an imperial political football, a myriad of other concessions were not curbed. Permitted concessions, in ever increasing frequency towards the First World War granted to Britain and Russia, epitomised less a drive towards modernity than a hiving off of Iran's commercial and natural resources. One

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[341] See 'British Policy on Railways in Persia, 1870-1900'.
[342] 'Note on Persian Railways', 3 July, 1911, IOR/L/PS/18/C124.

of the greatest laments of the Qajar dynasty was the selling of these concessions to line the pockets of the Shah and his coterie rather than to benefit the country.

A report by Arthur Herbert of the British Legation in Tehran in May 1886 showed the extent of imperial involvement in Iran and may have proved, conversely, the very argument of the nationalist delegates that Britain was indeed stripping Iran of its natural resources for their own needs. The report, on the plus side, described a growing postal service, which had begun in 1877 and a telegraph system, both of which were providing valuable state infrastructure. However, the road system (asphalt roads) left a lot to be desired. As of 1886, there were only two such roads in the country. The report noted in detail, though the author conceded the report was abridged, either the survey or active sourcing of the following minerals and natural resources: boxwood, rock salt, borax, saltpetre, alum, gypsum, naphtha, sulphur, coal, iron, manganese, cobalt, copper, lead, gold, silver, slate, quicksilver, zinc, tin, precious stones, marble, porphyry.[343]

The issue of concessions formed a major element in the nationalist's argument against European and imperial involvement. Of course, the Europeans considered progress in Iran to be synchronised with delimited

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[343] Arthur Herbert, British Legation, 'Report on present state of Persia and her Mineral Resources', May 7, 1886, FO60/482, pp.110-164.

borders and the extension of state structures to the peripheries of Iran. Though we can interpret all residual and contingent actions resulting from this broad paradigm, it is worth considering the impact of certain concessions as contingent forces. For example, the Russian railways that ended by the Iranian borders made contingent the likelihood that the Iranian border would be delimited there. In this way, the introduction of some of these concessions were to have more direct consequences on the shape of Iran's borders. The borders may have come into being at the behest of Russia and Britain, but they were also affected by the appropriation of the telegraph system and the discovery and exploitation of oil. Arguably a success story for Iran, the implementation of a telegraph system which crossed over frontiers made essential a delimited border. On the other hand, the discovery of oil in 1908 helped finalise the long running saga of the Ottoman-Iran border and the fate of Muhammerah, today called Khorramshahr, and the oil fields. This chapter will address these issues.

The telegraph line and borders

The introduction of the telegraph system has been assumed to be wholly driven by the British and, more specifically, by the need to establish quick communication with India following the Indian Mutiny in 1857. However, there had been other regional telegraph initiatives that predated the mutiny. Telegraph lines in India were being built in 1852 and negotiations between

the Ottomans and Britain for a telegraph line from Constantinople towards the Persian Gulf were well under way.[344] In effect, the mutiny only hastened its introduction and an understanding of the efficacy of a telegraph line between England and India predated the Indian Mutiny.

Indeed, Iran had already embraced the telegraph. The agreement extracted by Charles Alison, Minister to Tehran, in 1862 from Naser al-Din Shah was not the first proposal for a telegraph line in Iran. It is apparent that Naser al-Din Shah and the Iranians were already open to the possibilities of this new technology. Numerous small lines already existed in Tehran, connecting places frequented by the Shah and, by 1858, lines existed connecting Golestan Palace, Lalihzar and the Dar al-Fonun. The Shah had begun to appreciate the strategic necessity of the telegraph when he put in motion a plan to construct a line between Tehran and Mashad, to enable better security in the province of Khorasan.[345] Furthermore, in 1860 the Iranians constructed a line from the Shah's seat of government in Tehran to Hameran in Bandar Lengeh (on the Persian Gulf) and another line to Gilan was established in 1862.[346]

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[344] Maurice G. Simpson, 'THE INDO-EUROPEAN TELEGRAPH DEPARTMENT', *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, Vol. 76, No. 3928 (MARCH 2nd, 1928), pp.382-400, p382.
[345] Soli Shahvar, 'Iron Poles, Wooden Poles: The Electric Telegraph and the Ottoman: Iranian Boundary Conflict, 1863-1865', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (Apr., 2007), pp. 23-42, p.24.
[346] Mahmood Mahmood, 'Tarikh-e ravabet-e siyasi-e Iran va Englis dar qarn-e nozdahom miladi' [History of Iran's political relationship with Britain in the nineteenth century] (Egbal: jeld-e sevom, chap charom, 1353 [1974]) p.787.

If Naser al-Din Shah had doubts they were about the British and not the technology itself. On one hand, Iranians begrudged British participation as they concluded that they were just as able as the Ottomans to establish their own system,[347] and they also "saw no reason to oblige a foreign country with whom they had so recently been at war".[348] On the other hand, the treaty following the Anglo-Persian war of 1856/1857 had been lenient enough to suppose that the British and Iranians had entered an era of better relations. Despite the fact that there should have been doubts as to whether the Iranians were capable of financing and building a full network themselves, they decided to stick to a policy in which progress was to be on their terms and not, as they saw it, an invitation for further imperial intervention.

The Shah's antipathy to the British explains why discussions about the telegraph lines were so protracted. It also suggests why the agreement that Charles Alison (Minister in Tehran) and Mr. Edward Eastwick (Counsellor to Persia) concluded was no more significant than an "Engagement entered into by the Persian Minister for Foreign Affairs".[349]

In addition to the inherent problems of a telegraph system installed and run by the British was how stretching telegraph wires from west to east

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[347] *The English Amongst the Persians*, p.132.
[348] *Ibid*., *The English Amongst the Persians*, p.129.
[349] See 'Correspondence respecting the Construction of the Telegraph Line through PERSIA' 19th Century House of Commons Sessional Papers, Vol. LXVI, 307. p.49, Inclosure [*sic*] in No.81.

across Iranian territory necessitated engaging with issues of sovereignty. The building of a telegraph demanded a knowledge of where one border ended and the other began. Also, the implementation would necessitate telegraph houses and lines that needed to be guarded by soldiers and were to become symbols of sovereign ownership. Telegraph stations would be seen as state structures of some meaning and their positioning, particularly in the Persian Gulf, would involve issues of sovereignty – and, when run by the British and manned by Christian Armenians, seen as an assault on Iranian sovereignty.

It can be argued that, in allowing better communication with the rest of the world, the telegraph could aid the "enlightenment" of the people of Iran,[350] but this increased globalisation came at a cost; it meant establishing finite borders. In this way the telegraph diminished Iran's still unquenched desire to be the imperial power it once was. The telegraph and its installation raised and exemplified issues of sovereignty and border delimitation, which in turn helped peg Iran into the confines of its own borders.

In addition to these broad issues noted above, other points need to be considered. The first concerns the operations of the Indo-European Telegraph Department (IETD), tasked by the British to build the telegraph system, and

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[350] Sarhang Jahangeer Qayem Maqamy, 'Sabeqeh-e telgraf dar Iran' (bakhshy az tarikh-e reqabet-haye Engelis va Rus) [History of the telegraph in Iran (part of the history of competition between Britain and Russia], *Barresy-haye tarikhy*, Farvardeen va Ordebehesht 1351 [1971], sal-e haftom [year 7] – shomareh-e [number] 1 (73-120) p.88.

the absorption of its officers into the fabric of the British political system. Lyman Stebbins has examined the way in which the British operated in southern Iran and, in particular, the means by which they communicated with tribal leaders and landholders to promote their own interests. Specifically, he looked at the role of the Political Residents and Consul Generals and how these British agents were able to make their own regional affiliations because of the weakness of the Qajar state in controlling the outer reaches of its Empire.[351] Some, if not all Political Residents, were roped into working for the IETD in some manner. Some lowly British diplomats had dual roles. William McDouell served as Vice Consul in Mohammerah after many postings in the IETD along the gulf coast. He was later to serve as an advisor to the Anglo-Persian Oil Company.[352] A colourful man, he had found himself in Kurdistan after going "native" in Mohammerah and marrying the daughter of the village *Abdar* (water distributor/manager).

Some officers of stature, such as Major-General Sir Frederic John Goldsmid, would put the knowledge and skills gained by working on the telegraph to surveying and delimiting borders. Frederic Goldsmid was seconded from the IETD to lead a commission into the Sistan province to arbitrate a delimited border between 1870 and 1872. This arbitration covered

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[351] H. Lyman Stebbins, 'British Imperialism, Regionalism, and Nationalism in Iran, 1890-1919'.
[352] William McDouell, 'Obituary by A.T Wilson', *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, No.1 (Jan., 1925), pp.189-190.

the same territory through which the telegraph had gone.[353] Also seconded was another future director, Major Euan Smith. The narrative of border delimitation was not only replete with men who were soldiers and or diplomats and who were part of the telegraph industry, but also these were people who put their knowledge gained from surveying for telegraph routes into intelligence gathering, which in turn would be used in their diplomacy with the local tribes, leaders, and the Iranian government. Knowledge of the land was the most powerful commodity when it came to negotiating border delimitation with the Iranians.

The second point is that the telegraph saga conveys yet again an example of the often-debilitating relationship between the India government and the Foreign Office. The IETD was established in 1862 and suffered from an impractical structure from the beginning. Set up by the Secretary of State for India based in London, it was to be a department of the India government. From 1865, the IETD was run directly from London, but the department was based in India. This made it unique.[354] The first head of this organisation was Colonel Patrick Stewart, then a rising star Lieutenant in the Royal Bengal Engineers. Of seemingly no fixed office, he received his funds from the India government, but his instructions from the Secretary of State

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[353] *The English Amongst the Persians*, p.144.
[354] 'THE INDO-EUROPEAN TELEGRAPH DEPARTMENT', p.382.

for India in London, as well as the India government. On his premature death in 1865, two other Indian officers, John Bateman Champain and Colonel Frederic Goldsmid, were assigned to run the IETD at the same time. Confusion was resolved when Frederic Goldsmid was made director in 1865 and Champain his assistant. The management structure of the IETD, such as it was, was almost exclusively staffed by Indian officer engineers. As this study will show, this sometimes meant that decisions on the ground were taken without recourse to the Secretary of State for India in London.

The third point is that the Iranians were by no means bystanders in the development of the telegraph system, nor simply obstructive. The Iranians displayed foresight and diplomatic aptitude not generally afforded them. Thus, not only were the Iranians fully engaged players in the telegraph narrative, but they also achieved some significant diplomatic successes.

1862 Telegraph Agreement

The Engagement entered into by the Persian Minister for Foreign Affairs was one year in the making and was finally signed in 1862. The agreed telegraph line route was to stretch from Khanaqin (at the border with Ottoman/Iraq) to Tehran, then Isfahan, Shiraz and Bushire. A connection from Bushire to Afghanistan was put in abeyance for the time being. This *Engagement* consisted of 6 articles which described the agreement in rudimentary terms: Iran would pay for the materials needed to establish the telegraph system

which were to be bought from the British, however, the construction of the line would be managed by the British and the supervisor would be "fully empowered to call upon the Persian authorities to supply any materials that he may think requisite for this work".[355] Issues that were not mentioned in this document, but which had been discussed in the run up to this agreement, are more interesting and show the concerns that the Shah and his retinue had, which the British were either intentionally or unintentionally ignoring in the haste to conclude some kind of agreement.

Correspondence between Charles Alison and Earl Russell in 1861 repeated many of Mirza Saeed Khan's (Ambassador to the Sublime Porte) misgivings about any agreement.[356] One question was what would happen if hostilities between Iran and Britain were resumed, not unreasonable, given the recently fought war over Herat. Mirza Saeed Khan had argued that, in the event of a war with Britain and another country and the enforced stoppage of the telegraph system, Iran would pay up what it owed Britain for the construction of the line. Clearly, though not stated, securing communications in case of hostilities was vital to Iran. Issues of sovereignty were also raised. One specific item was the concern of running the line over a

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[355] 'Correspondence respecting the Construction of the Telegraph Line through PERSIA', p.49, Inclosure [*sic*] in No.81.
[356] Alison to Earl Russell, Tehran, November 5, 1861, 'Correspondence respecting the Construction of the Telegraph Line through PERSIA' p.5, No.10.

"tract of country in the direction of Scinde" and that Britain should give Iran "a paper setting forth that the claim of Persia to that tract was not invalidated".[357] Mirza Saeed Khan had appreciated the possible problems of running a telegraph line through territories whose sovereignty was suspect or which did not have delimited frontiers. Charles Alison's response to this as, "I think its immaterial whether Her Majesty's Government agree to it or not", is surprising as it ignored possible future complications. It is probable that the British just wanted to get a figurative foot in the door and assumed that any issues could be agreed upon later. Certainly, a few weeks after Mirza Saeed Khan's misgivings were mooted, Charles Alison relayed a conversation he had with "Ferookh Khan" (Prime Minister Amin al-Dawlah) in which he suggested that "it would have been better had the conditions relative to country between Bunder Abbas and Scinde been altogether left out".[358] The Prime Minister had, according to Charles Alison, responded by saying:

> Persia should not be blamed for making some allusion to, and thus avoid future misunderstanding respecting a country which undoubtedly belonged to her, but over which she was not at present prepared to exercise a direct control.[359]

There is no explanation as to why these issues were dropped when the final agreement was exchanged. Soli Shahvar, a distinguished researcher in

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[357] *Ibid*.,
[358] Alison to Earl Russell, Tehran, November 19, 1861, 'Correspondence respecting the Construction of the Telegraph Line through PERSIA' p.8, No.13.
[359] *Ibid*.,

this field, has reflected that Iranian issues of sovereignty lay at the root of why the discussions were put in abeyance in April of 1862. At the time, the Shah was reported to state, "The subject of the telegraph may thus be considered to be completely disposed of for the present".[360] It is probable that the Iranians were also concerned with the cost of the line, to be funded by them and, more specifically, it was probable that Naser al-Din Shah was worried about the cost of protecting the line east of Bander Abbas in territories that Iran did not fully control.

Certainly, when Colonel Patrick Stewart suggested that it would now be possible to attach a submarine cable from Bander Abbas to the Afghan border, negotiations were reinstated which assumed a line from Khanaqin on the Ottoman-Iranian border which ended at Bandar Abbas.[361]

It was already clear that even the negotiations for the implementation of the telegraph concerned issues of sovereignty detrimental to the Iranians and that its implementation would not be value neutral. As we shall see, however, the implementation of the telegraph not only made the question of sovereignty more contentious, but ultimately resulted in some obdurate and heavy handedness on the part of the British and surprising diplomatic successes on the Iranian side.

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[360] Alison to Earl Russell, Tehran, April 25, 1862, 'Correspondence respecting the Construction of the Telegraph Line through PERSIA' p.11, No.19.
[361] Merivale to Under Secretary (FO), India Office, September 10, 1862, FO60/279 and Melvill to Hammond, India Office, October 17, 1862, FO60/279, unnumbered.

Along the Makran coast

The *Engagement* ignored the obvious and necessary connection between Bushire in the Persian Gulf and Afghanistan. Any landline, intended to hug the coastline would have to go from the port of Bushire through to Bandar Abbas and Jask, both of which under the nominal control of the Sultan of Muscat, and then through Charbar and Gwuttur[362] (Map 6), all of which was disputed territory.

Map 6. The disputed area of Mekran (Makran)
This map is based on Percy Badger's political map of the Persian Gulf (IOR/L/PS/18/C68). It is overlaid with Sir Frederick Goldsmid's map outlining the contested area as he saw it (Mss Eur F126/33).
Source: British Library

[362] More commonly known as Chabahar in Iran and Gwador in Pakistan.

Originally, the British had intended to connect the telegraph line between Bushire and India via a submarine link. However, following the failure of the Red Sea cable, the British turned once more to a land connection.[363] The first inkling of any problems was reports received by Iranian officials that "English Officers were engaged in making preparation to carry a line of telegraph from the Baloochistan frontier by land to Bender Abbass [Bandar Abbas] and there on to Bushire".[364] As a result, the Iranian Foreign Minister asked the British to suspend operations until "the matter had been discussed and an arrangement entered into".[365] It could be suggested that the British had always intended to run a submarine cable and therefore did not raise the possibility of a landline earlier. However, the Red Sea cable failure had occurred in 1859 and there was at least one survey drawn up which advocated a land connection. In actuality, the British could have asked for a permission to construct a landline as part of the original *Engagement* but had decided not to.

The rumours of British preparations were true and put into effect by Indian officers on the ground without the knowledge of Charles Alison or his subordinate in Tehran. Captain Disbrowe, acting Political Resident in Muscat confirmed in a memorandum to Samuel Mansfield (Commissioner in Sinde

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[363] Soli Shahvar, 'Communications, Qajar Irredentism, and the Strategies of British India: The Makran Coast Telegraph and British Policy of Containing Persia in the East (Baluchistan) Part 1', *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (Sep., 2006), pp. 329-351, p.334.
[364] Thompson to Lord Russell, Teheran, April 12, 1863, FO60/279, unnumbered.
[365] *Ibid*.,

province) that all the rumours were indeed correct and that if Iranian reaction to these preparations was "left unchecked" it would lead to difficulties for the Sultan of Muscat.[366] He further explained that, for good measure, he considered the port of Chabahar to be under the "undisputed possession of the Rulers of Muscat".[367] He then proposed in this memo and a letter to Ronald Thomson that British troops should be landed to protect the work going on.[368] Captain Disbrowe's heavy-handed action was creating British policy "on the fly" and presupposed that Iran had no sovereignty in the region. Captain Disbrowe was, however, reacting to the flexing of Iranian power in the region. Colonel Ebrahim Khan, Governor of Bampur, had led a force to occupy Chabahar with the intention of checking how far the British preparations had gone.[369] Though Colonel Ebrahim Khan's actions were eventually disavowed by the Iranian government,[370] the point had been made.

Up to this point the British had ignored any possibility that Iran had any claim to the disputed areas. It is clear, however, that they had been aware of the possibility that the proposed landline would go over Iranian territory. Both Reverend George Percy Badger, a renowned orientalist and the ubiquitous Frederic Goldsmid were each assigned to investigate the

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[366] Captain Disbrowe to S. Mansfield, Muscat, March 29, 1863, FO 60/279, unnumbered.
[367] *Ibid*.,
[368] Captain Disbrowe to Thomson, Muscat, April 4, 1863, FO60/279, unnumbered.
[369] Copy of memorandum Captain Disbrowe to S. Mansfield, Muscat, March 29, 1863, FO60/279.
[370] *Ibid*.,

"Pretentions of Persia in Baloochistan and Mekran" and went to Muscat and Makran respectively. The resulting document, issued late in December 1863, was the first British stab at understanding the regional affiliations and territorial associations along the Gulf shores between Bander Abbas and the Afghan frontier.[371] Reverend Badger concentrated almost exclusively on the very complicated political situation that existed in these areas and was hard pressed to establish any definitive sovereignty with regards to tribes and tribal affiliations. He did note that "Whatever pretensions Persia may entertain to the possession of Baloochistan and Mekran, her actual jurisdiction in those provinces, as late as the year 1861, was exclusively confined to the interior," and that with an exception of 150 miles, "Persia exercises no jurisdiction on the coast of Mekran".[372] Reverend Badger also suggested that "as far as British interests in that quarter are concerned", Gwadur, the port very close to the border should "remain in the hands of the Sultan of Muscat, who has the naval force to protect it." Reverend Badger made few recommendations apart from this and that is of little surprise because also attached to this document was a copy of the Treaty of 1856 between the Sultan of Muscat and the Iranian government. This treaty made

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[371] Rev. G. P Badger, 'Rev. G. P. Badger on the Pretensions of Persia in Beloochistan [sic] and Mekran [sic], drawn up with especial reference to her Claim to Gwadur and Charbar', December, 1863, IOR/L/PS/18/C68.
[372] *Ibid*., Memorandum by the Rev. G. P. Badger.

it explicit to the reader that all the areas below Bander Abbas were effectively leased by the Iranian government to Muscat for twenty years. Not only were Iranian dignitaries and nearby governors to receive courtesies for hunting but the Iranian flag was to be flown in the area and the Muscatis "shall not give passage there to any agent of the foreign governments."[373]

The fact that Reverend Badger did not give overriding precedence to the 1856 Treaty and still believed that a way should be found to agree access from the Sultan of Muscat is striking. It was perhaps a hangover from diplomacy in India and some areas of the Gulf by the East India Company, where agreements with local powers was perceived as sound diplomatic practice. It is also possible that such arrangements might provide significant additional impediments to Iranian territorial progress in this territory. However, as far as the telegraph was concerned, the British appeared reluctant to deal directly with the Iranians, the major power in the region, no matter what. It is probable that had they done so, they might have expedited matters. However, the British were diplomatically boxed in. Completion of the telegraph line meant treading a very fine line between long-standing arrangements with smaller rulers such as the Sultan of Muscat and Iran. For the Iranians, linking the telegraph route with issues of territorial sovereignty

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[373] *Ibid.*,

was a coup of considerable proportions and their diplomacy in this respect should not be underestimated.

Frederic Goldsmid, in his report attached to Badger's own findings, was more attuned to the *realpolitik*. With regards to eastern Makran he reported Iranian influence underscoring Iranian sovereign intentions by writing that "As to her right [Iran], I know of none but of the strong over the weak". With regards to Gwadur, Frederic Goldsmid was equally effusive and suggested that "the question of Gwadur is one between Muscat and Khelat only, with which Persia has no concern".[374] This suggestion was reasonable given that the issue had not come up before, however, by 1868 it did. Two separate interpretations of the 1868 Telegraph Convention opened the door for Iran to claim all of western Makran.[375] Not for the first time, Frederic Goldsmid reiterated his concern that a definitive border in the region would help defend the Khan of Khelat as a buffer against the Iranians and that "in a general political sense, the matter is one of the greatest moment".[376] In this way, issues concerning the implementation of the telegraph had not only exposed issues of sovereignty, but were instrumental in pushing for fixed borders.

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[374] *Ibid.*,
[375] Peter John Brobst, 'Sir Frederic Goldsmid and the Containment of Persia, 1863-73', *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (Apr., 1997) pp.197-215, p.205.
[376] Goldsmid to Havelock, December 10, 1863, which formed part of the Memorandum by the Rev. G. P. Badger.

Frederic Goldsmid was eventually given leave to delimit the border in that region, though this process only began in 1870. Again, not all people in the India government agreed that delimitation was necessary. The new Viceroy, Sir John Lawrence, an exponent of *masterly inactivity* did not see the point in getting bogged down in such intricacies. However, by 1869, tribal activity, the loss of Omani power in the region and increased Iranian aggression by Colonel Ebrahim Khan towards its perceived ownership of Chabahar "had an unsettling effect on the western frontier of Kalat".[377] This time the Iranians did not repudiate Colonel Ebrahim Khan's actions as they had earlier and pressed their claim to both Chabahar and Gwadur.[378] Frederic Goldsmid put the confusion down to a misreading of the 1868 Telegraph Convention in regards to areas of sovereignty, the Iranian translation of which "was clearly more inclusive, allowing the Shah to claim authority over all western Makran".[379] The new Viceroy, Lord Mayo, decided a more active approach was needed and "prioritized the containment of Persia" and "[T]he solution, in his view, was the delimitation of Persia's south-eastern frontier."[380]

According to Frederic Goldsmid, Naser al-Din Shah was less keen to "limit her encroachments on Makran by the declaration of a fixed boundary

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[377] 'Sir Frederic Goldsmid and the Containment of Persia', pp.203-205.
[378] *Ibid*., p.205.
[379] *Ibid*.,
[380] *Ibid*., p.206.

line" than he was "the Sistan question".[381] Yet in many ways the arbitration of the Makran boundary between Iran and Kalat was one of the easiest and simplest delimitations. Goldsmid made his recommendation to the Shah based on Captain Lovett's map.[382] This showed a borderline from Jalk (Jalq) in the north to the Persian Gulf coast between Chabahar and Gwadar. In the main, mountains and rivers were used to institute a line of least resistance, which was, however, assumed to be heavily on the side of Kalat rather than Iran.[383] Here, "natural frontiers" were to be supplemented "by artificial frontiers".[384] However, politics had placed a heavy onus on keeping Kalat strong and independent as a buffer between Iran and India.

As the delimitation committee repaired to Tehran, the Shah accepted the map with one exception, he asked for the district of Kohak, which had been placed on the Kalati side, to be Iranian soil. Frederic Goldsmid "pointed out that such a modification was simply impossible and contrary to the spirit of his duty as a mediating or arbitrating Commissioner".[385] It is almost impossible to suggest that Frederic Goldsmid was impartial given a

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[381] Majors St. John, Lovet And Eaun Smith, *EASTERN PERSIA: An Account Of The Journeys Of The Persian Boundary Commission 1870-71-72*, Vol 1 (Facsimile Publisher, 2015) p.xxii
[382] Major St. John R.E., 'Map of Western Baluchistan Compiled by Order of H.M. Secretary of State for India to Show the Western Frontier of the Territories H.H. the Khan of Kalat as Determined by the Frontier Commission Under Major General Sir Frederic J. Goldsmid C.B., K.C.S.I., by Major St. John R.E.,' IOR/X/3094/1-4.
[383] Soli Shahvar, 'Communications, Qajar Irredentism, and the Strategies of British India', pp. 569-595.
[384] *Frontiers*, p.8.
[385] *EASTERN PERSIA*, p.44.

memorandum in December 1871.[386] However, it was agreed to leave the question of Kohak in abeyance and in fact Kohak was eventually neutralised by Frederic Goldsmid. In 1874, Iran occupied it anyway. In truth, Frederic Goldsmid had regarded Kohak to be independent of both Kalat and Iran[387] and more importantly "paid tribute or allegiance to no one".[388] However the efficacy of having an independent state, however small, on the border led Goldsmid to believe that Kohak should go to "one side or the other".[389] As Brobst suggested, the choice lay between a political determination and giving Kohak to the Kalatis, or giving it to the Iranians on the basis of topography and a decision more likely to secure peace. The issue of Kohak proved that self-determination could be superseded if the place was of no strategic or trading importance. Peace and tranquillity, one of the main reasons for border introduction by the British, would hold sway.[390]

The Iranians had assumed that the issue of Chabahar had been settled by the Perso-Kalat Boundary Commission as the map presented to them by Frederic Goldsmid clearly located it well into Iranian territory.[391] Frederic Goldsmid argued that the boundary had no bearing on the status of

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[386] 'Persia - policy to be pursued towards. Minute by the Viceroy of 29 December 1871 with a note', IOR/L/PS/18/C107. Here, the Viceroy outlined the policy of containment of Iran.
[387] *EASTERN PERSIA*, p.44.
[388] Ibid., *EASTERN PERSIA*, p.60.
[389] 'Sir Frederic Goldsmid and the Containment of Persia, 1863-73', p.210.
[390] *Frontiers*.
[391] 'Map of western Baluchistan', 1874, IOR/X/3094/1-4.

Chabahar which was a matter between Oman and Iran.[392] Whilst Frederic Goldsmid argued that the issue of Chabahar "was not considered in the British Commissioner's province to discuss",[393] he was, as with Kohak, not as impartial as he suggested. A determination regarding Kohak had been ignored because it favoured Iran however slightly. Chabahar, on the other hand, a port 40 miles in from the proposed border was supposedly better off in the hands of the Omanis, even though it was well within Iranian territory. In addition, Omani rule there was tenuous.[394] It would appear that for Frederic Goldsmid, the most important reason for continued Omani jurisdiction in Chabahar, however slight, was that the Iranians by claiming it would damage a "thriving commercial community".[395] In this case, leaving a semi-independent state on Iranian shores, ruled from across the gulf, was more important than peace and tranquillity.

The implementation of the telegraph in Makran had raised issues of sovereignty. Iran had followed a defensive attitude towards any changes in which it might have lost territories. The British had glossed over sovereignty issues in order to bring the telegraph network to fruition as quickly as possible. British endeavours were not helped by the dichotomy between

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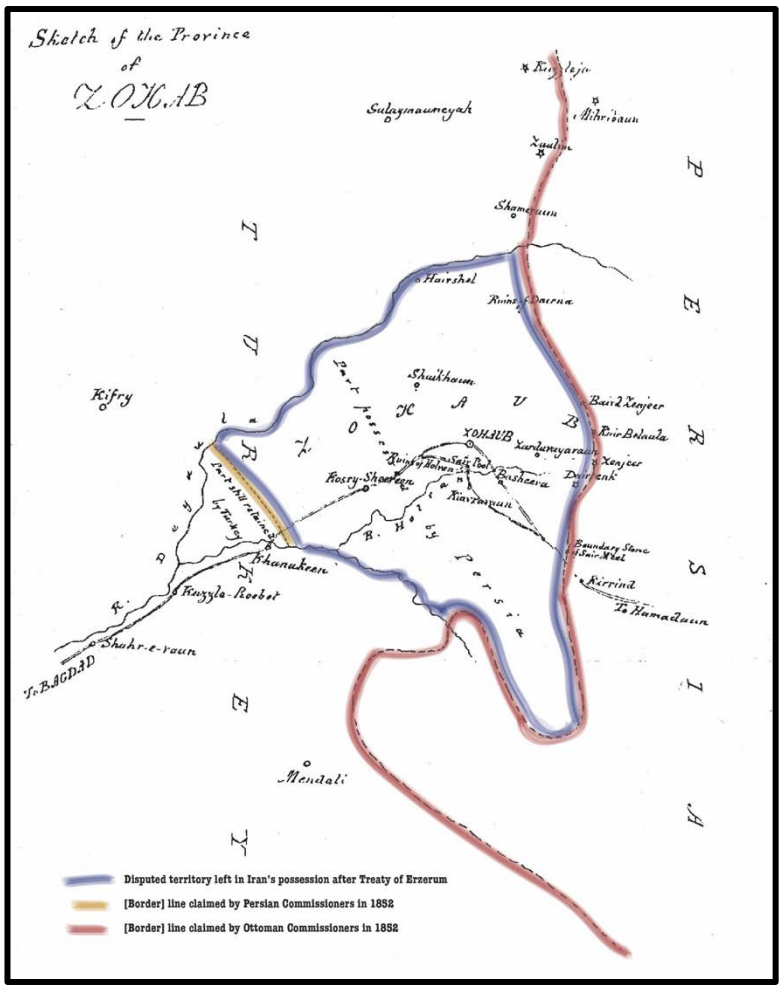
[392] 'Sir Frederic Goldsmid and the Containment of Persia, 1863-73', p.208.
[393] *EASTERN PERSIA*, p.Iii.
[394] 'Communications, Qajar Irredentism, and the Strategies of British India', p.589.
[395] *EASTERN PERSIA*, p.Iii.

Charles Alison's policies in Tehran and the India government men that implemented their strategies.

Zohab and the telegraph line

The *Engagement* of 1862 established that the telegraph line was to enter Iran from Ottoman territory at the border territory at Khanaqin, go on to Tehran, then Isfahan, Shiraz and finally Bushire. Khanaqin was picked as it was on the most direct stretch from Bagdad into Iran and the line could more easily be laid through a valley that bisected the Zagros Mountains. This



Map 7. The disputed area of Khanaqin
This map is based on a sketch map of the Zohab area, which outlines the disputed territory.
Source: Volume 2 R.N Schofield, (ed), The Iran-Iraq Border 1843-1844. p.211.

route also avoided the troublesome Arab tribes in Khuzestan.[396] However, Khanaqin was also on the edge of the contested territory of Zohab. The treaty between the Sublime Porte and the Shah of Iran which established the telegraph route was quite specific, locating Khanaqin as "fixed upon as the point where the two telegraph lines should meet".[397] The British had felt that progress up to the late summer of 1864 had been particularly slow. Their various and numerous complaints to the Iranians regarded the lack of help in finishing the line or in deciding the exact point of the link. Nevertheless, this period led to a few interesting proposals and communications as the Ottomans and Iranians persevered to link the telegraph at Khanaqin. These proposals were all based on enabling a link which did not require, firstly, a delimitation of the border or, secondly, any furtherance in either direction of either Ottoman or Iranian claims.

It was likely that the Iranians had been somewhat stung by the "inefficiency of the measures adopted by the Persian Government for prosecuting the completion of the telegraph line between the Turkish a frontier and Bushire with Vigour"[398] and Mirza Hussain Khan and Namik Pasha, Governor General of Bagdad, took it upon themselves to facilitate an

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[396] *The English Amongst the Persians*, p.128.
[397] 'Correspondence respecting the Construction of the Telegraph Line through PERSIA' p.54, Inclosure {*sic*} in No.87 and FO248/220, unnumbered.
[398] Alison to Lord Russell, Tehran, April 19, 1864, FO60/282, unnumbered.

agreement. The issue had always been the territory between the towns of Qasr-e-Shirin in Iranian held territory and Khanaqin on the edge of Ottoman territory, a distance of some 20 miles. Their proposal was to pick a point exactly in the middle. The practicality of this agreement was however lost on the Shah, and he decided that Mirza Hussain Khan "had upon his own responsibility entered into an agreement" and the Shah decided to "disavow the proceeding of his agent in this matter".[399]

The implication of such an agreement was the loss of 6-8 miles of Iranian territory which would alter "in either way the territorial rights of either party" and give the Ottomans any right to occupy this territory.[400] From the Iranian point of view "the very existence of a Turkish Line of telegraph on the ground claimed by Persia as its own naturally includes the right of patrolling the line with a Turkish guard".[401] The Shah was certainly cognisant of these issues. The existence of Turkish troops on patrol in disputed territory, let alone territory assumed to be Iranian, was untenable and could in the future be a decisive factor in deciding territorial ownership. As Turkish poles were iron and Iranian poles were made from wood, the optics of any confusion was so great that the Iranians took the view that any Turkish poles already put up in the disputed territory would have to be

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[399] Alison to Lord Russell, Tehran, June 15, 1864, FO60/283, unnumbered.
[400] Alison to Colonel Kemball, Tehran, June 12, 1864, FO60/283, unnumbered.
[401] Alison to Lord Russell, Camp near Teheran, July 26, 1864, FO60/283, unnumbered.

taken down. By all accounts, the Governor of Kermanshah gleefully "wanted to substitute Persian Telegraphic posts for the Turkish posts" in the disputed area.[402] However, the Iranians were just posturing and conceded that the Governor was just showing his "teeth and bark" in order that territorial concessions were not to be assumed.[403] Charles Alison may have wanted that this "somewhat childish dispute should be settled", but the negotiation was to become even more ridiculous.

On 5 September, Namik Pasha suggested that group of Whitebeards (village elders) from either side of the frontier, selected by him, to sit down and solve the delimitation issue.[404] Seen as a delaying tactic by the British and Iranians, it however seemed to spur some diplomatic action. A letter in late September spelt out several solutions to the telegraph issue at the frontier. It was firstly suggested that a post horse relay could be established over the disputed area to relay the telegraph messages over the disputed territory. Secondly it was suggested that a detour could be made around the disputed territory in an area more "clearly defined" such as Bin-Kudra in Turkey and Kurrahtoo on the Iranian side. This would have meant a detour of some ten

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[402] *Ibid.*,
[403] *Ibid.*,
[404] Enclosure in Alison to Lord Russell, Gulahek [sic], September 29, 1864, FO60/284, unnumbered.

miles. The final suggestion was to run alternate iron and wooden telegraph posts over the disputed territory.[405]

It is not surprising that it was this suggestion, running alternate telegraph poles, that was taken up by both the Iranians and Ottomans. It effectively delayed any decision regarding territories and kicked the whole question of the border position into the delimitation long grass. The many issues that had bedevilled this strip of territory went unanswered, even though questions of sovereignty and extension of the state apparatus had been raised. In time, the issue of Zohab was to be solved when the entire Ottoman-Iranian border was delimited, however for the moment the issue of the telegraph and Zohab only complicated delimitation issues in this region. On the other hand, the introduction of the telegraph had a large role to play in delimiting the Iranian-Kalati border, which remained a relatively simple exercise.

Khaneqin also raised questions of sovereignty and the extent of Iranian governmental control over its peripheries, both issues which would influence the delegates in Paris. Iran's interaction with this modern invention did impact the delimitation of borders. British interest in questions of sovereignty were limited to practicalities and the facilitation of the telegraph network rather than defining Iran's borders as Iran would have liked. Here was an example of British imperialism operating without political or diplomatic confrontation with

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[405] Kemball to William Stuart, Bagdad, September 29, 1864, FO248/220, unnumbered.

Russia. As we shall see when it came to oil, a vital issue to British security, the British were more intent to modify Iran's borders.

Oil and its effect on Iranian border delimitation

The saga of the delimitation of the Ottoman-Iranian borderlands stretched over the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, (see Chapter 5) and has spawned much analysis. One argument seldom put forward is that it was not until oil was discovered, that Britain was motivated to complete the process. That is to say, that whilst the British might have been exasperated by their involvement of negotiating a border for so long, it might also have been beneficial for them. The perpetuation of the contested border might have helped Britain with their own policies in Iran. Participation enabled Britain to keep an eye on the Russians and extend their political dominance over southern Iran.

Another point is that the politics of oil in Iran has been dominated, in the twentieth century, by the narrative of Iranian grievance in the face of British arrogance and greed. Ownership of Iran's own oil had become part of the nationalist and patriotic cause exemplified by the 1953 Coup. However, oil, a symbol of progress, had huge ramifications for British and Iranian relations already at the turn of the twentieth century. This section will show that the increase in Britain's power and influence in southern Iran and the

marginalisation of Iranian wants and desires led directly to a delimitation that was in Britain's interest.

By 1908, British influence had become dominant in southern Iran. Iran's growing weakness and nascent revolutionary environment had coincided with greater involvement of the British. Opening the Karun River to commercial traffic in 1888 and increased British commercial and trading interests in the region had consigned the British to a greater strategic interest in southern Iran. Projects such as the construction of a road linking the Karun River to Isfahan, by the Lynch Brothers, commonly called the Bakhtiari Road, began a greater incursion into the tribal peripheries of Iran.[406] The road, completed in 1900 and the Karun River Project crucially opened Bakhtiari territory to greater British involvement. Indeed, these projects facilitated a dovetailing between Britain's commercial interests and government which was almost seamless. It was in fact J R Preece, the British Consul in Isfahan, who, in making a reconnaissance among the Bakhtiari in 1895, first thought of building a road through the territory and opening the area to commercial traffic.[407]

The 1907 Anglo-Russian Convention, arguably the apogee of what the Iranians considered the final nail in their sovereignty until the First World War, split Iran into British and Russian spheres of influence. Over the next

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[406] *Tribes and Empire.*
[407] *Ibid.*, *Tribes and Empire*, p.100.

seven years, discovery of oil not only further increased British commercial and administrative involvement in southern Iran, but the Iranians were reduced to hapless bystanders in the process.

The concession given to the D'Arcy Oil Syndicate in 1901, would over time ever increasingly epitomise this symbiotic relationship. Unlike the now defunct Reuter Concession, D'Arcy had exclusive rights to search for oil throughout Iran and operated under the tacit approval of the British government. When, for example, the Bakhtiari had failed to satisfactorily protect the oil fields,[408] Indian Army soldiers were offered by the British government. Despite some reservations, it was felt that their use would "frighten them [Bakhtiari] and have a good moral effect in general" and "would have a sobering effect on the Khans".[409] In this way, not only were the British government and the Oil Company working in unison, but the British followed a policy of pacification of the tribes.

Clearly, it was obvious why the Iranians conflated the British government and the D'Arcy Oil Syndicate as one of the same. It was also becoming difficult to distinguish what little Iranian administration existed in the region from the British. Administratively, the British government had

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[408] Marling to Secretary of State (assumed to be Edward Grey), Foreign Office, June 10, 1908, FO248/923, p.94.
[409] Letter from Captain Lorimer to Sir Cecil Spring Rice, Teheran, September 14, 1907, FO248/923, p.297.

enmeshed herself into the Iranian administration in Khuzestan.[410] The special relationship with the Sheikh of Muhammerah was one example. The British had cultivated a relationship with the Sheikh of Muhammerah, who, ostensibly the Shah's regional representative, had forged a semi-independent existence. Indeed, at the height of the Constitutional Revolution, the Sheik looked for assurances from the British that his power and position would remain intact.

The demand by the British Admiralty to convert its ships from coal burning steam to oil engines was the conclusive factor. A natural manifestation of progress, the conversion had been energised by European exigencies and the naval race with Germany. Now, the usual role of the Royal Navy combating piracy in the Persian Gulf,[411] was augmented by the need to safeguard oil supplies.

The awareness that British commercial and diplomatic power had usurped Iranian control in the south are obvious examples of the narrative of colonialism by other means. Even so, oil was not referred to in *Claims of Persia before the Conference of the Preliminaries of Peace at Paris,* however existing concessions which prevented Iran from developing its own resources was and oil would undoubtedly have been an example. It is likely,

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[410] H. Lyman Stebbins, 'British Imperialism, Regionalism, and Nationalism in Iran, 1890-1919'.
[411] See J.F. Standish, 'British Maritime Policy in the Persian Gulf', *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.3, No.4 (Jul., 1967), pp.324-354, for both a general and detailed account of the Royal Navy's role in the Persian Gulf.

and a chink in the delegates' argument, that oil was left out because Iran did not have the ability to extract the oil herself.

The importance of oil

British government involvement with the D'Arcy Oil Syndicate and its subsequent incarnations was not unique but was to prove particularly enduring. The project was brought to William Knox D'Arcy by the former British Minister in Tehran, Sir Henry Drummond Wolff and the enigmatic Armenian or Georgian Antoine Ketabchy in the first instance. At first, drilling for oil did not produce commercially viable quantities, but rather than allow an interest in what was now called the First Exploitation Company to pass on to German interests, Ernest Pretyman attempted to dissuade D'Arcy from selling the concession.[412] Indeed, D'Arcy had already asked the Admiralty for a loan against future supplies.[413] Ernest Pretyman worked for the Admiralty and his interest coincided with his chairmanship of a new committee set up by Lord John Fisher, First Lord of the Admiralty, who was keen to convert the navy from coal to oil burning, and as a prerequisite, Ernest Pretyman analysed how oil supplies could be appropriated and safeguarded.[414]

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[412] Mostafa Elm, *Oil, Power, and Principle: Iran's Oil Nationalization and Its Aftermath* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1994) p.9.
[413] Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: The epic quest for oil, money, and power* (New York: Simon Shuster, 1991) p.140.
[414] *Oil, Power, and Principle*, p.9.

The British government, though advising D'Arcy for national security interests was by this time still unwilling to get financially involved in what was still a private enterprise but was gradually being pulled in out of necessity. Britain had no oil reserves and given the need for faster ships during a period of tremendous uncertainty in Europe,[415] Britain was forced to change her attitude. D'Arcy, who had by now run out of funds, was introduced by Ernest Pretyman to Lord Strathcona, who together with The Burma Oil Company, formed the Concessions Syndicate Ltd.[416] The British government, through the Admiralty, had become a commercial matchmaker.[417] By 1909, this company had metamorphosed into the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. The launch prospectus claimed:

> the outlet of the company's pipelines, though not in the British dominions, will be at the head of the Persian Gulf, and so under British Control (and) substantial contracts for fuel oil may be confidently looked for from the Admiralty[418]

Certainly, the company's tone was optimistic and in union with developing an oil powered navy. Though Lord John Fisher had retired in 1911, the issue was revitalised by Winston Churchill, also convinced of the need for oil powered engines. He became First Lord of the Admiralty in 1911.

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[415] Sara Reguer, 'Persian Oil and the First Lord: A Chapter in the Career of Winston Churchill', *Military Affairs*, Vol. 46, No.3 (Oct., 1982), pp.134-138.
[416] *Oil, Power, and Principle*, p.10.
[417] *The Prize*, p.141.
[418] Requoted in L.P Elwell-Sutton, *Persian Oil: A Study in Power Politics* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1955) p.20.

Mr. Charles Greenaway, now APOC's Chairman, testified before the Royal Commission on Fuel and Engines and did his best to get the supply contract. He alarmed the Commission by talking up the threat of Shell Oil gaining a foothold in the region.[419] Britain was moving to a position where it would have to secure oil supplies one way or another.

By 1912, a number of factors had changed on the ground. In 1904, oil had been struck by D'Arcy in the territory of Zohab, since at least 1823 a territory whose ownership had been disputed between Iran and the Ottomans. The output of Chia Sorkh in the Zohab was limited and the question of transportation made the site, at least for the moment, uneconomical. The drilling operations were moved to an area called Masjed-e-Suleiman in Khuzestan and a significant strike was made there in May 1908. Providentially, oil was struck just before the entire oil operation was meant to cease. The gamble had paid off. Now, the Anglo-Persian Oil Company looked to develop a refinery and chose a small island called Abadan and leased it from the Sheikh of Muhammerah.[420] The refinery was completed by 1912.

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[419] 'Persian Oil and the First Lord', p.134-135.

[420] L.P Elwell-Sutton describes how the British Government negotiated for Abadan directly with the Sheikh excluding the Oil Company. As part of the negotiation, the British were forced to give the Sheikh a guarantee of protection. See *Persian Oil: A Study in Power Politics*, pp. 20-21.

In the short term, the discovery of commercial quantities of oil was to fundamentally change the *loci* of the border debate. Now the territorial issues of Zohab and Muhammerah had an additional dimension. For the first time, Britain, through a commercial proxy, had a strong reason to either support Iran in the border negotiations or at the very least safeguard the interests of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company.

Fuelling the Zohab and Muhammerah debate

The territorial issues concerning Zohab and Muhammerah were longstanding. Not only do they show how both British and Russian diplomacy was integral to the negotiations between the Ottomans and Iranians, but also how Iran had become "captive" to a narrative in which delimitation was vital. At least up to the turn of the century, the issues thrown up by negotiations went to the heart of Iran's weaknesses in facing modern arguments of belonging and ownership.

The question of Iranian and Ottoman sovereignty over the regions of Zohab and Muhammerah led to several arguments, often theoretical, which were used to determine ownership. Discussions regarding documentary evidence, possession, testimonies, nomadism, tribes, religious and local affiliations were not only to complicate negotiations but were also to be factors used frequently when border issues were discussed. Indeed, they would also form some of the arguments put forward by delegates in Paris.

Zohab was claimed by both Iran and the Ottomans. Occupied by Iran during the 1821-1822 war it had not been given back to the Ottomans. Though under the first Treaty of Erzerum, 1823, Zohab should have been returned, the issue was complicated by the fact the treaty did not name Zohab by name and simply mentioned the return of "occupied territories".[421] The Ottomans provided documents confirming their ownership, which included a 1710 Treaty, a geographical memoir on the area by John Macdonald Kinneir and a document confirming grant of tithings.[422] However, the Iranians were not able to provide such documentary evidence and relied on arguing that possession of Zohab had come to pass during "an unstable period in Iranian history".[423]

As Iran could not prove title, proving ownership meant devising a historical methodology. But how far back does one go to prove possession or *uti possidetis?* In the words of Colonel Justin Sheil, "If Turkey reverts to so distant a period to prove rights, there is no reason why Persia should not take a retrospect still more remote".[424] Also past ownership required balancing against present ownership. Colonel Justin Sheil went on to argue

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[421] *The Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands*, p.104.
[422] *Ibid*., *The Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands*, p.104.
[423] *Ibid*., *The Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands.*
[424] Justin Sheil to Lord Aberdeen, Tehran, July 12, 1844, Enclosure 1 in No.6, Vol.1, TIIB.

"the above evidence is scarcely conclusive enough to warrant the resumption of a tract of territory which has been held by Persia for a length of time".[425]

Testimonies could be taken from the inhabitants. *Voce* evidence taken from Osman Pasha stated that the "300 villages, 6,000 families, all of them Sunnis; the boundaries were settled by Sultan Murad".[426] However, evidence for ownership on the ground was patchy. Inhabitants were few. Just two years later Major Henry Rawlinson stated, "the Plain of Zohab is almost destitute of permanent inhabitants".[427] Given these issues, rights could be assessed on periodic habitation. For example, Henry Rawlinson had noted that the plains were the habitual winter grazing land for Iranian tribes, some six to seven thousand families would descend on the plains and "they are to all intents and purposes during the period of their annual visit the de facto masters of the province".[428] The habitual problems of nomadic tribes crossing over territorial boundaries, particularly by the Kurds and Azeris over the Russian-Iranian border, (see Chapter 5) could now be examined antithetically. Whereas nomadic operations made border operation difficult, now the nomadic movement into desolate territories established possession rights, in this case by Iran.

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[425] *Ibid*.,
[426] Report of Answers received from Osman Pasha, late Governor of Zohab by the Commissioners of the Mediating Powers at Erzeroum August 11, 1843, Vol.1, TIIB.
[427] Observations by Major Rawlinson on the proposed transfer of Zohab, passed on to Sir Stratford Canning around December 1845, Vol.1, TIIB.
[428] *Ibid*.,

Religious themes played a relatively minor role. These nomadic tribes were supposedly Iranian and Shia, though the original inhabitants, the Kalhors, were Kurds and Sunni. More important was the question of territory, power, and military options.

For both the Ottomans and Iranians, the problems of making the Zohab part of their sovereign territory, raised more problems than solutions. Iran would gain little from securing territory that it could not administer or defend. In the same vein, Henry Rawlinson suggested occupation by the Ottomans would only give them headaches. He questioned the practicality of garrisoning Zohab; how would they deal with the migration of the Iranian tribes, and would it not cost considerably more to police than any possible income raised?[429] The only answer was that giving Zohab to the Ottomans would remove the natural defence of the Zagros from Iran and would "inflict a deep blow on the interests and security".[430]

Despite this, the British had begun to accept that the Zohab was in fact Ottoman territory occupied by Iranians. Though *uti possidetis* could be claimed by Iran, Stratford Canning's contention that "the claim of Turkey was all but substantiated as to Zohab"[431] was beginning to take root. This

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[429] *Ibid*.,
[430] Justin Sheil to Lord Aberdeen, Tehran, July 12, 1844, Enclosure 1 in No.6, Vol.1, TIIB.
[431] Sir Stratford Canning to Lord Aberdeen, Buyukdery[*sic*], August 31, 1844, Vol.1, TIIB.

indeed was the starting position for discussion in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Some of these same issues bedevilled Muhammerah, today subsumed by Khorramshahr. But here, at least, Muhammerah was a port and village whose strategic importance in the nineteenth century far outweighed its function as a harbour. Iran had claimed and possessed the right bank of the Shatt al-Arab tributary including the island of Khizr (present day Abadan), which they contended was part of Khuzestan province, ruled by the Kaab.[432] The Kaab were a settled tribe who had probably emigrated from Kuwaiti lands,[433] or from the marshes of the Tigris and Euphrates,[434] and had clearly dispossessed the Persian Afshars.

As Arabs, the Ottomans considered them "bona fide subjects of the Turkish Government".[435] The Iranians claimed that despite their ethnicity they had "transferred their allegiance to the Persian Crown".[436] Indeed, Muhammerah was governed by the Sheik of Muhammerah who considered himself subject to the Sheik of the Kaab.[437] He therefore owed allegiance to a

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[432] Also known as the Ka'b, Chaub, Caab, Chaab.
[433] A.H Layard, 'A Description of the Province of Khuzistan', *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, Vl.16, No. (1846), pp.1-105, p.43.
[434] Memorandum by Major Rawlinson on the subject of Muhammerah and the Chaab Tribe, Vol. 1, TIIB.
[435] *Ibid*.,
[436] *Ibid*.,
[437] Colonel Sheil (Her Majesty's Minister at Teheran) to the British Commissioners at the Conference of Erzeroum [*sic*], Vol.1, TIIB.

Sheik in Fellahieh, deep in Khuzestan and therefore Iranian territory. However, in reality the Sheikh of Muhammerah owed no one fealty. On many occasions he had considered himself quite independent of either the Ottomans or Iranians. During the Constitutional Revolution, the Sheikh went so far as seeking assurances from the British that his power and position would remain intact as a "contingency of Persia ceasing to be a Sovereign State and occupation or intervention by foreign Powers".[438]

Other indicators of ownership were equally blurred. Mohammerah never furnished troops to the Ottomans,[439] nor to the Iranians.[440] It was also difficult to establish either alliance or loyalty by tracing revenue or taxes. The assessment that Muhammerah paid what it had to and when it had to in order to be left alone is hard to ignore. When a religious issue existed, meetings between the Ottomans and Iranians generally emphasised a simple rule of thumb of relating Sunni's with the Ottomans and Shia with the Iranians.[441] The Kaab and Muhammerah were Shia, thus it made sense to stay with Iran.

The strategic importance of Muhammerah swept away all other arguments. The Ottomans worried about the implications for the port of

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[438] Consul-General Cox to Sir Edward Grey, Bushire, March 15, 1909, Volume 4, TIIB.
[439] Captain Kemball, Acting Political Resident, Bushire, to Colonel Sheil, 19 August, 1843, Vol.1, TIIB.
[440] Captain (afterwards General Sir Arnold) Kemball, (Acting Resident at Bushire) to Her Majesty's Minister at Tehran, 19 August, 1843, Vol.1, TIIB.
[441] *The Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands*, p.107.

Basra if Muhammerah were allowed to grow bigger.[442] However, Ottoman control of Muhammerah would have weakened Iran and therefore possibly Britain. In the 1840's as British commercial interests were still relatively light, the opinion was that Muhammerah should have gone to the Ottomans. Again, the Ottomans had produced documents showing "rights of possession" and Persia had not.[443] Colonel Justin Sheil was the lone voice appealing for the Iranians. The destruction of Muhammerah in 1837 by the Ottomans made him question Ottoman ownership. Would they have destroyed it if they considered it part of the Turkish dominions?

Colonel Justin Sheil's other form of evidence is more intriguing. He presented a map of the region produced by John Macdonald Kinneir, which included Muhammerah "in the dominions of Persia".[444] Imperial mapping was considered evidence of ownership, given weight when presented by a man of distinction. By 1919, Iran had certainly taken on the importance of maps as the map accompanying *Claims of Persia before the Conference of the Preliminaries of Peace at Paris* purported to describe Iran's patrimony or *Vatan* in visual terms.

John Macdonald Kinneir, in previous correspondence, had also raised another point in favour of Iran owning and controlling the port of

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[442] Colonel Williams to Sir Stratford Canning, Mohammerah, February 4, 1850, Vol.2, TIIB.
[443] *Ibid*.,
[444] Colonel Sheil (Her Majesty's Minister at Teheran) to the British Commissioners at the Conference of Erzeroum [*sic*], Vol.1, TIIB.

Muhammerah, "The Persian flag has since the reign of Kerim Khan been hoisted at Mohammerah, and carried by its boats up to this date".[445] The flag as the visual embodiment of *uti possidetis* further emphasised the nationality of the people of Muhammerah and the Kaabs. This point was also not lost on Iran. Prince Firuz had asked the British for some requisitioned ships from the Russians on the Caspian Sea to fly the Iranian flag. (See Chapter 3)

In the end, Stratford Canning categorically claimed that *uti possidetis* applied and Muhammerah and the eastern bank should go to Iran.[446] British strategic interests assumed that Iran would be a more pliable country with which to do business. Just as importantly, it was also what the Russians wanted. The Russian Commissioner backed Iran with regard to Muhammerah and the eastern shore,[447] and any dispute with the Russians would at this stage have been unhelpful. In mediating a commitment for Muhammerah and the eastern shore to remain with Iran both the British and the Russians did so simply for strategic reasons rather than any grand gestures for Iranian sovereignty.

One methodology, established in the 1840's by the British and Russians was territorial exchange. Zohab or Muhammerah could be bartered

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[445] J.A Malcolm to Lieutenant A.B Kemball, Sources whence is derived from the Information supplied from the Resident in the Persian Gulf relative to Muhammara, Vol.1, TIIB.
[446] Sir Stratford Canning to Lord Aberdeen, Buyukdery [*sic*], November 1, 1844, Vol.1. TIIB.
[447] Colonel Sheil to Lord Aberdeen, Tehran, December 29, 1844, Vol.1, TIIB.

to the Ottomans and Iranians. The practicality of giving up one piece of land to secure another had been established.[448] By 1891, the Ottomans had also begun to appreciate the efficacy of such an arrangement. The Ottomans had proposed to relinquish their claim to Muhammerah for the repatriation of Zohab.[449]

Altering the methodology

However, by the early twentieth century, the British attitude had changed and ideally, Britain wanted to keep both Zohab and Muhammerah in Iran. There was a significant transition from the British negotiating position in the nineteenth century, from one which had a large dose of impartiality, to one in which British commercial and strategic interests were paramount. Iran was to be side-lined from all important decisions.

Iran's weakness had been consecrated in the 1907 Convention, which allowed the British the latitude to pursue their own interests. The exigency of having important concessions in Zohab where the Anglo-Persian Oil Company had drilling operations and in Muhammerah where Abadan was leased from the Sheik of Muhammerah, substantially buttressed their viewpoint. Moreover, by 1913 the Anglo-Persian Oil Company was

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[448] Justin Sheil to Lord Aberdeen, Tehran, December 16, 1845, Vol.1, TIIB.
[449] Sir Percy Cox to Government of India, Muscat, May 23, 1912, FO416/167, p.282.

considering drilling for oil in the Muhammerah region,[450] and the British required access to the Shatt al-Arab waterway, which adjoined Muhammerah as this was the only waterway linking the Karun River to the Persian Gulf.

There was, however, a reasonable argument for ceding Zohab, along with Anglo-Persian Oil Company, to the Ottomans. Becoming part of Ottoman controlled territory promised that the Anglo-Persian Oil Company might gain from greater security and increased trade with Ottoman Mesopotamia.[451] But for this to happen a few issues needed to be resolved. The Ottomans had to agree for the Anglo-Persian Oil Company to lay a pipeline through Ottoman territory to Muhammerah and to ensure that the concession given to the Anatolian Railway Company for oil exploration had lapsed.[452] The Anatolian Railway Company had the right of preference over oilfields in Bagdad and Mosul vilayets.[453]

The Anglo-Persian Oil Company happily went along with this reasoning though their opinion was tempered by more substantive thoughts. Mr. Greenaway, the Oil Company's Managing Director, was of the opinion that neither a pipeline nor steamer transport would be economically viable.[454] Though Mr. Greenaway, envious of future commercial possibilities such as

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[450] Sir Percy Cox to Sir Edward Grey, Bushire, April 9, 1913, FO416/171, p.64.
[451] Marling to Sir Edward Grey, Constantinople, August 13, 1912, Vol.5, TIIB, p.323.
[452] Marling to Sir Edward Grey, Constantinople, August 11, 1912, Vol.5, TIIB, p.320.
[453] *Ibid*.,
[454] Sir Edward Grey to Marling, Foreign Office, August 29, 1912, Vol.5, TIIB, p.471.

concessions in the Bagdad and Mosul vilayets once they became part of Ottoman Mesopotamia,[455] the pertinent question was would the Ottomans recognise the Anglo-Persian Oil Company concession.[456]

Nevertheless, some of the advantages of the Oil Company residing in Ottoman controlled territory were beginning to look weaker as time went by. Attacks on Oil Company executives in Ottoman territory showed that security might not in fact improve with the move. Furthermore, the idea was expressed that the Oil Company had escaped a "great deal of official obstruction" by residing in Iran and not Ottoman Mesopotamia.[457] So whilst the British expressed a wish for calm borders, security, and the expansion of the Iran's state apparatus, this did not extend to constraining Oil Company operations. Sir Edward Grey was also far from convinced. He was worried that if the territory was transferred, the Oil Company might not be able to "secure and maintain" its rights under the Ottomans.[458] Interestingly, though it was noted briefly at the time,[459] there was little communication as to why the Ottomans would want to accept a concession which paid them no royalties and for which they would not be able to extend any further charges.

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[455] Anglo-Persian Oil Company to Foreign Office, September 3, 1912, Vol.5, TIIB, p.476.
[456] *Ibid*., p.471.
[457] Marling to Sir Edward Grey, Constantinople, August 20, 1912, Vol.5, TIIB, p.425.
[458] Sir Edward Grey to Count Benckendorff, Foreign Office, April 28, 1913, Vol. 5, TIIB p.578.
[459] Sir Edward Grey to Lowther, Constantinople, April 18, 1913, Vol. 5, TIIB p.571.

Not for the first time, as with the introduction of the telegraph, decisions were being made either before or without adequate topographical information. Discussions, and indeed decisions, regarding the Oil Company's operations were being made without the exact knowledge of where they were established. The Oil Company could only confirm that the Chia Sorkh drill site was situated in the territory which was to be transferred to the Ottomans.[460] It was not until Mr. Soanes (British Consul in Qasr-e-Shirin), produced a map (Map 8), that the British and Russians verified where the Oil Company operations were. In doing so they also clarified some of the options they had. In addition to the options shown on the map, Soanes had worked up a demarcation that kept the Oil Company's operation on Iranian territory whilst giving the Ottomans as much territory as possible.[461] However, the British attitude was moving towards a demarcation similar to the red line on the map which would leave the Oil Company operation in Ottoman hands.

Russian obstruction was one problem the British were not to face. The Russians proved to be amenable to most British proposals, despite the fact that the territory was within their sphere of influence. Russian aquiesence with regard to Zohab was easier than the British had feared, regardless that many of the British decisions were based on the welfare of the Anglo-Persian

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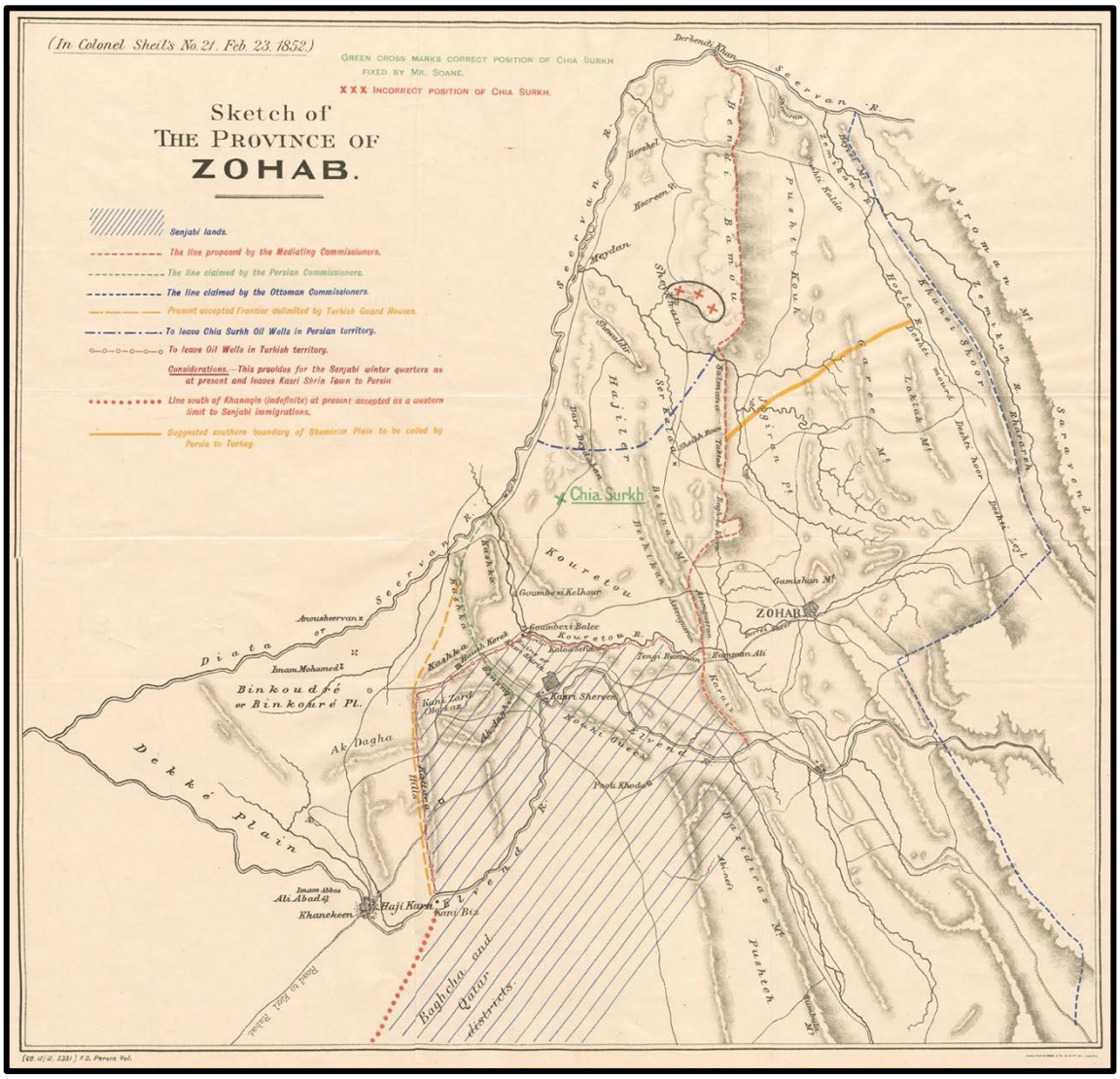
[460] Sir Edward Grey to Marling, Foreign Office, August 29, 1912, Vol.5, TIIB, p.471.
[461] Lowther to Sir Edward Grey, Constantinople, February 5, 1913, Vol.5, TIIB, p.528. See enclosure 2 in No 1. Mr. Soanes was, it is suspected, using a map similar to this with additional overlays.

Oil Company. Of course, it helped that Russia had pushed for the repatriation of Zohab to the Ottomans under the Treaty of Erzerum in order to avoid any future misunderstandings.[462]



Map 8. Chia Surkh & Qasr-i-Shirin (Chia Sorkh & Qasr-e-Shirin)
This map, created by Mr. Soanes in 1912, was overlaid on Colonel Sheil's original 1852 map, and showed the whereabouts of the Oil Company operations in Zohab and indicated possible borders. It also showed the Sanjabi lands and the Kuretu and Elvand rivers below which Edward Grey saw further possibilities.
Source: FO416/169

[462] Buchanan to Sir Edward Grey, St. Petersburgh [sic], August 29, 1912, Vol.5, TIIB, p.470.

However, the Russians expected that any agreement would include the retention of the Serkala Plain for the Iranian Shiah [Shia] tribes.[463] Raised again in a later memorandum the Russians asked if it was wise to leave the Sinjabi and Kalhor tribes in Ottoman hands given they were Shia. This memorandum also queried a delimitation that would cut off the Qasr-e-Shirin to Kermanshah Road.[464] These suggestions were taken on board (Map 9).

The British now moved to legally bind the Oil Company's status into the subsequent agreement. They had, in August 1912, already debated the inclusion of a caveat that no concession already granted could be subsequently invalidated by the transfer of territory.[465] It would appear that Sir Charles Marling's suggestion that the rights of the Oil Company could be safeguarded in return "of diplomatic support"[466] of the Ottomans was both vague and insufficient. By June of 1913, a draft article outlined the future rights of all parties.[467] The transferance of territory specified that Iran would not lose its shares in the Oil Company, but would forego all its profits in the transferred territory. This was not only an allusion to the future problems between Iran and the Oil Company but fed directly into the delegates narrative that British involvement had been purely self-serving.

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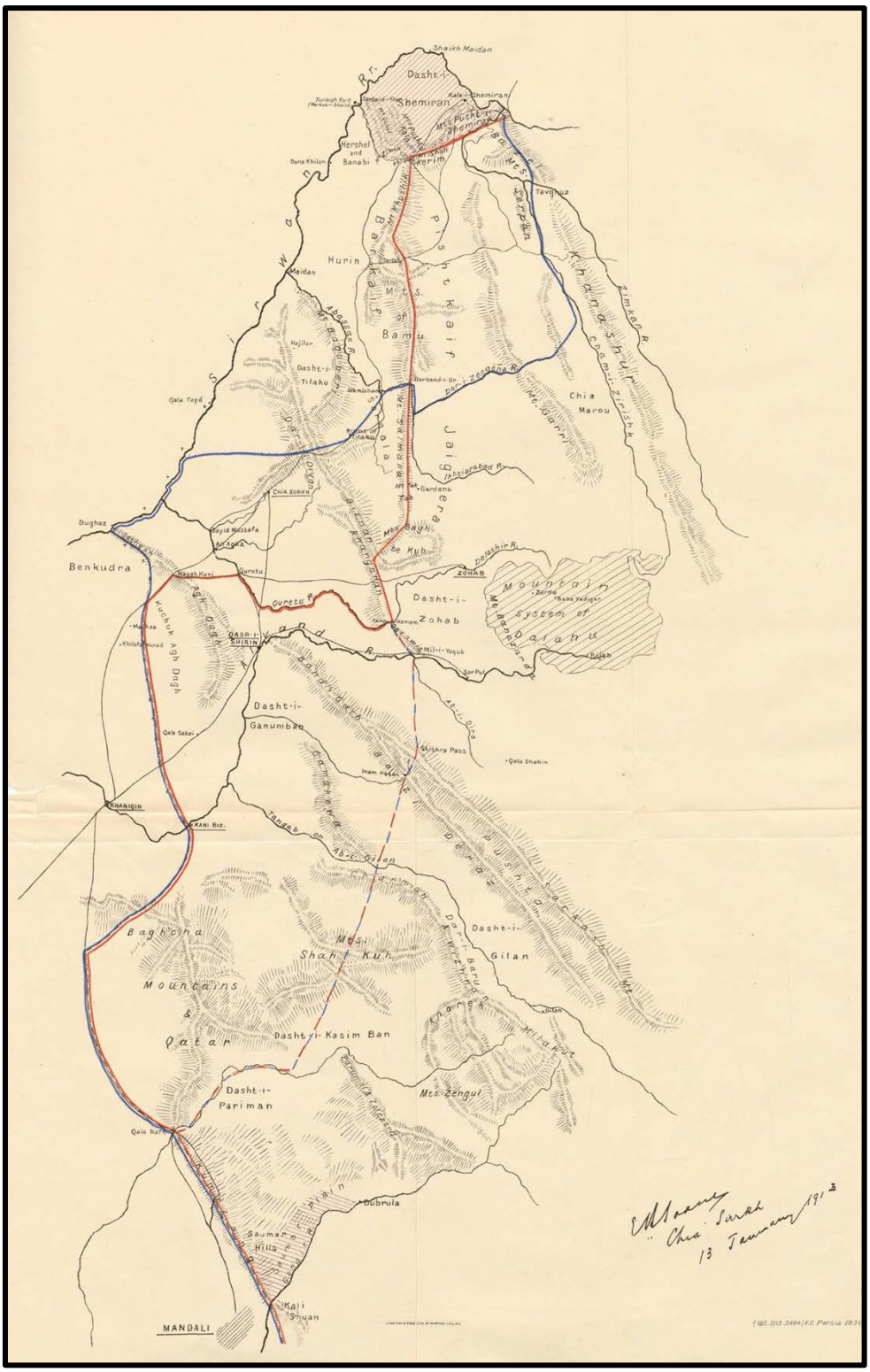
[463] Lowther to Sir Edward Grey, Constantinople, March 18, 1913, Vol.5, TIIB, p.536.
[464] Lowther to Sir Edward Grey, Constantinople, April 11, 1913, FO416/171, p.73.
[465] Sir Edward Grey to Buchanan, Foreign Office, August 21, 1912, Vol.5, TIIB, p.426.
[466] Marling to Sir Edward Grey, Constantinople, August 26, 1912, Vol.5, TIIB, p.444.
[467] Sir Edward Grey to Lowther, Foreign Office, June 7, 1913, FO416/171, p.275.



Map 9. Sketch map of the Frontier between Shemiran and Mandali

This map, drawn up by Mr. Soanes and Mr. Orloff (Russian Consul General in Bagdad) shows the options available. The blue line left Chia Sorkh in Iranian territory and the red line left it to the Ottomans, though Mr. Soanes was open to a combination of both. Their methodology assumed that the loss of Chia Sorkh to Iran demanded a reciprocal adjustment in Ottoman demands. It separated Senjabi from Kalhur (Kalhor) lands and gave Shemiran to the Ottomans on the basis that it was a Turkish Kurd village, despite being in Iran.

Source: FO416/170

The draft article did not entirely satisfy Sir G. Lowther. He felt that the expression "transferred territories", whilst satisfactory for territories that were genuinely ceded, was not when it came to making changes which only recognised the existing frontier or status quo. He proposed the umbrella wording of "rectifications" to describe the transferring of territory which could subsequently be defined.[468]

Sir Edward Grey also had some reservations, though these were more substantive and revolved around skewing the details of the agreement in British favour. He wanted to know if the territory south of the Kouretou (Kuretu River), which had been recognised as part of the status quo and therefore Ottoman, could be claimed as part of the Oil Company concession. For their part, the Oil Company had not claimed this territory.[469] Sir Charles Marling felt that this was a step too far and argued that it would be hard to justify.[470] It would appear that the matter was swiftly dropped. It is interesting to note that the lands specifically below Kuretou River included the same lands put to one side for the Sinjabi (Senjabi) and Kalhor (Kalhur) tribes. Sir Edward Grey's intentions were indicative, not only of the invisible nature of any barrier between business and politics, but also the disdain with which the British treated the Iranians.

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[468] Lowther to Sir Edward Grey, Constantinople, June 19, 1913, Vol.5, TIIB, p.609.
[469] See two memorandums by Sir Edward Grey, Foreign Office, July 4, 1913, FO416/171, p.9.
[470] Marling to Sir Edward Grey, Constantinople, July 7, 1913, FO416/171, p.19.

The Ottomans accepted the draft article regarding the Oil Company[471] and thereafter changes to this document were minor. The British were more than satisfied. They had managed to get the Ottomans to accept the rights of the Oil Company north of the Elvend River but had obfuscated their rights below the river.[472] The Oil Company was also satisfied as their rights had been legally preserved. Subsequently, the Oil Company confirmed that they believed that oil reserves did exist below the Elvand River in at least four localities.[473] Probably Sir Edward Grey either suspected or knew about this. Eventually, it became known that the Ottomans had been aware of the existence of oil below the Elvend River but had wanted to get "better terms than can be obtained from the Anglo-Persian Oil Company",[474] and presumably wanted to open the area up with their own concessions.

Iranian agency in the final decisions concerning Zohab was almost non existent. The British and Russian's diplomacy had established a delimitation in a contested territory with more comfort to the Ottomans than the Iranians. Whilst the Iranian delegates at Paris would lament the loss of territory as well as particularly British colonial practices, what they had not appreciated was the contingent nature of delimitation and political and

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[471] Marling to Sir Edward Grey, Constantinople, August 5, 1913, FO416/171, p.101.
[472] Mallet to Sir Edward Grey, Constantinople, November 10, 1913, Vol.5, TIIB, p.753.
[473] Anglo-Persian Oil Company to Foreign Office, November 12, 1912, Vol.5, TIIB, p.766
[474] British Commissioner, Turco-Persian Frontier Commission, Camp Qasr-i-Shirin, May 1, 1914, Vol.6, TIIB, p.3.

commercial imperial needs. When it came to the issue of borders around Muhammerah, these practices would dominate even more.

With Muhammerah, Britain found herself constrained to past commitments regarding a likely border which were to now prove unhelpful. The Second Treaty of Erzerum in 1847 had ceded Muhammerah and the island of Khizr (Abadan Island) to Iran. However, to get this negotiation over the line, the British and Russians had issued a joint note (the Explanatory Note) which clearly stated that in ceding this territory to Iran, the Ottomans had not foregone their rights. In effect, it confirmed Ottoman ownership of the Shatt al-Arab waterway and substantiated that Iran had no rights to the Shatt al-Arab river.[475] This note was only presented to Mirza Mohammad Khan, the Iranian Commissioner, annexed to the final document. Seemingly forced into signing the document, the Iranians had always argued that it had been signed for expediency's sake. Yet another example of imperial abuse in the Iranian narrative, and a bugbear for the Iranians for years to come, by 1912 it was inhibiting British room to negotiate. Also inhibiting, was the Williams Line in 1850, the result of the Delimitation Commission after the Treaty of Erzerum. This boundary delimitation had been accepted temporarily, but nevertheless established a precedent.

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[475] 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* (The SOAS/GRC Geopolitics Series, 1994) p.74.

These commitments compelled Sir Edward Grey to believe that Britain could not ignore both the Treaty of Erzerum, the Explanatory Note, nor the Williams Line, all of which the British had been party to. However, as was frequently the nature of British politics towards Iran, there existed divergent views. In contrast, the India government view was assembled from the situation at hand rather than past assurances. Lieutenant Wilson, Muhammerah Consul, explained in 1909 that the locally observed boundary had run down the middle line (Thalweg) of the Shatt al-Arab, separating Ottoman from Iranian territory.[476] This line had been observed for 60 years. Consul General Cox (Sir Percy Cox) had in 1910 also suggested that utilising the Williams Line of 1850 would put the Sheikh of Muhammerah's palace and court into Ottoman territory and that as the 1850 line gave the whole of the channel to the Ottomans, it also gave them two islands undoubtedly Iranian territory.[477]

Wilson would certainly have known that a previous India government memorandum had noted the "inconvenience" that the Ottomans possessed a map which gave them the whole river.[478] He proposed that the British should

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[476] A T Wilson Memorandum, Mohammerah, May 5, 1912, Vol.5, TIIB, p.178.
[477] Memorandum by Mr. Parker respecting the Frontier between Mohammerah and Turkey, April 3, 1912, Vol.5, TIIB, pp.47-92.
[478] Ritchie to Foreign Office, India Office, June 3, 1911, FO416/165, p.168.

attempt to adhere to the 1869 Carte Identique, effectively re-marking the area as part of the status quo.[479]

In 1912, the Alwyn Parker Memorandum pointed out some deficiencies with the India government approach. Alwyn Parker argued that the Wilson proposal had a whiff of "local expediency" about it and suggested that the original decisions had been based on sound proposals reached by the delimiting commissions. The award had relied on avoiding giving any untoward power either to Muhammerah and Basra and had been based clearly on Articles 2 of the Treaty of Erzerum and the Explanatory Note. Article 2 had specifically detailed the territory to be given to Iran and gave Iran the right to navigate the river. Logically, the implication was that any other disputed territory was Ottoman and that the Ottomans had sole rights towards the Shatt al-Arab. He did, however, propose to amend the Williams Line of 1850 to leave the Sheikh's property on Iranian soil.[480]

Alwyn Parker had extended an argument that would hold up in The Hague Tribunal if the dispute were to be presented there. He believed that arguments based solely on the India government's point of view could not hold and would lead to further claims by the Ottomans.[481] This approach had

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[479] A point re-iterated in Memorandum by Mr. Parker respecting the Frontier between Mohammerah and Turkey, April 3, 1912, Vol.5, TIIB, pp.47-92.
[480] *Ibid.*,
[481] *Ibid.*,

considerable sway with British politicians who had over the years been deeply suspicious of such oversight and did what they could to avoid it. Concerned that an award by The Hague Tribunal would prove "inconsistent with assurances extended by His Majesty's Government to the Sheikh of Mohammerah," it also prevented Britain acting on "considerations based upon political expediency".[482] Furthermore, there existed a substantive belief that the Ottomans would prevail if any award was made by The Hague Tribunal,[483] and the floodgates could open to oversight on other imperial arrangements. For example, should not all of Azerbaijan be judged to be Iranian territory, then, under the 1907 Convention, Russia may be forced to seize it.[484] Avoiding judgements from The Hague Tribunal, and any international oversight, was consistent with the ability of Britain and Russia to exercise whatever policy they desired in Iran.

Of course, one of the many hopes the Iranian delegates had was that countries such as Britain would in the future not operate outside international law. The British practice, on the other hand, was the avoidance of international oversight and a guiding principle or *modus operandi* at the Peace of Paris. Britain went to great lengths to exclude oversight or international commitments in what it saw as Britain's back garden. In this

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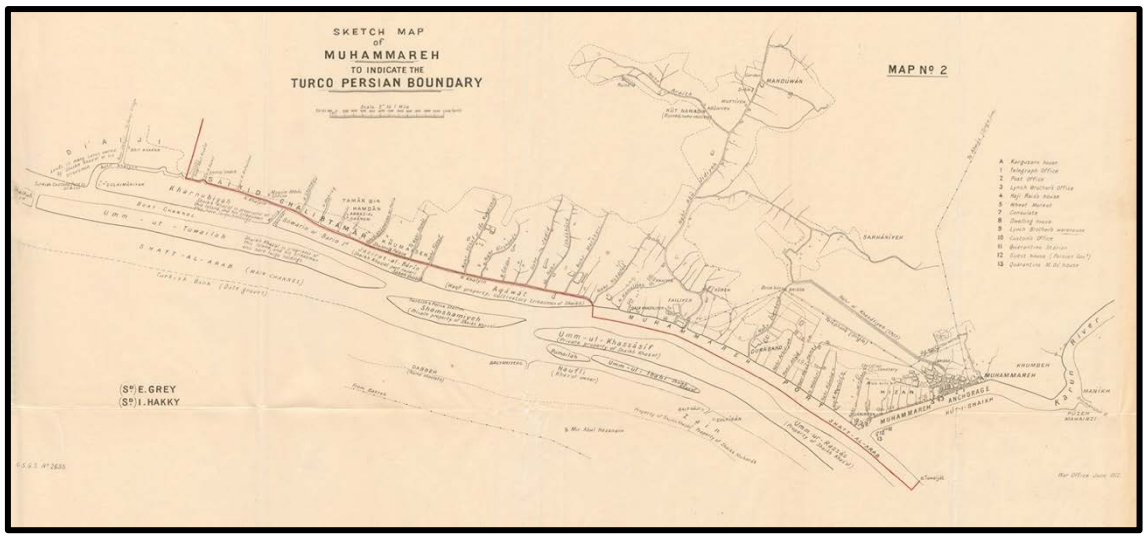
[482] Sir Edward Grey to Lowther, Foreign Office, March 2, 1912, FO416/167, p.288.
[483] Buchanan to Sir Edward Grey, St. Petersburgh [sic], March 13, 1912, FO416/167, p.338
[484] *Ibid*.,



Map 10. Sketch map of Muhammerah to indicate Turco/Persian Boundary
This map shows the delimitation which followed the Iranian banks of the Shatt-al Arab and then the Thalweg line to allow for the commercial exploitation of Muhammerah.
Source: FO416/171

case, it was the India government that argued that that any award allowing Ottoman control of the Shatt al-Arab was hard to reconcile with international law.[485] More practically, they also argued that Ottoman control of the Oil Company's anchorage and wharf at Abadan would put a dent in the British relationship and any assurances to the Sheikh of Muhammerah.[486] In the end, Sir Edward Grey made the decision himself and determined that the Treaty of Erzerum would indeed carry the day. With the exception of also claiming for Iran a few islands attached to Abadan Island and others that shifting sands may bring into being, safeguarding the anchorage at Muhammerah and Abadan Island, he maintained the Foreign Office line.[487] Eventually, this

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[485] Cox to Marquess of Crewe, Mohammerah, May 5, 1912, FO416/167, p.241.
[486] *Ibid*., For a full study of British assurances to the Sheik of Muhammerah see appendix to Memorandum by Mr. Parker respecting the Frontier between Mohammerah.
[487] Sir Edward Grey to Buchanan, Foreign Office, July 17, 1912, FO416/168, p.78.

proposal morphed into the Constantinople Protocol.[488] As luck would have it the Turks were occupied with other problems. In October, Turkey went to war with against the so-called Balkan League.

It is probably not surprising that Iran played virtually no role in the decisions concerning Muhammerah and Zohab. They were merely invited to accept these decisions. While some recognition needs to be accorded to the fact that Iran's central government was weak and the country was undergoing a Constitutional Revolution, the actions of the Russians and British exemplified colonial rule in everything but name.

Sir Edward Grey's opinion had always been that the Iranians should be grateful for what they received. Indeed, Iran "would be well advised to make some relatively minor cessions if by doing so she could secure the great advantage of a settled frontier".[489] In fact, just a month later, it was also obvious that the British and Russians would exert whatever necessary pressure on Iran to accept whatever was presented to them.[490] It was also obvious that Russian desires were secured by keeping Qasr-e-Shirin in Iran, a probable terminus for its railway plans.[491] The Iranians asked for confirmation as late as September 1912 that no territory would be lost in

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[488] See November 19, 1913, FO416/172, p.145.
[489] Sir Edward Grey to Lowther, Foreign Office, March 6, 1913, Vol.5, TIIB, p.533.
[490] Lowther to Sir Edward Grey, Constantinople, April 5, 1913, FO416/171, p.58.
[491] *Ibid*.,

Zohab and that the future of the Zohab was in no way linked with Muhammerah.[492] It is not clear if this question was answered but the Iranian bickering did not stop.

The decisions concerning the delimitation of Zohab and Muhammerah, on which by this point the delimitation of the entire Ottoman-Iranian frontier depended, were formed entirely by imperial imperatives to the exclusion of Iran's wishes or participation. However, though the Iranian delegates complained about British and Russian high-handed tactics, one question is not easy to answer. Did imperial intervention safeguard Iranian borders to a greater extent than if Iran had been left to its own devices, or did imperial intervention curtail Iran's aspirations? This question can only be examined by assessing British and Russian intervention in the nineteenth century.

The two case studies examined here assert that the introduction of modern technology and ideas in the Iranian context had wide-ranging ramifications on Iran's borders. These contingent forces, applied through the prism of imperialist policies, sometimes inadvertently and sometimes more directly affected Iran's borders. In this way, Iran's confrontation with imperial modernity would more broadly determine her borders.

The next chapter will establish both the origins of this pattern of domination and set out how Iran was affected by them. It will concentrate on

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[492] Townley to Sir Edward Grey, Tehran, September 4, 1912, FO416/168, p.381.

the north-western borderlands of Iran and describe the efforts of the Ottoman and Russian empires and their methodologies in accumulating territory.

Chapter 5: Lost territories and Turanian aggression

This thesis has argued that Iran's diminishing territories had largely been driven by Russian and British political strategies and the forces of modernity, thus undermining Iran's sovereignty. This chapter will develop this argument and, in particular, examine Iran's ability to withstand the more modern imperial forces of Russia and the Ottomans. In doing so, it will also examine Britain's role in seemingly furthering the Russian agenda. Less broadly, this chapter will magnify the details of Russian and Ottoman methods of expansion which were not just military and examine how the Iranians were ill-equipped to deal with issues of nascent nationalism and the British response to these issues.

Parisian *desiderata*

Iran's irredentist agenda in 1919 encompassed both grievances from the distant past and more contemporary resentments. Iranians desired no less than the return of lands lost under the Treaty of Turkmanchai and territories from the break-up of the Ottoman Empire. In addition, the Russians and Turks were to pay reparations for their encroachment and actions in Iran during the First World War, which had taken place despite Iran's claim to neutrality.

The Treaty of Turkmanchai remains a dark episode for Iranians to this day, as it presaged an opening of Iran to foreign pressures and involvement. It represented a culmination of huge losses of territory from two wars with

the Russians which fundamentally re-balanced the political supremacy in Russian favour. It is no wonder, therefore, that these territorial losses were to form a major element of irredentism in the *Claims of Persia before the Conference of the Preliminaries of Peace of Paris*.

This document asserted that the "integrity of Persia" and its "natural frontiers" had been attacked by the Russians. There were two facets to this argument. Not only that the "wresting of these provinces from Persia constituted by itself an act of iniquity", but that the Russians had gone further. After agreeing to use the Aras River as the outer mark for the frontier, a further "arbitrary frontier" was formed by the Russians as they appropriated large parts of Moghan and Talesh and separated "without any legitimate reason, populations which had been used to living in unison and in constant relations".

The Iranians asked for the return of "Bakou, Chirvan, Derbent, Chaki, Chemakha, Guendja (Elisabethpol), Karabagh, Nakhdjevan, Erivan". Places, deemed *Persianate,* and where Muslims were the majority. This glossed over the fact that Armenians lived in many of these locations and were Christian. The delegates asserted that "a large proportion of the inhabitants of these provinces have lately appealed to the Government of Teheran, to protect them, and they have expressed the wish to be restored to Persia".[493] In reality,

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[493] All quotes from *Claims* p. 7 and p.9.

many of these *Persianate* people wanted to carve out separate futures, following their own nationalist agendas, and both the Azeris and Armenians had put forward their own claims.

Iran's territorial claims also included some territory from the breakup of the Ottoman Empire. They claimed the area around Suleimanieh (now Sulaymaniyah), "wrested from Persia by the Treaty of Erzeroum [*sic*]," and the whole of Kurdistan based "on ethnic, geographical, religious and other reasons." Suleimanieh, because as with the territories lost to Russia, it had been "arbitrarily torn" from Iran by both war and then festering treaties.[494] In addition, the Iranians felt compelled to look after their Shia brethren. This compulsion, however, fell short of other considerations. They only asked for Iranian interests to be considered when the disposition of the Shia holy places in Iraq took place. Iran did not ask for the control of Karbala, Najaf, Kazmein and Samarra but asked for the ethnicity of these areas as Shia and predominantly *Persianate* to be safeguarded.[495]

These *desiderata* represented a curious selection. Justification for repatriation of territories seemed both confused and opportunistic. If the territories lost under the Treaty of Turkmanchai were to be repatriated because of religion and *Persianate* affiliations, then what was to become of

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[494] *Ibid*., *Claims*, p.9.
[495] *Ibid*., *Claims*.

Daghestan (Dagestan), which could be claimed on the same basis. Reasonably, a predominately Christian Georgia was not asked to be returned but then why ask for Iraqi Kurdistan. The Kurds and Iranians had a shared ethnicity, however they were Sunni not Shia. It was more likely that the delegates had a vision of uniting the Kurds within the Iranian Empire. As far as the Iranians were concerned, the Kurds had "declared themselves desirous to be re-united to Persia".[496] As we will see this last contention is perhaps the most dubious given the rather ambivalent feelings the Turkish Kurds had against the Iranians during 1905 and 1912. The Kurds had collaborated with the energetic campaign that the Turks had undertaken to annex parts of Azerbaijan from 1905 to 1919. Not unexpectedly, the Kurds claimed the length and breadth of Kurdistan as their own at the Peace Conference. This entailed a greater expanse than that claimed by Iran and if successful would have resulted in the loss of significant Iranian territory.[497]

This chapter will begin by analysing the territorial causes for the second Russo-Iranian war and the resulting Treaty of Turkmanchai. It will then examine the extensive encroachments by the Ottoman Empire between 1905 and 1911 against the background of unresolved delimitation issues. Finally, it will look at the actions of the Ottoman Turks during the First

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[496] *Ibid*., *Claims*.
[497] *Memorandum on the claims of the Kurd people* (Imprimerie A.-G. L'Hoir, Paris, March 1919)

World War and how Iran was affected by Ottoman and Russian incursions as well as British passivity and recurring indifference.

The Treaty of Golestan and the road to Turkmanchai

Research on the causes of the second war between Iran and Russia (1826-1828) has generally concentrated on the religious fervour created for Jihad, the protection of Muslims from Russians, and the pro-war stance of the Crown Prince Abbas and therefore, by definition, the weakness of Fath Ali Shah. Sometimes overlooked, but important, were the features of the Treaty of Golestan, imposed on the Iranians and the roles of both the British and Russians. Crucially, it was to be the details of past treaties which were to offer Russia opportunities for further expansion. These methods, allied to a more modern military, were to place Iran at a disadvantage.

The consequences of badly drawn treaties

The Treaty of Golestan had left many territorial issues unresolved. This factor, combined with Russian expansionist designs, enabled the Russians to absorb new territories. Under this treaty, Russia was the recipient of Georgia, Darband, Qobba, Baku, Shirvan, Shakki, Ganjeh, Moghan and parts of Talesh. Article 2 of the Treaty of Golestan problematically "based agreement on existing frontiers, and future demarcations of these and

decisions on borders not yet determined, on the status quo ad presentem".[498] In effect it meant that each side could remain in control and possession of territories which they held pending any delimitation negotiations. In practice this meant that territories could still be occupied before delimitation.

This gave the region a fluidity that, as we will see, directly helped the Russians and their creeping expansion southwards, and would eventually create new border issues that would subsequently have to be resolved. Territorial expansion remained a state objective for the Russians from the Tsar down to the lowliest official. This tacit understanding allowed for considerable leeway in terms of how the expansion was to be achieved. Envoys and military leaders were able to execute this unwritten rule in many ways. The distance from St. Petersburg and the formation of a small cadre of people with "specialist" knowledge of the Caucasus, allowed envoys and generals to take advantage of the Tsars ignorance and as glory seekers to pursue whatever policies they felt were warranted.[499]

General Tsitsianov fit this identikit of a Russian military official making a name for himself helping to expand the Empire. He "was given free rein to embark on a series of conquests that contributed to the outbreak of the war [first

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[498] P.W. Avery, 'An Enquiry into the outbreak of the second Russo-Persian War, 1826-1828' in C.E. Bosworth (ed), *Iran and Islam* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1971) p.23.
[499] *Russia and Iran.*

war]"[500] and illuminated the path to be followed by others. When General Yermolov was sent to Iran in 1817 to make some concessions regarding a new border settlement, he simply ignored the Tsar's more reasonable instructions.[501] The Russians on the ground were following different priorities. By 1826, this fact was even noticed by the Iranians, who whilst negotiating prior to the outbreak of the second war complained to the British "It is not only that they do not transmit our communications to their ministers but they do not forward the despatches of their own government to me".[502]

Britain's prevarication

The British also showed themselves unwilling to draw a line under the Treaty of Golestan. Just as the territorial issues generated by the Treaty of Golestan needed to be resolved, the British military mission was withdrawn and Britain refused to help trace "the frontier in the Caucasus",[503] as Sir Gore Ouseley had promised. Britain, not for the last time, had withdrawn from the Iranian political sphere at an important juncture. The fact that the delimitation of the frontier between Iran and Russia after the Treaty of Golestan had not been carried out was not solely the responsibility of the British, but unlike the Iranians and Russians who arguably had a vested

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[500] *Ibid*., *Russia and Iran*, p.65.
[501] *Ibid*., *Russia and Iran*, p.153.
[502] Translation of Letter from Meerza [*sic*] Abul Hassan Khan (Minister of Foreign Affairs) to Chairman of the Court of Directors, October 27, 1826, FO60/30.
[503] *The Beginning of the Great Game in Asia 1824-1834*, p.29.

interest in the fluidity of these borders, Britain's interests were uniquely served by a fixed and delimited border.[504]

British strategies were not assisted by their diplomats in Iran. After Sir Gore Ouseley, Sir Henry Willock became Chargé d'affaires to Iran. A Foreign Office man, Sir Henry Willock's overall appreciation of his role was defensive and as far as the Russians were concerned, non-confrontational. If the Iranians expected help from the British in their relationship with the Russians it was not forthcoming from Sir Henry Willock or his superior, Foreign Minister George Canning.

The repercussions of the Treaty of Golestan, and the desire not to follow through with the necessary border delimitation, was only one unhelpful aspect. Another was the understanding that the Iranians had from the Definitive Treaty of 1814 that Britain would protect them from Russian aggression. Indeed, further payments of subsidies towards the Iranian government were intrinsically linked to this treaty. In order to carry on receiving subsidies Iran could not be the aggressor in a war with Russia.

Sir Henry Willock's role in the run up to another war between Russia and Iran varied from attempting to stop the war to proving Iran was responsible. He firmly suggested that the cause of the war had lain with the

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[504] See Inclosure [*sic*], MacDonald to Swinton, Tabreez [*sic*] May 13, 1827, FO60/30, p.139, in which Prince Abbas Mirza suggested that as Britain had mediated the Treaty of Golestan they had a responsibility to ensure that the terms of the Treaty were adhered to.

Iranians. In November of 1826, he wrote, "Nothing can be more clear than that no Casus Foederis, entitling the Persians to British Subsidy had arisen, when the Shah began the War".[505] Indeed, he blamed the Crown Prince for inciting the war.[506] To an extent Sir Henry Willock was following George Canning's policy. Ever since Sir Gore Ouseleys' commitments, George Canning had been trying to find a way out of them. At the same time, Sir Henry Willock also seemed to agree that Russia had been aggressive in its tactics.[507] Sir Henry Willock was showing a diplomatic vacillation that came from a deep-rooted wish not to get entangled and as Edward Ingram memorably pointed out, the British resented being asked to help and would have preferred "to defend the Indian Empire to the last Persian".[508] Finally, in June 1826, Sir Henry Willock reported that he had asked the Shah "to come to a definitive settlement of the frontier even if he was obliged to make some sacrifice".[509]

Exactly why the British did not want to get entangled with Iranian issues concerning Russia is unclear, as rebuilding diplomacy in a post-Napoleonic Europe took precedent, it was evidently in their interest to do so. Others thought so too. Sir John Malcolm believed the Russian threat to Iran

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[505] Draft letter Henry Willock to Foreign Office, November 10, 1826, FO60/27, p.8.
[506] Henry Willock to George Canning, Camp Sultanieh [*sic*], June 27, 1826, FO60/27, p.126.
[507] Henry Willock to George Canning, Camp Sultanieh [*sic*], January 13, 1826, FO60/27, p.15.
[508] *Britain's Persian Connection,* p.2.
[509] Henry Willock to George Canning, Camp Sultanieh [*sic*], June 27, 1826, FO60/27, p.131.

and hence to India was clear. In a devastating critique of Russian aggression towards Iran, Sir John Malcolm claimed that there was no doubt that Russian policy was to establish direct influence over Iran and that Britain was abetting them in this process. Not only were British "Hot and Cold proceedings" allowing the Russians to achieve their expansionist policies but there had to be a point at which the British could not let the Russians advance any further and Iranian independence was crucial to "continued tranquillity".[510]

Between 1826 and 1835, Iranian diplomacy became the purview of the India government and Lieutenant Colonel John MacDonald was instructed on the character of his mission "with regard to the intrigues and encroachments of Russia".[511] Though John Macdonald was no less vociferous in deciding that Iran's attack "constitutes an aggression on the part of Persia", he also felt that the ultimate aggressor had been Russia and that Iran had to some extent been manipulated into war as Russia had procrastinated over boundary issues. Ultimately, John Macdonald's diplomatic stance echoed those in India who saw the threat of Russia to Iran and hence to India much more clearly than the Foreign Office in London.

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[510] Confidential Notes on the progress of Russia to the Eastward, John Malcolm, November 18, 1826, FO60/29, pp.129-142.
[511] Extract from a letter from George Swinton, Secretary to the Governor General in Council, to Lt. Colonel MacDonald, April 16, 1824, FO60/29, p.113.

By 1824, Sir Henry Willock had become more wary of Russian intentions. In a despatch in December, he suggested that the Russians were showing a worrying desire to expand their diplomatic relations around the Caspian.[512] As the Russians were forming local political networks, it was clearly starting to dawn on the British that the Treaty of Golestan, rather than closing the door on Russian aspirations, had put the Russians in a better strategic position in relation to Iran and therefore India.[513] Russia's strategy in Iran, which perfectly moulded the diplomatic and military into an expansionist force, was successful because of Iran's weakness, but it had been aided by Britain's passivity.

Russian pressure and British vacillation

By 1825, Russia's strategy had become more deliberate and urgent. In April, Fath Ali Khan was sent to St. Petersburg to accept Russia's conditions as Iran understood them. However, General Yermolov offered the return of some cannon captured at Aslanduz in return for territory at Lake Gokcha (Gokchai).[514] Afterwards, General Yermolov set out his reasoning for Lake Gokchai, as wanting to straighten out an ambiguity in the frontier.[515] Reports

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[512] Henry Willock to Lord Amherst, Tehran, December 23, 1824, FO60/25, p.22.
[513] *Ibid*.,
[514] Henry Willock to George Canning, Tehran, April 1, 1825, FO60/25, p.60.
[515] Translation of a letter addressed by His Excellency General Germaloff [Yermalov] to His Royal Highness Abbas Mirza, undated, FO60/25, p.64.

from British agents suggested that Abbas Mirza was not inclined to accept the loss of the land around Lake Gokchai and preferred to go to war.[516]

Another envoy was sent to Tiflis to negotiate with General Yermolov. This resulted in a variation of General Yermolov's earlier demand. Lake Gokchai, an uninhabitable strip of land according to General Yermolov,[517] could be exchanged for "a valuable district in Karabagh".[518] However, Abbas Mirza was loath to exchange for territory that he felt had been improperly occupied in the first place,[519] though the Iranians had previously proposed to swap part of Karabagh for Gokchai themselves.[520] It was probable the Russians never intended such a swap because they had already taken steps to remain. Iranians were told to leave the territory.[521] This mild ethnic cleansing clearly meant that the Russians had determined not to hand Gokchai back.

General Yermolov, by this point irritated by Abbas Mirza's intransigence asked for this offer to be directed to Fath Ali Shah. Abbas Mirza, the heir apparent, entrusted by Fath Ali Shah to negotiate with the Russians, no doubt saw this as an insult. Abbas Mirza's circumvention was

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[516] Miscellaneous information translated from the correspondence of the secret informant regarding the Russian and Persian frontier discussions, and the proceedings of the Russian Mission at Tabriz, Undated, FO60/25, p.72.
[517] *Ibid*.,
[518] Henry Willock to George Canning, Tehran, June 15, 1825, FO60/25, p.95.
[519] 'An Enquiry into the outbreak of the second Russo-Persian War, 1826-1828', p.28.
[520] Translation of letter from Mirza Sadok to Russian Authorities, March, FO60/27, pp.53-57.
[521] Mohammad Hossein Kavoos Araghi, 'Gozry bar mo'ahedat-e Golestan va Turkmanchai va peyamadha-ye an' [A look at the Golestan and Turkmanchai treaties and their consequences] *Faslnameh-e tarikh-e ravabet-e kharegy*, year 3, summer 1381 [2002], no.11.

probably calculated to be just that. Superficially, it is easy to see how Abbas Mirza has been labelled as an agitator for war with Russia. However, in reality, Abbas Mirza was simply attempting to minimise Iran's losses and believed that Iran was giving up more than they were receiving. As Peter Avery has suggested, "He tried to keep a precarious balance between peace and war, but nearer war than peace. Circumstances went beyond his control and he lost his balance".[522]

Whilst these negotiations were going nowhere, Sir Henry Willock was doing little but observing and calming the Iranians when he could. In the meantime, Major Monteith, who had been surveying the area in question, had reported that far from being a bad deal there were some advantages to the land swap, as the Karabagh territory was valuable and a strategic obstruction to further encroachment.[523] Fath Ali Shah was at this point urging the British to engage in the negotiations, however Henry Willock was neither inclined to get involved nor permitted to by the Russians. The last time he had asked the Russians had been in 1816 however.[524]

The Russians had been active in Gokchai for some time. A small detachment of Russian troops was stationed there with Iranian agreement. Ostensibly to prevent Russian deserters from reaching Iran along with other

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[522] 'An Enquiry into the outbreak of the second Russo-Persian War, 1826-1828', p.21.
[523] Montieth to Henry Willock, Tabreez [*sic*], July 17, 1825, FO60/25, p.216.
[524] *Ibid*.,

policing duties. It was logical for the Russians to make their occupation permanent. But recently, the detachment had been forced out by forces from Erivan.[525] By November, the Russians had run out of patience and diplomatic strategies and had returned to Gokchai in force.[526] Indeed, it was this final expansion into the contentious area of Gokchai that provided the trigger for the second war between Russia and Iran.

At this point, the death of Alexander I appeared to give everyone much breathing space. Even the British took stock and after being asked again, felt that it might be in its interests to involve herself in negotiations with the Russians, especially "while the hope remains of proving a case of aggression on the part of Russia".[527] But it was the Russians who took the initiative. Prince Menshikov came to visit the Shah and demanded the ratification of the agreement proposed by General Yermolov.[528] The British felt that an evacuation of Gokchai might have prevented a certain war,[529] yet it was becoming clear that whatever offer Prince Menshikov had given Sir Henry Willock was unlikely to lead to a substantive change in the Russian position.[530] It is perhaps no surprise that the Shah felt humiliated and hemmed in by Russian and other internal considerations and felt he had no

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[525] Henry Willock to George Canning, Tabreez [*sic*], October 24, 1825, FO60/25, p.251.
[526] Henry Willock to George Canning, Tehran, November 28, 1825, FO60/25, p.284.
[527] Henry Willock to George Canning, Tehran, February 17, 1826, FO60/27, p.32.
[528] Henry Willock to George Canning, Camp Soolamaneah [*sic*], July 18, 1826, FO60/27, p.201.
[529] *Ibid*.,
[530] Henry Willock to George Canning, Camp Sultanieh, July 23, 1826, FO60/27, p.207.

choice but to commence hostilities. Even Willock lamented that a temporary evacuation of Gokchai could have prevented a war.[531]

Diplomacy continued despite the beginning of hostilities. Russia's approach in this regard is interesting. Though General Yermolov agreed that Gokchai did indeed belong to Iran,[532] and at the same time suggested that the lands were "uninhabited and of no value", he also argued that they held Gokchai by the same right that Iran held more fertile lands that belonged to them. The basis of "status quo ad presentum" was now used as a pretext to grab additional land prior to any demarcation.[533] Furthermore, the Russians blamed the Iranians for holding land simply because delimitation had been delayed and that this in no way diminished Russian claims to these territories.[534] In this way, Russia suggested that "status quo ad presentum" was applicable when Russia held the territory but not when Iran did.

The war began well for the Iranians. In less than a month Iranian forces had reoccupied Shirvan, Shakki, Ganjeh and were at the gates of Tiflis. However, the Russians re-organised and the *Persianate* uprising of people under Russian yolk never materialised as the Iranians had expected.[535] Soon,

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[531] Henry Willock to George Canning, Camp Sultanieh [*sic*], July 18, 1826, FO60/27, p.203.
[532] Henry Willock to George Canning, Tehran, May 20, 1826, FO60/27, p.48.
[533] Translation of letter from General Wilhelmenoff to the Shah Camp Sultanieh, May 20, 1826, FO60/27, p.98.
[534] *Ibid*., p.102.
[535] Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Russia and Azerbaijan: A borderland in Transition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995) p.6.

the Russians turned the tide and after the loss of Tabriz, the Iranians sued for peace. The British had been worried about the ramifications of Iran losing the war almost as soon as it had begun. Despite their original reticence to give Iran its allowance under the Definitive Treaty, arguing that Iran and not Russia had been the aggressor, they now countenanced giving one year's payment directly to the Russians as reparations[536] and hoped that a return to the Golestan Treaty borders could be achieved.[537]

The Treaty of Turkmanchai

The Treaty of Turkmanchai was catastrophic for the Iranians and Erivan and Nakhchivan became Russian territory. Clause 4 of the treaty described the course of the new border. The border was to run from the mountain, which was known as Little Ararat, and follow the river of the Lower Karasu as it flowed into the Aras River. The Aras River would then form most of the border until the fort of Abbas Abad around which a Russian buffer zone was to operate. The frontier was then to deviate, using a number of rivers that eventually flowed into the Caspian. This deviation put the important and fertile territory of Moghan and the port of Lankaran within the Russian frontier.[538]

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[536] Letter and memorandum, Henry Ellis, January 3/4, 1826, FO60/30, pp.7-11.
[537] Sir John MacDonald to EIC, Camp at Deharagan, October 28, 1826, FO60/30, pp.15-25.
[538] See Ali Modares, 'Baksh-e siyasi-e eqtesadi: tahleel-e qarardad-ha este'mary (qarardad-e Iran va Rusiye-e Turkmanchai)' [Politics and Economics: Analysis of colonial contracts (Treaty of Turkmanchai between Russia and Iran] *Bonyad-e tarikh-e enqelab-e eslami-ye Iran*, no.9, year 3, winter 1366 [1987]

This border was strategically important, allowing the Russians to penetrate Iran at will and to outflank the Ottomans in the case of war. A necessary exigency given that they were still at war with the Ottomans when this treaty was signed. As with the Treaty of Golestan, Russian foresight accommodated further expansion at a later date. It is perhaps surprising that the Russians were happy to retain part of what was effectively to be called Azerbaijan, but not all of it, as they nearly occupied all of it at the end of the war. Perhaps they felt, quite reasonably that they could attack Iran again whenever they wanted as they could simply walk across the Aras River. It is also perhaps the case that the target of reaching the Aras River had been such an absolute strategic target that going beyond it had not been considered. Nevertheless, both points of view are interesting if one considers a protocol of the treaty which outlined an agreement that unless the remainder of the reparations demanded by the Russians were not paid by August 1828, a mere 6 months, then Iranian Azerbaijan would be annexed by Russia.[539]

In total, the Russians, under Article 7 demanded reparations totalling 10 Korours (20,000,000 silver roubles). The protocol called for the remaining reparations totalling 8 Korours (16,000,000 silver roubles) to be paid by October 1828.[540] The British were significantly worried about the possibility

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[539] 'tahleel-e qarardad-ha este'mary, pp.75-76.
[540] *Ibid*., 'tahleel-e qarardad-ha este'mary'.

of Iran losing even more fertile territory so they offered Iran a subsidy to cover the payment. Whether this subsidy was ever forthcoming is a contentious point.[541] By 1834, 2 Korours was stilled owed in reparations and its payment had been postponed at least twice. The British were worried that as long as Russia was owed the remaining reparations, then Russia would always have an advantageous political position. The British were so worried that in 1834, Viscount Palmerston again countenanced lending Iran the money.[542] Under a secret treaty with Russia in 1884, Iran was released from further obligations to pay reparations.

The India government had overseen relations in Iran after 1830. There is no doubt from the British archives that a new perspective on Russian ambitions and Iran's role in that had developed. The next five years were taken up by a certain amount of naval gazing regarding the role of the British in the lead up to the Treaty of Turkmanchai and a re-assessment of their strategy that was becoming entirely anti-Russian. Questions of the Shah's health, the death of Abbas Mirza and the succession, the abrogation of Article 4 and 5 of the Definitive Treaty were all discussed under the looming apparition of Russia.

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[541] It is by no means certain that this subsidy was paid, if anything it appears not.
[542] Sir John Campbell to Viscount Palmerston, Tehran, April 9, 1834, FO60/34, unnumbered.

Though Iran was to lose other territory to the Russians, the Treaty of Turkmanchai, and the events leading up it, remained a psychological wrench that would feed Iranian discontent for years to come. Russian military success, and indeed their ingenious use of treaties, signalled the arrival of modernity in a brutal fashion.

Rapacious Turkey and Azerbaijan

In 1919, Iran sought the region of Suleimanieh and the rest of Turkish Kurdistan. On the one hand, the return of these territories represented meagre returns for the hostilities and territorial interchanges between the Ottomans and Iranians over hundreds of years. On the other hand, the grounds on which these territories were demanded were dubious. Iran's *desiderata* therefore needs to be considered against the background of the downfall of the Ottomans and the forthcoming British involvement in Mesopotamia. However, also to be considered are the events that led the Iranians in Paris to conclude that the Turks had been and were still a threat to Iran's territorial integrity and nascent nationalism.

Against the background of what has been described as by G E Hubbard as "a phenomenon of procrastination unparalleled in the chronicles of oriental diplomacy",[543] the issues that bedevilled the delimitation of the

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[543] Re-quoted in General Preface, p.xvii, Vol.1, TIIB.

Ottoman(Iraq)-Iranian border over a period of some 70 years have been detailed elsewhere. What became a quadripartite negotiation from 1847, with Russia and Britain overseeing the numerous delimitation quests and commissions of the Ottomans and Iranians, arguably led to Iran losing some tracts of territory. However, despite Britain's zeal to delimit the Zohab and Muhammerah in line with their own political and economic imperatives (See Chapter 4), Britain was largely a mediating force in the negotiations. Russia's mediation, in the round, was also largely constructive and was in stark contrast with its expansionist attitude elsewhere in Iran (see Chapter 6).

The Ottoman Empire had longstanding designs on Azerbaijan, the Caucasus and northern Iran in much the same way as the Russians. In part, the treaties of Golestan and Turkmanchai had been efforts to protect the growing Russian Empire from Ottoman attack as much as taking territory from the Iranians. Border disagreements were plentiful, especially after the second Treaty of Erzerum. In June 1849, Amir Kabir, the modernising Prime Minister of Iran, had complained of Turkish encroachments to the Russians in Qotur.[544] Naser al-Din Shah, despite having met with Sultan Abdul Aziz where they discussed the border with the aid of maps,[545] complained that the

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[544] 'Nameh-ye Amir Kabir darbareh-e pishravy-e Osmani dar marz-e Azerbaijan' [Letter from Amir Kabir regarding Ottoman progress along the Azerbaijan border] in Ibrahim Safayee, *Marz-haye na-aram*, [Restless borders] (Idareh-e kol-e gozaresh-e vezarat-e farhang va honar, 1352 [1973]) p.17.
[545] *Marz-haye na-aram*, p.2.

attacks on Khoi and the bombing of Bayazid, had left the Shah unable to understand the nature of the Turkish/Iranian relationship.[546]

As a result of the 1877 Russo-Ottoman War the Ottoman Empire had become less European and more Asiatic in ethnicity. This, combined with the promotion of Sultan Abdulhamid II, who, ascending the throne in 1876 as a champion of Sunni pan-Islamism, has led some to argue that Ottoman encroachment in Azerbaijan projected a largely religious component.[547] Sunni Islam was gaining a militancy it had hitherto not had and this aggressiveness had eradicated the *millet* system and the safeguards for minorities in the Empire. Though religion was to play a greater role in border politics than ever before, it was only part of the story. Turkish strategies come under a different light when Turkish encroachment is examined more thoroughly between the longer period of 1905 to 1919 rather than just between 1905 and 1912. As we will see, both Ottoman and then Turkish exploitation affirmed commercial railway interests, military pre-eminence, and simple territorial seizure.

Religion was utilised, by and large, to coalesce forces against Iran. The Kurds, predominantly Sunni, formed a large facet of the Ottoman project. The Ottomans gave the Kurds the encouragement they needed to increase their raids and plunder the borderland at will. This strategy would not have

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[546] Tejavoz-e Osmani dar Khoi va Maku va Kurdistan [Ottoman invasion of Khoi, Maku and Kurdistan] *Marz-haye na-aram*, p.27.
[547] *The Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands*, p.230.

been as effective if they had not co-opted the Kurds dissatisfaction for the Iranian government and the opportunity for the Kurds to grab more booty and land. So the threat to Nestorian, Armenian and Jewish communities was real.

In comparison, Iran operated a degree of independence between monarchy and Shiism, the state religion. In the main, different ethnicities, except for Islamic offshoots such as Babism, were tolerated. Indeed, Armenians were given positions in the state structure.[548] None of this prevented the frequent internecine clashes and bloodletting which was getting worse at the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1905, Armenians and Muslims were attacking each other, and the violence had spread from Nakhchivan to Julfa,[549] and by October the British were already worried that the disturbances would spread to Iranian Azerbaijan.[550] It was felt that Turkish encroachment would only further inflame what was at the best of times a precarious balance.

Suleimanieh

The Second Treaty of Erzerum (1847) did indeed recognise the territorial transfer of the town and province of Suleimanieh to the Ottomans. The Ottomans had forcibly argued that their rights to Suleimanieh were

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[548] Garun Sarkasian, 'Armaniyan dar seyr enqelab-e mashrutiat-e Iran' [Armenians during Iran's Constitutional Revolution] *Faslnameh-e farhangy-e peyman,* No.36, yr 9, Summer 1385 [2006]
[549] Sir A Hardinge to Marquess of Landsdowne, Tehran, June 3, 1905, FO416/151, no.113, p.87.
[550] Mr. E Grant Duff to Marquess of Landsdowne, Tehran, October 10, 1905, FO416/151, no.53, p.47.

undisputedly based on the 1639 Treaty, which neither the Ottomans or the Iranians could find.[551] Iran's claim was weak and considered by the British "as unworthy of serious consideration".[552]

Iran claimed in 1919 that it had "ceded the region of Sulemanieh to Turkey in order thus to cut short that country's pretensions to Mohammerah".[553] There is some doubt that Suleimanieh was ever specifically considered as a makeweight or trade off with another territory. Though, of course, all territories were in some way or another part of border negotiations. Indeed, it was the territory of Zohab that was often cited as a territory that could be exchanged for Muhammerah.

The Iranian confusion in this matter may have been genuine or as a result of associating "the town and province of Suleimanieh" with Zohab for practicality. The Ottomans themselves had argued that Suleimanieh's environs "extended from the eastern shores of Lake Urmia to Mount Sahad, near Tabriz, and incorporated districts extending from Ushu, Lahijan, Baneh, Maraga, and Sqqez in the north, and Posht-e Kuh and Zohab in the south".[554] This area could by no means be realistically tied to the town of Suleimanieh, but as Sabri Ateş contends, Suleimanieh was merely a jumping off point for claiming other

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[551] *The Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands*, p.96.
[552] *Ibid.*, *The Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands*, p.97.
[553] *Claims*, p.8.
[554] *The Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands*, p.286.

districts. The one thing that these districts all had in common was how they fed into the narrative of the Kurds and who ruled and controlled them.

Kurdistan

The Iranians claimed that the rest of Turkish Kurdistan should be incorporated into Iran. Iran claimed that notable Kurds had asked for this to happen and that it made sense in view of the "ethnic, geographical, religious" ties. In combining Suleimanieh, arguably 70% Kurdish, with other areas of Kurdistan, Iran claimed all of it. As discussed above, in truth, Iran's claim to the Kurds were slim. Not only were the vast majority of Kurds Sunni and disapproved of rule from Iran, but Iran's relationship with the Kurds had been fractious. It may be possible that the only "notable Kurd" had been Sharif Pasha who had discussed the plight of the Kurds with Mohammad Foroughi.[555]

The Ottomans' relationship had not been much better. Though the Sublime Porte had at time made use of Kurdish light cavalry,[556] they had also pursued numerous punitive campaigns against them. In 1834 against the Kurdish emirates,[557] and in 1845, the powerful Babans.[558] At the time the Babans ruled Suleimanieh or their behalf.

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[555] 'Yaddashtha-ye montasher nashodeh'.
[556] Nabil Al-Tikriti, 'Ottoman Iraq', *The Journal of the Historical Society*, VII: 2 June 2007, p.203.
[557] *The Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands*, p.67.
[558] *Ibid*., *The Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands*, p.73.

Between 1840 and 1842, Suleimanieh had become the focal point on which the Iranians and Ottomans had nearly gone to war. Plundering Kurds, operating with impunity across the borders, had initiated a high level of distrust between the Ottoman and Iranian governments. Troops sent from either nation did little to help and indeed did much to further inflame the distrust between the two countries. The need for a patrolled frontier to prevent tribes crossing over contested borderlands was becoming increasingly obvious.[559] It was also obvious to the Iranian delegation that resolving the "Kurdish question" meant applying the same doctrine to Suleimanieh and the rest of Kurdistan. Divesting either made little sense when it came to re-inflating the Iranian Empire.

Turkish incursion: 1904 to 1914

The Iranian nationalists in Paris, in the same breath, linked the transfer of Suleimanieh with the incursions into contested borderland territories between 1904 and 1914.[560] Unlike in the early 1840's when Iran showed some military ability to protect its borderlands, by the turn of the century the Ottomans clearly had the upper hand. Undoubtedly this inability to protect Iranian territory between 1904 and 1914 drove Iranian desires for territorial restitution in 1919.

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[559] See Captain Brant's letters from Erzerum, in particular pages 26 to 85, Vol.1, TIIB.
[560] *Claims*, p.8.

This section will examine more closely the issues concerning the Ottoman-Iranian border. In particular, how the Ottomans were able to galvanise inchoate nationalist tendencies along with Kurdish militancy to attempt to push back borders towards Iran.

By 1905, much was to go their way. The Ottomans, with ruthlessness, attempted the subjugation of northern Azerbaijan, assisted if not encouraged, by the perpetually declining Iranian state and the parlous ability to defend Iran's *guarded domains.* The Constitutional Revolution in Iran between 1906 and 1911 only further encouraged the Ottomans. They also took advantage of Russia's relative military decline and in some cases regional inattention. Russia's military disaster against Japan and the 1905 revolution meant Russian minds and guns were elsewhere. Against expectation, the Ottomans also saw greater opportunities for mischief under the Anglo-Russian Agreement. Ostensibly an agreement that might have fortified Iran's border integrity, it allowed the exploitation of the weaker partner, Russia, whilst at the same time stopping any proactive approach by the British. The Iranians, for their part, found little encouragement with the Anglo-Russian Agreement when it came to safeguarding Iran's borders. Unable to do so herself, the Iranians looked towards the agreement that guaranteed its independence and by association anticipated to protect its borders.

Also in the Ottomans favour was the lack of progress in delimiting the Ottoman-Iranian boundary. The numerous treaties and resulting

delimitation commissions merely made progress plodding, a situation which enabled the Ottomans to make sustained incursions into both contested and recognisable Iranian territory. The lack of progress and the intrinsic nature of the treaties assisted in this respect. The Treaty of Erzerum (1823), which followed the last full conflict between Iran and the Ottomans, led to a greater emphasis on detail but little else. It was not until the British and Russians got involved in the Second Treaty of Erzerum (1847) that areas of dispute were highlighted. However, though this treaty, in recognising the sovereign territorial rights of each state, came closest to establishing a treaty on similar lines to the Treaty of Westphalia (1648), it did little more than to ascertain a wide strip of territory between the two empires that was disputed, and its chief importance lay in the distinction between the lands of Islam, or *dar al-Islam*, and the lands of disbelief, or *dar al-harb*[561] (See introduction). Ottoman insistence on reverting to the lost Treaty of Zohab (1639), served as an apocryphal basis on which to support negotiations. Contested interpretations of these treaties merely enabled negotiations to continue with no substantive end in sight.

Though, ultimately, British, and Russian mediation had been unsuccessful, the charts and maps collected were used to define the territory in dispute and the result was to set out the status quo for the border, along

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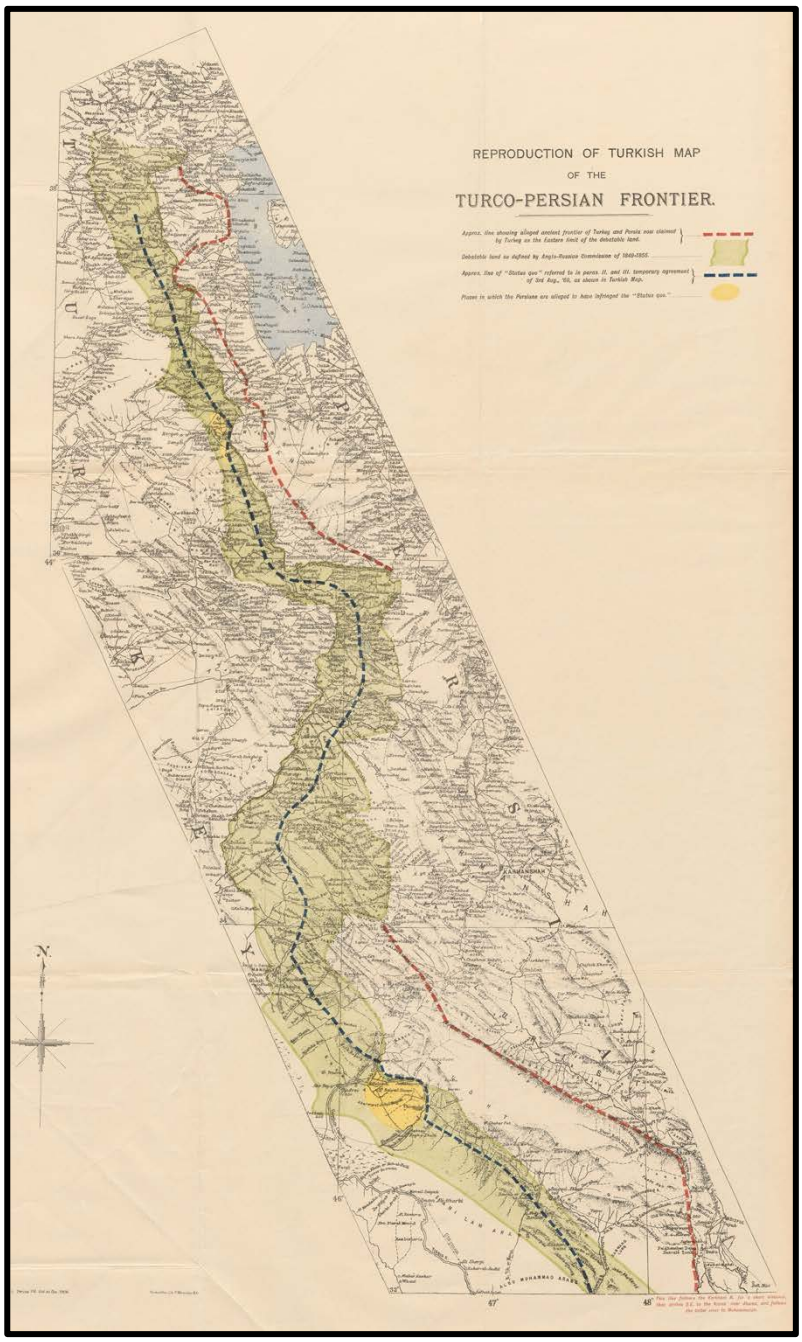
[561] General Preface XVI, Vo.1, TIIB.



Map 11. Carte Identique (1869)
Red line: Approximate ancient frontier line and eastern limit of Turkish claims.
Green: "Debatable" territory
Blue line: "Status quo" line according to agreement 3 August 1869
Yellow: Where Iran has infringed "status quo".
Source: FO 416/153

with a buffer zone (sometimes called the neutral zone). This would become to known as the Carte Identique (1869). However, as Alwyn Parker argued in

his report in 1906, the Carte Identique was not without significant faults.[562] The map did not actually define the frontier and some of the places of contemporaneous importance had been omitted. Coincidently, Alwyn Parker at the time a clerk in the Foreign Office also attended the Peace Conference.

Ultimately, the Carte Identique served to help prevent permanent Ottoman encroachment. By December 1911, the British and Russians concerned with the extent of Ottoman encroachments, assembled a Mission of Investigation, which was to report its extent. The Joint Report by Avalon Shipley and Vladimir Minorski was furnished together with a map showing the extent of Turkish encroachments overlaid on the Carte Identique (Map 12).

In October, The British were informed that the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs had recommended to the cabinet that Turkey should evacuate the "doubtful territory" on the basis that it could still be recovered if later determined as Turkish territory and as long as Russia did not occupy them in Turkey's absence.[563] Written confirmation was received in November.[564] Turkish apprehension was realised when rumours of Russian occupation were substantiated as fresh troops were sent from Russia to the Turkish/Iranian frontier.[565] Iran had not been able to meet the minimum requirements of

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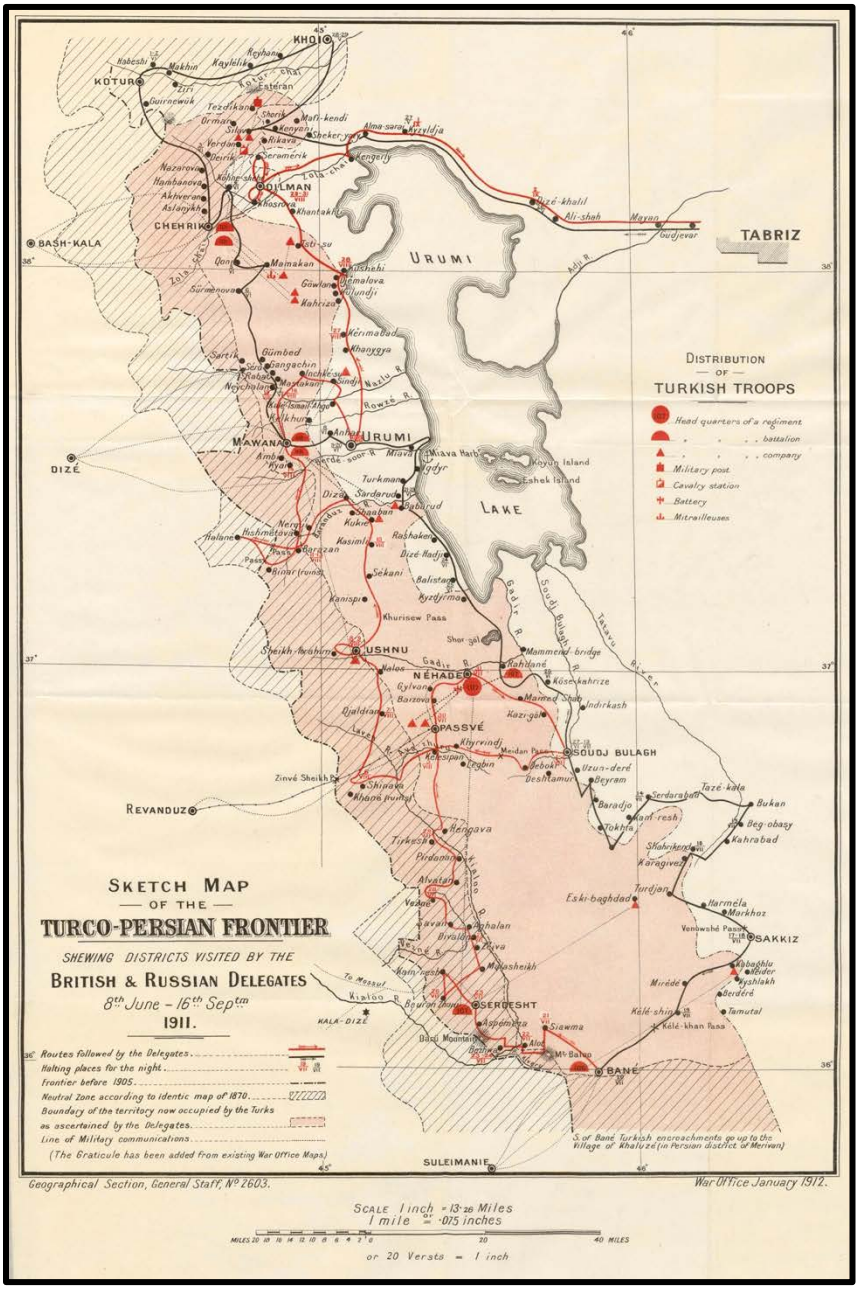
[562] Memorandum by Mr. A Parker on the Turco-Persian Boundary Question (1833 to1906), FO416/153, no.262, p.183.
[563] Sir G Lowther to Sir Edward Grey, Constantinople, October 19, 1912, FO416/169, no.61, p.33.
[564] Sir W Townley to Sir Edward Grey, Tehran, November 6, 1912, FO416/169, no.145, p.86.
[565] Consul General Smith to Sir Edward Grey, Odessa, November 4, 1912, FO416/169, no.159, p.101.

occupation. Indeed, this episode also showed that Ottoman border operations had been taken in opposition to Russian as well as Iranian territorial aspirations. Doubtless, this made Russia's next action more disagreeable.



Map 12. Frontier map showing districts visited by British and Russian Delegates
Red shading shows extent of Turkish encroachments
Diagonal thatched area: Neutral zone
Red symbols: Ottoman Military installations
Source: FO416/167

On 22 August the Russians submitted to Turkey a borderline that reflected the status quo of the 1905 border, which nullified its encroachments between 1905 and 1912.[566] This line, which had been established by the Mission of Investigation was eventually accepted by the Turks in April 1913 which provided for a "qualified acceptance of the Russian demands".[567] The qualification entailed a concession regarding the southern part of the border region and Zohab (See Chapter 4). Earlier in November 1912, the Porte admitted that they had been at fault[568] and evacuated all the disputed areas.[569] Except for some small exceptions it was the 1905 boundary line that was to be permanently delimited in the northern boundary section.

The Ottoman strategy of encroachment had been unsuccessful. Ostensibly, Ottoman insurgency had been a reaction to local circumstances. However, as we shall see Ottoman policy merely utilised local frictions to enable a broader strategy of intrusion. The delegates in Paris would have been cognisant not only of Ottoman ability to further encroachments, but also how local circumstances were used to bolster an overarching strategy.

In 1904, it was reported that Sheikh Fazlullah, a well-known and respected Muslim cleric, had forbidden a pilgrimage route to the Shia holy

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[566] Mr. Marling to Sir Edward Grey, Constantinople, August 23, 1912, FO416/168, no.309, p.185.
[567] Sir G Lowther to Sir Edward Grey, Constantinople, April 5,1913, FO416/171, no.54, p.59.
[568] Sir G Lowther to Sir Edward Grey, Constantinople, November 15,1912, FO416/169, no.195, p.129.
[569] Sir W Townley to Sir Edward Grey, Tehran, November 24,1912, FO416/169, no.238, p.165.

places in Ottoman territories because pilgrims could not be adequately protected. Pilgrimage to the holy Shia sites in Ottoman territories had been for many years a bedrock for the cultural and trading relationship between the Iranians and Ottomans. Sultan Abdulhamid II himself resented the inference that pilgrims were not protected.[570] Also, a Kalhor Ilkhani, Daoud Khan, who in a spiteful reaction to the discontinuance of Turkish endowments decided to evict a Turkish tribe from Saumar (Soomar, Iran) and to deprive Mendeli (Mandali, now in Iraq) of water.[571]

Later a British diplomat was to muse how such an event could result in a slow but wide-ranging attempt to annex large parts of Iranian territory. However, the context for Ottoman encroachment was now fixed. In October of that year, the Ottoman's secretly sent a military force to take over the area known as Lahijan and Vazne (Vasneh),[572] and the village of Passova (Pasve). More incursions into Iranian territory followed. By January 1907, the British were concluding that the only logical explanation for the actions of the Ottomans was to gain military advantage. Gaining the heights of Vasne allowed Ottoman troops an accessible route into Iran and might also provide for a railway.[573] By 1911, Avalon Shipley and Vladimir Minorski were left in

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[570] Sir A Hardinge to Marquess of Landsdowne, Tehran, December 31, 1904, FO416/151, no.41, p.32.
[571] Sir A Hardinge to Marquess of Landsdowne, Tehran, April 18, 1905, FO416/151, no.98, p.74.
[572] Marquess of Landsdowne to Mr. E Grant Duff, Foreign Office, October 18, 1905, FO416/151, no.26, p.17.
[573] Memorandum by Lieutenant-Colonel Maunsell respecting the Turco-Persian Frontier near Lahjan and Wazna, January 21, 1907, FO416/154, no.31, p.12.

no doubt that strategic considerations were driving the Turks. The lands they had occupied were not only a threat to Iran but also to Russia, as they threatened the railway to Julfa and the road to Tabriz.[574]

The Ottoman strategy was so all embracing that, up to 1911, had not altered despite regime change. The Young Turk Revolution had changed little on the ground in Iranian Azerbaijan. Though some troops were withdrawn from certain areas, significantly parts of Iranian Azerbaijan were still occupied by Turkish troops and, in places, the Turks were actually moving further into Iran. In addition, the Sublime Porte had appointed Djemil Bey, deemed by the British to have considerable expansionist views, as their representative on frontier issues.[575] The diplomatic language had, if anything, hardened; now the Turks declared that districts occupied by them for up to 3 years would now be deemed annexed territory.[576]

Also of interest to the Paris delegation, in both developing an understanding of the Ottoman strategy, and as a corollary, Iranian nationalism was Ottoman method of operation. A large element of the Ottoman push into contested, as well as Iranian, territory was driven by nationalism and the extension of state infrastructure and functions. Ottoman

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[574] *Ibid*.,
[575] Mr. Marling to Sir Edward Grey, Constantinople, December 27,1909, FO416/163, no.11, p.10.
[576] Acting Vice-Consul Morgan to Sir G Lowther, Van, December 29,1909, FO416/163, inc in no.224, p.139.

nationalism included the co-option of the Kurds in pro-Ottoman propaganda. At least on one occasion, the Mission of Investigation was greeted by flag waving Kurds and some Jews voicing their contentment at becoming Ottomans.[577] The agency of non-Muslims in pro-Turkish propaganda was not limited to Jews but also included Nestorians and Armenians.[578] Nominally these people would have had significant reasons not be under Turkish subjugation. In reality, the mosaic of village life makes it impossible to make superficial judgments on allegiances. The factors were less prosaic than ideas of belonging to one religion or the other. *Dekhalat* (deference) would be given to those who brought order and a bureaucratic infrastructure. This would in most cases have meant allegiance to the Turks rather than the Iranians. In one case, the last Iranian Governor of Serdesht (Sardasht) and wealthy landowner complained that his fidelity to Iran had resulted in no help in defending "his lands against Turkish encroachments".[579] In another case, whole families were divided in their loyalties, and out of four brothers, three remained Iranian and one gave his *dekhalat* to the Turks.[580] Some villages, such as the village of Alot in the Bane region, did not

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[577] *Ibid*.,
[578] *Ibid*.,
[579] No 4.- Diary of the Itinerary of the British and Russian Delegates from Soujboulak to Bane, July 27 to August 2, 1911. FO416/166, enc in no.112, p.44.
[580] *Ibid*.,

recognise any "rights of proprietorship over them" but simply considered themselves as Turkish because Bane had given *dekhalat* on their behalf.[581]

The Ottomans were swiftly following encroachment with the introduction of state infrastructure, especially when there was little evidence of the Iranian state apparatus. They would, for example, start collecting taxes as soon as they arrived in a new territory.[582] In June of 1907 it was reported that Ottoman authorities had "inscribed" Iranian subjects as Ottomans, issued Ottoman passports and enlisted them in the army.[583] Only a few months after their entry into Lahijan and Vazne, the area was brought under the district control of Suleimanieh and proclaimed a *Sanjak* (administrative district) with its own Ottoman *Kaïmakam* (governor).[584] Where there was visible evidence of the Iranian state, it was quickly removed; by destroying an Iranian custom house on the border and tearing down the Iran flag for example.[585]

Whilst the Ottomans had frequently exercised their right to protect Mesopotamian Kurds and to police the borderland as they sought fit, now the Ottoman push into Iran gave the Mesopotamian Kurds the encouragement they needed to increase their raids and plunder parts of the

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[581] No 5.- Diary of the Itinerary of the British and Russian Delegates from Bane through Serdesht to Soujboulak, August 3 to 14, 1911. FO416/166, enc in no.298, p.149.
[582] Sir C Spring-Rice to Sir Edward Grey, Tehran, October 20, 1906, FO416/153, no.97, p.79.
[583] Sir C Spring-Rice to Sir Edward Grey, Gulahek [*sic*], June 13, 1907, FO416/155, no.33, p.21.
[584] Lieutenant-Colonel Douglas to Mr. E Grant Duff, Tehran, April 24, 1906, FO416/152, inc in no.135, p.107.
[585] Consul-General Wratislaw to Mr. E Grant Duff, Urmi [*sic*], February 4, 1906, FO416/152, inc in no.216, p.185.

country at will. The effectiveness of the Ottoman strategy had been enhanced by co-opting the Kurds' dissatisfaction with the Iranian government.

This cooperation was highly coordinated.[586] The Kurds, accustomed to marauding along the border, violating tribal pastures, exploiting them, and then moving on, now did this with the tacit approval of the Ottomans. Now, with the backing of the Ottomans to push into Iran, the Kurds could act with impunity. This coordination would in time be imbued with religious overtones, but for the moment the Kurds were simply doing the Ottomans' dirty work.

The Mission of Investigation was quick to understand what they were seeing and stated, "an energetic action is now going on in the occupied provinces the object of which is to dispossess the ancient proprietors, and to bring about a change in the land tenure".[587] The strategy of replacing Shia Karapapak (Qarapapaqs) landowners by Kurdish Sunni ones operated with the support of the Turkish military that were almost always either Kurds or of Kurdish extraction.[588] In effect, the Mission of Investigation was describing a culture of ethnic cleansing.

One example of Kurdish aggression epitomised the absurd nature of borderland politics. On reaching Solduz (now Naqadeh), the Ottomans

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[586] Sir C Spring-Rice to Sir Edward Grey, Gulahek [*sic*], August 15,1907, FO416/155, no.295, p.243.
[587] No 3.- Diary of the Itinerary of the British and Russian Delegates from Urmia to Soujboulak, July 4 to July 10, 1911. FO416/166, enc in no.387, p.283.
[588] *Ibid*.,

encountered the Karapapaks. Of reputed Georgian ethnicity, these tribesmen were transferred to Azerbaijan after the Treaty of Turkmanchai to help Iran guard its borders. However, after being besieged by the Kurds they applied to the Sublime Porte to be left alone. The result of this was an ultimatum of two choices, either give up resistance and leave, or pledge allegiance to the Ottomans. After some deliberation, they agreed to the second alternative, gave the Ottomans *dekhalat* and became Ottoman citizens and the Kurds ceased to harass them.[589]

The problem for the Iranians was that they were not able to effectively rebuff the actions of the Turks and the Kurds, almost inviting actions such as those that got once loyal tribes such as the Karapapaks to give *dekhalat* to the Ottomans. As noted by the British, the Iranians were in a bind. Any move to assert control of the tribes, who the British and Iranians claimed were being incited by the Ottomans, would undoubtedly result in further hostilities on the part of the Ottomans. Yet, inaction was also not wise, as this would lead to further rebellions and agitation.[590]

The Iranian response was represented by a defensive attitude that encourage further Ottoman aggression. At the beginning, as the incursions increased the Iranian's seemed to be happy to compromise and offer

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[589] Consul-General Wratislaw to Mr. Marling, Urumia [*sic*], December 28, 1907, FO416/157, inc no.200, p.183.
[590] Sir Edward Grey to Mr. Marling, Foreign Office, November 21, 1907, FO416/156, no.273, p.149.

commissions to investigate the boundary issues as long as the Ottoman forces withdrew first. By early 1906, the Iranians seemed to have encouraged themselves to be bolder and mooted the idea of resisting the Ottomans militarily,[591] a decision that could have been catastrophic for Iran. Any military resistance was absurd given Iran's parlous state, and this idea was firmly and permanently resisted by the British. However, this did not stop the Iranians considering other methods of resistance. Two years later, the Iranians considered enlisting the Lurs to come up north and take on the Kurds.[592]

The Iranian delegates were also acquainted with the British strategy of negotiation. Attempting a resolution of the Ottoman-Iranian border was unduly affected by diplomatic missteps and incorrect analysis. The British had, through the 1907 Convention, tied themselves diplomatically to the Russians who were by now a fading military force in Iran and one prone to resorting to violence as a means to an end. The Ottomans were generally more worried about Russian intentions than Iran's. In a practical sense, this meant worrying that Russia would fill the vacuum if Ottoman forces were forced to relinquish territory. They also used the Russians as a negotiation chip; as a result of Russian intervention in the Constitutional Revolution, and the occupation of Tabriz in 1909, the Turks, now linked the withdrawal from

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[591] Mr. E Grant Duff to Sir Edward Grey, Tehran, January 31, 1906, FO416/152, no.157, p.138.
[592] Mr. Marling to Sir Edward Grey, Tehran, November 6, 1907, FO416/156, no.284, p.161.

Tabriz by Russian troops to any eventual evacuation of Iranian Azerbaijan by them.[593] This in turn left the Iranians in a conundrum when the Iranian Chargé d'affaires in St. Petersburg asked when the Russian troops would be withdrawn from Iranian soil.[594] Russia replied that they would do so when Iran satisfied their conditions of providing an adequate environment for commerce and an ability to keep the peace. Iran was of course not able even if it was willing to do either. However, as Firuz Kazemzadeh has argued, the Russians were pushing the diplomatic envelope as far as they could. The fact that the Russians still lingered in the north and especially in Iranian Azerbaijan had become a point of considerable debate. Every little disturbance let alone the tone of the debate in the *Majles* was used as an excuse to delay any evacuation. Soon, removal of Russian forces which had intervened in the revolution was linked with the removal of the financial advisor Morgan Shuster. Morgan Shuster had to be sacked for Russian forces to be removed.[595] Both these issues informed the accusations of foreign intervention levelled in Paris.

In some respects, the British were too cautious in their analysis of Ottoman strengths and the arrival and impact of a more forthright German diplomacy in the Middle East. The British resented the German offer to

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[593] Sir G Lowther to Sir Edward Grey, Constantinople, April 14,1910, FO416/163, no.179, p.82.
[594] Mr. O'Beirne to Sir Edward Grey, St. Petersburg, September 1,1910, FO416/164, no.339, p.251.
[595] See *Russia and Britain in Persia*, Chapter 9.

mediate between the Iranians and Ottomans regarding the joint border.[596] According to the Treaty of Friendship signed in 1873 between Iran and Germany, Germany was entitled to mediate if Iran was involved in a dispute with another power. However, the British also believed that the Ottomans were being egged on by the Germans who encouraged the Turks to take over Azerbaijan.[597] This seems unlikely, as we shall see during the First World War, the Ottomans were often taking independent action when it came to their strategic interests in Iran and the Caucasus. The Germans also irritated the British as they had become increasingly involved commercially in the region. The Hamburg-American Company ran steamers in the Persian Gulf and the notorious Bagdad railway increased anxiety that Germany's influence was growing. By 1906 there were rumours of a German syndicate applying to build a railway between the sensitive and contested area of Khaneqin (Qasr-e-Shirin) and Kermanshah.[598]

Iran was to be further marginalized by events around them. Iran's reaction to the 1907 Convention was mixed.[599] Ignorance of what the 1907 Convention entailed even gave rise to rumours that the Ottomans would also be given a sphere of influence.[600] Shocked by the 1907 Agreement and

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[596] Sir N O'Conor to Sir Edward Grey, Constantinople, April 24, 1906, FO416/152, no.94, p.69.
[597] Sir C Spring-Rice to Sir Edward Grey, Tehran, October 13, 1906, FO416/153, no.68b, p.62a.
[598] Question in House of Commons, July 9, 1906, FO416/153, no.26, p.37.
[599] See *Frontier Fictions*, pp.120-125.
[600] Mr. Marling to Sir Edward Grey, Tehran, October 10,1907, FO416/156, no.118, p.68.

powerless to prevent it, they eventually saw opportunities in it. It did, after all, further bind the Russians and British to work in Iran's interest, at least when it came to the border integrity of Iran. The British and Russians had stated that the 1907 Convention would respect the independence and integrity of Iran. Though this did not mean necessarily that they had to defend Iran, it did, as suggested by Sir Edward Grey, mean that they had a "moral obligation" to "effect a settlement of this question".[601] If the British and Russians had only encouraged a resolution, they now needed to be more pro-active. But the Iranians were only to see that Russian actions were associated with a general worsening of the 1907 Agreement and the ability, or lack of it, in curtailing their own violent excesses.[602]

With the benefit of hindsight. One can argue that, despite Iranian misgivings at Paris that Iran had been violated by the 1907 Agreement,[603] it was only the 1907 Agreement that had kept Iran intact. The agreement was the anchor that secured Russia from consolidating Iranian Azerbaijan under Russian rule during and following the Constitutional Revolution. It also meant that Britain and Russia were forced to work together.

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[601] Sir Edward Grey to Sir N O'Conor, Foreign Office, September 14, 1907, FO416/155, no.371, p.300.
[602] *Russia and Britain in Persia*, pp.563-580.
[603] *Claims*, p.2.

Despite the problems faced by the Iranians, this period also exemplifies some elements of a growing nationalism. The border and territorial issues fed into a nascent nationalism that was both encouraged by, and facilitated, a new Constitution. Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, in particular, has argued for the connection between border issues and nationalism. Certainly, in 1907, Marling had suggested that the threat of Ottoman forces to Urumieh had roused a "newly found patriotism".[604] However, as this note also suggested, this patriotism had been formed in opposition to Ottoman nationalism. Iran's submission to the Peace Conference also exemplified a nationalism based on Empire rather than a forward-thinking nationalism.

The First World War

After an interregnum of barely two years, the Turks again threatened Iran's borders. However, rather than gradual encroachment a new, notably "Turkish" Empire was to be formed which was to include the Caucasus and northern Iran. The battleground was to be northern Iran. Unable to defend its territory, Iran had to endure successive and repeated incursions by the Turks and Russians. As in other parts of Iran, border integrity was practically non-existent.

This section will examine how Iran faced an Ottoman campaign which was underpinned by a growing Turkish nationalism and a resumption of

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[604] Mr. Marling to Sir Edward Grey, Tehran, October 10, 1907, FO416/156, no.118, p.68.

conflict with Russian interests in the Caucasus and Iran. Once again, these war years showed a muddled British political strategy that, in many ways and despite the Anglo-Persian Agreement, illuminated a waning of British political power in Iran. The First World War, fresh in the minds of the Iranian delegates in Paris, formed a distilled perspective of all that was wrong within Iran and her weakness against both local and European powers.

Russia and Turkey had long contested the same territory in the Caucasus. The Caucasian Campaign of 1877, and the resulting peace treaty to the detriment of the Ottomans, provided an impetus for their designs during the First World War. The military campaign undertaken by the Russians, who supported the Balkan states rebellions against the Ottoman Empire, was successful. The Treaty of San Stefano (1878) resulted in the losses of Kars, Ardahan, Bayazid and Batum – all of which the Ottomans were desperate to get back. Under the Congress of Berlin (1878), only Bayazid was returned to the Ottomans.

The importance of the Caucasian Campaign of 1877 in relation to the Iranians was twofold. In the first place, it provided the Ottomans with suitable grievances against the Russians. Secondly, it raised the spectre of increased nationalist tendencies on the part of the smaller Ottoman communities such as the Armenians. The *millet* system had fostered religious separation into different ethnic groups, and, partially in response to an imported European nationalism, these ethnic groups began to develop a

nationalism based on political separation. By 1914, these sectarian divisions had developed to such an extent that Christian communities such as the Georgians, Armenians, and Nestorians responded to Russian overtones for military protection.

A more sectarian and profoundly Turkish nationalism had also gained traction in the Ottoman Empire. In response to Ottoman decline, the Young Turk movement had demonstrated a more forceful, and decidedly "Turkish" nationalism. An element of this had been a bourgeoning belief in Turkish identity, language, and culture. However, and in contrast to its positivism and modernity, the movement also promoted Islam as a binding faith. Islam was to provide the conduit presenting modernisation and Westernisation to the masses and was part of the changes being forced through in Ottoman/Turkey.[605] Certainly, the Ottomans were happy to have their military participation in the First World War cloaked in the mantel of *jihad* and as defenders of the faith.

Enver Pasha, the Minister of War and a proponent of pan-Turkism, stood at the centre of this new ideology. His vision for a pan-Turkish or pan-Turanian state in the Caucasus would do much to drive military strategy. Exactly what defined pan-Turanian as far as the British were concerned was established by "A Manual on the Turanians and Pan-Turanianism"

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[605] M. Sukru Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) p.201.

published for British Naval Intelligence.[606] This study established the ethnicity of *Turanism*, its worldwide breadth and differences, and common characteristics. The study was evidently written to inform British officials regarding the threat and possibility of a union between some 50 million *Turanians* who were dispersed throughout Russia, the British dominions, Afghanistan, and Iran. A possibility was mooted later during the war that the Ottomans might be "able to save themselves by combining the national Turkish elements into a single homogenous state".[607] Specifically, the threat to Iran and the Caucasus were the indigenous Turks around the Black Sea, Azerbaijan, Transcaucasia and the estimated two million Turks (at the time 20% of the Iranian population) mainly concentrating around north-western Iran. Ultimately, the British thought that any pan-Turkish nationalism was unlikely to be successful, as they presumed it had been partly inspired by the Germans - simply to cause difficulties for the British and Russians.[608] Nevertheless, the Ottomans were serious. Not only did Ottoman war aims target the re-gaining of territory lost to the Russians they also considered reaching the oil rich areas of Baku as a realistic possibility.

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[606] 'A Manual on the Turanians and Pan-Turanianism', November, 1918, Naval Staff Intelligence, IOR/L/MIL/17/16/25.
[607] *Ibid*., p.121.
[608] Report from an Agent recently returned from Switzerland, 3 April, 1918, FO371/4358, pp.227-229.

The War, a Turkish opportunity

Ottoman military progress at the beginning of the war faltered rather quickly. They did, however, occupy Tabriz. Tabriz was not occupied by regular Ottoman forces but by Turkish volunteers and Kurdish irregulars.[609] The Mesopotamian Kurds had been co-opted again as part of the Ottoman project. Indeed, their participation had flourished more widely. Many Turkish Kurds had joined the Committee of Union and Progress, the Turkish reform movement aligned with the Young Turks. The most prominent being Zia Gokalp.[610]

By March 1915, the Russians had re-occupied Tabriz and the irregular Ottoman forces left Iranian territory. The Russians now considered the importance of protecting against further Ottoman ingress. By July 1915 the Ottomans, and their Kurdish allies, had been cleared away from Van by Cossack and Armenian brigades and Iranian Azerbaijan was again controlled by the Russians. Despite this setback, Enver Pasha had considered the earlier success of occupation a victory for pan-Turkism,[611] and the agitation of the Kurdish tribes particularly against the Armenians had been welcome. However, no pan-Turkish movement in Iranian territory had arisen.

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[609] William Edward David Allen and Paul Muratoff, *Caucasian Battlefields: A History of the Wars on the Turco-Caucasian Border 1828-1921* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010) p.289.
[610] See pages 89-95 for a full a detailed account of Kurdish involvement in Turkish nationalism in, David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London; New York: I.B. Taurus, 2004)
[611] *Caucasian Battlefields*, p.289.

By June 1916, the Ottomans in Khaneqin and Russians in Qasr-e-Shirin faced each other over the precise terrain that had occupied various delimitation commissions over the years. Having failed in their attack the Russians retreated as far as Hamadan but were unable to hold the town and it was occupied by the Ottomans on 10 August. In the miserable winter that followed, many villages in the vicinity were decimated.[612]

By 1918, the Ottomans considered another push further into the Caucasus. Perhaps a curious decision, given that the war, at this point, was not going well for the Turks. In the western theatre the Ottomans had been pushed out of Palestine and the Arab revolt and General Allenby's push towards Damascus made further losses in the west an almost certainty. However, there remained for the Ottomans and indeed for pan-Turkism another opportunity in the Caucasus and Iran. For one thing, the Russians were ceasing to be a threat. As the effects of the Russian revolution penetrated the Russian military in the Caucasus and Iran as it had done on the European front, Russian military effectiveness had become marginal. Also, the Federation of Armenian, Azerbaijan and Georgian Republics formed as a response to the transfer of Russian power to individual Soviet republics had failed rather quickly and the individual states were no match for the Turks.

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[612] See Chapter XXXVIII, *Caucasian Battlefields*.

The British response and defence against nationalism

The British position and strategy in early 1918 was, to say the least, muddled. The Russian Revolution had changed the dynamics in the region and the British were forced to reappraise their policy regarding the security of north-western Iran. Securing communications and repelling a possible invasion of north-western Iran was vital but somehow this was to be secured by no military occupation of the strategic areas vacated by the Russian forces or what the Foreign Office called unlimited concessions. It would appear that the movement of British forces to Hamadan and particularly protecting the road from the frontier to Tabriz, or attack through Khaneqin or as a result of being forced out of Anzeli, was the only strategy to repel an invasion by the Turks from the Caucasus.[613]

So, in April 1918, the Ottomans took advantage of this dithering and launched a fresh invasion into Azerbaijan, advancing on oil rich Baku. By June, they had occupied most of the territory of the new Azeri republic and on 15 September reached Baku. Also in summer, the Turks saw action against an Azeri and Armenian fugitive army around Lake Urumieh and pushed into Iran as far south as Tabriz, Bijar and Zanjan.[614] The British political response was to examine whether a further rupture between

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[613] See FO371/3259.
[614] *Caucasian Battlefields*, pp.495-496.

Turkish and Iranian relations would benefit the Allies and bring Iran out of its self-imposed neutrality.[615]

If this rupture was to occur, it was to be nurtured and exploited by Sir Charles Marling. In truth, little was to be gained at this point by the British if Iran came to the Allies side.[616] Reaching for positives, it was opined that bringing Iran out of its position of neutrality and becoming an independent Muslim ally would put the British in a favourable light throughout Asia.[617] However, Sir Charles Marling's brief was to do what he could as long as Britain remained free of commitments. The quandary for Sir Charles Marling was to balance the possibility of making an alliance with Iran to stop a Turkish pan-Turanian state with the knowledge that there were no British troops to help.[618] The British viewpoint, formed as it was by Lord Balfour and Lord Curzon, did nothing to support Sir Charles Marling in his decision-making. The British government view was not shared by all and, as we have seen before, the India government had a different viewpoint. They were extremely worried about the Turks and the unsettling effect that further gains would have on the region and by logic India. They were pushing for an alliance with the Iranians.[619]

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[615] Cypher, Sir Charles Marling, May 10, 1918, FO371/3299, p.533.
[616] Cypher to Sir Charles Marling, May 13, 1918, FO371/3299, p.535.
[617] Cypher, Sir Charles Marling, May 24, 1918, FO371/3260, p.78.
[618] See FO371/3260, pp. 34-36 and p.37.
[619] Secret Cypher from Viceroy, May 21, 1918, FO371/3260, p.152.

The impetus to push further into Azerbaijan, reach Baku and even to keep on going towards India, was driven by pan-Turkish ideology. Turkish delegates arriving in Tabriz in May outlined their objectives: Kars, Erivan and all the areas of Muslim ethnicity. They considered all of Azerbaijan as Turkish territory.[620] Enver Pasha did no less than install his brother, Nuri Bey as leader of Azerbaijan. Nuri Bey made much capital out of building an Army of Islam out of Turkish regulars and some Azeris. Specially selected officers were dispatched to Azerbaijan to form the core of this army and the use of Enver Pasha's other relations developed into not so much as a pan-Turkish plan for Azerbaijan[621] but an Enverian plan for Azerbaijan.

Nevertheless, it must have been obvious to the Turks that Azeri feelings were not mutual. Earlier, at the beginning of the war, they had not joined the pan-Turanian movement. In 1917, there had been a mission to Tabriz by emissaries from Baku on behalf of the Turks urging separation and another mission in March 1918. Now it was clear that the Azeris and Turks had divergent political wishes. The Azeris were actively moving towards forming a republic. New Azeri political parties had burst on the seen in 1917, where nationalism provided a component of Azerbaijani identity.[622] The

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[620] Cypher, Sir Charles Marling, May 11, 1918, FO371/3299, p.537.
[621] War Office Memorandum, War Office, November 2, 1918, FO371/3262, p.523.
[622] *Russia and Azerbaijan: A borderland in Transition*, p.61-67.

announcement of the Transcaucasian Federation on 22 April 1918, effectively showed that nationalism did not mean federated to a Turkish Empire.

Needless Turkish aggression was also having a negative effect. Ethnic cleansing, however mild, was never far away as the Turkish military occupied ethnically mixed areas. One Turkish officer, operating in Iranian Azerbaijan, specifically demanded a count of Armenians in the territory. He had previously stated that Khoi had been taken and "that happily there were none [Armenians] left in Turkish territory".[623] Indeed the British felt that the Turks "occasioned great dissatisfaction among the local population".[624] This did nothing to help Turkish exertions in Iranian Azerbaijan in trying to establish a pan-Turkish state.

In Iran, it was also becoming clear that the Turks did not garner enough support from local politicians and over a short time their relations with local democrats had become so bad that they even arrested Mohammad Khiyabani and some of his followers and suggested that he was working with the Armenians against the forces of Islam.[625] Turkish overtures were also rejected by the Democratic Organisation at Tabriz and by Kuchik Khan.[626] The movement in Azerbaijan was not going to allow its territory to

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[623] Cypher, Sir Charles Marling, April 19, 1918, FO371/3299, p.440.
[624] War Office Memorandum, War Office, November 2, 1918, FO371/3262, p.523.
[625] Touraj Atabaki, 'Pan-Turkism and Iranian Nationalism', p.131.
[626] Separatist Movement in Persian Province of Azerbaijan, 11 April, 1918, FO371/4358, pp.242-241.

be subsumed by foreign forces. A hangover from the Constitutional Revolution, where Azerbaijani constitutionalists had fought hard, the movement in Iranian Azerbaijan had developed a sense of independence. Though, there might be some debate as to the separatist intentions of renaming Iranian Azerbaijan as Azadistan,[627] it significantly linked a bonded territory to a nationalist Iranian movement.

Crucially Iranian Azerbaijan, the epicentre of the Constitutional Revolution, did not see joining the Turks as a solution to Iran's ills. The significance of the Iranian Azeri movement, for Touraj Atabaki, lay in the assistance of the Azeri movement in the development of Iranian nationalism. Moreover, this defensive nationalism was synonymous in establishing Iran as "bounded territorial entity".[628] The newly acquired power to act, coupled with the need to defend territory gave rise to "national socialization", where Azeris were able to manifest their own nationalism as an othering to Caucasian Azerbaijan and pan-Turkism.[629]

On 31 August 1918, a detailed memo by Arnold J Toynbee, later a famous historian but at the time working in the intelligence department of the War Office, entitled "Turkish designs on Persian territory" was picked up

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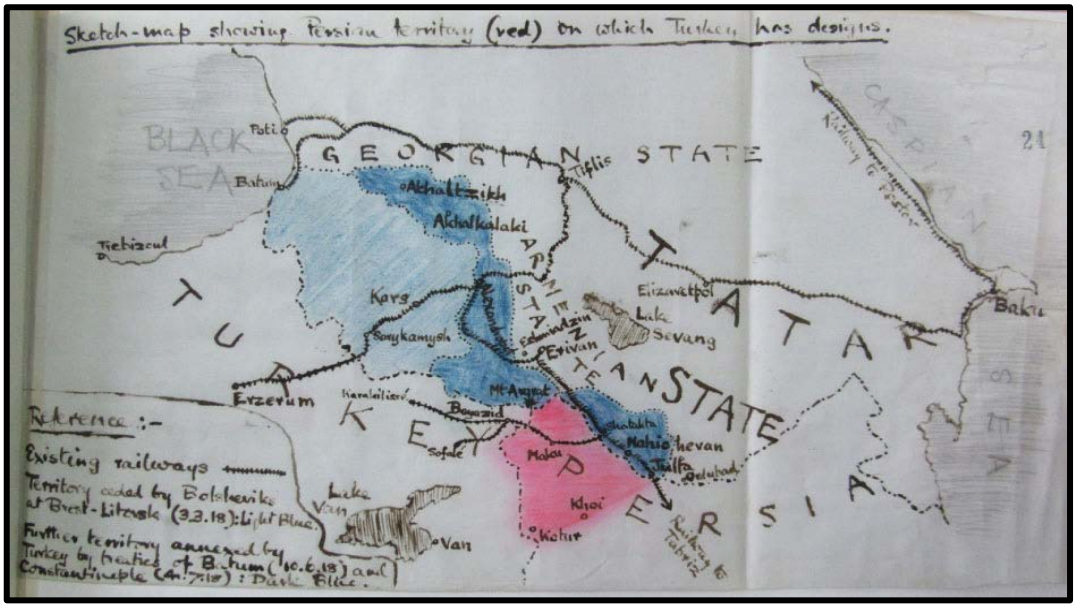
[627] Homa Katouzian 'Ahmad Kasravi on the Revolt of Sheikh Mohammad Khiyabani' in Touraj Atabaki (ed) *Iran and the First World War: Battleground of the Great Powers* (London; New York: I.B Taurus, 2006) pp.106-107.
[628] 'Pan-Turkism and Iranian Nationalism', p.122.
[629] *Territories, Boundaries and Consciousness*, pp.54-59.

by Sir Charles Marling and others. In this memo, Arnold J Toynbee, explained that the territories ceded to Turkey by Russia under the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (1918) and further territory ceded to Turkey by the Treaty of Batum (1918), did nothing less than invite further territorial gains by the Turks. In addition, given the assumption that the Turks had already annexed Nakhchivan and Julfa and the more favourable railway routes that could result, Arnold J Toynbee believed that there was "very presumptive evidence that Turkey intends to annex the Khoi and Maku districts of N.W. Persia".[630] (See Map 13).

Turkish propaganda prepared the ground for the annexation of Iranian Azerbaijan in early September. A Turkish Note to Persia suggested



Map 13. Sketch map showing Persian territory (Red) on which Turkey has designs
Light Blue: Territory ceded by Russia at Brest-Litovsk.
Dark Blue: Territory ceded to Turkey at Treaties of Batum and Constantinople
Source: FO371/3262, pp.23-25

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630 A.J. Toynbee to Foreign Office, War Office, August 31, 1918, FO371/3262, pp.23-25.

that Turkey had been fighting the British on behalf of all Muslims and it was necessary for Iranian Muslims to help throw out the British from the Caucasus and Iran.[631] It went on to suggest,

> Turkey by intervention in Persia will thus prove in a most conclusive manner her love for, and friendly sentiments towards that country, which is incapable of defending itself.[632]

The British considered this note as preparing the ground for further encroachments,[633] and made a critical appraisal of the situation. The possibility of the Turks, prior to evacuating Iranian Azerbaijan, having a plebiscite there, enabling a union of Iranian Azerbaijan and what was Russian Azerbaijan and creating an independent *Turanian* state would be problematic on many levels.[634] It is unclear why Arnold J Toynbee felt that there was a chance of success for such a plebiscite and, indeed, why the Iranian Azeris would countenance such a separation. As we have already noted, the Turks' ham-fisted attempts to bring along Iranian Azeris had been ineffective. Nevertheless, the British were worried about the possibility of a *Turanian* state. What really worried the British was not so much Turkish involvement, but any sense of democracy which would, by definition, be outside of British control. As Arnold J Toynbee suggested, the result of the

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[631] A Turkish Note to Persia, G.14, September 4, 1918, FO371/3262, p.98.
[632] *Ibid*.,
[633] Memorandum regarding A Turkish Note to Persia, War Office, September 12, 1918, FO371/3262, p.97.
[634] A.J. Toynbee Memorandum, War Office, October 12, 1918, FO371/3262, p.276.

plebiscite might be difficult to ignore given "our championship of the principle of self-determination".[635] The method put forward for avoiding an uncomfortable situation for the British was to recognise Russian Azerbaijan as soon as possible.[636]

All of this could have been very different if British attitudes had not been hampered by ideas of minimal involvement and a general unwillingness to grant Iran anything by way of territorial gains. Captain Leo S Amery, a future independently minded politician who was at this point Assistant Secretary to the Imperial War Cabinet, put forward an interesting solution to the issue of the Caucasus. In March 1918, he suggested that Britain should take a leaf out of the German book and express a willingness to incorporate Transcaucasia into Iran, if Iran was willing to help the Allied war effort. Captain Amery seemed to understand that a policy of asking Iran for support but offering nothing in return was counter-productive. Certainly, his suggestion would have helped eradicate the territorial losses to the Russians at the beginning of the last century. However, it would also enable Iran to be the centre of a Muslim state rather than the Turks. Citing historical and cultural connections between the Muslim Caucasus states and Iran, Captain Amery suggested that the Christian minorities, could set up their

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[635] *Ibid*., p.277.
[636] *Ibid*.,

own state. The immediate response to the memorandum by a Captain Abraham, assumed to be Captain Edgar Abraham (another Assistant to the Imperial War Cabinet) was that Captain Amery's analysis was "over-sanguine".[637] Even though this policy recommendation was put forward for discussion by the Eastern Committee, Lord Curzon and Lord Balfour had already outlined that they were not keen to further involve themselves in north-west Iran unless absolutely necessary.[638] As British involvement in north-west Iran was already out of duress, the British were unlikely to commit themselves to more imaginative schemes.

Rumours now circulated which made the Iranians very uncomfortable. In the middle of October, the Iranians asked the British whether, if a separate peace was made between Britain and Turkey, Iranian Azerbaijan would be acquired by Turkey. They were told, it would appear quite honestly, that Britain was not in the habit of giving territory to its enemies and, if anything, the eventuality might be the other way around.[639] Certainly, the Iranians, much bruised by the war, were disconsolate enough to believe that anything was possible at this stage. The only satisfactory answer to this question would be the evacuation of Iranian Azerbaijan by the Turks.

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[637] Policy in Persia and Trans-Caucasia, L S Amery, Foreign Office, March 14, 1918, FO371/3259, pp.246-243.
[638] Eastern Committee Minutes, March 18, 1918, FO371/3259, p.199.
[639] Persian Azerbaijan Memorandum, Sir Percy Cox, Foreign Office, October 14, 1918, FO371/3262, p.351.

The Iranians were effectively rescued by the capitulation of the Turks. As a result of the fall of Damascus and under the Mudros Agreement on 30 October the Turks were required to leave north-west Iran and the rest of Transcaucasia if demanded by the Allies. The British were also saved from making uncomfortable decisions regarding Azerbaijan. A military solution to the Turkish army on Iranian soil would have been difficult to solve as Dunsterforce remained the only realistic military force. Whilst the Turks, after the Mudros Agreement, had modified their approach to the Armenians, they had not begun to evacuate Azerbaijan by the end of October. The British assessment was that the Turks wanted to keep a toe-hold in Azerbaijan and maintain "an unostentatious ''Enverean" nucleus to secure control of a "self-determined" Azerbaijan, thus providing for the future a strong and well placed centre for pan-Turanian or pan-Islamic activity".[640] It is interesting that after contesting the political domination of Iran for nearly one century with the Russians, now, when Russian influence was virtually non-existent, the British felt exposed and vulnerable. They were now solely responsible for their endeavours in Iran.

This chapter has outlined the compression and stress placed on Iran's north-western frontiers by the Russians and Turks. What has been shown has been a gradual yet pervasive inability for Iran to protect its borders in war or

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[640] War Office Memorandum, War Office, November 2, 1918, FO371/3262, p.523.

peace. The delegation to the Peace Conference would have been motivated by the knowledge that Iran had become a negligible political factor during the First World War, its territory only useful as a battleground for the Russians and Turks. The return of lands lost to the Russians at Turkmanchai was, therefore, very important. However, the delegates had also learned from the Ottoman/Turks how to galvanise facets of belonging into a force for nationalism within an imperial context.

Chapter 6: Border delimitation from the Caspian to Sarakhs during the Great Game

Today, the division between New and Old Sarakhs begun in the nineteenth century still remains. Sarakhs in Iran is still divided from Serakhs in Turkmenistan by the Hari-rud River (Tejen) which marks the border. The issue of Sarakhs in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century was fundamental to the implementation of Iran's north-eastern border in two ways. Firstly, its ownership represented a contentious issue in its own right and would form the singular border problem that the British were willing to discuss in 1919. Secondly, its ownership was the final piece that defined the new border between Russia and Iran, drawn from the Caspian to Afghanistan.

Outwardly, this border resulted from Russian expansion and Iranian inability to prevent it. However, Britain was also unable and at times unwilling to curb Russian aggression, an aggression which affected both British interests and those of Iran. Iran's weakness was indeed an important factor, yet in this chapter it will become obvious that the Iranians had more agency than the so-called *Great Game* would suggest. In fact, though a great deal of Iranian territory was annexed by Russia during Naser al-Din's reign, at times he showed some ability to effect as best as possible these changes in Iran's interest. Unfortunately, he was also prone to procrastination and thus many sound diplomatic positions were not actualised.

1861 served as a threshold in the Iranian approach to the Turkmens and the lands that they inhabited. After 1861, the approach would be to prevent incursions into Khorasan rather than encouraging fruitless and costly expeditions. The Russians would argue that at this point the Turkmen tribes had effectively become quite independent of Iran.[641] This certainly fed into the narrative that Iran's relationship with the Turkmens was hardly paternalistic. This ambivalence was exposed when, as the Russians finally beat the Turkmens in battle to take over the Akhal basin, Naser al-Din Shah took some joy in their defeat.[642] This ambivalence also formed the basis for the Qajar governors easily matching the Turkmen cruelty which also served to further create a wedge between the Turkmen tribes and the Qajar dynasty. Now, not only was Iran's administration across the Attrek and Tejen Rivers even more tenuous, but the Turkmens were treated more as invaders than as possible citizens of Iran.

This new dynamic coincided with Russia's determined and successful expansion towards the Attrek River. Russia's military expansion brought with it pacification, administration, and other trappings of a modern state. Even the railway was not far behind. Russia would, in a relatively short time,

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[641] General Petrusevitch, The Turcomans [*sic*], June 1, 1879, FO539/111, p.13.
[642] Jalil Qassabi Gazkouh, Hadi Vakili, Abolfazl Eskandari Farouji, ''Elal va peyamadha-ye jodai-e qarieh-e Firouzeh az Iran' [Causes and consequences of the separation of the village of Firouzeh from Iran] *Quarterly bulletin of Greater Khorassan:* Vol 6, No.21, Winter 2016, p.85.

share a border with Iranian that equated control and administration with a flexible arrangement of allegiances based on permissions, tributes and taxes. Economic motives for expansion such as the cultivation of land for food for a growing Russian population may have been mooted,[643] however even the Russians conceded that costs of the operations to claim these territories exceeded their value.[644] What is certain, was that the pacification of tribes was not an end in itself (see Chapter 2). The British, engaged in the *Great Game*, to protect India from the Russians, never really understood that pursuing the aspirations and needs of the Iranians was synonymous with pursuing their own needs. The British missed many opportunities to slow down and rebuff Russian expansion, and were not willing to stand up diplomatically, nor militarily and were unwilling to finance any approach.

This section will examine how Russia progressively expanded using, to greater or lesser degrees, methods of surveying which cast doubt on territorial ownership and assigned significance to natural frontiers, which had had no political significance. As with Chapter 5, the devil was in the detail. Russia used treaties to build in threats for even greater forfeiture of territory. At the same time, the use of secret treaties and understandings allowed Russia to pressurise Iran and side-line the British. A pre-modern

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[643] General Petrusevitch, The Turcomans [*sic*], p.30.
[644] Thornton to Granville, January 9, 1884, FO65/1202, p.23.

Iran found it difficult to counter Russia's modern approaches of establishing sovereignty over conquered lands.

Iran's claims

At the Peace Conference in 1919, Iran asked for the restitution of the entire area between the Amou Darya (Oxus River) and the Attrek River. This corresponded to the Russian expansion into and subjugation of the following areas, the Ust-Urt plateau and Mangishlak, the Transcaspian province, Khiva, Akhal-Teke and Dashte Chul. It also incorporated the return of several important towns: Alexanderdrovsk (Fort Shevchenko), Krasnovodsk (Turkmenbashi), Ouzoun-Ada (Ostrov Uzun-Ada) on the Caspian Sea and the towns of Khiva, Marv (Merv), Askabad (Eshqabad) and Sarakhs. It did not, however, include Samarkand and Bokhara though the territory sought did get very close to the town of Herat in Afghanistan. This represented the largest single territory that the Iranian government wanted returned.

Iran's claim was, as usual, based on cultural and *Persianate* affiliations to the region. Iran claimed that many of their "illustrious Persians," such as poets and philosophers, had originated from this area. Further ties, such as the Persian language, were also mooted, as well as more direct connections. For example, the same people who inhabited this territory such as Turkmens, Persians, Kurds, and Tajiks also lived in Iran. Strangely, however, dynastic kinship was not claimed. Though the Qajars had originated from this region

and despite close connections to the throne, for example, Fath Ali Shah had numerous Turkmen wives and highly placed officials,[645] these affiliations were not claimed. It is possible that that the delegates felt that arguing Qajar cultural connections was, in view of the *longue duree* of a succession of Empires, superfluous. It is also possible, that despite ties to the extended Qajar elite, the nationalists that made up the commission had reservations regarding the survival of the Qajar dynasty and were now looking to the future. Finally, there was the questionable motive that the peoples in the Transcaspian had appealed to the Iranians for help as the Russians tightened their grip in the region in the late 1880's.

This claim to the Transcaspian was based on Iran's past glories and Empires. It is likely, but not definitive, that much of the region north of the Amu Darya and east including Khiva, Marv, Bukhara, and Herat, formed part of a formidable satrapy in the Achaemenid Empire. A satrapy being a standard district of provincial administration throughout the Empire which was required to give tribute to the Achaemenid throne. Much of this region was reconquered after the death of Alexander and provided part of subsequent empires of the Seljuk and others. Attacks by the Uzbegs in this region and Khorasan led to a contraction under the Safavids relative to past

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[645] Amin Qoli, *Tarikh-e siyasi va ijtema'i-e turkmen-ha* [History, politics and sociology of the Turkmen] (Elm, First Edition, 1366 [1987]) p.121.

Empires. Arguably, the last time Iran's control would be felt up to the Amu Darya and eastwards was under Nader Shah, who actively followed a policy of re-conquest though his plans did not achieve the pacification of local tribes. Despite the Qajar's obvious connections with the Turkmens of the area, Iran's hold on the region had become more fragile and tenuous over the subsequent years. Playing a major role in Agha Mohammad Shah's (1789-1797) early reign, subsequent mishandling of the Turkmens by local governors would lead to frequent banditry and uprisings, including the recurrent kidnapping of Iranians for ransom. There were numerous uprisings against the rule of Fath Ali Shah. One was even started by the Governor of Asterabad in league with the Turkmens.[646]

Whilst the Qajars never equated territorial ownership with the responsibility of control, they did make certain attempts to govern the Turkmens. This would include, at least up to 1861, frequent expeditions to fight them. This was particularly the case during the reign of Naser al-Din Shah. In around 1851, the Iranians, menaced by Turkmens in Khorasan, were concerned that the town of Mashad might fall. Fighting broke out in and around the Sarakhs region, which pitted Iranian troops against a Turkmen army assisted by the Khivans. Though the Iranian army had some successes, they were eventually overwhelmed and were only saved by the Khivans,

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[646] *Ibid.*, *Tarikh-e siyasi va ijtema'i-e turkmen-ha*, p.117.

who, fearing the Russian approach, reached out to the Iranian government.[647] The battle of Marv in 1861, triggered by Iran's insistence on subordinating the Turkmens and Uzbegs and demanding taxes, was catastrophic for the Iranians.[648] In 1858, the Iranians invited Turkmen chiefs to Mashad for negotiations and the Governor of Khorasan imprisoned all 80 of them.[649] The Iranians were rebuffed short of Marv and were forced to return to Sarakhs, enduring huge losses from both fighting and lack of food.[650]

As we shall see, Russia's expansion was helped by the lack of Iranian administrative infrastructure. In a region where Iranian sovereignty was somewhat detached, it was the Russians who were willing to subdue the Turkmens. Their chosen method, military policy followed by modern infrastructure such as railways, would cement their control.

The Russian push to Krasnovodsk and Ashuradeh

Russia showed an interest in the Transcaspian region earlier than its push into the Caucasus. In 1781, they asked to build storage units at Asterabad.[651] However, given that Russia was at this time more interested in the Caucasus, Russia went no further than preparing to build a port and fort at

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[647] *Ibid*., *Tarikh-e siyasi va ijtema'i-e turkmen-ha*, pp.129-130.
[648] *Ibid*., *Tarikh-e siyasi va ijtema'i-e turkmen-ha*, pp.136-140.
[649] *Ibid*., *Tarikh-e siyasi va ijtema'i-e turkmen-ha*.
[650] *Ibid*., *Tarikh-e siyasi va ijtema'i-e turkmen-ha.*
[651] Feredoun Adamiat, Amir Kabir va Iran [Amir Kabir and Iran] (Tehran: Kharazmi, 1362 [1983]) p.472.

Krasnovodsk on the Caspian Sea in 1819. The idea being to set "the Caspian within a frame of Russian forts and establishments".[652] Though a temporary fort was built, it was not until Colonel Stotelov landed in force that the establishment of Krasnovodsk was established as a fortified trading post. The stars were aligning. In 1859 the government decided to build the fort, in 1865 a government committee expressed that a fort would promote trade with central Asia and finally in 1869 the Society for the Promotion of Russian Industry and Trade made similar recommendations.[653]

By 1836, the Russians, surveying the east coast of the Caspian, came upon the island of Ashuradeh. Undeterred by the Turkmen inhabitants and a detachment of Iranian soldiers, the Russians in 1841 declared its possession as permanent and stationed the brig Araxes there to protect trade from Turkmen pirates.[654] Ashuradeh was just off Asterabad and the mouth of the Attrek River. With this move the Russians had leap-frogged the length of the Caspian Sea. Russia, a land-based empire had engaged in a strategy more reminiscent of British imperialism, where coastal bridgeheads were set up which could then be used for further expansion or colonisation.[655] In 1842, the Russians instituted a permit system which allowed Turkmens sanctioned by

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[652] 'The Russians in Akhal', IOR/L/PS/20/MEMO36/16, p.5.
[653] Seymour Becker, *Russia's Protectorates in Central Asia: Bukhara and Khiva, 1865-1924* (London; New York: Routledge, 2009) p.66.
[654] 'The Russians in Akhal', IOR/L/PS/20/MEMO36/16, p.5.
[655] For a fuller description of this idea see John Darwin, 'Imperialism and the Victorians: The dynamics of territorial expansion', *English Historical Review*, 112 (1997) pp.614-642.

Russia to enter the bay.[656] In 1845 a Moscow trading company was allowed to trade off the island by the Russians.

By establishing a military presence, an administration and encouraging trade, the Russians had already managed a semblance of territorial control. They had also established a base in Iranian territory with the minimum of fuss. The Iranians were forced to accept the Russian actions on the basis that the Russians were only using the absolute minimum of one vessel to combat piracy, which hurt all trade irrespective of nationality. Of course, it was not lost on the Iranians that the Treaty of Turkmanchai, which had given Russia these rights on the Caspian, had also forbidden Iran from having a naval force and the option, able or not, to deal with piracy.

British reaction to the takeover of Ashuradeh was ineffectual. The British, after an appeal by the Iranians, asked for Russia to leave Ashuradeh as late as 1849 and the Iranians put in an official demand in 1854.[657] Ashuradeh's importance is far greater than one would at first imagine. Whilst the Russians went quietly about building their forces there, which included establishing a consul at Asterabad, two of their actions had considerable impact on the nature of Iran's borders. Firstly, as they were not allowed to construct storehouses on Iranian territory, they decided to build

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[656] 'The Russians in Akhal', IOR/L/PS/20/MEMO36/16, p.6.
[657] Henry Rawlinson, *England and Russia in the East* (Elibron Classics, 2005) p.137.

them "at a point seven versts beyond the Karu-Su (Krasnovodsk), which is considered the frontier of Persia".[658] The point they chose was less than 5 miles from Ashuradeh. At a leap, Iran's assumed border had been reduced by the entire length of the Caspian. Secondly, in 1866 when Naser al-Din Shah visited Ashuradeh and was invited aboard one the Russian warships[659] he had effectively sanctioned Russian actions.

Krasnovodsk was also to be an important drop off point for Russian military activity. In 1869, Colonel Stotelov's landing began Russia's operation against Khiva and Turkmens, effectively beginning the process of establishing a new border between Russia and Iran around the Attrek River. It took nearly four years for the Russians to establish sufficient control over the Turkmens to finally advance against Khiva in 1873. The landing at Krasnovodsk and Russia's operations against the Teke Turkmen, sparked consternation in Tehran. The Russian Minister explained that "the enterprise would in no way injure the interests of Persia, nor did it imply any hostile design against either that Power or against the Turcomans [sic]".[660] Of course, in both cases this belied Russian actual goals in the Transcaspian. The British reaction to the Russian activity was again muted and indeed Naser al-Din Shah was prevailed upon to waive all objections as long as the Russians

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[658] 'The Russians in Akhal', IOR/L/PS/20/MEMO36/16, p.7.
[659] *Ibid*., p.8.
[660] *Ibid*., p.11.

failed to cross the Attrek River,[661] further substantiating the Attrek as the outermost extent of Iran's sovereignty.

Russian expansion broadly followed the same method as the Caucasus. Concurrently the government in St. Petersburg and diplomats such as Nicholas de Giers, Russia's long serving Foreign Minister, would feign ignorance of events on the ground in the Transcaspian, but at the same time the government would send out military men who sought to drive the expansion of the Empire. Military overreach, disavowed by St. Petersburg in the first instance, was always later substantiated. The urge for expansion and the prevailing mores of Russian society resonated in the newspapers and in Russian military journals and magazines. These publications would print dubious maps that forecast boundary changes. Even Russian diplomats produced these maps.[662]

British reaction to Russian incursions and secret agreements

In Chapter 5, British diplomacy was found wanting, as Russia used military and diplomatic methods to expand its Empire up to the Aras River. While their inability to formulate a consistent strategy to Russia's expansion was to continue, it did so now within a nuanced political context in which Britain

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[661] *Ibid.*,
[662] E Hertslet, 'Memorandum on the Attrek or Northern Frontier of Persia', August 16, 1877, IOR/L/PS/18/C18, p.10.

found herself after the Treaty of Turkmanchai. From this point secret arrangements and treaties were to muddy diplomacy and ultimately put Britain at a disadvantage.

British suspicions of Iran's motives had increased in the 1850's. In 1854, rumours had circulated that Naser al-Din Shah had negotiated a secret treaty with Russia. Indeed, the British believed that Iranian resistance to British demands, and Russian support for Iran, meant that Russia was behind Iranian tactics.[663] A secret treaty had in fact been agreed in 1854, where Iran promised not to aid the Ottomans against the Russians should a war take place. One aspect of the treaty was the promise to end Iran's indemnity from the Treaty of Turkmanchai, which was still pending.[664] The importance of this indemnity assuring Iran's submissiveness should not be underestimated. It was, it is argued here, a major reason behind Iran's spineless political reaction to Russia's encroachment on its borders at least until 1884 when Russia released Iran from its obligations. Furthermore, as Abbas Amanat has suggested, Naser al-Din Shah was emboldened by this agreement in 1854 in such a way that he was now motivated to regain some of Iran's lost borders in the east.[665] The 1856 war and attack on Herat by Iran,

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[663] Thompson to Murray, Bagdad, October 30, 1856, BDFA Files, Part 1, Series B, Volume 10 Persia 1856-1885, Document 195.
[664] *Pivot of the Universe*, p.254.
[665] *Ibid*., *Pivot of the Universe*, p.250.

did of course significantly retard relations with the British, though the choice of Charles Murray in Tehran as Minister Plenipotentiary hampered relations even more. Nevertheless, at least for the time being the Treaty of Paris (1857) effectively curtailed Naser al-Din Shah's aspirations towards Herat and Afghanistan.

The British were not above involvement in secret arrangements themselves and there was one "Understanding" following the Treaty of Turkmanchai that would define their reactions to Russian aggression to the end of the nineteenth century. In 1834, Britain and Russia arrived at "a common understanding respecting the independence and integrity of the dominions of the Shah of Persia".[666] This Understanding was re-affirmed in 1838 and in 1865. The occupation of Ashuradeh was of course in contravention of this Understanding, yet the British were unwilling to make an issue of it.

This, rather minor Understanding, between Britain and Russia represented a major coup for the Russians and resulted in considerably confusing the British. Psychologically and practically, the British assumed that Russia would ultimately abide by the agreement despite slight violations. This meant that the Russians could push their agenda to the limit and beyond, leaving the British in a sense of confusion and unable to react until it was too late. The British demonstrated their confusion by

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[666] 'The Russians in Akhal', IOR/L/PS/20/MEMO22/N, p.55.

periodically asking the Russians for confirmation of this Understanding, which they provided again in 1873.

The British probably should have realised the value of this Understanding earlier. In 1865, Lord Russell proposed to the Russians an "exchange of declarations" to respect the contemporary possessions in Asia and Iran's independence. Prince Gorchakov declined to make such a declaration.[667] By 1888, as Drummond Wolff was being briefed to take over as Minister Plenipotentiary in Tehran, it was notable that the British viewed the Understanding with some circumspection, calling it of a "somewhat informal and indefinite nature".[668]

In part, the Iranians may also have wondered if the British and Russians were at times working towards a similar agenda, though they knew nothing about such an agreement except that they believed that Britain could have been more forceful in its repudiations. Ultimately, perhaps the issue of Ashuradeh was not significant enough for the British to engage properly with this Understanding. In the meantime, the Iranians had made another secret agreement with the Russians in 1869:

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[667] Statement of the Principal Questions, February 29, 1881, FO60/491 (unnumbered)
[668] *Ibid.*,

> His Majesty the Shah, on the 12th instant (4th December 1869), requested the undersigned, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of His Majesty the Emperor, to explain for what object the fort at Kyril-Soo [*sic*] (Krasnovodsk) was being constructed, and having also required an assurance that the Russian authorities would in no way interfere in the affairs of the Yemoot [*sic*] Turkomans, and of those living on the Attrek [*sic*] and Goorgaun [*sic*] Rivers; also that no fort or stronghold should hereafter be built at the embouchures of the Attrek and Goorgaun Rivers; and likewise that they should not interfere in any way with the possessions of Persia, but that the Persian Government should continue to maintain the authority they have hitherto held in respect to these tribes and their territories. In accordance with the wish expressed by His Majesty the Shah, the undersigned lost no time in referring, by telegraph, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of His Majesty the Emperor, and he has now the pleasure to bring to the knowledge of the Ministers of His Majesty the Shah the reply which he has just received to the effect that the Government of His majesty the Emperor recognizes the authority and sovereignty of Persia up to the banks of the Attrek River; and they have no intention to construct any fort. (Signed Berger)[669]

The British were more upset that the Russians had denied both the existence of this agreement and the existence of a fort than its relevance to establishing a new border. By the time they found out about the agreement the border had already been decided in 1882. However, the agreement engages in some important issues. The British understood that this agreement resulted from a proposal by the Iranians that the Russians "would not occupy any territory south of the Kizl-Soo (Krasnovodsk)", so that Iran's boundaries "be recognized as the Persian boundary line along the frontiers of the Turcoman country".[670] Iran's intention was to clarify the extent of its borders to encompass all Turkmen lands and had taken a very narrow definition of building above the Attrek, indeed they assumed that it referred to the region

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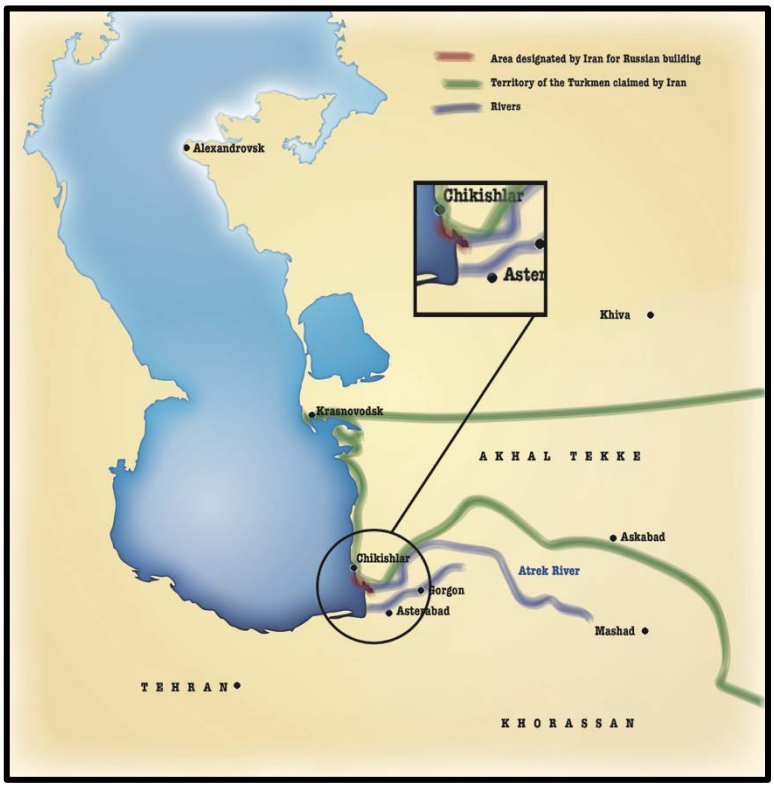
[669] 'The Russians in Akhal', IOR/L/PS/20/MEMO22/N, p.56.
[670] *Ibid*., p.57.

along the Caspian coast from the mouth of the Attrek River for about 30 miles to where the Gorgan district ended.[671] (Map 14). Not surprisingly, the Russians were loath to clarify this when asked.[672]

Indeed, the Russians had only used this agreement, which the Iranians had pushed for, to further obfuscate their actions and strategy. The building of



Map 14. Territory designated for Russian building
This map illustrates the discrepancy between Iran and Russia's reading of the agreement
Source: Author's rendering based on available material

the fort at Chikishlar (Chikishlyar) was a source of consternation to the Iranians because they felt it abrogated the agreement. The British understanding, and correct reading, was that the fort was north of the Attrek River and therefore

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671 *Ibid*., p.58.
672 Numerous clarifications sought by the British and Iranians went unheeded.

within the agreement. However, the nub of the issue was that the Russians did not recognise Iran's authority over any of the Turkmen tribes. Prince Gorchakov remarked that the Shah "had never any better claim to the country of the Turcomans [*sic*] than the King of Italy to the throne of Jerusalem".[673] By 1874, General Lomakin had self-styled his role as commander of all Turkmen tribes in the Attrek and Gorgon areas. The British complained to the Russians,[674] and the response was that General Lomakin had misspoken.[675]

It was not until 1873, after Iran asked for its integrity to be recognised, that Britain finally told the Iranians that an Understanding with Russia existed which did just that.[676] It can be surmised that had Iran known, concerned as it was with Russia's expansion into what was considered Iranian territory, Iran might not have entered into the last secret agreement. Peculiarly, the Iranians were told that the Understanding should not be made public as it could have implied distrust on the part of Britain towards Russia and raised doubts as to Russia respecting Iran's integrity.[677] In effect, the British were happy to have an Understanding but not call on Russia when breeched, thereby rendering the Understanding useless.

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[673] 'The Russians in Akhal', IOR/L/PS/20/MEMO22/N, p.59.
[674] *Ibid*., p.62.
[675] Memorandum on the Attrek or Northern Frontier of Persia, p.18-19.
[676] 'The Russians in Akhal', IOR/L/PS/20/MEMO22/N, p.59.
[677] *Ibid*., p.61.

As the Iranian government absorbed the Understanding, they sought clarification as to their role in its furtherance and how it would help promote their interests. The British reply was,

> Her Majesty's Government consider that the best mode of confirming both Powers in those sentiments is that Persia, while steadfastly maintaining her rights as an independent power, should studiously fulfil in all respects her treaty engagement with each, and so ensure the continuance of the friendship which both Powers, even for their own interest, should desire to maintain her.[678]

So when General Lomakin claimed to command all Turkmen tribes in the Attrek and Gorgon areas (see above), the Iranians were compelled to reply "judiciously, which meant…not to admit pretensions of Russia, nor to claim Persian sovereignty over them [Turkmens]".[679] When Britain did finally complain about Lomakin's claim, describing the territory in question as undoubtedly Iranian,[680] the Russians claimed that the question had nothing to do with the British and was to be negotiated between Iran and Russia.[681] This again brought into question the value of the Understanding. In 1877 the Russians did acknowledge that the Iranians had been the aggrieved party and were entitled to an explanation, [682] but it was too late to change the direction of events. For the Iranians, this episode established that it was only

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[678] *Ibid*.,
[679] *Ibid*., p.62.
[680] *Ibid*.,
[681] *Ibid*.,
[682] *Ibid*.,

Iran who was bound to agreements, whilst Russia, supposedly bound by the Understanding, was not.

The years between 1869 and 1873 were put to good use by the Russians as they took up strategic positions that would enable an attack on Khiva and Marv (Merv) and eventually reposition the Russian border on the Attrek River and the Tejen River, and therefore closer to British India. Whilst Naser al-Din Shah had followed a policy of playing the British off against the Russians in order to sanctify the *guarded domains*, he had rather haplessly allowed the Russians to gain footholds in Iranian territory. Moreover, the British had frequent opportunities to put up diplomatic hurdles, but did not and, in trusting their arrangements with the Russians, they had neglected to act in concert with the Iranians.

Naser al-Din Shah had been outmanoeuvred by the use of secret treaties, though the British were as well. The Russians were able to leapfrog over considerable territory due to the Shah's ignorance of issues of sovereignty and his inability to understand the ramifications of his actions. Other narratives were also being established. One was the idea of the Iranians being taken advantage of or being forced into penitent circumstances. The other was the issue of secret arrangements in diplomacy.

Seen as unhelpful and dangerous, diplomatic secrecy was to be a particular bugbear of Present Wilson in 1919.[683]

The Conquest of Khiva and Turkmen agitation

Russian subjugation of the Teke Turkmen between 1870 and 1873, was reported to have two motives. The first motive was a fear of an Anglo-Indian plan to bring about a coalition of Muslim states against Russia. This rather ludicrous idea had no foundation and arguably exemplified a relationship between Britain and Muslim countries that did not exist. The second motive was the judgement that dealing with the Teke first would secure a base of operations against Khiva and protect the Russian flank.[684] Certainly, this motive was more plausible. It did though, dubiously, conflate a relationship between the Teke and Khivan's. It was also contrary to Colonel Stoletov's orders from St. Petersburg not to provoke the inhabitants.[685] Not for the first time, Russian commanders in the field took it upon themselves to create military situations for self-advancement. Russian attempts to frighten and pacify the Teke continued, by any means. In early 1872, attempts were made to persuade the Iranians to send a force to the frontier as a diversion so that

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[683] Woodrow Wilson, Address to a Joint Session of Congress on the Conditions of Peace.
[684] 'The Russians in Akhal', IOR/L/PS/20/MEMO36/16, p.11.
[685] *Ibid*.,

the Russians could attack Khiva.[686] Exactly why the Russians thought the Iranians would voluntarily do this is unclear.

Meanwhile, Russian contempt for Iranian territory and Iranian complaints of its violations were becoming more pronounced. In 1873, a Russian expedition crossed the Attrek River into Iranian territory to punish Turkmens for their frequent raiding but had other motives. It not only gave the Iranians a lesson in how pacification should be carried out, but also evoked the sense that the Russians considered all Turkmen territory as fair game, even south of the Attrek River. Even though Iranian soldiers apparently merrily thanked these Russians as they re-crossed the Attrek River after their expedition, the Iranian government telegrammed the Russians for an explanation. The Russians responded that they had intimated a few months before that they may embark on such an expedition and took Iran's silence for consent.[687] It is unclear whether the Iranians had indeed received such a message, but they claimed not to have.

The British had their own reasons to be fearful of the conquest of Khiva in 1873. Russia was now a material threat to Afghanistan and, therefore, India. Again, it raised the question of if and how Iran was part of the British strategy to protect India. One India government official had

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[686] *Ibid*., p.17
[687] *Ibid*., p.21.

declared that prior to the current threat, "the attitude of Persia was a matter of comparative indifference to us",[688] now, the India government met to discuss exactly what role Iran had in the British strategy. The minutes of this meeting and subsequent recommendations to the Foreign Office showed a greater willingness to accept that the protection of Iran was vital to British interests. The context for either abandoning or abandoning Iran would be determined by the threat of Russia, communication with India and commercial interests. These considerations would, they declared, be inconsistent with greater influence and participation of Russia in Iran.[689] Though there was only one definitive recommendation to supply British officers to re-organise the Iranian Army and make Iran more defendable, importantly, the India government wished to adopt a policy towards Iran that was consistent and consistently followed through. Doing nothing, they surmised, would lead to a loss of influence and reputation.[690] Though the India government appeared to baulk at either considering Iran as a protectorate as with Afghanistan[691] or making treaty arrangements to guarantee Iran's integrity,[692] its approach seemed to be taken up by Lord Salisbury.[693]

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[688] Minute by the Honourable Sir William Muir on our relations with Persia, 31 May 31, 1875, FO60/377, p.32.
[689] Government of India to Secretary of State for India (and enclosures), 7 June, 1875, FO60/377, p.27.
[690] *Ibid*.,
[691] Minute by the Honourable Sir William Muir on our relations with Persia, pp.32-35.
[692] A. Eden, June 2nd, 1875, FO60/377, p.30.
[693] *Persia and the Defence of India*, p.50.

However, conversations between Lord Derby in the Foreign Office and Count Shuvalov suggested that the British were inclined to stress the status quo and would be unlikely to act unless Marv itself was threatened.[694] Again the Foreign Office and India government were giving out mixed signals. What is more, both the Foreign Office and India government had become rather negligent in their approach. Rose Greaves describes that between 1876 and 1877, supposedly alarmist communications from India regarding Russian intentions to Marv were ignored by both the India government and Foreign Office.[695]

In addition to this muddled thinking, Britain reassessed its ties with Sher Ali Khan, the Emir of Afghanistan. Some surprising options surfaced. Prior to the submission of Marv to the Russians, the British were willing to entertain two extensions of Iranian interest, one in Marv and the other in Herat. Simply entertaining these ideas shows how factors which had a bearing on the Treaty of Paris (1857), which had effectively put an end to Iran's interest in Herat and Afghanistan, could be put to one side. In August 1874, Naser al-Din Shah asked the British to support a mission to Marv to persuade the inhabitants to become Iranian subjects.[696] Sir William Taylour

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[694] Conversation between Lord Derby and Count Schouvaloff [*sic*] regarding the position of the British and Russian Governments in respect to the Central Asian question in March 1875, Precis of Correspondence relating to affairs in Central Asia, Bilichustan [*sic*], Persia, 1877, IOR/L/PS/20/253, p.1.
[695] *Persia and the Defence of India*, pp.30-31.
[696] Napier, May 4, 1875, FO60/377, p.38.

Thomson, Minister Plenipotentiary in Tehran, supported the merits of this course of action. Naser al-Din Shah suggested both moral and material help from the British. The material presumably included money and firearms. However, the inclusion of British officers might also supply the moral help that the Shah was looking for. It is assumed here, but is not definite, that the India government proposal to provide British officers and NCOs to train the Iranian Army formed part of this requirement. Lord Northbrook, Viceroy of India (1872-1876) was suspicious of the Naser al-Din's "real" intentions towards Marv. Moreover, he wondered about the efficacy of Iran as an ally and what effect such an engagement with Iran might have on Afghanistan. In the final analysis, Lord Northbrook argued against Iran's worth as an ally and stated that should an "offensive and defensive alliance between England and Persia" exist, Britain could not actually defend Iran from Russian attack even if it so desired.[697] This episode was just one example of the machinations of Naser al-Din to achieve some territorial expansion against the background of wider geo-politics.

In 1879, as worries about the "condition" and the unity of Afghanistan were raised, Sir Ronald Thomson (Brother to Taylour and Minister Plenipotentiary in Tehran) discussed the judiciousness of entrusting Herat to the Iranians rather than "the chance guardianship of some petty chief who

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[697] Minute by His Excellency The Viceroy, May 20, 1874, FO60/377, p.46.

may be accessible to Russian bribes".[698] Moreover, Herat under the Iranians would enable the British to have indirect control over that territory.[699] The conditions for such a plan might also establish the right for future British military intervention and the garrisoning of some British soldiers at Herat.[700] Notwithstanding the effects such a policy would have on the Treaty of Paris (1857) and the last time that Iran had tried to re-establish control over Herat, Iran's interest was piqued. However, it was likely that the genesis of this idea had come from the Iranians in the first place. Not only was the raising of the Herat issue timely, but it allowed the Iranians to realise some territorial gains.[701] It was duly reported in the *Daily News* and syndicated throughout Britain that the Russians now also knew about these plans and saw it as a hurdle to their ambitions.[702]

In January 1880, Naser al-Din Shah was told that "the principle of the occupation of Herat provisionally by Persia under certain conditions was accepted by Her Majesty's Government".[703] The Shah's response was one of gratitude, removing a "feeling of soreness and irritation" for Iran because of Herat's earlier loss and promised, without any real justification, to protect

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[698] Secret Cypher, Thomson to Foreign Office, October 22, 1879, FO60/419, p.151.
[699] O.T Burne, 'Persia, Herat and Seistan [*sic*]', January 1, 1880, IOR/L/PS/18/C29/1, p.13.
[700] Secret Cypher, Thomson to Foreign Office, October 22, 1879, FO60/419, p.151.
[701] Secret Cypher, Thomson to Foreign Office, October 27, 1879, FO60/419, pp.163-165.
[702] Reported Intention to Occupy Herat, *Daily News*, 29 November, 1879.
[703] Thomson to Salisbury, January 6, 1880, FO60/428, p.5.

India from any intrigues.[704] Malkom Khan, Ambassador in London, behind much of the diplomacy pushing for the Herat plan, was a frequent exponent of the Iranian viewpoint. In one discussion with the British government, he declared that the current British policy was "bringing about the annexation of Merv by Russia".[705] He, however, went further and asked if Britain would set aside the Sistan arbitration and give Sistan back to Iran.[706] The Foreign Office declared that they would entertain such a request favourably.[707]

Whilst the Iranians considered that Herat and possibly Sistan were in their grasp and that the plan provided a defence against Russian aggression, up to this point no one had asked the India Government their opinion. After satisfying themselves that London was, so far at least, only talking about Herat, the Viceroy responded by deprecating "any project for dealing piecemeal with territorial redistribution of Afghanistan".[708] Clearly the Foreign Office had not appreciated the call by the India government for a coherent and over-arching strategy.

This period, in which Iran was seen as a possible ally against Russian aggression amidst the unreliability of Afghanistan, has been seen by Rose Greaves as replacing Afghanistan with Iran as a much-needed buffer to the

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[704] *Ibid*.,
[705] 'Persia, Herat and Seistan' [*sic*], p.6.
[706] *Ibid*., p.11.
[707] *Ibid*.,
[708] *Ibid*., p.17.

Russians. The evidence shows, however, that this may be too definitive. The British would much rather have sought an alliance with Afghanistan as they would undoubtedly have had greater influence. The British never trusted the Iranians enough to indulge in what would probably have been a negligible alliance, and in which the Iranians could not actually prove that they could hold up their part of the bargain. In the final analysis, it is highly questionable that Iran could be more of a bulwark to Russian intentions than the patchwork Afghanistan state.

However, Rose Greaves was correct in her analysis to suggest that the negotiations for the transfer of Herat took so long that it was effectively ended by the elections in Britain in 1880, which brought the non-interventionist and less active liberals back to power. Naser al-Din Shah had eked out a negotiation that could have been extremely fruitful and one that at a stroke could settle some of Iran's irredentist desires – the return of Herat and Sistan. Unfortunately, for Iran, the opportunity to see if Iran could hold and safeguard these returned dominions, a dubious proposition, was not tested. On the return to power of the Conservatives and Lord Salisbury in 1885, the negotiation was not revisited. By that point the Treaty of Akhal had been signed and Marv had been taken by the Russians. A British memorandum in 1888 blamed the length of time it took the Shah in negotiating the takeover of Herat and the fact that the Iranians had wanted to

make the arrangement permanent.[709] It should be noted that none of the available British archives discussed any temporary nature of this deal.

1881, a turning point

The Russian expedition against the Teke Turkmen and success at the battle of Geok-Tepe was a turning point in the development of a new Iranian border on the banks of the Attrek River. The bloody conflict and decisive supremacy over the Teke had conclusively curtailed Iran's sovereignty over some Turkmen tribes. The only positive was that Iran had been resolute in not giving the Russians any aid in terms of food and camels, which put them in good stead with the British and formed part of the Iranian-British rapprochement between 1878 and 1879.[710]

1881 also serves as a reasonable date to mark the beginning of absorbing the Turkmens into the Russian fold. In contrast to Iranian ideas of ethnic similarities and *Persianate* peculiarities put forward in 1919, the Russians were to progressively, but quickly, embark on turning the Turkmens into Russian citizens. The expansion of the Russian Empire was leading to the assimilation of peoples seemingly without concern over ethnicity, language, or culture. In this way, they managed to succeed where

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[709] Statement of the Principal Questions, February 29, 1881, FO60/491 (unnumbered)
[710] For a contemporary assessment of the Russian campaign in 1879 see Notes on the Russian expedition against the Tekke Turkomans, 1879, WO106/175.

the Iranians had failed, as they never considered the Turkmens anything other than part of the Iranian myth.

The Akhal Teke oasis was formally annexed in May 1881 and by December 1881, Naser al-Din Shah had run out of options and was resigned to the inevitable loss of territory. Never potent, British diplomacy had re-trenched further. Lord Granville was now at the Foreign Office, and the correspondence between Sir Ronald Thomson in Tehran and the Foreign Office took on a discernibly static demeanour. Conversely, the India government became more active. The India government, in their recommendations to the Foreign Office in 1873 had also recommended greater involvement of their own staff and they were now ready to indulge this recommendation. In one memorandum, the India government suggested that some recruitment of both civil and military officers from India might be a great advantage to the "small and inelastic" service in Iran, particularly those who understood "Asiatic habits".[711] The proposal to send Sir Archibald Alison, an intelligence officer, as a Military Attaché in Tehran originated from the India government.[712]

Certainly, both the Foreign Office and the India government understood the necessity to have more ears on the ground in the border

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[711] Minute by the Honourable Sir William Muir on our relations with Persia, May 31, 1875, FO60/377, p.35.
[712] India Office, April 22, 1880, FO60/432, pp.48-49.

territories to better understand Russian intentions. In April 1880, the Consul of Asterabad, Harry Churchill had decided to leave. Sick and fed up with the weather conditions, wild animals, and a consulate that apparently lacked windows,[713] he was to be replaced by someone more suited to the hardships of Iran's borderlands and who understood military strategy as he would need to "watch pending Russian operations".[714] In September 1880, Lt. Colonel Beresford Lovett was named Consul at Asterabad.[715] Beresford Lovett was an Indian Army officer, surveyor and engineer whose skills seemed to run to anything. A contemporary and friend of Frederic Goldsmid he was also a geographer and cartographer who had played a substantive role in the delimitation of Sistan in the early 1870's.

Beresford Lovett's job at Asterabad was to spy on the Russians and to then hopefully to insinuate himself into whatever border delimitations might take place after the 1881 treaty. Stealth was to be the approach. In the "tit for tat" nature of the *Great Game*, the fear had been that a British officer stationed too close to the Afghan frontier and arousing suspicion might generate assertions by the Russians to put a Consul in Mashad.[716]

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[713] Churchill to Walpole, Asterabad, January 2, 1880, FO60/431, pp.1-4.
[714] India Office to Foreign Office, May 18, 1880, FO60/432, p.54.
[715] Draft, Thomson, September 20, 1880, FO60/430, p.6.
[716] Thomson to Granville, Tehran, July 16, 1881, FO60/439, pp.219-220.

In addition to his job as a spy, his assignment was to obtain "trustworthy information" regarding Herat and the "general condition" of the frontier.[717] Colonel Stewart would, off and on, be involved in reconnaissance and surveying of this frontier for up to three years. Along with the surveying work of Beresford Lovett, particularly in and around Asterabad,[718] and the terrain between Tehran and Asterabad,[719] as well as the surveying of Condie Stephens around Hari-rud River and its tributaries,[720] it built up an important picture of the terrain in the disputed frontier. It was, of course, vital information on which to base British strategy.

The British worried that the annexed Transcaspian had not been defined and might not be until early 1882.[721] The other British concern was that any treaty and subsequent delimitation could be finalised without either their cooperation or consent. Arguably, if Britain had developed a defensive treaty with Iran, then they would possibly have received a seat at the table. In September, the British attempted to insinuate themselves in the negotiations. Sir Ronald Thomson suggested that in order to secure "British interests" a British officer should be part of the commission, to help with difficult decisions and to be present as an "accredited agent without a vote".[722] If the Russians and/or the

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[717] Mallet to Foreign Office, July 23, 1881, FO60/442, p.122.
[718] Thomson to Granville, Tehran, August 9, 1881, FO60/437, p.166.
[719] Thomson to Granville, Tehran, November 1, 1881, FO60/438, p.165.
[720] Thomson Cypher, Tehran, February 14, 1883, FO60/455, p.44.
[721] Thomson Cypher, Tehran, July 22, 1881, FO60/439, p.99.
[722] Thomson Draft, September 2, 1881, FO60/439, p.35.

Iranians would not accede to this request then Sir Ronald Thomson asked if there were any other ways that the British could prevent the extension of the Russian frontier beyond the Akhal basin.[723] Sir Ronald Thomson, spoke to the Shah about the feasibility of having a British officer involved in the negotiations. Having been told by the Shah that none of the arrangements had been finalised and would not be for some time, Sir Ronald Thomson resorted to a carrot and stick approach. On the one hand, he told the Shah about the Russians surveying the Sarakhs region, and on the other, he asked for permission from the Foreign Office to voice British "extreme dissatisfaction" should any secret negotiations take place without their knowledge.[724]

The Shah now felt that a fixed border might prevent further loss of territory. The failure of the negotiation with the British concerning Herat had inevitably led him to resolve other issues with the Russians. In February of 1880, Naser al-Din Shah attempted to negotiate a new commercial treaty with the Russians. This treaty, based on the template of an existing treaty between Britain and the Ottoman Empire, was designed to supersede the commercial capitulations of the Treaty of Turkmanchai.[725] Whilst the British were worried this treaty might undermine British interests,[726] the Iranians were

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[723] *Ibid*., p.36.
[724] Thomson to Granville, Tehran, September 2, 1881, FO 60/438, p.41.
[725] Thomson to Salisbury, Tehran, February 24, 1880, FO 60/430, pp.62-64.
[726] Thomson Draft, Tehran, August 23, 1880, FO 60/430, p.53.

determined to lessen the advantage of Russia's ad valorem tax.[727] Naser al-Din Shah knew that he could not undo the Treaty of Turkmanchai and the lands lost, but repairing the economic damage of the treaty and re-establishing some pride was the next best thing.

Secret conventions and diplomacy in the dark

Given that the Iranians had already embarked on a secret treaty in 1856 and were now willing to discuss a commercial treaty with Russia, whilst the Russians were annexing the lands above the Attrek River, the British were rightfully worried that the Iranians would go ahead and negotiate a treaty by themselves, which would not favour Iranian or British interests. The Iranians did not disappoint the British.

The Border Convention of 1881, or Treaty of Akhal, designated a new border between the possessions of the Russian Empire and Iran. The main thrust of the agreement was to draw a border from the mouth of Attrek in the Caspian to the region of Baba Dormaz, and to advocate a delimitation commission to establish the exact border.

The Treaty of Akhal disheartened the British. In 1883, a memorandum, though written with more than a dose of hindsight, was damning. Condie Stephens, described an agreement that had given Russia control of all the

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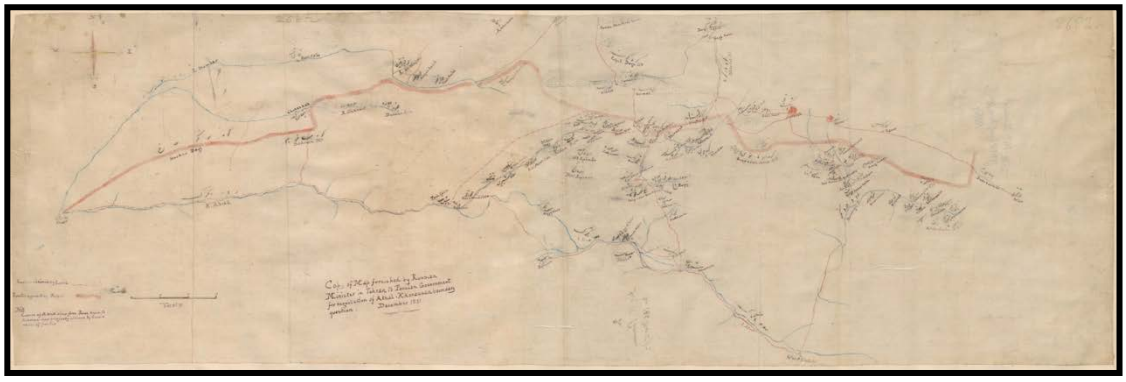
[727] Thomson to Granville, Tehran, July 13, 1880, FO 60/430, pp.88-89.

headwaters and nearly all the passes into Iran leaving it defenceless to any attack. He also criticised the "mischievous elasticity of some of provisions". Iran was asked to build a road from Khorasan to the Transcaspian. However, the Russians would be responsible for nominating the frontier agents. Stephens suggested that "Russia has not only secured for herself free access to Khorasan, but has practically acquired the means, if not actually the right, of procuring from that province what extra supplies she may stand in need of".[728] If the Treaty of Akhal was meant to limit Russian interest and encroachment in Khorasan, then it failed. As far as the British were concerned the threat of encroachment had increased.



Map 15. Copy of map furnished by Russian Minister in Tehran to Persian Government for negociation of Akhla-Khorassan [*sic*] boundary question. December 1881.
Dotted Red line: shows Russian proposed border.
Heavier Red Line: Shows Iran proposed border
Resulting border based on Russian proposal
Source: FO 925/2682

The Treaty of Akhal felt unfinished. Lord Curzon had been known to muse about the likelihood of another secret treaty which completed the

[728] The Akhal-Khorassan Boundary Treaty, Enclosure in No.1, April 10, 1884, FO65/1205, pp.125-127.

picture of the Khorasan frontier. Russian activities certainly implied a further agreement. The Russians were locally asserting that the Derehgez and Kelat territory (between Baba Dormaz and Sarakhs) belonged to them, and the area around Sarakhs had been surveyed.[729] British intelligence was also suggesting that a border had been agreed that finished just short of Sarakhs.[730] Even in July 1883, the Iranians claimed that no arrangement had been made with the Russians to extend the frontier beyond Baba Dormaz.[731] Finally, after a meeting with the Shah in in December 1884, Sir Ronald Thomson was finally able to disclose that a secret agreement had indeed existed. Here is the text of the resulting telegraph in full:

> Very Confidential. At a private audience today the Shah stated to me confidentially that when Akhal boundary treaty was concluded in 1881 Persia had also signed a secret convention in extending Russian frontier from Baba Dormaz to point on the Tejen eight miles north of New Sarakhs. This treaty contains five articles. It defines the frontier line between above points giving all Turcoman settlements in Atek [*sic*] region to Russia and further stipulates that Turcoman population in these districts shall no longer pay tribute to Persia, that they shall not be deprived of their usual supply of water, that all questions concerning them shall be referred to the Russian Legation and that Persia shall abstain from all interference with Tekeh Turcomans [*sic*] on the Tejen. Shah said that Russia threatened if this treaty was not signed to insist on Atek [*sic*] river throughout its course being the line of boundary and to take forcible possession of the Atek territory. He had therefore accepted terms pressed and stipulation that treaty should be kept secret for five years. Not sent to India.[732]

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[729] Thomson to Granville, Enclosure in No.9, May 22, 1882, FO6O/445, p.375.
[730] Russian Abstract, February 7, 1882, FO60/447, p.15.
[731] Thomson Cypher, July 19, 1883, FO60/455, p.78.
[732] Cypher Thomson, December 8, 1884, FO60/462, p.208.

The secret convention explained the Shah's reticence in discussing the frontier between Baba Dormaz and Sarakhs. The British had put this reticence down to his wish not to risk the displeasure of the Russians.[733]

Map 16. Tracing showing the direction of the Russo-Persian border between Baba Dormaz and Sarakhs.
Light Red line: shows proposed border ending short of Sarakhs.
Source: Referred to in FO 60/486 p.71 and FO 60/490 p.17. MFQ1/831.

However, by 1886, it had become obvious that Naser al-Din Shah had been less than open regarding any of his dealings with the Russians.

[733] Thomson Cypher, January 12, 1882, FO60/447, p.114.

The Secret Convention of 1881,[734] was only one secret convention of many during this decade. Unbeknown to the British, another secret convention had been signed in 1883. In case of Iranian control not being established over Iranian Yamut and Goklan tribes by the end of 1886, specifically the Yamut and Goklan, "Russia is at liberty to advance the frontier to the Goorgan [*sic*] so as to bring the unruly tribes under Russian administration and to maintain tranquillity".[735] This substantiated the unconfirmed intelligence that Iran was in danger of losing even more territory. A secret Russian communication, intercepted by the British, also pointed to it. Colonel Karaviev, in his report provided for two possible borders, a moderate one noted in the Akhal Treaty and the Secret Convention in the same year, and another border which took in to account the cessation of Yamut and Goklan territories.[736] The British believed that Colonel Karaviev had arrived to engage the later proposal.[737]

In 1886, the British were also faced with another report, this time written by General Kouropatkin which outlined a plan for Russian advance on India.[738] Though written with an eye towards a war with Britain, the

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[734] See enclosure, Nicolson to Salisbury, January 125, 1887, FO60/486, pp.60-69.
[735] Resume of a secret convention said to have been signed between the Russian and Persian Governments, Inclosure [*sic*], in No.8, FO60/480, p.137.
[736] Nicolson to Rosebury, April 29, 1886, FO60/480, pp.126-128.
[737] *Ibid*.,
[738] Generals Kouropatkin's Plan for an advance on India, Inclosure [*sic*], in No 3, FO60/480, pp.129-132.

report should be seen as part of a strategy that included a further secret convention that the Russians put forward in that year. General Schepelev outlined a plan that called for a takeover of Iranian administration, communication, and territory to pursue a war with Britain. Iran was to be wooed by the proposition that its sovereignty would remain intact after hostilities and that the return of Qotur and Bagdad was in the offing should the war also spread to Turkey. However, should Iran not fulfil the articles in this convention, the territories of Mazandaran and Gilan would be annexed to Russia.[739] It appears that the Shah never saw this proposal, though some Iranian ministers were privy to it. What his opinion might have been is a matter of conjecture, though given past experience he might have looked upon it favourably. Certainly, the British felt that there was enough to entice him.[740]

To counter or balance Iran's dealings with Russia, the Iranian government, between 1881 and 1886, prepared the ground for greater British involvement. They argued that Iran, while dismayed with Russia's advance had no choice but to conclude a treaty that resulted in the loss of lands.[741] Calling on Russia to recognise Iran's right to contentious territory would weaken its own position and Iran was better off negotiating treaties over

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[739] Proposals to be taken as Basis for a Convention to be signed between the Russian and Persian Governments, as set forth by Generals Kouropatkin's [*sic*], Inclosure [*sic*], in No 4, FO60/480, p.134.
[740] Nicolson to Rosebury, June 23, 1886, FO60/480, p.133.
[741] Thomson Cypher, March 16, 1882, FO60/447, p.156

territory which was not disputed.[742] Moreover, it was in Britain's interest to check Russia's advance. After all, the objective of Russia's possession of the Akhal was only "to facilitate a move on Merve".[743] If Britain could obtain a recognition of Iran's rights, then Marv might be secure. In a further discussion, they claimed that should Britain stop Russia's push towards Marv then any further Russian annexations against Iran had little value.[744] The Iranians then suggested that the British should occupy Herat before it was too late.[745] Iran's objective throughout this diplomatic dialogue was to suggest that rather than pushing Iran to stand up for themselves, which they could not, then the British, who had vast interests in the region should do something about the Russians themselves.

By 1886, the British for their part were dismayed by the numerous secret conventions signed between Iran and Russia that seemed to give up more and more territory. By March of 1887, the British agreed to remonstrate with the Russians under the Understanding against further violations of Iranian territory, as long as they were told before the event and not informed afterwards.[746] Several documents show however that the Shah put little store in British protestations of help. Remonstrations were to be the extent of

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[742] *Ibid.*,
[743] *Ibid.*,
[744] Thomson Cypher, March 20, 1882, FO60/447, p.162.
[745] Thomson Cypher, March 22, 1882, FO60/447, p.164.
[746] Nicolson to Salisbury, March 21, 1887, FO60/486, p.179.

Britain's help. Naser al-Din Shah correctly assumed that British "assistance would never proceed beyond friendly counsels".[747] Naser al-Din Shah was to lament that Russia's progress might have been different if Iran had been supported by Britain in establishing control over the Turkmens.[748]

Influence of diplomacy on the ground

The secret conventions and a lack of understanding of the pressures that Iran was under, had meant that Britain was to a great extent operating without all the facts, a situation that gave Russia the upper hand. To what extent an opportunity to regain territory had been missed because Naser al-Din Shah had acquiesced to a secret treaty with the Russians we shall never know. However, under this dark cloud there was a distinct lack of energy in convening a delimitation convention following the Treaty of Akhal.

As we will see, the British were anxious to settle the border and to become involved in negotiations. Seemingly jolted into action, they may have become aware that the importance would be in the detail. The Russians put modern methods to use in ensuring that delimitation on the ground was to be in their favour and defined as such to enable further expansion at a later date.

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[747] Nicolson to Salisbury, January 24, 1887, FO60/486, p.51.
[748] Nicolson to Salisbury, February 20, 1887, FO60/486, p.105.

The Shah believed that he was protected by the Secret Agreement and the Understanding and felt that the longer it took the better the results might be for Iran. The Russians, whose encroachment and movement south had not abated obviously saw no reason to delimit any borders. The British naturally felt that delimitation would stifle further encroachments and hopefully leave the Russians short of the Afghanistan border. Only the British wanted delimitation to take place sooner rather than later. The British were particularly insistent that they wanted to be involved in any delimitation commission. They, at least on the surface, believed that the Shah would back their involvement despite not wanting to upset the Russians.[749] Not only did the British want to secure their interests, however, they also wanted to ensure that Russian encroachment did not extend further than agreed.[750] Sir Ronald Thomson believed that being on the commission as an "agent without a vote" would be sufficient to keep the Russians from bullying the Shah.[751]

The Russian Boundary Commission arrived in Tehran in August 1883 and consisted of Colonel Karaviev and Captain Count Nirod and were to move to the Akhal frontier in October,[752] there to be joined by Mr. Argyropoulo, from the Russian legation in Tehran.[753] Iran's representatives

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[749] Thomson to Granville, September 4, 1881, FO60/438, pp.38-42.
[750] Draft Thomson, September 2, 1881, FO60/439, pp.35-36.
[751] *Ibid*., p.35.
[752] Rasht Consul to Granville, August 6, 1883, FO60/457, pp.95-97.
[753] Rasht Consul to Granville, October 29, 1883, FO60/457, pp.148-149.

were Suleiman Khan, Sahib Ikhtar and Amir Tuman. One British memorandum outlined both the method and plan for the Boundary Commission.[754] Given that the Treaty of Akhal had been very specific as to the border route, it was expected that unresolved issues would be minimal. The Boundary Commission was to address a number of relatively problematic issues. Firstly, the nationality of the Yamut Turkmens needed to be ascertained. Given their nomadic way of life this would not be easy. Secondly, to determine Iran's claim to the region known as Hassan Kuly (now Esenguly in Turkmenistan). The Russians had claimed this was within their territory however the Iranians claimed that had the Attrek River not diverted from its natural channel then the village would be Iranian as their inhabitants declared they were.[755] Thirdly, to remove Russian outposts from Kefteh Chanar (assumed to be the area now known as Chenar) which lay in Iranian territory. Given that these issues lay closer to the Caspian than Baba Dormaz, the Boundary Commission decided to reverse their original intention and to begin at Baba Dormaz and work towards the Caspian.

The issue of water rights now took centre stage. Life enabling properties aside, control of water or land through which it flowed assigned power. The ability to bully the weaker power in negotiation became crucial

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[754] Thomson to Granville, January 21, 1884, FO65/1202, pp.94-97.
[755] Thomson to Granville, February 26, 1882, FO60/444, p.535.

in the power dynamics in which Iran and Russia found themselves. Though the Iranian claim to Hassan Kuli was turned down and the well irrigated area of Chenar was returned to Iran, the issue of water rights near Luftabad (Lotfabad) and rights towards what the British called the Hoozkan waters (tributary of what is now called the Ahal River) was a concern. The Russians believed that Iran had appropriated streams that Turkmens had been forced to leave during the battles of Geok Tepe.[756] The Russians believed that water was being deprived by what they now considered to be Russian subjects though curiously they also seemed to understand that there were some villages, such as Lotfabad, which were definitively Iranian.[757] This was one issue that was to be kicked into the long grass. It seemed that one option, probably unworkable and fraught with difficulty, was to operate a joint protectorate between Russia and Iran over this region.[758] This option would, in time, undoubtedly result in Russian control whatever the perception of joint administration. Sir Ronald Thomson understood furthermore that control of the territory in the meantime by the Russians would result in water shortages for the Iranian subjects and the eventual turning of the local inhabitants into Russian subjects, therefore rendering the issue moot.

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[756] Thomson to Granville, March 5, 1884, FO65/1204, p.25.
[757] *Ibid*., Thomson to Granville, p.26.
[758] *Ibid*.,

Sir Ronald Thomson's analysis had already been borne out in February when the Russians cut off the waters to the villages around Lotfabad.[759] According to Mirza Reza Khan (Prince Arfa) it was his negotiation which led to an agreement whereby the Lotfabad villagers could dig a new stream for irrigation.[760] As far as the Iranian representative at the Boundary Commission was concerned, who had left the commission as this disagreement played out, in the end the lack of water would mean the de-population of the entire area of Kelat.[761]

The Boundary Commission agreed several Protocols in 1884, to the east of Baba Dormaz and towards the Tejen River. These Protocols were not only in line with Colonel Karaviev's secret memorandum but displayed a thorough re-organisation of water rights and organisation of agriculture for the good of Russia's new Turkmen subjects.[762] The work of the 1882 Boundary Commission came to an end rather rapidly in 1884, their work had been overtaken by events, such as the Russian occupation of Marv and the territory up to Sarakhs. In 1886, Iran and Russia signed another convention on 30 January 1886 at Ashkhabad, which further affected the area between

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[759] Letter from Mashad Agent, February 13, 1884, FO65/1204, p.29.
[760] Prince Arfa' (Mirza Reza Khan), *Memories of a Bygone Age: Qajar Persia and Imperial Russia 1853-1902*, Edited and translated by Michael Noël-Clarke (London: Gingko Library 2016)
[761] Letter from Governor of Kelat, February 12, 1884, FO65/1204, p.31.
[762] See, Protocols on February 20 1884, May 15, 18, 28 and June 21, in Wolff to Salisbury, May 10, 1888, FO60/492, unnumbered.

Baba Dormaz and Hassan Guli Bay on the Caspian. Broadly, this convention only fine-tuned the Treaty of Akhal. It did, however, include a few Protocols which further defined the frontier, all of which were eventually confirmed in 1954 between the Pahlavi government and the USSR.[763] A ceremony, in 1886, established the transfer of the newly established frontier to local Iranian and Russian administrations.[764] This ceremony and document alludes to a number of further protocols signed between Russia and Iran.

While this convention fine-tuned the Treaty of Akhal it did not in any way describe the border between Baba Dormaz, through to Sarakhs and beyond to the Zulfiqar pass. For the next 7 years, the unofficial border remained where the Russians had settled on the other side of the Tejen River. In the meantime, the Afghan boundary was settled in 1887.[765] The boundary was set between the Zulfiqar pass and the Oxus River, though questions remained as to where it would end. Lord Curzon described this boundary as a "length without strength"[766] and not a boundary that might stop the Russians from further encroachment.

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[763] Iran and Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, *Agreement concerning the settlement of frontier and financial questions*, signed in Tehran, December 2, 1954, No 6497.
[764] Certificate regarding the handing over of the frontier between the Country beyond the Caspian and Persia to the local Persian and Russian Government Authorities, Wolff to Salisbury, May 10, 1888, FO60/492, unnumbered.
[765] Ridgeway to Salisbury, August 15, 1887, FO251/57, unnumbered.
[766] *Russia in Central Asia*, p.344.

The road to Sarakhs

The issue of Sarakhs was linked to the takeover of Marv. Once Marv was lost to Russian expansion then Sarakhs and other areas east of the Tejen River were likely to suffer the same fate. Russia's annexation of Marv in 1884 cajoled the British to act more stridently and press for a joint commission to settle Afghanistan's northern borders.[767] Though this newfound urgency led Britain to finally consider military action as the Russians threatened Penjdeh in 1885, for the Iranians, it would be too late.

The Russian occupation of Sarakhs, east of the Tejen River, had followed the usual methodology of encroachment. This included three elements: surveying, casting doubt on ownership and creeping administration.

Surveying territory could be seen as tacit appropriation of territory or at least a claim to it. In some cases, this included territory whose ownership had not been disputed. The Russians had periodically surveyed territory in Iranian Khorasan, which was undoubtedly Iranian. As early as 1881, the Russians surveyed territory such as Bujnurd and Kuchan territory even though it was Iranian territory.[768]

The action of surveying obfuscated ownership. This was reinforced by questioning ownership, which they did when they queried Iranian

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[767] *Persia and the Defence of India*, p.69.
[768] Draft Thomson, December 16, 1881, FO60/435, p.172.

ownership of Sarakhs.[769] Actions casting doubt on ownership were difficult for the Iranians to counter as they found it difficult to substantiate ownership when it had long been the case. Providing information that proved ownership was also challenging. State trappings such as a monitored border, customs houses and other state infrastructure would have gone a long way to substantiate Iranian claims, but it was the Russians who were instituting them. The railway to Samarkand, finished in May 1888 was a prime example. It already connected many Turkmen conquests along the Akhal basin.

This approach of territorial absorption epitomised the methods of a modern state when confronted with the pre-modern state that Iran was. Of course, for the pre-modern state it aroused feelings of defencelessness, inferiority, and anger. These feelings, of a country "put upon" by stronger nations still resonates in Iran to this day. However, this narrative fed directly into the nationalist cause for the delegates in Paris.

Sarakhs had already been surveyed by the Russians in 1882. It was reported that the Russians had surveyed to within 16 versts of Sarakhs (a little over 16 kilometres).[770] This was, of course, already closer to Sarakhs than had been secretly agreed between Iran and Russia. Despite numerous conversations between the British and the Russians in which further Russian

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[769] Draft Thomson, December 30, 1881, FO60/435, p.179.
[770] Thomson Draft, February 11, 1882, FO60/447, p.13.

expansion was denied, either before, during or even after more expansion,[771] experiences on the ground told a different story. On a trip to Baku, Beresford Lovett, was told by the Governor General for the Caucasus, that Russia's ideal would be "the realization of une frontiere scricure" meaning to Beresford Lovett "a frontier conterminous with that of a responsible power".[772] A rather romantic view of imperialism that did not include the miscellaneous tribes or the oriental power of Iran or Afghanistan. The British, at this point with no firm knowledge of a secret treaty, believed that Russia would also incorporate the territory up to the Tejen River near Sarakhs and that the Naser al-Din Shah would be forced to accept this change.[773]

After Sir Ronald Thomson found out about the terms of the secret treaty he naturally assumed that the Iranian-Afghan border would run from the point "where the proposed line crosses the Tejen River north of Sarakhs".[774] By spring 1884, the Russians, with control over the administration of Marv were rumoured to be turning their attention to Sarakhs.[775] The submission of Marv to the Russians was part of a larger plan to bring all Turkmens under Russian control and, as far as Russia was concerned, this meant controlling the territory up to the Tejen River and

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[771] See *Russia and Britain in Persia*.
[772] Lovett to Granville, June 2, 1882, FO60/449, p.329.
[773] Thomson Cypher, November 12, 1883, FO60/455, p.104.
[774] Thomson (undated), FO60/460, pp.162-163.
[775] Thomson Cypher, April 21, 1884, FO60/462, p.92.

Sarakhs. Naser al-Din Shah vehemently denied that that any proposal to secede either bank of Sarakhs to the Russians would be accepted by the Iranian government.[776]

Against the background of a huge imbalance of power between Iran and Russia, the arguments both governments used would benefit from being highlighted. When the Iranians and Russians met to negotiate, the irate Iranians claimed that both old Sarakhs and new Sarakhs, separated by the Tejen river belonged to Iran and that any Turkmen who might live there did so by special permission.[777] The Russians argued that the right side of the river was occupied by Turkmen and Russia had the right to bring them under Russian control. Both arguments rest on varied interpretation of sovereignty and ideas of what constituted a relationship with people of the realm. On the one hand, the treatment of tribes and people on the periphery of the Iranian Empire was casual, the onus being on the ownership of land and permitting different people at different times to work that land. The permanency was the control of the land. Conversely, the modern approach of the Russians exemplified their control of people and their practice of extending the operation of the state to make these people citizens.

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[776] Thomson Cypher, May 11, 1884, FO60/462, p.100.
[777] Thomson Cypher, June 15, 1884, FO60/462, p.124.

The British understood this argument and were quite unsupportive when Iran asked for help. In the middle of June, the Russians took over some territory in Old Sarakhs and threw the Iranian guards out.[778] The Iranian government protested and hoped that Britain would support a formal protest.[779] Whilst Sir Ronald Thomson considered Russian claims to Sarakhs arbitrary, he also knew that the Russians were unlikely to change their policy.[780] In July, the Russians, in an attempt to further underline their position, declared that Iran's agreement not to interfere with Turkmens under Russian control included any in the territory east of the Tejen.[781] Whilst the Iranian government might have felt that agreements and treaties were always one sided and never in their interest, it was the British response that was interesting. Malkom Khan asked what the British response would be to the Russians given the Understanding that existed and had been reiterated many times. The British argued that the problem was that Iran had not taken British advice, particularly in 1878 and 1879.[782]

The advice the British now gave was that Iran should strengthen its position in Sarakhs. However, in view of the obvious need to pursue a policy of extending Iranian administration over these dominions, the assumption is

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[778] Thomson Cypher, June 18, 1884, FO60/462, p.126.
[779] Thomson Cypher, June 22, 1884, FO60/462, p.128.
[780] Thomson Note, undated, FO60/462, p.134.
[781] Thomson Cypher, June 8, 1884, FO60/462, p.142.
[782] Thomson Draft, July 3, 1884, FO60/459, pp.73-75.

that the British had been pushing for such a strategy. Archival material during these years, however, suggests that Britain was more interested in increasing its own influence in Iran. Britain had two complaints. The first, was that Britain was being hindered in developing its commercial interests in Iran. Concessions for roads and the Karun River project, amongst others were intended to grow trade in Iran for the good of Iranians and British. The issue of railways was also crucial for the British, only for them to see a proposed concession for a railway between Rasht and Tehran to be substituted by the Russian Falkenhagen proposal.[783] The battle for concessions and primacy in Iran was becoming increasingly frantic as the end of the century approached and the British felt they were losing the battle for political and commercial supremacy against the Russians.

The second, and overriding complaint was the British assumption that Russian influence in the country was extensive and that the Shah's "personal sympathies are well known to be wholly with the Emperor".[784] Much of this British *angst* should to be reflected against the wider problems that Britain was having with Russia. Russia went to war with the Ottomans in 1877 and the possibility of British intervention on the Ottoman side had seemed likely. The Berlin Congress, which effectively limited Russia's prizes, might have

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[783] Thomson to Salisbury, September 3, 1878, FO60/411, pp.105-107.
[784] Thomson to Salisbury, July 6, 1878, FO60/410, p.223.

seemed like a victory for the British but the Peace of St. Stefano convinced the British even more that Iran had made a secret deal with the Russians. The British could not understand why the Iranians would receive Qotur from the Ottomans if some deal had not been made. To make matters worse, Naser al-Din Shah had to be pushed to voice his displeasure of Russian expansion towards Akhal. He excused his supposed pliancy by not wanting to offend the Emperor.[785] The British stance, though understandable, did not take into account the position of Iran or Naser al-Din Shah. Fear of the Russians was a major and inalterable fact for the Iranians, and it is not clear what Iran might have done to dissuade the Russians from their inevitable progress. The only power that could dissuade the Russians was the British Empire. However, they ultimately lacked the will to stand up to the Russians for the sake of Iran.

It certainly could be argued, and the British did, that Iran had not done enough to substantiate ownership of Sarakhs and by extension the Khorasan province. The mismanagement of the province of Khorasan, so important as a buffer to the growing Russian influence in the region, had been perpetuated by the Shah himself and was reflected in the practice of sending incompetent and self-serving governors to the region. Whilst the British would have liked to see the tentacles of the modern state to reach

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[785] Thomson to Salisbury, September 3, 1878, FO60/411, p.59.

the likes of Khorasan and Sarakhs it was probably the issue of safety and pacification of the tribes that was the biggest problem. The India government even offered an annual subsidy to the Iranian government to calm the border regions.[786]

Over Naser al-Din Shah's long reign, Iran had tried different methods of subjugation which exemplified a purely military approach to the problem. For a modern approach to laws and administration one must go back to Amir Kabir's brief office. Amir Kabir had spent time and money revitalising the forts which protected the *guarded domains.* He was also not reticent in sending in the Iranian army to pacify the Goklan Turkmen in 1848. Amir Kabir's approach in negotiating with the Russians, relied more on a legal and formal approach rather than simply responding to situations. When the Russians expected a verbal confirmation from Mohamad Shah to be enough to build on the island of Ashuradeh, Amir Kabir expected an agreement that took into consideration international law.[787]

However, within the understanding of how the Iranian Empire managed the outlaying and peripheral regions, it is possible to argue that they did do just that. It needs to be remembered that Sarakhs had been sparingly occupied and that the Turkmens there in 1884 had not been there

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[786] Statement of the Principal Questions, February 29, 1881, FO60/491 (unnumbered)
[787] *Amir Kabir va Iran,* pp.478-479.

for any length of time. Nevertheless, this was all in stark contrast with Russian initiatives, which followed brutal campaigns of subjugation. Districts were organised, passports issued, and lawlessness curtailed, sometimes by integrating Turkmens into Russian militias. Even the British remarked that people were likely better off under Russian rule than Iranian.

The Yamut and the question of Firouzeh

The Treaty of Akhal in 1881, established a new frontier that cut through the nomadic lands of the Yamut Turkmen. The practical problems this caused were to consume and worry the Iranians up to 1893 and beyond.

The Treaty of Akhal had allowed for border controls to be set up and for taxes to be levied by both Iran and Russia. The Yamut showed imaginative methods of avoiding these taxes, either by moving or by dealing violently with the tax officials. The British Asterabad agent reported one instance where the official was fired upon and his horse killed.[788] The Secret Convention, agreed in 1881, resolved that Iran had to ensure that the Yamut were pacified, something that they had previously found problematic. If the Iranians were not able to end Yamut banditry, then the whole Gorgan territory might be forfeited to Russia. This was, of course, in contradiction to the Understanding which existed between Britain and Russia.

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[788] Asterabad Agent Report, January 3, 1889, FO60/500, unnumbered.

By 1886, it was certainly clear to Sir Arthur Nicolson (Chargé d'affaires) that Iran had failed to pacify the Yamut and what he called their "present effervescence", artfully downplaying their violence.[789] Though the Iranians sent troops to the region in 1886 to supress the rebellion, they were not able to bring the Yamut to heel. In 1888, during the month of November alone there were 8 vicious attacks which involved either the stealing of livestock or fatalities.[790] Colonel Stewart was scathing about the Iranian military, having the means, but not the guts to take on the Yamut.

The Iranians were satisfied that the Russians were behind the most recent agitation.[791] Anything the Russians could do to promote discord, leading to further cessation of territory was ideal. For all Russian protestations that their expansion was to subdue and pacify tribes, there was ample evidence for the Iranians that they were promoting much of the mischief themselves. Whilst the Russians were moaning about the level of disorder, they were themselves allowing Teke and Saryk Turkmen to join the Yamut insurgents.[792] In this way the Russians were acting much like the Ottomans (Chapter 5), promoting discord, and then providing the solution.

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[789] Nicolson to Rosebury, Tehran, April 29, 1886, FO251/57, unnumbered.
[790] No 7 Political, December 17, 1888, FO60/497, unnumbered.
[791] Nicolson to Rosebury, Tehran, April 29, 1886, FO251/57, unnumbered.
[792] Wolff to Salisbury, July 23, 1888, FO60/496, unnumbered.

The Iranians had also frequently used the Turkmen tribes for their own political necessities.

Usually, the implementation of borders and border controls has been an imposition on nomadic tribes, though in this case the Yamut seemed impervious. The Yamut were no strangers to territorial limits which existed amongst the wider Turkmen community. They had, for instance, boundary markers between themselves and the sedentary and much smaller Turkmen tribe, the Goklan. The boundary between the tribes was marked by a solitary minaret.[793] These boundaries were at times flexible, as confrontations and battles had moved rival Turkmen tribes from area to area. So, it is certain that Turkmens actively chose to defy the unwanted impositions of borders.

It is remarkable that, given Iran's inability to subdue the Yamut, the Russians did not annex the Gorgan territory to bring the Yamut under their control. They had many opportunities to do so, and the Iranians had certainly given them enough reason. Even up to 1892, the Yamut were causing considerable difficulties for the Iranians, who had taken the approach of moving the Goklan to counter Yamut insurgency, albeit placing the Goklan on what was considered Russian territory.[794] This had been a longstanding device by Iranian governments to calm borders. Some Kurdish

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[793] 'On the Yamud and Goklan Tribes of Turkomania', p.61.
[794] Confidential Report, January 29, 1892, FO251/57, unnumbered.

tribes had already been moved from the western borderlands to counter the Turkmens.

It is likely that the Russians, whose interest in Sarakhs was greater from a strategic point of view, were willing to trade Sarakhs for the Gorgan territory. In 1889, as Naser al-Din Shah passed though St. Petersburg on his last trip to Europe, it was rumoured that he had given up on Sarakhs.[795] It was not until another protocol, that the border was demarcated between Lotfabad and Baba Dormaz, past Sarakhs and through to the Zulfiqar pass.

The issue of the Firouzeh district was not brought up by the Iranians during their bout of irredentism in 1919, though it could have been. The Treaty of Akhal, under Article 1, clearly gave this district to Iran. However, Article 4 also stated that Iran would not have effective control of waterways, whose source may even be within Iran. Moreover, the Iranians were not allowed to cultivate these regions, despite being in Iran, and had to supply the necessary officials to ensure this happened. This obviously absurd situation may have resulted from the vagaries of drawing up agreements without full knowledge of the geography. However, the Russians had a habit of forcing treaties on Iran which gave them a reason to either contest further territory or amend treaties in the future.[796] Clearly, allowing Iran to possess

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[795] Nawrab Ali Khan to Kennedy, 14 June 1889, FO60/501, pp.87-89.
[796] ''Elal va peyamadha-ye jodai-e qarieh-e Firouzeh az Iran', p.85.

the district of Firouzeh whose valley allowed a strategic route into Iran was not in Russian interest.

The Convention between Russia and Persia for Territorial Interchange in 1893 dealt with the issue of the village and territory of Firouzeh. Firouzeh was exchanged for two pieces of territory. The first concerned a strip of land opposite the fortress of Abbas Abad in the Caucasus and the village of Hesar, south-east of Lotfabad. There followed in 1894 numerous protocols which slightly modified what had been agreed over the previous thirteen years. All of which were sanctified in subsequent treaties between Iran and Russia/Soviet Union. The issue of Firouzeh was also mentioned in the rather dubiously titled Treaty of Friendship in 1921. This treaty, the first such treaty with the Soviet Union, is a curious amalgam of socialist camaraderie, goodwill, and hard diplomacy. The island of Ashuradeh and the village and environs of Firouzeh were given back to Iran "in view of the repugnance which the Russian Federal Government feels to enjoying the fruit of the policy of usurpation of the Tsarist Government".[797] Russian goodwill did not extend to the question of Sarakhs, the Turkmen lands or indeed the Caucasus. The treaty was signed by Moshaver al-Mamalek, who had led the Iranian commission in Paris in 1919. If he did finally achieve some sense of

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[797] Persia and the Russia Socialist Federal Soviet republic, Treaty of Friendship, signed at Moscow, February 26, 1921, No 268, League of Nations, Treaty Series.

satisfaction in negotiating some return of territory, it would not last. Though Ashuradeh remained Iranian, Firouzeh was never given back to Iran. This was ultimately substantiated by the Agreement concerning the settlement of frontier and financial questions in 1954, negotiated by Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and the Soviet Union. This Agreement not only ironed out the odd problems not sufficiently dealt with by the Treaty of Akhal or subsequent conventions, but also established Firjuza (Firouzeh) as part of the Soviet Union.

The Russian military expansion southwards had led to a greater Empire at the expense of the Iranian Empire. Iran's Empire, based on tacit control was no match for the Russian military and state machine that came in its wake. As the Russian military pacified the Turkmens territories, they instituted administrative districts which brought some peace and prosperity to the Turkmens, whether they wanted it or not.[798] In contrast to the Iranians, the Russians also brought, very quickly, telegraph lines and railways - building a modern infrastructure that would enable them to successfully bring the Turkmen into the Russian fold.

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[798] Memorandum by Colonel Karaviev relating to the Introduction of Russian Administration in the Attek [*sic*], November 15, 1886, FO251/57, unnumbered.

Conclusion:

Contemporary British attitudes consigned Iran's failure in Paris to the deluded nature of Iran's *desiderata* presented to the Peace Conference in 1919. Accusations that Iran's plans constituted an "utter lack of practical statesmanship that inspired the fantastic claims put forward by the Persian representatives"[799] very much reflected opinions. However, 1919 represented an important juncture in the history of Iran; a period that represented a persistent diplomatic effort to regain sovereignty by regaining territory. The delegates in Paris charted the erosion and ultimate marginalisation of Iranian agency and responded with modern legal arguments. In Paris, the delegates were presenting a plan which addressed the very factors for which the British had criticised Iran, such as the inability to guard its borders and to provide modern government.

Nationalism: The Iranian narrative at the Peace of Paris

Claims of Persia before the Conference of the Preliminaries of Peace at Paris set out the Iranian position. It was an emotive document, bemoaning Iran's inability to escape the imperial clutches of Britain, Russia and even Ottoman/Turkey. In this respect it indulged in the tendency to blame others for Iran's ills. Readers of Iranian history will note that the Russians and particularly the

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[799] *A History of Persia*, Chapter XC.

British were swiftly blamed for Iran's longstanding issues.[800] Nevertheless, the discussion on how Iran's borders were reduced and delimited to imperial preferences shows that there is indeed some merit to this argument. Of course, imperial pressures alone cannot explain Iranian failures to improve their lot. Iran had the agency to develop its political, judicial, and economic structures, but did not. In this respect, comparison with the Ottomans is damning. The Ottomans were able to develop a bureaucratic system and structure that transcended transition in rulers, while the Qajar dynasty maintained a patrimonial "system", which neutralised any movement towards better governance. Even so, the Iranian "system" would go on to survive for some time longer, while it was the Ottoman empire which crumbled. Unquestionably, the lack of reference to the Qajar dynasty in *Claims of Persia before the Conference of the Preliminaries of Peace at Paris* spoke volumes.

The delegates argued that for Iran's independence and integrity to be secured, Iran needed to introduce administrative reforms and develop its own natural wealth. They argued that concessions, rather than introducing modern developments, had in fact prevented Iran from developing. Iran had not been able to progress as it would have liked towards a better civilisation.

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[800] For recent assessments see Rudi Matthee 'Facing a Rude and Barbarous neighbour: Iranian Perceptions of Russia and the Russians from the Safavids to the Qajars' and Abbas Amanat 'Through the Persian Eye: Anglophilia and Anglophobia in modern Iranian history' both in *Iran Facing Others: Identity Boundaries in a Historical Perspective.*

A progress, however, that could be reconciled within a narrative of Iranian history that was embedded in ideas of Empire and myth.

Iran recognised the need to move towards a judicial framework which included the concept of the Rule of Law. Whilst such a legal framework was necessary it was also fanciful given the patrimonialism which guided Iranian politics. Ultimately, such a move would have necessitated the establishment of a constitutional monarchy and the end of patrimonialism and therefore the instituting of the full details of the Constitutional Revolution.

Also compelling, was Iran's recognition and use of the idea of self-determination. As discussed, Iranian delegates were not ignorant of Western philosophy or new political concepts. An Iranian definition of self-determination on ethnic lines was simply not feasible. A definition on nationalist lines did, however, fulfil their ambitions. President Wilson never gave a clear definition. Given that the United States with all its different ethnicities, was comparable to what Iran was hopefully destined to be,[801] the delegates seemed convinced that self-determination could work in an imperial context. *Persianate* descriptions facilitated Iranian notions of self-determination.

The nationalists in the Iranian commission extolled the necessary concept of a bounded territory. Iranians were, however, late-comers to this

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[801] *Peacemakers*, pp.19-20.

concept. It was the British who saw the need for fixed and delimited borders; not as a goal in itself but central to enabling trade, business and security. Delimited borders were intended to end tribal unruliness and bring Iran into the modern age. This theology, invented and used to some effect in India, did nothing else other than raise longstanding resentments that the delegates in Paris brought up repeatedly.

Moreover, there were very few delimitations that did not create local problems, in that they managed to cut through tribes and nomadic ranges. Most delimitations required revisiting or amending in subsequent conventions. The Iranians viewed these shortcomings as a criticism of modern border implementations. When observed along with British attempts to exploit Iran's potential with concessions and concomitant pacification of unruly tribes, it is perhaps no wonder that the British and Russians were considered with such apprehension by the delegates.

In contrast, the delegates assumed a bounded Empire which differentiated concepts of Iran and *Aniran*, *dar al-Islam* and *dar al-harb* and history. The issue was that Iran's contemporary borders had come about without recourse to this conceptual paradigm. The intention was to establish a modern country but with delimitations founded on an imperial basis. In other words, a land that befitted a spiritual and cultural Empire of Iranian people and a land, whose delimitation would deal more constructively with tribal issues and nomadic ways of life.

The *imperial nationalism* set out by the delegates emanated from their grounding in Iran's history and myths and their participation in the Constitutional Revolution. Their credentials go a long way to explaining the tone and contents of *Claims of Persia before the Conference of the Preliminaries of Peace at Paris.* Thus, they also understood Iran's geo-political position, which had provided the framework enabling British, Russia and Ottoman/Turkey intervention in Iran. Iran's military weakness, collateral of an un-modern political and legal system, being at the mercy of Russia's interventionist and expansionist aims coupled with Britain's intent to secure the integrity of India as well as Ottoman/Turkish relative superiority, was their tableau.

The nationalism presented at Paris was only a nascent and inchoate nationalism relying on the past rather than a coherent plan for the future,[802] which was to come. However embryonic, this nationalism can also be seen as part of the process, of a developing national consciousness and should be analysed in conjunction with the steps taken by the Constitutional Revolution. Whilst there is a sense of continuity and a building of nationalist ideals, 1919 may indeed represent a turning point. That is, the point at which the Iranian government began showing awareness of what the future may hold. In this way, the First World War was both a nexus of a very long wish

[802] It can still be argued that Iranian ideas of nationalism to the present day have been too eager to rely on the past rather than looking to the future.

list and a precursor to considerable changes in the development and political changes to come.[803]

Modernity: Iran's embracing of modern methods

The methods by which the delegates supported their diplomacy in 1919 reflected a tangibly modern approach. Both in its written presentations and diplomacy, Iran showed an ability to interpret, act on, and be part of the new diplomatic world which was to follow the carnage of world war. The embracing of modern methods showed an understanding of what modernity meant to them. The use of international law, the League of Nations and a nuanced argument of self-determination were all used to either illuminate or defend Iran's wish list. Modernity was now hopefully to work for the good of Iran and not be used against her. Enthusiastically, yet unrealistically, as Mohammad Foroughi's diary records, they envisioned some equality within an international consensus.[804] They attempted to situate the importance of Iran within the context of progress towards civilisation and into the global doctrine of progress. In fact, Mohammad Ali Foroughi wrote a speech in

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[803] See Bert G. Fragner, 'World War 1 as a Turning point in Iranian History' in Oliver Bast (ed*), La Perse et La Grande Guerre*, Bibliothéque Iranienne 52 (Tehran; Louvain: Peeters, 2002) p.441-447.
[804] See 'Yaddashtha-ye montasher nashodeh'.

which he presented Iran as a western bulwark towards eastern hordes.[805] [806] As such, they believed in Iran's cultural importance to the West.

Ahmad Shah's role in determining Iran's diplomatic programme has been largely ignored by researchers. According to Iranian sources, he organised and planned Iran's diplomatic venture in Paris. Ultimately, even if his role was somewhat exaggerated by the press of the day, there is no doubt that he had a role in a diplomatic policy which paralleled, but at times seemed independent of, Vosuq al-Dowleh's foreign policy. Therefore, despite the use of modern methods, there existed multi policy channels which led to policies which were to appear varied, porous, and confused.

Nevertheless, once in Paris, the Iranian delegation adopted numerous new methods of diplomacy in their charm campaign. Their attempts to gain entrance revolved around a consistent strategy of isolating and putting their grievances to one country at a time. In this, they were most successful with President Wilson, Secretary Lansing, and the Americans.

To their credit, Iran was one of the first members of the League of Nations and also one of the most enthusiastic. Iran was described by the British as one of the "champions of the small states".[807] However, Iran's

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[805] *'Notq-e Foroughi dar konferans-e sol-e Paris dar 1919'*.
[806] Contrary to numerous claims, the above address was written in anticipation of access to the Peace Conference and never made.
[807] Arnulf Becker Lorca, 'Petitioning the International: A 'Pre-history' of Self-determination', *The European Journal of International Law*, Vol 25, no 2, pp.497-523, p.514

attempt to carve out a place in this new world order, suffered from being naïve; Iran was also one of the first to put a grievance to the League of Nations, only to be rebuffed.[808] The old order was not to be blown away that easily. Indeed, Iran was also naïve with regards to British intentions. It was unlikely that the British were ever going to let Iran set the agenda in their imperial backyard. It is Iranian reliance on resetting its borders in line with past glories and what has been described here as an *imperial nationalism*, that may have been its undoing. Whilst it is impossible to say whether the delegation would have been successful if Iran had presented a more modest plan, it must have been doubtful.

Irredentism: Iran and the loss of territories

For the Iranian delegates and diplomats, reclaiming the territories lost was vital to any nationalist programme in Iran. However, just as important was how these territories and lands had been lost in the first place. The methods by which lands had been appropriated through war, one-sided treaties, and imperial hegemony fed directly into the narrative of how badly the Iranians had been treated. It also fed into the narrative that Iran had succumbed to the bullying and interference of Britain and Russia. Accordingly, the forensic

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[808] Iran lodged a complaint with the League when the Russians landed in Anzeli in 1920. The subsequent meeting of the Council of the League of Nations between June 14th and 16th 1920 only threw the complaint back to the Iranians, expecting them to directly ask the Russians to evacuate Anzeli but it did affect their withdrawal. See Mansoureh Ettehadieh, 'Les illusions'.

evaluation of how these borders transpired gives a better understanding of Iran's grievances. One example of this is the issue of oil and the telegraph.

The introduction of the telegraph raised collateral sovereignty issues, which the British either did not engage with, or at least chose to disregard. This case study shows that whilst Iran was forced to confront some border issues, Iran came out of the process rather well. Arguably, while the British were hampered by their own diplomatic strategies, the Iranians were not. Nevertheless, the telegraph serves as an example of how progress brought with it incidental and concomitant changes that were also in themselves exemplars of progress.

The issue of oil, crucially important to Britain by 1912, showed how British border strategies had evolved. By this point, Britain was acting as a colonial power and directing its efforts to border delimitations that were in Britain's interest. At the same time, they were able to carve out a commercially successful result and achieve a strategically important objective. The Iranians became mere bystanders, and this fed into the narrative in 1919 and beyond. However, it is difficult to imagine how Britain could have acted differently. Britain's European political needs far outweighed its relationship with a relatively insubstantial country. In this way, and not for the first time, Iranian diplomacy was ignored because of what was happening in Europe. It is perhaps apt that such a saga, which the

delimitation of the Iraq-Iranian border was, was finally put to bed by British imperial needs.

However, even though Britain finally carved out an advantage for herself on the Iraq-Iran border, it had been up to that point an honest broker. The British, together with the Russians, kept the delimitation pot boiling long after they should have gone home. As much as their involvement might have eventually been for self-gain, it is difficult to see how Iran could have maintained its territory against the Ottomans without them. Iran's very weakness and reliance on the British and Russians may have saved it from further territorial losses. Abbas Amanat was not the first person to make this point. Sir John Malcolm wrote in 1830, that

> The power of Asiatic countries to resist invasion of a regular army depends less upon their riches than their poverty, the want of resources of their country, the unsettled habits of the inhabitants, and their being in fact intangible to the attack or regular force. **They yield like a reed to the storm, but are not broken.** [Emphasis added][809]

[809] Re-quoted in *The beginning of the Great Game*, p.69 from 'Notes on the Invasion of India by Russia' in Malcolm to Ellenborough, private, July 1, 1830, P.R.O 30/9/4.

Opposition to Iranian proposals and the Anglo-Persian Agreement

British opposition to the work of the Iranian commission in Paris was partly the result of negotiations going on in Tehran without their knowledge. How Iran might have been more successful in its irredentism if both elements, Paris and Tehran, were combined and public knowledge no one will know. It cannot be shown that Vosuq al-Dowleh's orchestrated both negotiations.[810] British negotiations in Tehran were in themselves incompatible with the new era of openness put forward by President Wilson. In this respect it was Britain who appeared behind the times and seemed out of step with the aspirations of openness, global coordination, and internationalism after the First World War.[811]

Britain's engagement in Europe with the new ideals were not to be replicated in the Middle East. Pursuit of differing approaches and indeed a stubbornness to recognise change rendered the Anglo-Persian Agreement of 1919 almost stillborn. Yet, in the midst of the British negotiating an agreement which would incur worldwide rancour, and the triumvirate of Vosuq al-Dowleh, Nosrat al-Dowleh and Sarem al-Dowleh selling Iran's sovereignty for 50 pieces of silver, there was space to debate

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[810] 'British imperialism and Persian diplomacy in the shadow of World War I (1914-1921)'
[811] See Frank Trentmann, 'After the Nation-State: Citizenship, Empire and Global Coordination in the New Internationalism, 1914-1930' in Kevin Grant, Philippa Levine, Frank Trentmann (eds), *Beyond Sovereignty: Britain, Empire and Transnationalism, c.1880-1950* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2007)

the reclaiming of territories. Territorial claims, at first part of the negotiations, was gradually demoted to a letter rather than part of the agreement. This may have been a tactical misjudgement on the part of the British. Iran's stubbornness in this regard had nationalistic and practical applications. Territorial claims were central to ideas of sovereignty and, for the agreement, a visual statement of Iranian success.

The negotiation and completion of the Anglo-Persian Agreement not only put a significant dent in the ability of the Iranians to pursue matters in Paris, but also signified a change in how Britain was viewed abroad in relation to its machinations in Iran. The British, and specifically Lord Curzon, were chastised for their imperial and misplaced diplomacy. It was reported almost immediately that the United States declined to recognise it.[812] The signing of the document, which reportedly made Ahmad Shah flee for his life,[813] showed that it was Iran and not Britain who understood that colonial attitudes were considered *passé*. The failure of the Anglo-Persian Agreement might also be an example of the changing of the guard, becoming part of the gradual replacement of British domination with American influence.[814]

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[812] *The New York Times*, 30 August 1919, p.3.
[813] *Chicago Tribune*, 19 August 1919, p.1.
[814] This is James Barr's thesis in *Lords of the Desert: Britain's Struggle with America to Dominate the Middle East* (London: Simon & Shuster, 2018) however his timeline begins later.

As Prince Firuz continued to apply pressure on Lord Curzon and the British for some rectifications, it was obvious that Iranian *desiderata* was reducing in scale and ambition. However, at the same time, Iranian arguments were developing a geo-political viewpoint; Iran positioned herself as a regional power able to keep the other nations in check and therefore able to further British strategies. In other words, rather than be a burden to Britain, Iran could come to its aid. Conclusively though, Lord Curzon did not see how Iran had the wherewithal to do so.

Ultimately, Iranian territorial claims were condensed into two issues: Sarakhs and Ashuradeh. Both were lost to Russian expansion in the Transcaspian, and the genesis of these issues are analysed in Chapter 6. Only the tiny island of Ashuradeh was handed back by the Russians but without British help. In the final analysis, as far as the British were concerned, Iran's diplomacy had suffered from a variegated and changing checklist of territories – the return of none of which were practical. Whilst this criticism may seem excessive, given the valid reasons for Iranian territorial claims, the British were correct in their assessment that Iran could not militarily defend its own territory, let alone new ones. In contrast to both British and Russian Empires, diplomacy without the threat of force was unlikely to be successful.

Imperialism: Engagement and impact

Iranian irredentism and nationalism in 1919 were also defined by their engagement with British and Russian imperialism. Several factors informed the loss of territories.

Russian aggression and Iranian weakness

The Treaty of Turkmanchai was a turning point for Iran in its relationship with Russia and Britain. From the military standpoint, Iran had proved herself inadequate in standing up to superior firepower. Russian ingress in the Transcaspian also began around this period and in a relatively short time, Russia subdued the Turkmens and reached the Tejend River. The military was a valuable element of Russian expansionist policies, expansionist policies that never wavered. Russian tunnel vision in this respect is one of the more remarkable findings of this thesis. Territorial expansion was a permanent and prevalent objective of the Russians. This was not expansion because of tribal pacification, though that was a corollary, but rather a need to expand into new territories.

The consolidation of military and diplomatic objectives allowed a firm footing for expansion. Not only had Iran shown herself to be militarily inferior, but it was now at the mercy of Russian influence. In a very short period of time, Iran was contending with an imperial power that showed a

remarkable ability to use war and diplomacy to extend its reach into what Iranians considered to be their territory.

Iran learned first-hand how a treaty, in this case Golestan, could be used to extract further territorial gains. This included the ability to broaden issues of delimitation details into jumping off points for territorial expansion. If the treaty was made vague enough it could be used to contest further gains. Territories could be claimed because they ironed out kinks in the frontier line. Territories could be occupied by troops and used to bargain for land in exchange over which they had no control. Progressively, Russian methodology included a process of surveying, casting doubt on ownership, creeping infrastructure, and administration. Surveying established knowledge of the terrain, which in turn enabled military strategies to become realities. Surveying also established a local understanding, however tacit, which connected the surveyor with the land. In some cases, resulting maps were afforded absolute status when examining delimitations, which allowed the maps' authors considerable power. In other cases, local geographic landmarks such as rivers and mountains were used to argue for "natural frontiers", irrespective of their local significance. More locally still, water rights were used as a justification or threat for further territorial gain.

Treaties were used by Russia to build in threats for even greater forfeiture of territory. Russia demanded considerable reparations at the Treaty of Turkmanchai, for which Iran had been unable to pay up front.

Whether accidental or by design, by forcing Iran to pay reparations over a period of time, Iran would be in a psychologically subservient position – at least until 1884. Also pertinent, was the Understanding reached secretly between Britain and Russia which was not only ineffectual, but its very existence allowed Russia to push its military and diplomatic advantage as far as possible. Diplomatically, Russia was able to pressurise the Iranians to make numerous concessions along the way. Mostly outmanoeuvred by Russian diplomacy, Iran was left floundering as Russia, through a series of secret and public conventions and treaties, was able to extend its control. Taken as a whole, the secret conventions between Iran, Britain and Russia successfully served only Russia. Secrecy had encouraged the lack of trust between the British and Iranians.

For the Russians the bifurcated strategy, where territorial opportunities were purloined with a mixture of diplomacy and military muscle, was successful at least until 1917 when they were forced to exit the Iranian sphere. After the turn of the century, much of the Iranian apprehension of the Russians was also embodied by the Anglo-Russian Convention and the aggressive and at times bloody role they played in the years of the Constitutional Revolution.

Iran's relationship with the Ottomans predated that with the Russians and British, but the relationship had developed from a fluctuating power dynamic to one, after 1847, that was one sided and detrimental to Iran's

sovereignty, such that as it was. The return of Suleimanieh and asking for Kurdistan seemed a meagre return for Iran's losses up to 1918. In this respect, Iran's wish for reparations from Turkey superseded that of territory. Of course, Iran's *desiderata* against the Turks might have been greater save for Britain's designs on Mesopotamia. It was the last ten to fifteen years up to 1919 that acquainted the Iranian delegates with the power of nationalism and the need to bind it into ideas of Empire. If the Ottomans could do it, then with a modern state infrastructure, the Iranians could do so as well.

Iranian hostility towards the British was muted in *Claims of Persia before the Conference of the Preliminaries of Peace at Paris.* It did not fully reflect the bitterness with which Britain was viewed by Iran's political elite at the end of the First World War. However, it would also have been obvious to the delegation that achieving anything without British assistance was impossible and any *desiderata* had to be tempered by that certainty. The delegates needed to balance the pursuit of political and economic independence with the knowledge that Britain was, by this point, the only power in the region. As a result, Iran did not ask for Bahrein or bring up the ownership of other islands in the Persian Gulf. However, another reading might be that, whilst the delegates had no direct knowledge of the negotiation of the Anglo-Persian Agreement in Tehran, only suspicions, they might have known that some closer arrangement with the British was in the offing. If so, they might have had more success if they had approached the British on that basis.

Nevertheless, just as Britain had been part of the problem in previous years, it continued to be so now. In fact, the Iranian delegates received no worthwhile help or assurances in their endeavours from the British at all over two years. Moreover, they put in considerable effort in designing impediments for the Iranian delegation. From the moment Sir Percy Cox was informed, the British assembled an array of tactics to prevent the Iranians going to Paris. Thereafter, in Paris, the British raised further obstacles to prevent the Iranians being heard. The French, Italians and Americans were to varying degrees more inclined to give Iran a hearing. In the year or so afterwards, Prince Firuz had been equally rebuffed.

The failure of British policy in Iran

Even before 1919, Britain had played a considerable role in stoking Iranian resentment. Britain's strategic involvement in Iran began after the Indian territories had come under the complete control of the East India Company. At first, French designs on India emerged as the *raison d'etre* for diplomatic involvement in Iran. A simple result of geography meant that Iran was to form part of the strategy in protecting India from any power wishing to wrest her from Britain. For the first time, Iran was influenced by European politics. Both Britain and Bonapartist France were engaged in war, and it was assumed this war could reach and imperil India. In future, this disposition

involved Iran in issues in which it had little interest; either European politics or safeguarding India.

This thesis has shown that dismissing Iran's request for help under the Definitive Treaty defined Britain's diplomatic involvement in Iran for years to come. In contrast to the Russians, British political and diplomatic strategies, where they were any, were muddled and changed frequently. The one consistent thread of British diplomacy in Iran until 1919, with the possible exception of the Anglo-Russian and Anglo-Persian agreements, was that it was reactive. Britain never seemed to carve out a proactive strategy which may have been successful.

The British understood belatedly that the major threat to India, and therefore Iran, came from the Russians. They missed opportunities to reign in Russian aggression early on as they seemed to have had their eyes firmly fixed on France. Moreover, when Russia's threat was realised, the British were unable to develop a strategy to deal with the threat. A lack of an overarching plan resulted in an occasional, reactive diplomacy. When they were forced to adjust their thinking, they were usually diplomatically outmanoeuvred by Russia. The Understanding, reached by the Russians and British in secret was a coup for the Russians. The British believed that ultimately the Russians would abide by it even though there was much evidence to the contrary. The Understanding, not needed on the Iraq/Iran border, was successfully employed in the Transcaspian. In much the same

way as the Russian indemnity that Iran owed following the Treaty of Turkmanchai made Iran penitent, this Understanding also moderated British attitudes. This Understanding confused the British, at least until 1884, by which time the Transcaspian-Iranian border had come into being.

The British had numerous opportunities to actively help the Iranians fend off Russian military antagonism, one of which would have been to help delimit the border after the Treaty of Golestan. Asked numerous times to help negotiate throughout the years, they chose to decline. It is not clear why, especially when their strategic desires coincided with Iran's. The British may have complained about numerous secret treaties, but they never considered what they themselves might have done to prevent the asymmetrical political context of Russian and Iranian relations developing. The Iranians never understood why the British pushed Iran to stand up for herself, which it could not do, whilst they, who had vast interests in the region, did not themselves act against the Russians.

The British were pro-active only when their needs were clear and obvious, such as with issues concerning the telegraph and oil, but rarely with any diplomacy that had the chance of getting Britain further enmeshed in Iranian politics. They were also loath to spend any money to support Britain's diplomatic position. Part of this puzzle concerned their lack of trust in the Iranians, and particularly Iran's rulers. The venality of the Shahs and attitudes towards modernity as the British saw it, coloured their perception.

The attack on Herat in 1856 and the secrecy within which deals were made with the Russians made the British rightfully distrustful. Yet in all this, the British never came to terms with, or understood, or were able to counter, the coercive relationship that the Russians had with Iran.

Britain's muddled approach to Iran was made even more problematic by the different ideas held by the Foreign Office and the India government on how to treat Iran. Conceivably, this dichotomy had begun because of the different early appeals by the British and India governments to the Iranians. The visits of Sir John Malcolm and Sir Harford Jones set this chain in motion. The frequent exchange of responsibility for the Iranian mission was the other. Whatever the reason, it led to many years debating strategies in Iran and who was to pay for them. In addition, the views of the Foreign Office and India government suffered from positioning Iran in European or Middle Eastern politics. Of course, Iran was to remain an element in both.

The onus for paying for policies in Iran generally fell to the India government – whether or not they were one with the policy. This was merely an extension of the usual arrangement that India paid its own way and for its own her security. The India government also had to balance unexpected financial outlay with its own finance department.[815] The India government was never happy to accept paying for strategies which concerned Iran and India, but

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[815] For some of these tensions see Rose Greaves, *Persia and the Defence of India*, pp.12-13.

whose fountainhead was European politics. In addition to this, disagreements existed on broad policies concerning how and where to protect India.

These policies and strategies were numerous. How Iran itself was situated in these policies was also complicated. Of course, the truth is that Iran was never as important as it believed it was, either to India or Britain. The shaping of an Iranian policy was only incidental to other priorities. This central issue fuels the debate as to why Iran was ignored at times, up to and including at Paris in 1919. An Iranian policy, in conjunction with India, might have protected Iran when requirements coalesced.

In the context of protecting and ensuring Iran's borders, a prerequisite for preventing either Ottoman or Russian encroachment, the Foreign Office and the India government disagreed on how to treat the boundary issues of the Treaty of Golestan; how to deliver the telegraph system and ensuing border issues; how to go about delimiting the regions around Zohab and Muhammerah; how to deal with the Ottomans before, during and after the First World War and; how to stand up to the Russians in the Transcaspian. By the mid 1880's the India government attempted to guide the Foreign Office into a consistent policy towards Iran. The failure of this rested with the good European relations with Russia at the time and the change of government in Britain.

It was not always a question of policy, but also sometimes of personnel. British diplomats and officers had different views. In the main,

East India Company and India government officers were more open to the Russian threat and more open to seeing the importance of Iran as a buffer to India. They were sent to Iran as they were more able to acclimatise to the extreme heat and cold and other hardships, but they also brought the handicap of treating the Iranians and Indians as one and the same.

Finally, what role did Iran have in its own territorial losses? The fact that the British and Russians maintained near colonial levels of control over Iran does not absolve Iran entirely. Iran showed poor judgement in going to war against the Russians twice and was unable or unwilling to make the structural changes to a patrimonial government despite the Constitutional Revolution. Ultimately, in what was to be Iran's undoing, she was never able to secure her borders.

Using modern means, Iran's efforts in 1919 were a concerted effort to turn back the clock. Examining the what, whys, and wherefores of the loss of these territories not only enlightens us as to their irredentist zeal, but also gives a greater understanding of British and Russian "colonial" efforts in Iran. Irredentism and imperial hegemony fed directly into the nationalist narrative. Even though Iran was not to achieve its objectives, it is interesting that the history, myth, and historical myth that provided the fodder for this initiative remains part of Iranian historiography, albeit without any substantive drive to reclaim territories. Iran's nationalist narrative would appear to be still closely bound to its imperial past.

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