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ANGLO-IRANIAN RELATIONS II. QAJAR PERIOD

ANGLO-IRANIAN RELATIONS

ii. The Qajar Period

Before the 19th century Anglo-Iranian relations were sporadic. Periods of engagement alternated with decades of disengagement. After the death of Karīm Khan Zand (1193/1779) contacts between Britain and Iran diminished and were maintained with regularity only in the Persian Gulf as the center of government authority moved north.

The founder of the Qajar dynasty, Āqā Moḥammad Khan (q.v.) devoted most of his political career to the consolidation of his newly acquired power, the destruction of domestic opposition, and the reestablishment of Iranian control over border provinces lost during the years of anarchy that had followed the turbulent reign of Nāder Shah Afšār. Preoccupied with the north, Āqā Moḥammad Khan felt no need to deal with Europeans whose interests seemed confined to the Persian Gulf.

The British on their part showed no interest in and were not even fully informed of Āqā Moḥammad Khan's invasion of Georgia (1795) or of the Caucasian campaign of 1796, during which the newly crowned Shah was murdered by his body servants. Two years later the British would reach out to Āqā Moḥammad Khan's successor, Fatḥ-ʿAlī Shah (q.v.), for support against a

possible Afghan invasion of India.

The governor-general of Bengal, Lord Wellesley, had invited Zamān Shah, amir of Kabul, to cooperate against Tippu Sultan, an Indian ruler, who fought the British with French support. Tippu was killed in battle in 1798 and the need for Afghan assistance disappeared. However, Zamān Shah was determined to pursue a campaign in India. To stop him Wellesley, through a native agent in Būšehr, entered into negotiations with the new king, Fatḥ-ʿAlī Shah, and urged him to intervene in Afghanistan, a country over which Iran had never relinquished its claim to sovereignty (P. Sykes, *A History of Persia* II, London, 1958, p. 300).

The Afghan menace was made even more formidable in British eyes by Napoleon's professed interest in driving the English out of India. The French revolutionary general's Egyptian and Italian campaigns so impressed his contemporaries that even an utterly unrealistic scheme of a French invasion of India was taken seriously. A mission led by Captain John Malcolm (q.v.) was sent to Iran to enlist Fatḥ-ʿAlī Shah's support against Zamān Shah of Kabul and to prevent the spread of French influence in Tehran.

?p. 47?Iran's principal negotiator was Ḥājjī Ebrāhīm Kalāntar Šīrāzī (q.v.) who, as one-time vizier of Loṭf-ʿAlī Khan Zand (q.v.), was familiar with the British, and hoped to regain with their help Iranian control of Afghanistan. Captain Malcolm on his part presented to the Shah and to various members of the government large "gifts" which, doubtless, influenced the outcome of his mission and established the standard of conduct for both Iranian officials and foreign diplomats (J. W. Kaye, *The Life and Correspondence of Sir John Malcolm*, London, 1956, I, pp. 133f. and passim).

The treaty concluded by Captain Malcolm and Ḥājjī Ebrāhīm Šīrāzī (4 January 1801) stipulated that Iran would attack Afghanistan if the Amir invaded India. Moreover, the Shah promised not to admit the French to Iran. Conversely, in case of an Afghan or French attack, the British would supply Iran with military equipment (see H. J. Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Nearand Middle East* I, Princeton, N. J., 1950, pp. 68-70). A simultaneously concluded commercial agreement largely confirmed the privileges granted to the East India Company in 1763. English and Indian merchants were permitted to settle in Persian Gulf ports and were exempted from taxes. In addition certain British goods could be imported free of duty. Thus from the British point of view Captain Malcolm's mission was a complete success.

In the next several years the British in India lost their interest in Iran. Several Iranian embassies to Calcutta were received without enthusiasm (M. E. Yapp, *Strategies of British India: Britain, Iran and Afghanistan*, pp. 36-38).

Russian expansion in Transcaucasia compelled Iran to fight a war for which it was not prepared. If Fatḥ-ʿAlī Shah had hoped for British support, he was sorely disappointed, for Britain had no reason to defend Iran against Russia, a potential, and, from April, 1805, actual, ally in the struggle with Napoleon. The Shah's requests for aid were ignored.

Early in 1806 Napoleon proposed to Fatḥ-ʿAlī Shah an alliance against Russia and Britain. The Shah had no choice but to accept the French offer. A French military mission under General Gardane arrived in Tehran to train the Iranian army. However, news soon reached Tehran that France had signed a peace treaty with Russia (Tilsit). No French military aid would be given Iran.

The Franco-Iranian alliance greatly alarmed the British government. India's governor-general, Lord Minto, decided to send John Malcolm on a second mission to Tehran. Malcolm, who had been promoted brigadier-general, arrived in southern Iran in May, 1808, but was not permitted by the Iranian government to travel to Tehran. He was instead instructed to negotiate with the governor-general of Fārs. This he angrily refused to do and returned to India (Kaye, op. cit., I, pp. 420-21).

Meanwhile another British mission, this one from the home government was on its way to Iran without Lord Minto's knowledge. Its leader, Sir Harford Jones, brought rich gifts and made rich promises. He offered the Shah an alliance against Russia which had declared war on Britain, and annual subsidy of 120,000 pounds sterling for as long as that war lasted, and British officers to take the place of the no longer useful French. The Shah signed the treaty in March, 1809 (C. U. Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements, andSunnuds Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries*, 2nd ed., Calcutta, 1933, XII, pp. 45-46).

Though lord Minto was offended by the manner in which Sir Harford had concluded the treaty in behalf of Great Britain without consulting the governor-general, he took advantage of the opportunity that suddenly appeared in Iran. John Malcolm was sent to Iran on a third mission, and this time he was received with all the honors to which he felt entitled. With him came instructors for the army that was being modernized by ʿAbbās Mīrzā

(q.v.), heir to the Iranian throne. British instructors were, of course, powerless to change the underlying causes of Iranian weakness and Russian strength. Iranians might win victories but the outcome of the war was decided before it started. Even Napoleon's invasion of Russia could not change the essential power relationship between it and Iran.

Once again Britain stood aside from Iran's struggle. The English and the Russians were now allies. The pursuit of victory over Napoleon took precedence over all other considerations. It was Iran's ill luck to be the victim of changed circumstances in Europe.

Badly defeated in battle, Iran suffered heavy territorial losses in the Treaty of Golestān (q.v.) signed in 1813. The Anglo-Iranian treaty of 1809 proved of limited value, yet the Iranian government saw no alternative to a British orientation now that Russia was established as Iran's principal and most dangerous enemy. Sir Gore Ousley (q.v.), England's new envoy renegotiated the treaty of 1809 and on 25 November 1814, concluded the so-called Definitive Treaty which stipulated that the Shah would annul all his alliances with states hostile to Britain, that he would not permit Britain's enemies to cross Iran on the way to India, that he would help Britain with troops should the Afghans attack British India, and that he would employ as instructors for his army only the English or the nationals of states friendly to Britain. Britain in turn would help Iran with Indian troops if Iran were attacked by a European power, though an annual money subsidy of β 150,000 could be substituted. The treaty further stipulated that Britain would participate in discussions of issues raised by the establishment of the new Russo-Iranian border. Britain also promised not to interfere in Iran's internal affairs and to remain neutral in case of war between Iran and Afghanistan. At the time of the signing neither side was aware how short-lived the Definitive Treaty would prove to be (Aitchison, op. cit., XII, pp. 53-56).

The onerous Golestān Treaty was considered by ʿAbbās Mīrzā a temporary expedient. On this one issue the reforming prince and the reactionary Shiʿite clergy were in agreement. When in 1825 a dispute arose over ?p.48?districts in the vicinity of Lake Gokcha, and General A. P. Ie rmolov occupied the districts, ʿAbbās Mīrzā attacked and, in spite of initial successes, led his semi-modernized army to defeat and the consequent loss of Īravān (Erivan), Naḵǰavān (Nakhichevan), and Tabrīz. The road to Tehran was open (N. Dubrovin, *Istoriyavoĭny i vladychestva russkikh na Kavkaze*, St. Petersburg, 1871-87, IV-VI).

Iranian appeals to Britain for troops or subsidies were rejected by the English who took the conventional view that Iran had waged aggressive war and was therefore not entitled to aid under the terms of the treaty of 1814. Exploiting ʿAbbās Mīrzā's urgent need for funds, the British envoy, Sir John Macdonald, compelled the Iranians to accept the cancellation of articles III and IV of the treaty of 1814 in return for a one-time payment of β150,000. Article III established the procedure for determining where the frontier between Russia and Iran lay, Article IV promised British military aid or a subsidy if Iran were to suffer aggression. Thus Britain was able to preserve the advantages acquired under the treaty of 1814 and to remove the two clauses that could be dangerous or expensive.

After the conclusion of the treaty of Torkamāṇčāy (q.v.) Britain lost much of its interest in Iran. India seemed secure, and trade with Iran was insignificant. The Shah could safely be neglected. Iran, on the contrary, felt exposed to unprecedented dangers. Fatḥ-ʿAlī Shah and ʿAbbās Mīrzā had experienced the extent of Russian power and learned their lesson. From then on no Iranian ruler would risk another all out confrontation with the colossus to the north. The very magnitude of the defeat made the Iranians feel bitter toward Britain which, in their view, had violated its promises of support. Neither Fatḥ-ʿAlī Shah nor his successor Moḥammad Shah would ever again trust the British.

After the conclusion of the treaty of Torkamāṇčāy, Iran tried to compensate for the losses in the Caucasus by regaining control of Herat. Russia favored this policy since it provided an opportunity to tie Iran more closely to Russia. That same policy antagonized the British who felt that the extension of Iranian authority to Herat would open the door to Russian influence there as well as in Kabul and Qandahār.

ʿAbbās Mīrzā, a strong proponent of eastward expansion, organized the Herat campaign of 1833-34, but died before it bore fruit. His father, Fatḥ-ʿAlī Shah died soon thereafter, leaving the crown to a grandson, Moḥammad Mīrzā who ascended the throne with the assistance of the British and the Russian ministers, acting in unison to prevent a fratricidal struggle for power. Sir John Campbell, the British minister, even provided the new Shah with money to ensure that he not fail to establish his authority for lack of funds (Sykes, op. cit., II, p. 327).

The new Shah quickly disillusioned the British. With lull Russian support he threw himself into preparations for another Afghan campaign. The British,

convinced that Iranian control of Afghanistan would bring Russia to the gates of India, did all they could to discourage the Shah; but he paid no heed to British representations, relying on the Definitive Treaty of 1814 that specifically committed Britain to non-intervention in an Irano-Afghan war.

Iranian troops laid siege to Herat in November, 1837. The well-fortified city resisted, utilizing the military skill of a British officer, whose presence indicated British support for Herat. The British envoy, Sir John McNeill, tried to persuade Moḥammad Shah to lift the siege and reach a compromise agreement with Herat. McNeill's rival was the Russian minister, count Ivan Osipovich Simonich, a well-known Anglophobe. He encouraged the Shah to continue the siege. Relations between the Shah and McNeill grew tense as each felt insulted by the arrogance of the other. McNeill left the imperial camp and soon sent the Shah a message announcing the British occupation of Ḵārg island in the Persian Gulf and the decision of the British government to regard an Iranian occupation of Herat as a hostile act (Yapp, op. cit., pp, 146-49; N. A. Khalfin, "Vstupitel'naya Stat'ya," in I. O. Simonich, *Vospominaniya*, pp. 9f.). Thus Britain violated the treaty of 1814, this time even without a pretext such as the one used in 1826. Moḥammad Shah had no choice but to comply. He tried to salvage his dignity by demanding the recall of McNeill, whom he accused of insulting behavior. That small consolation was denied him by Lord Palmerston. Instead, the Iranian government was pressed to conclude a commercial treaty favorable to Britain.

The death of Moḥammad Shah and the accession of Nāṣer-al-dīn Mīrzā to the throne in 1264/1848 did not lead to better relations between Iran and Britain. When in 1851 the ruler of Herat, seeking protection against domestic enemies, turned to Iran for help, the British intervened and forced upon the young Shah a treaty (1853) that forbade the dispatch of Iranian troops to Herat. Thus another opportunity to annex this long-coveted region was lost.

Resentment against Britain predisposed the Shah to listen favorably to proposals made to him by the Russian Minister, Prince Dmitriĭ Ivanovich Dolgorukov. Embroiled with Britain, France, and Turkey in a conflict that would lead to war, Russia sought to win Iran's support by offering Iran Ottoman territories—Baghdad and Erzerum—and the remission of the still unpaid portion of the indemnity payable by Iran to Russia under the treaty of Torkamāṇčāy.

The grand vizier, Mīrzā Āqā Khan Nūrī (q.v.), strongly objected to an alliance

with Russia. He persuaded the Shah that it would be more advantageous to side with the British, the French, and the Turks against Russia and achieve the abrogation of the entire treaty of Torkamāṇčāy and the recovery of Iran's Caucasian possessions. The Shah agreed with Mīrzā Āqā Khan and entered into negotiations with the British whom he invited to collaborate in driving the Russians out of the Caucasus. The Shah asked for a contingent of the India Army to be sent to Iran and for another to invade Dagestan. The British showed no interest, and the issue lapsed, leaving a residue of suspicion and resentment in ?p.49? Tehran. (A. Tājbaḵš, *Tārīḵ-e rawābeṭ-e Īrān wa Rūsīya dar nīma-ye awwal-e qarn-e nūzdahom*, Tabrīz, 1337 Š./l958-59, p. 144).

Relations between Britain and Iran were further exacerbated by an imbroglio with the British Minister to Iran, Mr. Murray, who left Tehran in high dudgeon. Mīrzā Āqā Khan turned his attention to Herat where (1855) a new opportunity to reestablish Iranian control presented itself. Grasping the opportunity, the Shah sent an army do Afghanistan. In October, 1856, Herat fell to the Iranians. In response Britain began the Anglo-Persian war (q.v.) which resulted in Iran's quick defeat and the conclusion of the peace treaty of Paris in 1857, by which Iran finally gave up its claim to Afghanistan.

From the establishment of the Qajar dynasty to the seventh decade of the 19th century Anglo-Iranian relations were largely determined by England's fear for the safety of India. The initial courting of Fatḥ-ʿAlī Shah and the subsequent abandonment of Iran in favor of various Afghan rulers of Herat, Qandahār, and Kabul, the deterioration of Anglo-Iranian relations in the reign of Moḥammad Shah, the war of l857 were manifestations of the same British view that attached no importance to Iran except as a barrier against Napoleon or a potential springboard for a Russian thrust against India. Essentially thc same view prevailed for the rest of the 19th century, except that after the Crimean War the focus of Britain's fears shifted east of the Caspian where Russia was engaged in a great empire-building enterprise.

The seemingly irresistible advance of the Russian troops and the brilliant victories they achieved over hordes of Central Asian warriors should have created a common interest between Britain and Iran in resisting Russia's approach to Khorasan and Herat. In January, 1869, Nāṣer-al-dīn Shah told the departing British Minister, Charles Alison, that the closest intimacy should exist between the two states now that Russia was making such advances in Central Asia (Alison to Clarendon, No. 2, Tehran, January 11, 1869, F.O. 60/318). Later Iran's Foreign Minister, Mīrzā Saʿīd Khan Moʾtamen-al-molk explained

that the Shah wanted to reestablish the cordial relations with England such as had existed in the reign of Fatḥ-ʿAlī Shah. The British, however, were unwilling to do more than intercede in St. Petersburg (F. Kazemzadeh, *RussiaandBritaininPersia, 1864-1974*, New Haven and London, 1968, p. 16).

During the 1870s and 1890s Britain's attitude toward Iran was determined largely by the state of Anglo-Russian relations. Discussions in the Foreign Office, the India Office, the government of India, and among them, showed that there was no agreement on the issue of the Russian threat or on a policy to be pursued in Iran. Under the circumstances it was useless for Iranians to insist on British guarantees of their country's territorial integrity. Even advice received from the various British ministers in Tehran was contradictory and impractical. When the British felt that there was no threat from

Russia, they advised Iran to comply with Russian demands and not antagonize their great northern neighbor; but when Calcutta or London were in their periodic, states of alarm, British diplomats would demand that Iran protest every Russian encroachment and assume risks without any assurance of backing from Britain.

In the autumn of 1879, as a result of the turmoil in Afghanistan that followed the massacre of the British mission in Kabul, the British conceived the idea of changing their traditional position and making Iran rather than Afghanistan the keeper of Herat. Such a reversal of policy would necessitate in Iranian undertaking not to permit any foreigners to visit or reside in Herat; to take steps, with Britain's moral support, to prevent the occupation of Marv by Russia; to "do all she possibly can, to check the advance of Russia in the Turkoman country;" and not to give assistance to any Russian military expedition "advancing Eastward from the Caspian" (R. Thomson to Salisbury, No. 255, Secret, Tehran, October 28, 1879, F.O. 60/422).

The Shah was elated at the prospect of recovering Herat. In January 1880 the minister of foreign affairs, Mīrzā Ḥosayn Khan, told the Russian minister, Ivan Alekseevich Zinoviev, about the British proposal. The Russians instantly realized that the implementation of the proposal would make of Iran a vassal of England (Kazemzadeh, op. cit., p. 71). However, there occurred no test of strength. In the spring a general election returned a Liberal majority to Parliament. Lord Salisbury, an advocate of turning Herat over to Iran, left the Foreign Office. His successor, Lord Granville, broke off negotiations with Iran concerning Herat.

After the Panǰdeh incident in which a Russian detachment killed hundreds of Afghan soldiers in full view of English observers, and war between Britain and Russia became probable, the British minister in Tehran asked what course Iran would pursue in case of such a war. The Shah replied that Iran could not rely on British friendship, was helpless before Russia, and would not even attempt to resist her any longer (Thomson to Granville, No. 65, Tehran, June 9, 1885; F.O. 65/l244 in Kazemzadeh, op. cit., p. 97).

The stabilization in Central Asia after 1885 once again permitted Britain to ignore Iran, leaving the Shah to the predominant influence of Russia. Whereas such episodes as the Reuter concession (q.v.), the issue of the navigation of the Kārūn, or even the turmoil that resulted from the Tobacco Régie (q.v.) loom large in Iranian history, Britain's involvement in them was limited. In each instance decisions on the extent to which Britain should pursue this or that specific interest were made in the context of Anglo-Russian rather than of Anglo-Iranian relations. Thus the cancellation of the Reuter and the tobacco concessions were both forced upon Iran against the Shah's will by Russia which perceived these and other concessions granted to British subjects as political gains for England.

The public outcry that forced the cancellation of the Tobacco Régie (1891-92) had been led by a number of?p. 50? prominent Shiʿite clerics; and supported by the Russian government. The British learned the lesson and used it against the Russians when the latter began to offer Iran loans that the inefficient government of Moẓaffar-al-dīn Shah (1313-24/1896-1907) could never hope to repay. Increasing Russian activity in central arid southern Iran, the appearance of Russian ships in the Persian Gulf, the establishment of Russian consulates near the Indian border, and the hold achieved by Russia on Iran's economy pushed Britain toward stronger measures than mere protest. Taking advantage of widespread dissatisfaction with the pro-Russian course adopted by the Iranian government since 1892, the British legation in Tehran began to cultivate disaffected officials, publishers of newspapers, and most of all, prominent *moǰtaheds*, some of whom allegedly received large gifts of money if they assumed an anti-Russian position (M. S. Ivanov, *Iranskaya revolyutsiya 1905-1911 godov*, Moscow, 1957, p. 202).

The Anglo-Japanese alliance of 1902, the threat uttered in May, 1903, in the House of Lords by Lansdowne that Britain would "regard the establishment of a naval base . . . in the Persian Gulf by any other power as a very grave menace to British interest . . .," (Parliamentary Debates [Lords], 4th series, 121,

1348) and the posture assumed by Britain in the Russo-Japanese war (l904-05) persuaded many Iranians that Britain had at last decided to challenge Russia in the East. The following November and December Lord Curzon, viceroy of India, accompanied by an armada of naval ships, toured the Persian Gulf, adding to the impression that Britain had taken a firm stand.

Russia's defeat by Japan unleashed the first Russian revolution, the repercussions of which were instantly felt in Iran. A constitutional movement with heavy antiRussian overtones quickly emerged in late 1905-early 1906. In July, 1906, leading clerics abandoned the capital for the city of Qom. Their exodus was followed by 5,000 persons taking sanctuary (*bast*) in the British legation in Tehran, a gesture that eloquently proclaimed from whom Iranians expected support.

The Iranians, whether in or out of the government, suspected that an Anglo-Russian agreement might be in the offing. The British Foreign Office, now led by a Liberal foreign secretary, Sir Edward Grey, was planning to conclude an agreement with Russia that would divide Iran into spheres of influence and virtually destroy whatever remained of its independence.

Once again the causes of British actions lay outside Iran. Fear of Germany was the motive force behind Sir Edward Grey's policy. Those Iranians who had joined the constitutional movement had been acting on the assumption of British support that was no longer there.

The signing of the Anglo-Russian Convention (q.v.) of 31 August 1907, was a blow to those who had fought for a constitution in Iran. Moẓaffar-al-dīn Shah had granted his country a constitution shortly before he died in January, 1907. His heir was an outright servant of Russia, enjoying its support and prepared to act against the newly established parliamentary system. The Anglo-Russian agreement was perceived in Iran as the final abandonment of Iran by Britain. The bitterness felt by the Iranians has never disappeared.

One can scarcely speak of Anglo-Iranian relations in the decade of 1907-17. There was renewed Russian aggressiveness in Iran and half-hearted British attempts to mitigate it. There were desperate Iranian attempts to regain a measure of independence through government reform, but these were systematically frustrated by Russia, as was the case with the mission of Morgan Shuster (q.v.), an American financial advisor. There was the Anglo-Russian agreement of 1915 which gave Russia a free hand in her sphere of

influence and eliminated the neutral zone by joining it to the British sphere. Except in the Shuster episode, Iran's role was passive.

During World War I Russian and British troops occupied Iran. There was no longer a foreign policy for the Iranian government to implement. It was the Bolshevik revolution of 7 November 1917 that opened entirely new perspectives for both Iran and Britain. As Russian troops withdrew from northern Iran, British forces moved in from the south. Virtually the entire country was occupied and the Russian threat was temporarily eliminated. To put its new position on a firm foundation Britain's foreign secretary, Lord Curzon, bribed three key Iranian statesmen, Mīrzā Ḥasan Khan Woṯūq-al-dawla, Fījrūz Mīrzā Noṣrat-al-dawla, and Akbar Mīrzā Ṣārem-al-dawla, into signing the Anglo-Persian Agreement of 1919 (q.v.) that established a virtual British protectorate over Iran (*Documents on British Foreign Policy*, series 1, London, XII, pp. 639, 643-44, 648, 656-657).

In April, 1920 Russian troops reoccupied Bādkūba (Baku). Presently they landed at Anzalī (q.v.) and helped create a Gīlān Soviet republic (see Mīrzā Kūček Khan). Britain, weakened by war and the problems that arose in its aftermath, was neither able nor willing to commit sufficient, resources to the defense of northern Iran against the Bolshevik menace. British troops were withdrawn to the south.

Britain attempted to hold on to its recently won position in Tehran by manipulating subservient politicians but even they were not able to deliver the votes needed for the ratification of the Agreement of 1919 in the Majlis. The British were obviously losing control of the situation.

The appearance on the scene of Reżā Khan (later, Reżā Shah), commander of the Persian Cossack Brigade, leader of the only effective military unit in Iran, created a new option for the British. The corrupt old-line statesmen, the titled bureaucrats, the pudgy Aḥmad Shah himself, could be bought, and even controlled, but they had proved incapable of arresting the fragmentation of the country, incapable even of reestablishing a minimum of order, and certainly incapable of stopping the menace of Russian Bolshevism. Lacking military force, politically incapable of defending the position it had achieved under the treaty of 1919, Britain was prepared to revise its policy in Iran if someone such as?p. 51? Reżā Khan could contain the Soviet threat and return Iran to its traditional position as India's buffer state.

Elements of the Persian Cossack Brigade entered Tehran unopposed on 21 February 1921. Their commander, Reżā Khan, assured the British of his goodwill, saying that the Cossacks had come to Tehran to form a strong government and to "oppose Bolshevik advance which would follow withdrawal of British troops" (Mr. Norman to Earl Curzon, Tehran, February 21, 1921; Documents on British Foreign Policy, series 1, London, 1963, XII, p. 729).

The same day the British minister, Mr. Norman, advised Aḥmad Shah "to enter into relations" with Reżā Khan and to acquiesce in his demands.

The Shah took British advice, appointing Sayyed Żīāʾ-al-dīn Ṭabāṭabāʾī, a pro-British journalist and politician, prime minister. Sayyed Żīāʾ-al-dīn outlined for the British minister the program of his government but emphasized that the Anglo-Persian Agreement of 1919 must be denounced (Norman to Curzon, February 25, 1921; ibid., p. 731).

Lord Curzon saw in the Iranian repudiation of the 1919 Agreement a personal defeat. However, circumstances demanded the withdrawal of British troops from Iran, and the threat of Bolshevism made it necessary to seek a compromise with any Iranian forces that might be able to stop the advance of the Gīlān Soviet troops toward Tehran. The British Minister in Tehran ardently pleaded with Curzon in the name of British interests "not to allow resentment at abrogation of agreement . . . to prevent His Majesty's government from taking advantage of present opportunity by excluding from new government all help and encouragement which they need" (Norman to Curzon, March 3, 1921; ibid., p. 736).

Though Curzon blustered and threatened to abrogate all British commitments to Iran if the latter refused to ratify the Agreement of 1919, Britain had little choice but to accept the new order of things in Tehran. The 1919 agreement was repudiated, the Iranian government, dominated by the Minister of War, Reżā Khan, proceeded to impose the authority of the central government on refractory tribal chieftains and undisciplined governors, the national army came into being, and a foundation of economic reform was laid. The British government began to modify its position. It did not attempt to prevent the ouster of Sayyed Żīāʾ-al-dīn from the post of prime minister, nor did it object to the elevation in 1923, of Reżā Khan to that post.

The authority of Aḥmad Shah, never very significant, had completely eroded.

The absentee ruler could not hope to compete with the energetic and determined prime minister who was now Iran's dictator. When the Qajar dynasty was finally abolished (1925), the downfall of Aḥmad Shah and the elevation of Reżā Khan to the throne did not disturb Anglo-Iranian relations.

In conclusion it can be stated that through most of the Qajar period, British interest in Iran was limited. First and foremost, Iran was a buffer state, guarding the approaches to India. Yet even the defense of India took

second place to Britain's European interests as was demonstrated by the Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1907 and the policies Britain pursued on the eve of World War I. The Iranian government under the Qajars did not understand the relatively low importance Britain attached to Iran and repeatedly miscalculated British reactions to Iranian or Russian policies. The legacy of such misunderstanding will live for a long time and will continue to color Iran's foreign policies.

See also Anglo-Persian Agreement.

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