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During the First World War, France, unlike England, Russia, Germany, and the Ottoman Empire, had no direct strategic interests in Persia. France did, however, become involved with Persia in two ways: First, through diplomatic moves which helped to neutralize German schemes in the region (Bast, pp. 101-12); and second, through a military-humanitarian initiative involving the dispatch of a mobile hospital to Urmia and training the Christian militia after the departure of Russian soldiers. The crushing defeat of the Assyro-Chaldean resistance in Azarbaijan made a strong impact on France. In spite of the official separation of church and state, the French government still regarded itself as the protector of Christian minorities and had supported several French speaking schools in the Urmia region. The financial difficulties of the missions and the mass migration of the Christians to Iraq and the Caucasus had led to the closure of the majority of the Catholic institutions.

FRENCH OBJECTIVES IN PERSIA

After the collapse of the Russian Empire, the plan by the Allies to divide various Muslim regions into zones of influence underwent important changes, mostly in favor of the new British strategic interests in Palestine and Iraq.

Although in theory neutral, Persia was in effect under British domination, given the presence of the South Persia Rifles on her soil and the Persian Cossack Brigade (q.v.) being on the payroll of the British Legation. This hegemony displeased Paris, especially since Persia was adjacent to “la bande de Mossoul,” the zone allotted to France under the Sykes-Picot Agreement in 1916.

For the first time since Napoleon, France had ambitions in Persia: the departure of Russians and Germans gave her the opportunity to develop her cultural and commercial interests. French diplomats, notably Charles Bonin (1918-20) emphasized the fact that France had no colonial record in Persia and could therefore exert a sustainable influence against the Bolshevik menace. Bonin, an archivist by training and passionately interested in archaeology and languages, was also a seasoned diplomat. He prepared for his mission meticulously and drew up an ambitious list of objectives (Archives du Ministère des affaires étrangères, Paris, Série Asie 1918-1940, Perse-Iran 24, fols. 101 sq.; Richard, p. 100). He noted that French influence in Persia was fast disappearing and that, for instance, not a single reference was made to the French Legation or French diplomats in Norman Shuster’s *The Strangling of Persia*, the account of his appointment as financial advisor in Persia in 1911. At the time, France had fewer diplomats in Persia than did Belgium.

The projects considered to enhance French presence in Persia included founding a French bank in Tehran; setting up a French high-school; increasing the number of French teachers in Dār al-fonūn (q.v.) and the School of Law (see FACULTIES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TEHRAN iii); setting up a school of agriculture (see FACULTIES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TEHRAN i); starting a stud farm to be managed by the government; adding a commercial section to the French Legation; setting up an international wireless service (to broadcast news to counter Russian and German propaganda); strengthening the archaeological mission (see DÉLÉGATIONS ARCHÉOLOGIQUES FRANÇAISES); publishing a French language newspaper; and increasing the number of French consulates (Richard, p. 100). There were also two other more overtly political projects: The first project included bringing in financial advisors—the French mention, for example, Eugène Bizot, who had, however, in Shuster’s sardonic words, “displayed a masterly inactivity in making any financial reforms during his two years at Teheran. He returned to his Government post at Paris greatly improved in health, but the Persian finances continued to stumble and stagger as before” (Shuster, p. 28). The second project concerned

sending a French military mission to train the Persian army. Bonin's firm belief in France's *mission civilizatrice* was accompanied by his awareness of the economic possibilities: "We must profit from our rivals' mistakes, their weaknesses and their withdrawals, and through this window of opportunity make our entry into Central Asia and claim the market for our commerce, a market in which we could succeed if our products were not systematically boycotted by England, which has always refused to let us establish a foothold in Persia." (Archives du Ministère des affaires étrangères, Série Asie 1918-1940, Perse-Iran 24, fols. 101 sq.; Richard, p. 101).

Before the publication of the Anglo-Persian Agreement of 1919 (q.v.), which the French diplomats called *l'Arrangement* in order to underline its lack of legitimacy, the Quai d'Orsay had already noted that the British were determined to prevent any outside interference in their dealings with Persia. Stephen Pichon, the French foreign minister, interpreted the British refusal to let ʿAlīqolī Khan Anṣārī Mošāwer-al-Mamālek participate in the Congress of Versailles as part of London's plan to settle the Persian question on its own with the shah's government and impose its views on Tehran. "The English politics in Persia," he wrote on March 21, 1919, "will soon lead to the establishment of a *de facto* protectorate" (Archives du Ministère des affaires étrangères, Perse-Iran 32, folio 79). Even Woṯūq-al-Dawla, the prime minister at the time, asked the French to intervene to preserve the right of Persia, not recognized by the agreement, to choose its foreign advisers. In harmony with the outrage expressed in the major Western capitals, Woṯūq-al-Dawla is said to have tried, once the agreement had been signed, to convince Bonin to obtain its cancellation with the help of his American colleague. The openly hostile attitude of the French minister plenipotentiary led to protests from London. The reports by the French diplomats preserved in the French archives thus offer a new perspective on this problematic episode in modern Persian history and the role of its protagonists (Archives du Ministère des affaires étrangères, Perse-Iran 33, fols. 9, 10 September, l919, fol. 33, 14 September l919; Perse-Iran 34, fol. 12, May 1920).

The prevailing sense of resignation felt by the French diplomats faced with the British predominance did not, however, prevent them from attaching a great deal of importance to all resistance movements and from distancing themselves from the British, especially when the Russian officers who still commanded the Cossack Brigade were discharged. The way Paris viewed the coup d'état of 21 February 1921 is most revealing. Henri Hoppenot, the new

chargé d'affaires, produced evidence to show that his British colleagues were unaware of General Ironside's involvement (Richard, p. 110). At first, the French diplomats thought that the conspirators, amongst whom there were many officers trained in France, were genuinely anti-British and that France's day in Persia had finally arrived. The attitude of Reżā Khan, who categorically refused British interference in the organization of the army and, in June 1923, sent 46 officer students to French military schools (Cronin, pp. 130-31), shows that this illusion was not altogether absurd. However, London and Paris, preoccupied with setting up their protectorates in the Near-East at the San Remo Conference (May 1920), had agreed not to dispute the prevailing British hegemony in Persia.

FRANCE'S RELATIONS WITH REŻĀ SHAH

Before Germany returned to the scene, France played the traditional role of the third power between Russia and England. Persians were not indifferent to Clemenceau's military prestige and France's victory in the war against Germany. France was highly praised by Reżā Shah in a speech addressed to Persian cadets leaving for military training in France. Both the quality and the organization of the French army and the patriotism of the nation were applauded (Elwell-Sutton, p. 44). From l922, the Ministry of War was authorized by the parliament to send cadet officers to France for further training, a program which lasted for a decade (see ARMY v). French officers were also recruited to train Persians at the Military Academy in Tehran (Dāneškada-ye afsarī), where Reżā Shah insisted that his officers consider these instructors as subordinates in their service (Zangana, pp. 184-87). In a more general way, France was the adopted model in the formation of Persian secondary education, with the *dābīrestān* modeled on the French *lycée*, and for the curriculum of the various Faculties of the University of Tehran (qq.v.), where French advisors and professors took an active part, most notably in the faculties of Medicine and Fine Arts.

From 1933 to 1938, the recruitment of a French mission made it possible for Persian officers to be trained in Tehran by French military instructors led by Colonel Caldairou. The French tried to use this opportunity to expand their exports of military equipment, but without much success. The sensitiveness of Persians, and especially of Reżā Shah himself, who insisted that a general should head the mission, made it almost impossible for the military instructors to function. In 1935 Caldairou was sent back and Franco-Persian relations began to deteriorate as a result of the shah's indignation over some satirical

articles in French newspapers. Nevertheless, in September 1935, five new officers including General Gendre, were sent to Tehran. Despite many difficulties, France intended to maintain her position in Persia because of her problems in Syria, and she wanted to thwart German influence, constantly at work in all the regions, notably for export of military equipment.

The diplomatic difficulties brought about by the French press (the Germans experienced similar problems which also led to a break in diplomatic relations) were compounded by the election of a socialist government, the Popular Front, in l936. For Reżā Shah, it was as if Stalin had installed an agent in the Hôtel Matignon, and all French actions were now treated with suspicion. It was also thought that strikes and workers' demands had completely disrupted the French economy, and that it was pointless to place commercial orders which could not be filled. Persia refused to take part in the Paris International Exposition of 1937. The mounting xenophobia of the Pahlavi regime left its mark on the Crown Prince, Moḥammad-Reżā, who, on his return from Switzerland, turned against his French military instructors and obtained their dismissal. The last one left Tehran when diplomatic relations were finally broken off in 1938 on the pretext of the publication of satirical articles in France about Reżā Shah.

Diplomatic relations were re-established in March l939 at the time of the wedding ceremony of the crown prince with Princess Fawzīa of Egypt. France sent two distinguished representatives, the Orientalist Louis Massignon and General Maxime Weygand, who presented several Persian officials with medals and decorations from his government. The French Legation, whose diplomatic personnel had stayed on but kept a low profile, was now allowed to renew its activities openly.

THE SECOND WORLD WAR AND MOḤAMMAD-REŻĀ SHAH

The events of 1940 and the establishment of the Vichy government had boosted Reżā Shah's confidence. On Nowrūz 1941 he declared, "The French have at last understood, like us and after us, that in order to be strong there must be an authoritarian government," (Jean Helleu, Report, end of March 1941). Henri Pétain, a soldier like him, had purged France of its hostile newspapers. Wasn't Pétain's enemy, Charles de Gaulle, plotting with the English against his own country? But the subsequent Anglo-Soviet occupation of Persia and the shah's abdication led to a ban on the use of coded telegrams and diplomatic bags by Vichy diplomats, as demanded by the Allied forces.

Later, Persia demanded the closure of the French Legation as stipulated in the Tripartite Treaty signed by Persia, Great Britain, and the USSR (29 January 1942). Jacques Coiffard, the French chargé d'affaires, sent a strong protest against these restrictions and attacked the prime minister, Moḥammad-ʿAlī Forūḡī (q.v.) in the Persian press. This created much indignation among Persians and relations were broken off between the two countries and Coiffard was expelled (dismissed by Vichy, he joined the Free French Forces fighting in Lebanon). France was no longer represented in Persia, despite the fact that by the end of 1941 a Free France committee was established in Tehran, run by the engineer Henri Goblot (author of *Les qanats: une technique d'acquisition de l'eau*, Paris, 1979) with the help of André Godard (q.v.; director-general of the Archaeological Service), to which the French minister plenipotentiary, Jean Helleu, was attached. But the committee had no resources. In 1942, Godard, although working for the Persian government, was recognized as plenipotentiary by Persia, and was invested with diplomatic powers by the French provisional government in London. Godard handled Gaulist propaganda but also helped the French schools, which were experiencing financial difficulties after the departure of the Pétainist diplomats.

Moḥammad-Reżā Shah, resenting the distrust shown by the British towards him, was greatly impressed when de Gaulle, on his way to Moscow in November 1944, stopped over in Tehran to assure the young monarch of the importance France attached to the continuity of imperial legitimacy while Persia was still occupied by the English and Russians.

In conformity with the attitude adopted in the 19th century, France had given up playing the leading role in Persia, and the volume of trade between the two countries never reached the level of trade between Germany and Persia. The new reign, however, appeared potentially promising. The young shah had been educated in the French-speaking part of Switzerland (at Rosey) and always chose French governesses for his children. The ideological and political language of the Persian nationalists, including Moḥammad Moṣaddeq himself, and indeed the political elite in general, was French. Many of the prime ministers who followed Moṣaddeq were fluent in French, including Manūčehr Eqbāl (q.v.), ʿAlī Amīnī, Amīr ʿAbbās Hoveydā (q.v.), Šāpūr Baḵtīār, and Mahdī Bāzargān. Napoleon, as the man who had defied Great Britain, was regarded as a hero. The much more recent example of the French Resistance against Fascism also had its appeal. On the other hand France's military actions as a

colonial power against independence movements in Indochina and Algeria, and her role in the Suez crisis of l956, tarnished her image among the people.

At the same time, through its position as a permanent founder member of the United Nations Security Council, France regained some international prestige. But French diplomacy did not play an important role in Persia either during the Azarbaijan crisis in 1946 (see Azarbaijan v), or during the crisis of nationalization of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, when on the whole it sided with Britain and refused to break the oil embargo. After the downfall of Moṣaddeq, the Compagnie Française des Pétroles received only 6 percent of the share of the market in the consortium set up in 1954. President Pompidou's lukewarm response to the shah's invitation to the Persepolis celebrations in 1971, to which he sent Jacques Chaban-Delmas, demonstrates the reservations felt by the French concerning what they perceived as the shah's grandiose politics, based on dubious assumptions and over-reliance on Washington. Nonetheless, exploiting the sudden, dramatic increase in Persian purchasing power after the oil crisis, the French succeeded in selling their nuclear technology to Persia. The French company Framatome was entrusted with building five nuclear power plants in complex negotiations culminating in a contract in 1975, which also provided for Persian participation in Eurodif, a company designed to finance the creation of nuclear subsidiaries in several European countries and to supply them with enriched uranium. Later, despite President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing's efforts at mediation between the oil producing countries, the industrialized nations, and the underdeveloped countries adversely affected by the oil boom of 1973, French foreign policy showed no particular initiative towards Persia.

The revocation of the Eurodif contract by the Baḵtīār government in January 1979, subsequently endorsed by the Islamic Republic, plunged Franco-Persian relations into disarray. France, having lost an investment and a venue for its enriched uranium, considered herself the injured party and demanded international arbitration before being obliged to repay, with interest, the investment made by the shah in Eurodif (about one billion dollars in gross) and it was France, rather than Persia, which was required to indemnify financial losses incurred by companies when the contract was abrogated in 1979. The exact terms of the final settlement, reached in 1991, have remained secret.

THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION AND AFTER: 1978 TO 1988

The unexpected arrival of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (Āyat-Allāh Rūḥ-Allāh Ḵomeynī) in France on 6 October 1978, and his stay in the village of Neauphle-le-Chateau, some twenty kilometers from Paris, until 31 January 1979, brought a new dramatic twist to Franco-Persian relations. The universal fascination with this patriarchal figure prevented the possibility of his expulsion or the exertion of any direct pressure on him by the host government. The shah himself, thinking that the popularity of the ayatollah would ebb once he was removed from Najaf, asked France to keep him there. Soon the United States became convinced of the inevitability of the shah's fall, and the decision taken at the Guadeloupe Conference (January 1979) to establish informal contacts with Khomeini and to prepare for the departure of the shah, merely confirmed the policy already adopted by President Carter (see CARTER ADMINISTRATION). The French showed no initiative here, and in spite of the sympathy felt by Persians towards France for having hosted Khomeini and harbored the opponents of the Pahlavi regime, no privileges were accorded to France by the new regime, which denounced the West in general for collaborating with the shah and siding with the Americans.

Even before the victory of the revolution, Paris had become a haven for a community of Persians (see FRANCE xvii). After 1979, in successive waves, monarchists, then liberal nationalists, Marxists, and liberal Muslims sought exile in France, aggravating the existing tension between the two countries. Šāpūr Baḵtīār, who had acquired French citizenship long before the revolution (after his marriage to a French national and his participation in the Resistance), was among the first whose extradition was demanded. The first attempt to assassinate him failed (21 July 1980) and led to a ten year jail sentence for a Lebanese terrorist, Anis Naccache. After a wave of terrorist attacks attributed to the Islamic Republic, Baḵtīār was assassinated on 6 August 1991, and the culprits were never arrested. With the passage of time, monarchist political groups and leftists in Paris have gradually become less active, and the number of political publications in Persian decreased after the Iran-Iraq war. The Persian Cultural Center, which was closed by the police after the waves of terrorism, reopened in 1996.

In addition to the traditional alliance with Arab countries and contracts signed with Iraq by Jacques Chirac in 1975, French Socialists had close links with the more secular and liberal opponents of the shah, the leftist groups hostile to the staunchly pro-Khomeini Islamic Republican Party (IRP), communists, liberal nationalists (the first to be discarded from power), and leftist Muslims. The

innate distaste of the secular French socialists for a clerical regime seeking its legitimacy in religion was reciprocated by the antipathy of the Persian Islamic rulers for what they perceived as a rationalistic, Masonic, atheist ideology. Persian opposition leaders, especially the leaders of the People's Mojahedin (Mojāhedīn-e ḵalq-e Īrān) and ex-president Abu'l-Ḥasan Banī Ṣadr, who secretly fled to France on 29 July 1981, found the French sharing their belief that the end of the "the dictatorship of the mollās" was at hand. President François Mitterrand, reacting to Israel's bombing of the Tammuz nuclear plant (7 June 1981) in Iraq, decided to take sides. Almost all French citizens were evacuated from Persia (August 1981) and, at the demand of the regional Arab states, French aid to Iraq was intensified. Mirage F1 planes, ordered back in 1977, were now delivered to Iraq. In October 1983, Mitterand lent Iraq five Super-Étendard bombers carrying Exocet missiles in order to destroy Persian oil export installations. In response, the Islamic Republic tried to force France to change course by deploying two weapons which brought with them much notoriety for the regime in the west: its support for hostage taking in Lebanon and terrorist attacks on the French soil. An arrangement seems to have been negotiated during the legislative election of 1986 in France, won by the Gaullists: French hostages were liberated, and the headquarters of the People's Mojahedin were moved to Iraq.

Despite clearly taking sides with Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war, France managed also to sell arms to Persia through indirect channels and tried to safeguard its interests there. Faced with terrorist attacks on her own soil, hostage taking in Lebanon, and under pressure to repay Persia's loans to Eurodif, France began a "war of embassies" with Persia in 1987. Paris demanded that Waḥīd Gorjī, a translator at the Persian embassy with no diplomatic status, who was suspected of collaboration with a terrorist group, appear before judicial authorities. The refusal by Tehran and the counter-accusations of espionage against the French Consul, Paul Torri, led to a dramatic break in diplomatic relations on 17 July 1987, accompanied by Persian threats to French vessels in the Persian Gulf. The diplomats of the two countries were confined to their embassies until December, and full diplomatic relations were resumed only in June 1988, at the very time when France was participating, along with the United States, in admonitory naval operations along the Persian coast. At this final stage in the war with Iraq, Paris was particularly important to the Islamic Republic because of its influence in the UN Security Council. The terms of the cease-fire demanded by Resolution 598 (voted on 20 July 1987) were not very favorable to Persia, as

they did not designate Iraq as the aggressor. But Persia at last accepted the resolution (18 July 1988), putting an end to eight years of war. In the meantime, President Mitterrand was reelected, despite efforts by Tehran to help Chirac's government by having French hostages liberated a few days before the election.

The revolution dealt an almost fatal blow to what was left of French culture in Persia. The departure of the royal family and the upper bourgeoisie, whose second language was French, the closure of French schools (see france xv), and the suspension and later closure of French cultural institutes were among contributory factors. The French newspaper, *Le Journal de Téhéran*, which claimed to be the oldest French daily newspaper outside France, founded in March 1934 (Barzīn, p. 409) by ʿAbbās Masʿūdī, publisher of the *Ettelaδat* (q.v.) group of newspapers,ceased publication. Only the French Institute of Research in Iran (IFRI), despite being officially closed, remained active, publishing books and hosting researchers (see FRANCE xiii).Finally, a biannual cultural review in French, *Luqmān*, was founded in l984 by the Iranian Universities Press (Markaz-e Našr-e Dānešgāhī). It has published several articles on the cultural history of the relationship between the two countries and has a Persian summary at the end of each issue.

The resumption of Franco-Persian relations in 1988, which began on a more subdued but perhaps also on a more solid basis, benefited from the excellent contacts between the then two foreign ministers, Roland Dumas and ʿAlī-Akbar Welāyatī. There was talk of an official visit to Tehran by François Mitterrand in the fall of 1991, but the assassination of Šāpūr Baḵtīār aborted any such happening. However, the French president's wife, Danièle Mitterrand paid a semi-official visit to Tehran in the spring of 1991, when she participated in the reception of Kurdish refugees from Iraq.

Faced with the American policy of "dual containment" towards Iraq and Persia after the Persian Gulf War of 1990-91, the countries of the European Community, and particularly France, have sought to adopt an independent policy. An off-shore drilling contract with the American firm Conoco, canceled because of the economic embargo imposed by Washington, was taken over in July 1995 by the French company Total (Digard et al., p. 234). In 1996, France led the protest by a group of Western countries against the D'Amato Act, passed by the United States Congress, which contains the threat of serious sanctions against all companies, regardless of nationality, working with certain countries, including Persia. The European Union accounts for about

half of Persia's foreign trade, but France's share remains negligible compared to that of Germany (Digard et al, p. 217).

After the election of Moḥammad Ḵātamī as president, European countries have tried to reestablish their former "critical dialogue" with Persia. The French minister of foreign affairs, Hubert Védrine, went to Tehran in August l998 and officially invited Ḵātamī to visit France. In spite of a deterioration in the world economy in general, there seems to be a gradual improvement in the commercial relations between the two countries, and discussions are in progress regarding a new cultural agreement, including the possibility of reopening French classes in Persian institutions.

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