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Importing Modernity: European Military Missions to Qajar Iran

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In the first decades of the nineteenth century, when the Middle East and North Africa first began to attract the sustained attention of European imperialism and colonialism, Arab, Ottoman Turkish, and Iranian polities began a protracted experiment with army modernization. These decades saw a mania in the Middle East for the import of European methods of military organization and techniques of warfare. Everywhere, in the Ottoman Empire, North Africa, Egypt, and Iran, *nizam-i jadid* (new order) regiments sprang up, sometimes on the ruins of older military formations, sometimes alongside them, unleashing a process of military-led modernization that was to characterize state-building projects throughout the region until well into the twentieth century. The ruling dynasties in these regions embarked on army reform in a desperate effort to strengthen their defensive capacity, and to resist growing European hegemony and direct or indirect control by imitating European methods of military organization and warfare. Almost every indigenous ruler who succeeded in evading or warding off direct European control, from the sultans of pre-Protectorate Morocco in the west to the shahs of the Qajar dynasty in Iran in the east, invited European officers, sometimes as individuals, sometimes as formal missions, to assist with building a modern army.[1] With the help of these officers, Middle Eastern rulers thus sought to appropriate the secrets of European power.[2]

[1] Where countries fell under direct European control, the process of military modernization and state-building took place within a totally different configuration.

[2] Although the role of military reform in generating a dynamic for a wider state-building agenda has long been acknowledged, studies of the new armies of the nineteenth-century Middle East and North Africa are few. Among the most important are Stanford J. Shaw, "The Origins of Ottoman Military Reform: The Nizam-i Cedid Army of Sultan Selim III," *Journal of Modern History* 37, 3 (1965): 291–305; L. Carl Brown, *The Tunisia of Ahmed Bey* (Princeton, 1974); M. E. Yapp, "The Modernization of Middle Eastern Armies in the Nineteenth Century: A Comparative View," in, M. E. Yapp and V. J. Parry, eds., *War, Technology and Society in the Middle East* (London, 1975); Wilfrid J. Rollman, "The 'New Order' in a Pre-Colonial Muslim Society: Military Reform in Morocco, 1844–1904," Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1983; Khaled Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men: Mehmed Ali, His Army and the Making of Modern Egypt* (Cambridge, 1997). Recent attention has turned from the reforming westernizing elites to military modernization as experienced "from below." See Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men*; Erik J. Zürcher, ed., *Arming the*

These early attempts at military modernization were partly driven by shock at successive defeats by European powers, especially by the relentless Russian conquests of Ottoman and Iranian territory and the consequent extension of infidel control over Muslim populations. Napoleon's occupation of Egypt in 1798, although temporary, provided both a reminder of local military weakness and an impressive display of the power of a modern army. There were, however, other equally important motives. In the early nineteenth century, Middle Eastern rulers still harbored ambitions of re-conquering territories lost to European expansion and hoped to develop modern armies with offensive capacities, which would also enhance their standing vis-à-vis other states in the region. Perhaps most importantly, by creating a modern army loyal exclusively to themselves, the Ottoman and Moroccan sultans, the beys of Tunis, the shahs of Iran, and the khedives of Egypt hoped to equip their dynasties with a coercive weapon capable of quelling domestic opposition and buttressing their own personal power as expressed in the form of a modern autocratic state.

Their protracted struggles to build up forces capable of defending their realms from external attack largely failed. Yet the Ottoman example, and the less enduring achievements of Muhammad Ali in Egypt in the 1820s and

State: Military Conscription in the Middle East and Central Asia (London and New York, 1999); Odile Moreau and Abderrahmane el Moudden, eds., "Réforme par le haut, réforme par le bas: La modernisation de L'armée aux 19e et 20e siècles," *Quaderni di Oriente Moderno* (special issue) (Rome, 2004). Surprisingly, in the light of the amount of material, memoirs, and diplomatic correspondence they generated, the European missions have attracted little interest. Two articles look at the German missions to the Ottoman Empire: Ulrich Trumpener, "Liman von Sanders and the German-Ottoman Alliance," *Journal of Contemporary History* 1, 4 (Oct. 1966): 179–92; and Glen W. Swanson, "War, Technology and Society in the Ottoman Empire from the Reign of Abdülhamid II to 1913: Mahmud Şevket and the German Military Mission," in, M. E. Yapp and V. J. Parry, eds., *War, Technology and Society in the Middle East* (London, 1975), 366–85. Precolonial Morocco is the subject of Khalid Ben Srhir's "Britain and Military Reforms in Morocco during the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century," in, Odile Moreau and Abderrahmane el Moudden, eds., "Réforme par le haut, réforme par le bas: La modernisation de L'armée aux 19e et 20e siècles," *Quaderni di Oriente Moderno* (special issue) (Rome, 2004): 85–109. Morocco's interesting experiment with an Ottoman mission is dealt with by Abderrahmane el Moudden, "Looking Eastward: Some Moroccan Tentative Military Reforms with Turkish Assistance (18th–early 20th Centuries)," *Maghreb Review* 19, 3–4 (1994): 237–45. Iran has suffered a particular lack of scholarly interest in this topic. There is no comprehensive study of the military or military reform in nineteenth-century Iran. For an overview, see J. Calmard, "Les Réformes Militaires sous les Qajars (1795–1925)," in, Y. Richard, ed., *Entre l'Iran et l'Occident* (Paris, 1989), 17–42. A small number of older Persian works also provide surveys. See Jahangir Qa'im-Maqami, *Tahavvulat-i Siyasi-yi Nizam-i Iran* (Tehran, 1326); Jamil Quzanlu, *Tarikh-i Nizam-i Iran*, 2 vols. (Tehran, 1315). The late Nasir-al-Din Shah decades are dealt with by Reza Ra'iss Tousi, "The Persian Army, 1880–1907," *Middle Eastern Studies* 24, 2 (Apr. 1988): 206–29. The individual military forces of the late Qajar and constitutional periods have fared better (see The Cossack Brigade, the Government gendarmerie, and the South Persia Rifles, below). The only foreign mission to have received serious attention is the Swedish mission of the constitutional period. See Markus Ineichen, *Die Schwedischen Offiziere in Persien 1911–1916* (Bern, 2002). The present article is the first to examine the foreign military missions to Iran as a general phenomenon.

1830s, were immensely important in spreading ideas of military reform throughout the region. The adoption of European methods by rulers as strong and assertive as Muhammad Ali or with the prestige of the Ottoman sultan-caliph made these innovations palatable and even desirable to wider Muslim opinion. The routes through which modern concepts of military organization and innovations in military technology were transmitted were complex. Europe itself offered no single model of military development, and Middle Eastern countries in general appear to have been influenced much more by each local effort at reform than by the unmediated European example.[3]

Iran in particular seems to have been fascinated by the Ottoman experience. In its military reforms it shared many of the Ottoman Empire's goals—each conceptualized its military needs in terms of a large multi-functional army based on mass conscription. Although the later triumphs of European imperialism, in which Iran has been cast as a passive victim, have tended to obscure this motive, the Qajar shahs wanted a large modern army not only for defensive but also offensive warfare. They wished not only to protect themselves against the inexorable pressure from Russia but also to regain lost territory in the Caucasus and Afghanistan which had been ruled by their Safavid predecessors in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and to thereby to appropriate some of the religious charisma of the Safavids and legitimize their own rule.[4] The first and second Qajar shahs, Aqa Muhammad Shah and Fath Ali Shah, struggled for decades to reassert their hegemony in the eastern Caucasus against Russian challenges, especially over Georgia, and a key element in their strategy was the creation of reformed regiments. Their successors, too, hoped that military power could advance their dynastic claims. Muhammad Shah in 1837, and Nasir al-Din Shah in 1856 launched wars to seize Herat in western Afghanistan, but both were frustrated by British diplomatic, military, and naval power. In 1860 Nasir-al-Din Shah made an ill-fated attempt to assert his sovereignty over the oasis-town of Merv in Central Asia. Only toward the end of the century did he finally abandon these increasingly unrealistic objectives, and Iran began to reconcile itself, in practice if not always in theory, to the country's existing borders.[5]

For the shahs of Iran in the nineteenth century, the recovery of lost territories through military means was highly significant for the ideological legitimization and the consolidation of the dynasty. But military reform was intimately linked to state building in another novel sense. The establishment of reformed regiments would enable the shahs to embark on a project to alter fundamentally

[3] el Moudden, "Looking Eastward," 243.

[4] The Safavids claimed descent from the seventh Imam and had ruled an empire that at its height stretched from Baghdad to Herat.

[5] Riza Shah, like his contemporary Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, conceptualized the state-building project in terms of consolidating these borders, not as an irredentist challenge.

the balance between the state, in the person of the shah, and the rest of the political system as expressed in layers of princes, courtiers, notables, tribal khans, and ulama. This project was central to programs of military reform, and in the Iranian case it took on overriding importance and determined which models were adopted. There was no evidence that *nizam* troops were superior in warfare to those they were intended to replace. Their great advantage was that they were entirely dependent on the shah and, formally at least, loyal to him. They had no other allegiance than to the state.

For all these rulers of the Middle East, to reform meant to Europeanize.[6] The elite seems never to have questioned the goal of regular disciplined forces on the European model. But, in purely defensive terms, other modes of military organization appear to have been much more successful. It may be argued that in the nineteenth century the goal of defense against European armies was unrealistic. At the beginning of the century Iran's traditional forces had been able to stalemate Russia in the eastern Caucasus for many years yet, by the beginning of the twentieth century, Russian armies could march through northern Iran unopposed by the *nizam* regiments. During the nineteenth century the most powerful opposition to European expansion was offered not by the *nizam* forces of the established dynasties but by the well organized, disciplined, and militant Sufi brotherhoods led by charismatic figures whose legitimacy derived from religious origins. Shaykh Shamyl of the Naqshbandi Sufi order in the Caucasus, Abd al-Qadir of the Qadiriyyah in Algeria, and Shaykh Muhammad Ahmad (the Mahdi) of the Samaniyyah in the Sudan put up fierce resistance for years and sometimes decades. However, such movements, with their subaltern and radical dimensions, were as much a menace to the established local rulers as to the European empires.[7]

In their efforts to build disciplined regular forces, all the region's reforming rulers of the early-nineteenth-century faced the same problem: a lack of a professional officer corps.[8] The region possessed no modern educational institutions, let alone military colleges, nor had there yet been any significant effort by local elites to acquire training abroad. Rulers therefore turned directly to European officers, whom they employed for varying lengths of time under a variety of conditions. The use of such officers, whether renegades and adventurers engaged as individuals, or members of formal missions sanctioned by their own governments, was fraught with difficulties. For the ruler and the

[6] This was indeed a global phenomenon. See David B. Ralston, *Importing the European Army: The Introduction of European Military Techniques and Institutions into the Extra-European World, 1600–1814* (Chicago, 1990).

[7] The use of such strategies continues in the contemporary Middle East, most notably by Hizbullah in Lebanon. The similarity of this approach to methods of guerrilla warfare adopted in other areas of the world is obvious.

[8] Avigdor Levy, "The Officer Corps in Sultan Mahmud's New Ottoman Army, 1826–1839," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 2, 1 (Jan. 1971): 21–39.

high officials appointed to oversee reform, European officers were useful both for their professional expertise and, perhaps more importantly, for the prestige and imperial backing which their involvement seemed to lend to modernization programs. Any advantage so derived was, however, invariably offset by the resentments their presence generated among both the elite and the population at large, resentments which arose from the humiliation of seeming to mimic an enemy deemed culturally and religiously inferior, from anxiety at the loss of sovereignty implied by the presence of foreigners in command of the army, and from the specific hostility of those whose personal positions were directly undermined or threatened. In addition, the ascendancy of foreign officers from any individual country often aggravated opposition from one or all of that country's European rivals as much as it provided diplomatic cover and imperial support to the Iranian government.

The account that follows looks at Iran's experience with building a regular army under the leadership of European military missions during the rule of the Qajar dynasty (1797–1925). The Qajar shahs and their ministers and, by the end of the nineteenth century, wider layers of reforming opinion, were obsessed with the need to establish regular disciplined military forces. The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were peppered with attempts to set up a standing army on the European model with the help of foreign officers. In all, Qajar Iran saw three formal French military missions, three British, two Austrian, one "unofficial" Italian mission, one Russian mission with the Cossack Brigade, and one Swedish mission with the Government Gendarmerie. In addition, a miscellany of foreign adventurers and mercenaries were employed on an individual basis. Yet the cumulative result of this obsession was to leave Iran in the first decades of the twentieth century burdened by immense expenditures on the army but militarily greatly weakened. Its forces survived within a maelstrom of political controversy—in conflict with each other and reflecting and exacerbating ongoing struggles within the Iranian political system. Paradoxically, it was only with the advent to power in 1921 of Riza Khan, later the first Pahlavi shah, Riza Shah (1925–1941), and his dismissal of all the foreign officers commanding the remaining fragmented military forces, that Iran was able finally to build a national army on the European model.

The narrative is divided into two parts. The first examines the efforts made by successive Qajar shahs and their reforming ministers to establish regular *nizam-i jadid* forces, and the role played in these efforts by European military missions. It argues that these efforts were not only futile but, in a period when European influence was at its zenith and Middle Eastern countries were experiencing unprecedented political, diplomatic, and financial aggression, were actually dangerous to Iranian independence and solvency. This part of the account highlights both the self-serving motives of the European powers, always focused on the advancement of their own strategic and diplomatic interests, and Iran's fitful attitude to the missions

and their task, an attitude where admiration for Europe was tempered, and sometimes overwhelmed, by mistrust and suspicion, and where reform was essentially configured by the whims of a despotic shah.[9] It charts the process by which the shahs, always eager for new missions, finally lost control of the foreign officers, a process symbolized by the establishment of the Russian Military Mission with the Cossack Brigade, a unit that functioned practically as a foreign force. It concludes by showing how, partly as a result of the Russian Mission's role in defending Tsarist imperial interests, bolstering a weak and reactionary shah and starkly illustrating his dependence on foreign support, the presence and role of foreign military missions became a key signifier for reforming opinion of the actual and potential loss of Iranian sovereignty.

The second part of the narrative discusses the new context for the politics of military reform under European leadership that was provided by the constitutional and post-constitutional years. It discusses how the project of army reform, and the wider state-building agenda in which it was embedded, were taken up in the early twentieth century by a new generation of constitutionalist and nationalist reformers. For these circles, the shah was no longer, if he ever had been, capable of acting as an agent of reform, but was instead now a major impediment to Iran's regeneration. This section describes the struggle by the constitutional authorities and later Iranian governments to rid Iran of the Russian Mission and resist the imposition of a British mission, and their parallel efforts to establish a military force, under European officers from a neutral country, which would be loyal to themselves and would enable them to resist the demands of the imperial powers and a puppet shah. It places this struggle within a rapidly changing diplomatic nexus, in which first Britain and Russia together, and after 1917 Britain alone, made unprecedentedly aggressive bids to take control of Iran's armed forces as part of broader efforts to establish an unchallengeable hegemony.

PART ONE: THE QAJAR SHAHS AND MILITARY REFORM

The Military Forces of the Early Qajar Shahs

At the end of the eighteenth century, the military forces of the Qajar rulers resembled those of preceding dynasties. They bore strong traces of the Turco-Mongol military tradition that dominated the Middle East, and owed practically nothing to European military science.[10] In peacetime, there was no standing

[9] Rudi Matthee, "Between Sympathy and Enmity: Nineteenth-Century Iranian Views of the British and the Russians," in, Beata Eschment and Hans Harder, eds., *Looking at the Coloniser: Cross-Cultural Perceptions in Central Asia and the Caucasus, Bengal and Related Areas* (Würzburg, 2004), 311–38.

[10] See C. E. Bosworth, "Army, ii. Islamic, to the Mongol Period"; M. Haneda, "Army iii, Safavid"; J. R. Perry, "Army iv, Afsar and Zand," all in *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (Encyclopaedia

army other then the shah's household establishment.[11] On the outbreak of war the shah would assemble his forces by issuing a *farman* (edict) calling on the tribal khans and provincial governors to collect recruits. The army so produced was largely made up of irregular cavalry drawn from the nomadic tribes, who constituted the prestigious and effective fighting element and whose loyalty was guaranteed by keeping the chief or his son at court as a hostage. Complements of foot soldiers were taken indiscriminately from the peasantry. The early Qajar shahs appointed senior military commanders for specific campaigns. Those appointed were either tribal khans who officered their own irregular cavalry, or princes of the Qajar tribe, court favorites, or provincial governors. These commanders then engaged their own relatives, clients, and dependants as subordinate officers. There were no fixed pay scales or hierarchical command structures. The troops carried firearms, bows, lances, swords, and daggers. Pay was low and the troops fought out of the fear of the harsh consequences of disobedience, and, as far as the tribal forces were concerned, loyalty to their chiefs and especially the hope of plunder. An ideological dimension was often given to major military campaigns by the declaration of a *jihad*.

In its struggle with Russia in the late eighteenth through the early nineteenth centuries, Iran was able to campaign in a highly effective way.[12] By using the tactics of tribal raiding the cavalry avoided the formal battles that would have favored disciplined forces, and relied instead on guerrilla raids, picking off small, isolated detachments, harrying enemy communications, and the like. Using these methods Iranian forces denied its enemy victory for nine years during the first Russo-Iranian war (1804–1813), despite Russia's immense superiority in resources.[13]

Iranica Foundation, Center for Iranian Studies, Columbia University), http://www.iranica.com/newsite/.

[11] Europeans observers have left several contemporary accounts of the army in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. See, *inter alia*, Comte de Ferrieres-Sauveboeuf, *Mémoires Historiques, Politiques et Géographiques des Voyages du Comte de Ferrieres-Sauveboeuf Faits en Turquie, en Perse at en Arabie, depuis 1782 jusqu'en 1789* (Paris, 1790); George Forster, *A Journey from Bengal to England* (London, 1798); Dr. G. A. Olivier, *Voyage dans l'Empire Othoman, l'Egypte at la Perse* (Paris, 1800–1807); P.A.L. Gardane, *Journal d'un voyage en la Turquie d'Asie et la Perse fait en 1807 and 1808* (Paris, 1809); James Morier, *A Journey through Persia, Armenia, and Asia Minor, to Constantinople, in the Years 1808 and 1809* (London 1812); James Morier, *A Second Journey through Persia, Armenia, and Asia Minor, to Constantinople, between the years 1810 and 1816* (London, 1818); Moritz von Kotzebue, *Narrative of a Journey into Persia* (London, 1819); J. M. Tancoigne, *A Narrative of a Journey into Persia and Residence in Tehran* (London, 1820); Pierre Amédée Jaubert, *Voyage en Armenie et en Perse* (Paris, 1821).

[12] Muriel Atkin, *Russia and Iran, 1780–1828* (Minneapolis, 1980).

[13] For a discussion of the respective military strengths and weaknesses of Iran and Russia, see Atkin, *Russia and Iran*, 99–122.

Early Qajar Military Reform: French and British Missions

Iran's first systematic attempt at military reform along European lines was made during the first Russo-Iranian war by Fath Ali Shah (1797–1834), and especially his son Abbas Mirza, the crown prince and governor of Azarbayjan.[14] Both were convinced that regiments of European-style troops would enable them to break the deadlock and win victory, regain lost territory in the Caucasus, and thus help to legitimize their dynasty. In the early nineteenth century the focus of Iran's military efforts was the province of Azarbayjan and its capital Tabriz, the front line against Russian expansion. The military condition of Tabriz was important for another reason: it was, by tradition, the seat of the crown prince, and it was essential that the heir apparent possess sufficient armed strength to impose his claim to the throne against the inevitable challenges on the death of the shah.

Abbas Mirza, like his contemporaries in the Middle East and North Africa, had concluded that the survival of both his dynasty and his country depended on matching European military strength by imitating European military organization.[15] Deeply impressed by the steps already taken on this path by the Ottoman Empire under Sultan Selim III, Abbas Mirza began to construct in Azarbayjan his own version of the disciplined infantry and artillery regiments known in the Ottoman Empire as the *nizam-i jadid*. Like Sultan Selim and his successors, Abbas Mirza intended that a Europeanized army would reduce and finally eliminate his dependence on tribal and provincial chiefs and notables for the raising of military forces.

Abbas Mirza faced two major problems of personnel and manpower: he lacked officers with knowledge of European methods and had no regularized method of enlisting recruits. The solutions he found to these problems, the employment of foreign officers and the introduction of a rudimentary form of conscription, were similar to those adopted in the Ottoman Empire and Egypt and determined the character of the Iranian reform effort for the rest of the century.[16]

At first Abbas Mirza, like the Ottomans before him, employed renegade Christian officers to raise and drill troops, drawing on the many Russian deserters in Tabriz.[17] Only the arrival of the first French military mission provided him with the professional officers and NCOs necessary to further develop his

[14] See Emineh Pakravan, *Abbas Mirza* (Paris, 1973).

[15] Morier, *A Second Journey through Persia*, 211.

[16] In the Ottoman Empire and Egypt, the reform effort could only begin in earnest after the destruction of reactionary military castes, the Janissaries and the Mamluks, respectively. In Iran no such forces existed. This indicates not Iran's relatively advanced condition, but rather its primitive civil and military structures.

[17] The presence of such a significant number of Russian deserters in Tabriz may be explained by the extremely harsh conditions prevailing in the Russian armies in the Caucasus. See Atkin, *Russia and Iran*, 106–7.

plans.[18] In 1807, the first French mission to Iran under General Gardane arrived in Tehran. He and his staff came under the terms of the treaty of Finkenstein by which Iran had entered into an alliance with Napoleonic France against Britain and Russia.[19] An offshoot of the struggle taking place in Europe, Gardane's mission was to organize the shah's forces along European lines as part of a comprehensive diplomatic and military agreement between the two countries.

Two French officers remained in Tabriz for about fourteen months as military instructors, and they began to raise and train three regiments of infantry, numbering between four and six thousand men. These troops, known as *sarbaz*, were armed with muskets made in Tabriz on the French model, and clothed in uniforms also notionally French in inspiration but with a typical Persian black sheepskin hat. The French also began to organize the artillery, and formed the many Russian deserters still in Tabriz into a unit of their own.[20]

The French mission soon fell victim to the changing, European context. Little more than two months after the Treaty of Finkenstein, European alignments were reversed when Napoleon and the tsar signed the Treaty of Tilsit and French influence in Iran began to collapse. Fath Ali Shah agreed to receive a British mission and in February 1809 he expelled the French, Gardane's mission having already been severely undermined by opposition from Iranian officials in Tabriz and Tehran and the hostility of the British at the shah's court.

Although the British had originally rebuffed Fath Ali Shah's overtures, Gardane's arrival had galvanized them into sending missions of their own, and they succeeded in displacing the French. The Preliminary Treaty of Friendship and Alliance, concluded in 1809, provided for a British subsidy, equipment, and officers and men, in exchange for the shah's breaking with the French. Between 1810 and 1813 more than fifty members of a British military mission—officers, NCOs, and men—arrived in Iran from both India and Britain. In Tabriz the British mission continued the work begun by the French of raising and drilling troops. British muskets and sabers replaced French equipment, and an attempt was made to modify uniforms to a nominally British style.[21]

[18] Morier, *A Second Journey through Persia*, 211–12.

[19] For the Gardane mission, see Gardane, *Journal d'un voyage en la Turquie d'Asie et la Perse*; Alfred de Gardane, *Mission du Generale Gardane en Perse sous le premier Empire* (Paris, 1865). For Franco-Iranian relations, see Iradj Amini, *Napoleon and Persia* (Richmond, Surrey, 1999).

[20] On the regiment of Russian deserters, see Aleksandr Kibovskii, "'Bagaderan'—Russian Deserters in the Persian Army, 1802–1839," *Tseikhgauz* 5 (1996), Mark Conrad, trans., http://home.comcast.net/-markconrad/Persdes2.html.

[21] For a description of the appearance of officers and men in this period, see Aleksandr Kibovskii and Vadim Yegorov, "The Persian Regular Army of the First Half of the Nineteenth Century," *Tseikhgauz* 5 (1996): 20–25, Mark Conrad, trans., http://home.comcast.net/-markconrad/PERSIA.html.

In addition to the convulsions of European diplomacy, Abbas Mirza faced other problems. Iran's revenues were insufficient for its expensive wars, and those of Azarbayjan in particular were quite unequal to the demands of Abbas Mirza's agenda. In 1810 the British began paying him a subsidy, which went primarily to defray the cost of the new regiments, but training, equipping, and paying these *sarbaz* was so expensive that overall his financial problems worsened. The reforms also encountered opposition on their own account. The population in general and occasionally the *sarbaz* themselves disliked the European appearance of the new regiments, while some of the ulama declared the presence of infidels harmful and the adoption of their methods a betrayal of the Prophet's example. Abbas Mirza's political enemies quickly exploited these doubts, but his supporters also mobilized religious sentiment where they could, obtaining opinions that the reforms were in fact a return to early Islamic practice.

By 1812, Abbas Mirza possessed a European-trained army of about 13,000 infantry, cavalry, and artillery, and he and the shah believed victory in the war with Russia was within reach. Although the fledgling regiments had achieved minor victories in 1810, Abbas Mirza's hope of exploiting Russian weakness during Napoleon's invasion of 1812 was disappointed and the war finally ended after the *nizam* regiments suffered a series of military disasters. Abbas Mirza now also faced the loss of the British mission. The alliance formed between Britain and Russia in 1812–1913 weakened the British commitment to Iran, and the defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo in 1815 further diminished British interest. By the end of 1815 the British mission had withdrawn.

Both the Gardane and British missions had come to Iran as a result of European conflicts and rivalries, to further their own political, diplomatic, and military objectives. Their interests in Iran waxed and waned with the changing European context, and their missions were mere tools of political expedience, easily dispensed with. Naturally, both Britain and France did everything possible to undermine the missions of the other. Though Abbas Mirza and the shah had done their best to maneuver within and exploit the shifting European alignments, Iran was powerless concerning the wider context. Nonethess, the missions had not been forced on a reluctant or conservative Iran by a forward-looking Europe. On the contrary, the initiative for them had clearly come from the shah and Abbas Mirza, for whom foreign assistance with military reform was a major benefit of Iran's international alliances. The shah had insisted on the military missions in the face of a European consensus that, given Iran's circumstances, such reforms were unlikely to succeed.[22]

[22] See the remarks of the Russian staff officer Captain N. N. Muraviev quoted in Kibovskii and Yegorov, "The Persian Regular Army." See also John Malcolm, *The History of Persia* (London, 1829); Henry Creswicke Rawlinson, *England and Russia in the East* (London, 1875), 30–31.

After Britain's departure, Abbas Mirza continued to maintain the *nizam* forces, now organized into ten Iranian regiments with another two composed of Russian deserters. He engaged individual European officers of various nationalities—French, Italian, and Spanish—who had been left unemployed after the Napoleonic wars. He also tried to introduce changes in the methods by which the *nizam* regiments were recruited, both to provide himself with a more predictable supply of manpower and to make himself independent of the local elite. He devised the *bunichah* system, a primitive form of conscription whereby liability for military service was tied to revenue assessments in the countryside. Some sort of conscription system may have been suggested to him by his French officers, as seems to have been the case with Muhammad Ali in Egypt. But Abbas Mirza's system, indirect and collective, with an implicit reliance on landowners, bears stronger traces of Russian influence and the model of Peter the Great, and may have owed something to the Russian deserters.[23] On the other hand, it may have resulted simply from his own efforts to regularize the existing system, from which it differed little in practice, if greatly in theory.

In 1826, war with Russia flared up again and again ended in a disastrous Iranian defeat two years later. Abbas Mirza was undeterred by these repeated military failures and continued his search for foreign officers. He appealed again to Britain, whose reaction was again determined entirely by its own strategic needs. London and especially Calcutta now harbored growing concern over a possible Russian threat to India and the loss of British influence at Tehran, and in 1833 a second British military mission arrived, recruited in India. However, before it could begin work Iran's political context suddenly changed by the deaths of both Abbas Mirza and the monarch, Fath Ali Shah. The mission now faced the task of ensuring the smooth succession of a new shah, Muhammad Shah (1834–1848), and averting any potential crisis by suppressing rival claimants to the throne. British officers then began raising and drilling troops.

Despite their success in installing the new shah, British officers immediately began to encounter difficulties. The political situation was becoming less and less favorable, Russian influence at Tehran was growing, and the new shah was determined to renew his claim to Herat against inevitable British opposition. The officers received little support from either the new shah or the Iranian government. They were deeply resented by the Iranian *nizam* officers, and there was constant friction, sometimes subterranean, sometimes overt, over the extent and scope of British functions and responsibilities. The Iranian authorities insisted on regarding them purely as instructors, and refused them the control they desired over pay, rations, and promotions. The *nizam* officers

[23] For a general discussion of conscription in the Middle East, see Jan Lucassen and Erik J. Zürcher, "Introduction: Conscription and the Historical Context," in, Erik J. Zürcher, ed., *Arming the State: Military Conscription in the Middle East and Central Asia* (London and New York, 1999), 1–19.

hated British interference and frequently disregarded their recommendations.[24] The British found their work obstructed at every level due to a combination of political opposition to British strategy, wounded national pride, and professional jealousy. The mission suffered further from intrigues by the military officers of other nationalities in the shah's service and by the diplomatic representatives of rival powers.[25] This second British experiment finally broke down after the political and diplomatic rupture occasioned by Muhammad Shah's 1837 attack on Herat. In 1838 Britain severed relations with Iran and ordered its officers in the shah's service to quit the country.

Despite his unhappy experience with the British mission, Muhammad Shah continued to seek foreign assistance with his desultory efforts at military reform. Since relations with Britain were strained and Russia was not sufficiently trusted to be allowed the education or command of the army, he turned to France. The French agreed to supply weapons and army instructors to replace the British, and in September 1839 a mission led by Edouard Comte de Sercey left Paris, reaching Tabriz the following January.[26] But with the treasury empty and the shah demoralized by the Herat failure, the Iranian government treated the French mission mostly with indifference. It was opposed by both Britain and Russia, while the shah made no efforts on the officers' behalf. All were subalterns or NCOs, some of them old enough to have served with Napoleon, and they were all much mocked by their fellow Europeans for giving themselves senior ranks and fancy uniforms. The mission remained in Iran less than four years, and the officers apparently spent most of their time trying unsuccessfully to extract their pay from the authorities.[27] By the time of Muhammad Shah's death, the blue tunic of the French had again replaced the English red coat, but little else had changed.

Military Reform under Nasir al-Din Shah

A new phase in efforts to reform the army opened with the accession of Nasir al-Din Shah (1848–1896).[28] His prime minister, Mirza Taqi Khan Amir Kabir,

[24] Some observations about the difficulties encountered by the British officers of this mission may be found in Lt-Col Stuart, *Journal of a Residence in Northern Persia and the Adjacent Provinces of Turkey* (London, 1854).

[25] Throughout the nineteenth century the shah possessed in his service a number of European officers of a wide variety of nationalities. See, for example, Mansurah Ittihadiyyah and S. Mir Muhammad Sadigh, eds., *Zhinral Saminu dar Khidmat-i Iran-i Qajar va Jang-i Hirat, 1236–1266*, with an introduction by Jean Calmard (Tehran, 1375); Bo Utas, "Borowsky, Isidore," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*; Jaqueline Calmard-Compas, "Ferrier, Joseph Phillipe," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, http://www.iranica.com/newsite/.

[26] See Count F. E de Sercey, *Une Ambassade Extraordinaire. La Perse en 1839–1840* (Paris, 1928); J. Pichon, *Journal d'une mission militaire en Perse (1839–1840)* (Paris, 1900).

[27] An account of the French Mission may be found in Eugene Flandin, *Voyage en Perse* (Paris, 1851).

[28] See Abbas Amanat, *Pivot of the Universe: Nasir al-Din Shah and the Iranian Monarchy, 1851–1896* (London and New York, 1997); Shaul Bakhash, *Iran: Monarchy, Bureaucracy and Reform under the Qajars, 1858–1896* (London, 1978).

impressed by the progress of the Ottoman reform movement of the *tanzimat*, immediately launched a comprehensive program of reform, including a series of measures to modernize the army. He established the *Dar al-Funun*, an elite military and technical college. He also developed the *bunichah* system of conscription, devised by Abbas Mirza and originally intended only for Azarbayjan, into a relatively complex measure, theoretically applicable across the country and to the entire population, and raised new *nizam* regiments.

To assist him in these efforts, especially in providing tuition at the *Dar al-Funun*, Amir Kabir again turned to Europe, and political considerations again determined the choice of the nation. Placing little trust in the British, French, or Russians, he cast his net wider and, impressed by the Austrian victories over Sardinia in 1848–1849, approached that country.[29] An Austrian mission was recruited but before it reached Tehran the political context had turned against it with Amir Kabir's fall from power.[30] The new Prime Minister Aqa Khan Nuri was unsympathetic to his predecessor's reforms, especially the college, and to the engagement of Europeans. Notwithstanding their weakened position, the Austrians began work at the beginning of 1852, exercising recruits in the parade ground and instructing officers at the *Dar al-Funun*.

The Austrian mission was further compromised by the arrival in Tehran of a group of Italian officers, refugees from various Italian states who had taken an active part in the revolutionary movements of 1848–1849, and who were now appointed instructors of the infantry. Relations between the Austrian and Italian officers were bad from the beginning since the Austrian army had suppressed the Italian revolutions of 1848. The Austrian officers, frustrated and demoralized, began to leave. By 1853, the Italians had acquired sole charge of the infantry, leaving the Austrians the artillery and the cavalry. The Austrian mission, hampered at every turn, made almost no progress, while the Italians, whose only military experience had been short periods of service in revolutionary corps of volunteers, had an equally small impact.[31]

In 1856 Nasir al-Din Shah launched another disastrous attack on Herat. After the collapse of the Herat expedition under British military and diplomatic pressure, the shah again began to toy with the idea of Western-style reforms and again sought military advisers from Europe. Neither the Italians nor the

[29] For the Austrian mission see the account by its medical doctor, Jakob Polak, *Persien, das Land und seiner Bewohner* (Leipzig, 1865). For Austro-Iranian relations see Helmut Slaby, *Bindenschild und Sonnenlöwe: Die Geschichte der Österreichisch-Iranischen Beziehungen bis zur Gegenwart* (Graz, 1982); Helmut Slaby, "Austria, Diplomatic and Commercial Relations with Persia," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, http://www.iranica.com/newsite/.

[30] For the circumstances of Amir Kabir's fall, see Amanat, *Pivot of the Universe*, 133–68.

[31] For a discussion of the Italian interest in Iranian military reform, see A. Piemontese, "An Italian Source for the History of Qāğār Persia: The Reports of the General Enrico Andreini (1871–1886)," *East and West* 19 (1969): 147–75; "L'esercito persiano nel 1874–75. Organizzazione e riforma secondo E. Andreini," *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 49 (1975): 71–117.

Austrians had been a success, relations with Britain had been soured by the Herat war, and Russia was still considered a source of danger, so the shah again turned to France, seeking advice from Napoleon III. Because Iran was useful to France as an obstacle to Ottoman influence and British ambitions, Napoleon encouraged the Shah in both his military reforms and his regional ambitions, and in October 1858 a third French mission arrived.[32] This mission was led by Commandant Brongniart, and all of its members were professional soldiers who had served in the French colonial army in Algiers. Napoleon had specifically recommended the combination of regular and irregular forces raised by the French in Algeria as a model for Iran. The mission was to raise and train troops and to teach at the *Dar al-Funun*. It survived until 1867 but finally quit the country with no real achievements. The shah then turned again to Britain, which, in the grip of the policy of "masterly inactivity," declined to assist.[33] He renewed his request in 1870 but was again refused.

In the 1870s, the reforming prime minister and minister of war, Mirza Husayn Khan, Mushir al-Dawlah, launched another major effort at military reorganization, again, as in Amir Kabir's time, in deliberate imitation of the Ottoman *tanzimat*. As part of a comprehensive program of modernization, Mushir al-Dawlah drew up extensive plans to reorganize the army, including measures to regulate its budget, enforce conscription, and improve military education.[34]

Like his predecessors, Mushir al-Dawlah turned to Europe for help, and in 1878 the shah, while traveling in Europe, asked both the Austrian emperor and the Russian tsar for the loan of instructors. In January 1879 the second Austrian mission duly arrived in Tehran. Soon after their arrival the first Russian mission arrived under Colonel Domantovich and began working to establish a regular cavalry in the form of the Iranian Cossack Brigade.[35]

The Austrian officers were surprised on their arrival to find the Russians in charge of the cavalry, but they began their mission nonetheless and organized a force known as the Austrian corps.[36] Yet, before long, they began to attract hostility from a pro-Russian faction at court that was eager to promote the Russian military mission. Funds began to be paid irregularly or not at all, and the corps gradually fell to pieces.

[32] For the shah's relationship with Napoleon III, see Amanat, *Pivot of the Universe*, 352–53.

[33] This policy held sway between 1830 and 1870 and concentrated on consolidation in India and a static defense of the Empire.

[34] Guity Nashat, *The Origins of Modern Reform in Iran, 1870–1880* (Urbana, Ill., 1982), 55–71.

[35] For the early history of the Cossack Brigade, see F. Kazemzadeh, "The Origin and Early Development of the Persian Cossack Brigade," *American Slavic and East European Review* 15, 3 (Oct. 1956): 351–63; Stephanie Cronin, *The Army and the Creation of the Pahlavi State in Iran, 1910–1926* (London and New York, 1997). See also the memoirs of its fifth Russian commandant, *Khatirat-i Kulunil Kasakufski*, Abbas Quli Jali, trans. (Tehran, 1344).

[36] Slaby, "Austria, Diplomatic and Commercial Relations with Persia."

The Qajar Shahs and the European Missions: A Balance-Sheet

By the end of the nineteenth century, Iran's "reformed" military forces, with the partial exception of the Cossack Brigade, still adhered essentially to the conceptions introduced in 1812 by Abbas Mirza and the first French and British missions. Throughout the century, under the combined impetus of internal reform efforts and the succession of European missions, infantry and artillery regiments had been raised which theoretically conformed to European models in terms of appearance, internal organization, methods of recruitment and training, and structures of command. In reality, despite repeated efforts and under a wide variety of European instruction, these efforts had failed to provide Iran with a Europeanized army. Instead, the entire project experienced a slow, inexorable collapse. Abbas Mirza's plan to raise regiments capable of recovering lost territories and defending the country had become a simple desire to have troops suitably modern in appearance with which to provide the shah with the trappings and accoutrements of power and statehood. The *nizam* troops were now essentially for show, to furnish a "modern" backdrop for the shah's power. Nasir al-Din Shah's modern army, although occasionally used against refractory tribes, was essentially a mirage.

On paper, the numbers of *nizam* troops had risen inexorably throughout the century, each reform wave leading to the raising of more regiments. While the French mission was at Tabriz in 1808, Abbas Mirza possessed between 4,000 and 6,000 *nizam* troops. By the late 1830s the infantry alone had risen to fifty regiments containing 54,850 officers and men. By 1900, the *nizam* infantry officially numbered 78,500 men divided into eighty regiments. In reality, many of these troops were either absent from their regiments or entirely fictitious, the muster rolls having been falsified so senior officers could retain the pay of imaginary soldiers. Although commanding officers seemed able, by rough and ready methods, to find men for their regiments in emergencies, money was in ever-shorter supply, Iran was falling into debt, and in any case troops so raised had no training or discipline.[37]

Whatever the situation on the ground, the authorities invariably met in full the cost of pay for the complement of officers and men stipulated on the muster rolls, and of their uniforms and weapons. Thus Abbas Mirza's *bunichah* system rapidly became a cross the Iranian Treasury was force to bear. This aggravated corruption and discredited the reform project in general.

Where *nizam* regiments existed, they endured conditions that deteriorated throughout the century. Abbas Mirza's introduction of a system of fixed rates of pay in particular led to a catastrophic deterioration in conditions, owing to a

[37] Picot, Report on the Organization of the Persian Army, Durand to Salisbury, 18 Jan. 1900, FO881/7364,105.

remorseless depreciation of Iran's silver coinage.[38] By the end of the century pay was worth, in real terms, about one-fifth of its original value, and even this pittance often remained unpaid for months or even years. Soldiers were allowed, encouraged, and even obliged to find other work as laborers or small shopkeepers—garrisons became empty shells, with troops away earning their bread in the bazaars.[39]

In operational terms, the irregular cavalry was still the most effective fighting element in Iran's forces, and it had remained untouched by the European missions and government reform efforts. The state's continued reliance on such forces buttressed the power of the khans, and negated efforts by reforming officials to reduce their autonomy and make them more dependent upon and responsive to the central government, frustrating and even reversing a wider agenda of centralization.

Nasir-al-Din Shah and the Russian Military Mission

By the end of the century little had been achieved in creating a Europeanized army, in appearance or reality. The main significance of the reformed regiments was in providing a conduit through which state money might be channeled into the pockets of elite families and in indulging the shah's fondness for what amounted to military fancy dress. Nonetheless, in the 1870s a step had been taken which had permanent and momentous consequences for the country, when the shah asked the Russian tsar for officers to help organize a regular cavalry.

The Russian military mission with the Iranian Cossack Brigade was a departure from Iran's previous experiments with foreign officers. It was to be the longest lasting of all the foreign military missions to Qajar, remaining until removed by the British just prior to the coup of 1921, a total of 41 years. It was also to prove itself to be a different type to previous missions. It was openly an instrument of Russian foreign policy and completely beyond Iranian control. By giving Iran the Cossack Brigade, Russia only partially succeeded in tying the shah to itself, but was completely successful in establishing a visible and seemingly permanent affront to Iranian sovereignty.

The Russian officers encountered many of the problems familiar from the experience of the previous missions had, including opposition from resentful officials and courtiers, hostility from the diplomatic representatives of other powers, internal social and professional tensions, and the Iranian government's perpetual failure to provide sufficient funds. Nonetheless, the Brigade was able to sustain itself and grow, due mainly to unrelenting Russian pressure on the Iranian government. Russia attached great importance to its mission, since

[38] See P. W Avery and J. B Simmons, "Persia on a Cross of Silver, 1880–1890," in, Elie Kedourie and Sylvia G. Haim, eds., *Towards a Modern Iran, Studies in Thought, Politics and Society*, (London, 1980), 1–37.

[39] For a discussion of the reactions of the *nizam* troops to their conditions, see Vanessa Martin, *The Qajar Pact: Bargaining, Protest and the State in Nineteenth-Century Persia* (London, 2005), 133–49.

from the beginning of the century it had been systematically excluded by British opposition and Iranian suspicion from providing military assistance. Russia provided not only consistent political support but also most of the Brigade's arms and munitions, free of charge, while the commandant was supplied with enough money to offer recruits high pay as well as the benefits of Russian diplomatic protection.

Perhaps the most novel aspect of the Russian mission was its relationship to the Iranian government. The commandant abandoned any pretence of subordination to the authorities, whether the shah or the government, and operated more or less independently according to his interpretation of Russian interests. For the Russian officers of the Brigade, furthermore, the advance of Russian interests was indissolubly linked to the defense of Qajar absolutism. By the late nineteenth century, the monarchy had become dependent upon the Russians. In 1896, after Nasir al-Din Shah's assassination, it was the Cossack officers and their men who ensured the accession of the new shah, Muzaffar al-Din (1896–1907).

The novel position of the Brigade and its commandant was reflected in a new degree of hostility from Iranian opinion, and from the start the Russian mission and the Brigade itself aroused great resentment both within official circles and among a broader nationalist and constitutionalist milieu, which felt the mission had been imposed on Iran through pressure on a weak and despotic ruler.[40] After the Constitutional Revolution, the Brigade was drawn ever deeper into domestic political conflicts, not as an arm of the state but rather as a partisan of the shah in his struggle with the constitutionalists.

PART TWO: THE CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION AND MILITARY REFORM

Constitutional Government and the Cossack Brigade

In 1905 and 1906 the constitutional revolution transformed the political and ideological contexts within which debates about military reform and foreign assistance took place. For constitutionalist opinion and the new National Assembly (Majlis), the key issue was no longer how to strengthen the monarchy but, on the contrary, how to limit the shah's absolutism. How were the new authorities to enforce their own power, defend themselves against their internal and external enemies, assert state power over all the national territory, and halt the disintegration that threatened Iran's existence as an independent state? Their answer was to reactivate the efforts toward state building and specifically the construction of a modern army that had dominated nineteenth-century reform efforts. But now these efforts had to take place against the backdrop of opposition from the shah and the military forces on which he depended, the Russian officers with the Cossack Brigade.

[40] Ahmad Amirahmadi, *Khatirat-i Nakhustin Sipahbud-i Iran*, 2 vols. (Tehran, 1373), vol. 1, 47.

The first strategy the new authorities adopted was to try to establish their own effective control over the existing forces, most significantly, the Russian-officered Cossack Brigade. In this they failed. Their second strategy succeeded when, in 1910, they established Iran's first modern, national military force: the Government Gendarmerie.

In 1905 and 1906 the Cossack Brigade was weak and demoralized. Popular hostility was intense and many of the Iranian officers and men were sympathetic to the revolution. The Russian mission was in disarray, and the military authorities in Russia were preoccupied with defeat at the hands of Japan and the suppression of the 1905 revolution. Indeed, despite its royalist and pro-Russian traditions, in 1905 and 1906 the commandant had been unable to provide the shah with a coercive instrument to use against the revolutionaries. Its paralysis and the absence of other effective army units meant that the revolution was able to achieve its objectives through largely peaceful means. After the revolution, the Russians lost control completely and the Iranian officers formed a military council to take control of the Brigade.

Nonetheless, the constitutional regime was unable to grasp this opportunity to rid itself of the hated Russian mission. Russian authorities regained the initiative and a new commandant, Colonel Liakhov, succeeded in abolishing the military council and reasserting Russian control. In this he encountered considerable difficulty since, besides resistance within the Brigade itself, the leading ulama, government ministers, and the Majlis all continued their efforts to curb his power.

The constitutional regime soon paid the price for allowing Russian officers to retain control of the Brigade. In June 1908, Liakhov and the Cossacks under his command made a decisive intervention into the domestic political conflict, bombarded and suppressed the Majlis, and overthrew the constitutional government on orders from the new shah, Muhammad Ali (1907–1909), and his royalist and Russian supporters. Liakhov himself became military governor of Tehran, but his ascendancy was brief. After the proconstitutional tribal and irregular forces captured the capital in 1909, the Russian officers and the Brigade were again eclipsed, to reemerge again only after the Russian government forced a second closure of the Majlis in 1911. In the context of the general defeat suffered by Iranian constitutionalism in 1911, Russia consolidated the Brigade once more into an instrument of royalism and foreign control and, after the outbreak of war in 1914, assumed directly the full cost of the force.

The Swedish Military Mission and the Government Gendarmerie

By the beginning of the twentieth century all the broad schemes of military modernization under missions of foreign officers had ended in failure. The establishment of the Cossack Brigade under the Russian military mission had created a new problem of loss of authority without solving the old problem of a lack of effective military strength. By the constitutional period, the issue

of sovereignty had become paramount and the state-building agenda had passed from the shah and his high ministers to a new generation representing new social forces. Iranian constitutionalists argued strongly for the creation of a force that could defend Iran's borders and independence, maintain internal security, collect taxes, and uphold the authority of the constitutional authorities. The need for a strong national army was constantly reiterated in government pronouncements, Majlis debates, programmes of political parties, and the press.

Much of the hatred for the Cossack Brigade stemmed from its role as an arm of the powerful imperial presence on Iran's northern border. Yet, although horrified at the effect of the presence of Russian Cossack officers at the heart of the Iranian state, the constitutionalists could not slough off the old fascination with foreign military missions. Now, however, it was argued that officers should come from neutral countries without imperial ambitions in the region, and be under the firm control, not of a shah compromised by his dependence on foreign support, but of the institutions of constitutional government—the Majlis and the ministries of war and the interior. In 1910, the government embarked on yet another experiment with foreign officers when the Majlis voted for the establishment of the Government Gendarmerie and approved a Swedish military mission to lead the force, Sweden being an acceptable source of foreign officers as it had a tradition of neutrality and was considered a minor power.[41]

Just as the Cossack Brigade survived as a result of persistent Russian backing, so, too, the Government Gendarmerie in its early years benefited enormously from British financial and diplomatic support. Britain hoped that by offering its patronage to the Swedish officers it might use the Gendarmerie to protect its growing interests in southern Iran and to counterbalance the Russian Cossack Brigade in the capital.[42] However, the danger for Iran inherent in the existence of military forces sponsored by essentially rival powers became apparent as the Gendarmerie was prevented from establishing itself throughout the country. Russia opposed its presence in its zone of influence, wishing to make that area the exclusive preserve of the Cossack Brigade.[43]

[41] For a discussion of Sweden's motivation and role as a supplier of military advisers to foreign governments, including Iran, see Nils Palmstierna, "Swedish Army Officers in Africa and Asia," *Revue International d'Histoire Militaire* 26 (1967): 45–73. For the Swedish officers, see Ineichen, *Die Schwedischen Offiziere*. Two of the Swedish officers have left memoirs: P. Nyström, *Fem Ar i Persien som Gendarmofficer* (Stockholm, 1925); and Hjalmar Pravitz, *Frau Persien i Stiltje och Storm* (Stockholm, 1918). For the Government Gendarmerie, see Cronin, *The Army*, 17–54, 89–95; Lt-Col. Parviz Afsar, *Tarikh-i Zhandarmiri-yi Iran* (Qum, 1332); Jahangir Qa'im Maqami, *Tarikh-i Zhandarmiri-yi Iran* (Tehran, 1355).

[42] In the early twentieth century, oil joined Britain's older commercial and strategic interests in the area.

[43] The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 divided Iran into spheres of interest: Russian in the north, British in the southeast, and a neutral zone in the southwest.

Nonetheless, by 1914 the Gendarmerie represented the first real success in Iranian efforts to build a regular military force. It had come to embody the state-building trend that had begun with Abbas Mirza and was now represented by the constitutional movement. The Swedish mission had been engaged by the Majlis and it offered no challenge to Iranian sovereignty. On the contrary, it drew its legitimacy from its identification with the constitutional authorities and, unlike previous Iranian military formations, including the Cossack Brigade, was able to employ the motifs of nationalism to attract recruits and ensure their loyalty.

New British Missions and a Bid for Supremacy

The years of the First World War saw a further transformation in both the domestic and international contexts within which the foreign missions operated.[44] The constitutional revolution had failed to provide Iran with means to escape from the coils of an exhausted Qajar political order. The war brought increased imperialist intervention, both political and military, with Iran's continued independent existence threatened by national disintegration, partition, or the imposition of direct European control.

The Gendarmerie had derived significant impetus in its early years from British political and financial support, but with the outbreak of war and the concomitant political polarization the force rejected its imperial patron and identified itself unequivocally with Iranian nationalism. The Swedish command was effectively eclipsed, freeing the Iranian officer corps to assume a leading role in the military and political conflicts of the war and the post-war years.[45] Between 1915 and 1917, Gendarme officers offered military leadership to nationalist forces battling foreign intervention and control and a docile and collaborating shah.

In the first years of the war the Cossack Brigade became more than ever a Russian tool while Britain, shaken by its treatment at the hands of Gendarme officers whom it had armed and financed, began planning to raise and command a force directly, over which its control would be certain. Iran's strategic significance and its government's helplessness proved an irresistible temptation to Russia and Britain. Allies in war, Britain and Russia at first acted together. In 1916, Russia, its armies in occupation of northern Iran and within striking distance of Tehran, used their control of elements within the Iranian government to draw up the Sipahsalar Agreement. This provided for the expansion of the Cossack Brigade to a division and the establishment of

[44] See Touraj Atabaki, ed., *Iran and the First World War: Battleground of the Great Powers* (London and New York, 2006); Oliver Bast, ed., *La Perse et la Grande Guerre* (Tehran, 2002).

[45] See Cronin, *The Army*; and also, "An Episode in Revolutionary Nationalism: The Rebellion of Colonel Pasyan in Mashhad, April–October 1921," *Middle Eastern Studies* (Oct. 1997): 693–750.

a British-officered force, the South Persia Rifles (SPR).[46] Through these, Russia and Britain intended to consolidate power in their respective zones of influence, Russia in the north and Britain in the south.

The Agreement provoked profound opposition in Iran, where it was widely perceived as accelerating the partition of the country. The government refused formal acceptance, though it was too weak and dependent on Allied support to repudiate it outright. Although the Agreement thus possessed no legal standing, the Russians proceeded immediately to expand Cossack numbers while Britain raised the SPR, a force whose legitimacy was always contested and which throughout its existence was a thorn in the side of Iranian nationalists.

In 1917 the October Revolution gave the Iranian government hope that it could simultaneously rid itself of the old Russian and the new British missions. Popular hatred of the Cossacks had risen to a crescendo since the war's outbreak, and an official recall of the Russian officers by the new Soviet government was greeted with widespread enthusiasm. The Iranian government was, however, too feeble to exploit the moment and insist that the Russian officers and the remaining imperial power accept the new situation and relinquish control to Iranian officers.[47] On the contrary, the British seized the chance to adopt the Cossacks and refashion them into a device for advancing British interests. In early 1918 Britain assumed political and financial sponsorship of the Division, and welcomed the seizure of command by a White Russian officer, Colonel Starroselsky.

Britain initially hoped to use the Cossack Division to support its strategic political and military plans in Iran and the Caucasus, but Starroselsky's fierce White Russian nationalism, and his efforts to carve out an independent political role for himself, soon clashed with the new plans formulated by Lord Curzon for the establishment of unimpeded British control over Iran through the Anglo-Iranian Agreement of 1919. Britain began to see the Russian officers as an obstacle and even a menace, especially to its intention to create a unified army under British officers. In October 1920 the Cossack camp at Qazvin was placed under British guns, and General Sir Edmund Ironside summarily removed the Russian officers from their commands, ending four decades of the Russian military mission.[48] Ironside placed a few British officers in temporary command, and in 1921 he used the Division in an intervention in domestic politics more dramatic even than the coup of 1908.

[46] The Agreement was named after the prime minister, Muhammad Vali Khan Sipahsalar, with whom it was drawn up.

[47] Marling to FO, 21 Dec. 1917, FO371/2988/242011; Consul, Tabriz, to Marling, 20 Feb. 1918, FO371/3264/33414.

[48] Major-Gen. Sir Edmund Ironside, *High Road to Command: The Diaries of Major General Sir Edmund Ironside, 1920–22*, Lord Ironside, ed. (London, 1972).

The South Persia Rifles

Meanwhile, the last episode in Qajar Iran's long experiment with foreign military missions began with the establishment in 1916 of the British-officered SPR. The SPR was intended to replace the Gendarmerie, which the British now regarded as incorrigibly hostile, and to restore and maintain order in southern Iran for the remainder of the war, but also to be available as a political instrument to secure British interests in post-war Iran.[49]

The SPR was established by Colonel Sir Percy Sykes under the Sipahsalar Agreement as a *quid pro quo* for Russia's expansion of the Cossack Brigade to a division.[50] The odium that the SPR attracted was a mirror-image for the British resentment engendered by the Russian military mission, and the linking of the two forces in the Sipahsalar Agreement gave the Iranian government the opportunity to demand the removal of both contingents of foreign officers.

The Iranian government remained wedded to the idea of a single national army under Iranian control. They wanted Allied help to finance it, and were prepared to accept that it be officered by neutrals as long as they recognized Iranian sovereignty. But they resolutely opposed another force along the lines of the Cossack Brigade. To Iranians, establishment of yet another such corps rendered the eventual creation of a national army even more remote, and confirmed the *de facto* partition of the country into a Russian-dominated north and a British south. The government lacked the strength to reject outright the British mission to the SPR, but it temporized and procrastinated, refusing and resisting acceptance of the Sipahsalar Agreement.

Iranian reluctance to endorse Sykes's mission made the SPR the hub of a wider conflict between Iran and Britain in the post-war years. The force took on a symbolic importance for both countries. For Iran it was a visible reminder of lost sovereignty and the creeping dismemberment of the country. The British saw the success of Sykes and his officers as vital to imperial prestige, and a means to cut through the chaos resulting from war, new and growing nationalist opposition, and dangerous experiments with neutral officers.

In its early stages most of the SPR's commissioned ranks and many of its men were former Gendarmes, and Sykes and his British officers were unable to eradicate their deep nationalist and anti-British sentiments.[51] However, it seems that the main difficulty facing the British in constructing the SPR was the central government's vacillating attitude and underlying hostility.

[49] British officers were already commanding various small-scale levy corps in different provincial areas. See W.E.R. Dickson, *East Persia. A Backwater of the Great War* (London, 1924); R.E.H. Dyer, *The Raiders of the Sarhad* (London, 1921).

[50] For the SPR, see Floreeda Safiri, *The South Persia Rifles*, Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1976; W. J. Olson, *Anglo-Iranian Relations during World War I* (London, 1984), 153–213.

[51] Brig.-Gen. Sir Percy Sykes, *A History of Persia*, 2 vols. (London, 1921), vol. 2, 472.

Ultimately, faced with the passive and sometimes active opposition of the government and the bitter enmity of nationalist opinion, Sykes found it impossible to create a coherent corps or ensure the loyalty of officers and men.[52] In March 1918 the government publicly declared its non-recognition of the SPR and denounced it as a foreign force, and Sykes' work began rapidly to unravel. Within a few months the SPR was fighting for survival against enemies both within and without. Two serious mutinies shook the Fars regiment, while the force found itself overwhelmed by a tribal insurgency led by the anti-British Qashqai tribal confederation.

The SPR survived its political, military, and organizational difficulties only because of immense British pressure on both the central government and the southern provincial authorities. The cost of the force was borne entirely by the British and Indian governments. Envisaged as a crucial component of the national army proposed by the Anglo-Iranian Military Commission, the SPR never shook off its reputation as a tool of foreign influence. British determination to impose acceptance of the SPR poisoned relations with a succession of Iranian cabinets down to and even beyond the coup of 1921, and although officers and men of the force were accepted into Riza Khan's new army, they remained objects of suspicion and none achieved high rank.

The Anglo-Iranian Military Commission

Despite the SPR's checkered history, in 1919 Britain put forward a more grandiose scheme to modernize the army under British officers. After the end of the war, the foreign secretary Lord Curzon insisted that Britain should consolidate its new predominance in Iran, resulting from the withdrawal of Russia after the Bolshevik revolution, through a long-term agreement with pro-British elements in the country. The mechanism adopted for this consolidation was the Anglo-Iranian Agreement. Under its terms, an Anglo-Iranian Military Commission made up of British and Iranian officers was set up to plan an overhaul and reorganization of Iran's military forces.[53] The Commission's report of April 1920 recommended that Iran's existing forces be merged into a uniform national force under British officers.[54] In practical terms, the Commission envisaged an Iranian army built around a core constituted by the SPR.

The scheme devised by the Commission bore a strong similarity to earlier plans for military modernization within a framework of comprehensive administrative reform. But in the new political and ideological climate the role it prescribed for British officers was an intolerable affront to national

[52] Floreeda Safiri, *The South Persia Rifles*, 151.

[53] On the Anglo-Iranian Military Commission, see Kavih Bayat, "Qarardad-i 1919 va Tashkil-i Qushun-i Muttahid al-Shikl dar Iran," in, *Tarikh-i Mu'asir-i Iran, Majmu'ah-i Maqalat*, 5 vols. (Tehran, 1369), vol. 2, 125–40.

[54] Report of the Anglo-Persian Military Commission, 1920, FO371/4911/C197/197/34.

dignity. In the rapidly changing circumstances of post-war Iran, both the Agreement itself and the Military Commission's proposals outraged nationalist opinion, especially among the Iranian officers and men of both the Gendarmerie and the Cossack Division.[55]

During the constitutional period the Iranian government had continued to advance schemes for creating a national army, while the Sipahsalar Agreement had provided nationalist opinion with the opportunity to link the fate of the Russian mission to the Cossack Division with the British officers of the SPR, and to demand that both be substituted with officers of a third, neutral power.[56] The Allies, and after 1917 the British alone, repeatedly discouraged this idea. With the Anglo-Iranian Military Commission, it seemed Iran would at last obtain a uniform national army, but without the sovereignty that had been at the heart of the state-building agenda.

By 1919, no Iranian government could accept the Anglo-Iranian Agreement, which in any case required a now politically impossible Majlis ratification. The British refusal to relinquish the Agreement caused a protracted political crisis in Tehran and eventually led them to abandon any strategy of working through the existing authorities. They resorted instead to the desperate expedient of sponsoring a coup.[57] The coup was carried out by the Cossacks in Qazvin led by Riza Khan, an Iranian officer installed in command by General Ironside, in partnership with the pro-British civilian politician Sayyid Ziya al-Din Tabatabai. The coup was facilitated by the British officers then in nominal command of the Cossack camp. These included officers of the Anglo-Iranian Military Commission, who were intended to lead the new army.

In 1921 the Cossack officers carried out a decisive political intervention that would lead eventually to the overthrow of the Qajar dynasty—which the force had been formed to protect—and the establishment of the Pahlavi dynasty that would shape Iran until 1979. The British had intended the coup to install in power their protégé, Sayyid Ziya, who was committed to introducing British financial and military advisers; it was envisaged as an alternative route to the main objectives of the 1919 Agreement. In reality, the coup marked a turning point in British power in Iran. Britain's capacity to intervene directly in the political system collapsed, and the new regime's confidence and assertiveness was symbolized by its resolve to refuse foreign officers any role in building a national army.

In the months following the coup a struggle for power rapidly developed between Sayyid Ziya and Riza Khan, a political and personal conflict that came

[55] See Homa Katouzian, *State and Society in Iran: The Eclipse of the Qajars and the Emergence of the Pahlavis* (London and New York, 2000), chs. 4, 5.

[56] See, for example, the scheme outlined by the prime minister, Ala al-Saltanah, in July 1917. Memorandum from Ala-us-Saltaneh [*sic*] to Marling, 30 July 1917, FO371/2981/200656.

[57] For wider background on the British and the coup, see especially Stephanie Cronin, "Britain, the Iranian Military and the Rise of Riza Khan," in, Vanessa Martin, ed., *Anglo-Iranian Relations since 1900* (London, 2005), 99–127.

to a head over Sayyid Ziya's determination to give operational command to the British officers still unofficially on active service with the Cossacks. This Riza Khan declared to be equivalent to selling to foreigners the army, "the soul of the nation."[58] He forced Sayyid Ziya into exile and peremptorily dismissed the officers in question. The British SPR officers soon followed, as did the remaining Swedes. With all foreign officers and the remnants of the foreign missions gone, Riza Khan was finally able to embark on the task of building a unified national army, on the European model but free from foreign control.

CONCLUSION

In assessing the consequences of the long Qajar dalliance with foreign military missions, two broad issues arise: the roles played by foreign officers, and the general impact of the missions on Iran's construction of a modern army.

Explanations for the failure of military reform in nineteenth-century Iran have usually focused on the overall weakness of Qajar reform efforts—the fitful interest of the shahs and the unpredictable rise and fall of their reforming ministers, internal opposition, and poor governance and administration. Yet the foreign military missions themselves were far from disinterested and professional. Haphazard and chaotic, they lacked consistent backing from their governments, were riven by internal conflicts among their officers and frequently between the officers and their diplomatic representatives, and were entirely contingent upon the European diplomatic context. The missions aggravated and galvanized European rivalries and aroused intense professional resentment and political hostility among Iranians.

Until the Russians arrived in 1879, none of the foreign missions had remained long, having either disintegrated due to Iranian ambivalence or collapsed under international complications. Not only were they too short-lived to make any real progress, but the countries from which the missions were sought constantly changed, as Iran tried to navigate through the complexities of great power diplomacy and avoid unwelcome political entanglements. With each new mission uniforms, training methods and tactics, and weapons changed accordingly, creating confusion and even havoc as troops undertook operations armed with a variety of weapons requiring different parts and ammunition. Occasionally missions from different European countries were in Iran at the same time, generating political and professional tensions. The Austrians and Italians imported their conflict from Europe, and relations between the second Austrian and the Russian mission were tense due to rivalries in the Balkans. The presence of rival missions brought a more serious threat in the twentieth century. Iranian fears that their country would be partitioned between the British and the Russian empires were sharpened by the

[58] Norman to Curzon, 6 June 1921, FO371/6406/E9970/2/34.

Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, and were given further substance as the Russian-officered Cossack Brigade and the Swedish Gendarmerie were confined to different "zones" of the country, adding a military reality to diplomatic spheres of influence.

Much historical writing about Qajar efforts at state building has been dominated by a "catastrophist" perspective that views all nineteenth-century reform as futile and hopeless, as having lead only to a deepening crisis. Certainly, the serial efforts to use foreign military missions to produce an Iranian army that exactly resembled the armies from which the European officers were themselves drawn, whether British, French, Austrian or any other nationality, failed, as did the comprehensive schemes for reform within which they were embedded. It may even be argued that the *nizam* regiments actually contributed to Iran's deteriorating military and financial situation. Before Abbas Mirza's reforms, Iran had relied for its defense and internal security largely on tribal irregulars who made few active demands on the treasury. Khans were recompensed through the accounting device of deducting revenues they owed. By contrast, the maintenance of vast numbers of regular troops entailed crippling expenses: wages for nonexistent troops, pay for foreign officers, and the purchase of weapons from abroad. These expenses increased throughout the century as ever more regiments were raised, each with large numbers of salaried but otherwise inactive Iranian officers, and as more foreign missions arrived. This occurred even as Iran's financial position deteriorated as it became integrated into the global economy. Rather than the *nizam* regiments dragging Iran towards a wider modernization, the regiments themselves became assimilated to the decaying Qajar order, the conditions of officers and men, far from being maintained at levels prescribed by Abbas Mirza at the time of the Napoleonic wars, worsening as the century progressed. By the end of the century Iran's military forces were much weaker vis-à-vis European armies than in Abbas Mirza's time.

Yet there is another dimension to the history of Qajar military reform. Two foreign missions, very different in character and context, successfully produced military forces that were to have a defining impact on Iran's state-building efforts in the 1920s and 1930s, the officers of the Government Gendarmerie bringing their military expertise to the new national army, and the Cossacks providing Riza Khan with a bedrock of political loyalty upon which he secured not just the new army but also his new dynasty. Both forces carved out their existence in isolation from any wider attempt at modernization. Both were financed without any radical restructuring of domestic taxation, and the bulk of their costs and armaments were borne by Britain or Russia. Both sidestepped the unwieldy and inefficient *bunichah* system of recruitment, remained small, enlisting mostly volunteers. Finally, both relied on diplomatic support to face down their domestic critics and enemies. Crucially, however, although the officer corps of both forces were incubated by foreign missions,

it was only after these missions had been marginalized or removed that the Gendarmes and Cossacks were freed to assume a national political role.

At the heart of the relationship was a fundamental conflict between Iran and the foreign missions. All the various Iranian individuals and groups who embraced the concept of military-led modernization—first the shahs and their reforming ministers, then constitutionalist and nationalist political circles—hoped to build an army on the European model to defend Iran against Europe. None of the foreign missions shared this objective, with the partial exception of the Swedish mission established under constitutionalist auspices. The major imperial powers, especially Britain, Russia, and France, engaged in the game of army reform in order to augment their own influence over Iran and its government, and to deny the field to their European enemies. Their degree of commitment was determined by the imperial context and their missions were intended to further their own political, diplomatic, and military objectives, were in fact merely another card in the Great Game. Far from enabling Iran to assert its sovereignty, the missions were a device to increase European hegemony and Iranian dependence. This was symbolized by the way in which the troops were armed. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Iran's forces possessed locally produced weapons of good quality.[59] But during the course of the century Iran came to rely on the purchase of European weaponry, a pattern that endured throughout the Qajar dynasty and deepened during the Pahlavi era. This became an enormous drain on national resources, and made the army's very existence contingent upon foreign industries and governments.

This conflict between European and Iranian objectives found expression in the perpetual struggle for control that afflicted every foreign mission. Foreign officers constantly complained that they were treated as instructors only, lacked wider powers, and were at the mercy of the Iranian authorities. These authorities, in thrall to the notion of scientific methods of organization and warfare but fearful of the consequences of deeper imperial involvement, alternately invited and resisted the European presence. The Russian military mission finally cut the Gordian knot, gave up any pretence of deferring to Iranian control or even supervision, and operated entirely independently.

Iran's experience with the Cossack Brigade in the last quarter of the century revealed starkly the dangers of foreign missions. By this time, Iran had not only failed to strengthen itself against European encroachment but, after decades of modernization schemes, had become much weaker in economic as well as military terms, and ever more vulnerable. Since the early nineteenth century, various European powers had involved themselves sporadically and unsuccessfully in Iran's attempt to built a modern army. None of the missions had survived the vagaries of European rivalries and Iranian ambiguity. The Russian mission of 1879

[59] See Tancoigne, *A Narrative of a Journey into Persia*, 245–49.

was a turning point. After its arrival Iran found itself with a regular cavalry force, but one permanently lost to Iranian control and which was, in 1908, to overthrow the institutions of constitutional government at the behest of a foreign power. During the years of the Russian mission's presence, and indeed partly because of its character, Iranian attitudes toward foreign military missions were transformed. From actively seeking the help of such missions, Iran began a long struggle to resist their imposition and to remove those that remained.

Iran's struggle to rid itself of the Russian military mission was to endure until 1920, and was only to be achieved then by British power in pursuit of British goals. In the two decades before the 1921 coup, Iran had faced not only Russia's unrelenting determination to retain its mission, but also a newly aggressive approach from Britain. For much of the nineteenth century Britain's interest in Iran's attempts at army reform had been desultory, with periods of activity sparked by a desire to deny the French or the Russians any advantage, and never lasting longer than the specific episodes of imperial rivalry themselves. During the constitutional period, however, burgeoning interests in the Persian Gulf and southern Iran concentrated British attention on security and defense. Britain now repeatedly offered, and finally threatened, to raise and officer a force if Tehran could not maintain order in the south. With the example of the Cossack Brigade before it, Britain, now at its imperial zenith, embarked on a deeper and more complex involvement in Iran's military modernization. This involvement, however, coincided with the birth of modern nationalism in Iran and made the British determination to guide and control Iran's military forces a point of intense conflict. Britain first sponsored the Gendarmerie in the hope that it would act as a counterweight to the Cossack Brigade. After this catastrophic experiment, Britain lost patience with neutral officers. During the First World War, British and Russian determination to impose their own officers increased, but so did Iranian reluctance to accept them. In 1916 Britain and Russia forced on a helpless government the Sipahsalar Agreement, which provided for a substantial increase in the number of Russians serving with the Cossacks and for the establishment of a British military mission. The South Persia Rifles was established in a deliberate British effort to wrest control of southern Iran from the nationalists and the Gendarmes and was seen by Iranian opinion not as an instrument for the realization of national aspirations but of their frustrations. After the 1917 revolution removed the Russian imperial presence, Britain, in a bid to establish sole hegemony, first adopted the Cossack Division, then sponsored a broader scheme to build a national army led by British officers as part of the Anglo-Iranian Agreement. The British insistence on imposing its officers and Iranian resistance culminated in a protracted political crisis. The presence of a British military mission charged with reorganizing, training, and officering the army was a pivotal element in the Agreement and caused deep resentment, contributing materially to its eventual rejection.

For much of the nineteenth century, the shah and the reforming elite had viewed foreign assistance with army reform as essential. Their only strategy was to simply to copy European models of dress and drill in the hope that European military strength would follow by some still mysterious process. As the century drew to a close attitudes began to change. The foreign missions had always aroused a degree of resentment, religious disquiet mingling with political resentment among both elite and popular classes. Now, the growth of modern nationalism and a clearer understanding of the mechanisms of European tutelage, coupled with the actual experience of the Cossack Brigade, made it impossible for an emerging public opinion to tolerate Russian and British officers in command of the army. In this new climate, the Iranian political class lost its appetite for foreign military missions, which they now clearly understood to be a harbinger of general political tutelage. But now Britain and Russia were as determined to impose their officers as Iranian nationalists were to refuse them.

For much of the century the Qajar shahs and their ministers had been free to invite foreign officers as they wished. However, in addition to the unacknowledged contradiction between Iranian motives and the agendas of the foreign missions, another conflict pervaded the reforming project. The Iranian state was never an abstraction, but an embodiment of particular social forces. Military modernization was couched in terms of improving the state's ability to defend the country against foreign aggression. But an equally important objective of army reform was to strengthen the state so it could impose its will on other social groups within the country that were actually or potentially contending for power. Until the late nineteenth century the state was, in practice, identified with the shah and the dynasty, and the foreign missions served the shah, a position highlighted by their role in safeguarding the dynasty by enforcing acceptance of the succession of Muhammad Shah in 1834 and Muzaffar al-Din Shah in 1896. But support for the shah inevitably involved suppressing his enemies. In the nineteenth century this might mean, for example, action against rebel princes who disputed the succession. Foreign officers inevitably became entangled in domestic power struggles between factions at court, each possessing its own position to defend, its own orientation toward one imperial power or another, and a pro- or anti-reform inclination. In the twentieth century, foreign military missions were drawn into a new and wider battle between the monarchy and Iranian nationalism. By the constitutional period, the shah had come to be held responsible not for the strengthening of the state but rather with its weakening, and was identified with the loss of sovereignty and the spread of foreign influence, a phenomenon perfectly illustrated by his reliance on the Cossack Brigade. State-building opinion now defined progress in terms of limiting royal despotism and resented accordingly royal foreign attempts, through military missions as well as in other ways, to shore up the shah's power and frustrate their own ambitions.

The reaction against the Qajar experience with foreign missions led the soldier Riza Khan resolutely to refuse such experiments. Only after the removal of the missions did Iran succeed in building a modern army. Between 1921 and 1941

no foreign missions came to Iran. In fact, of all of Iran's rulers from the early nineteenth century down to the Islamic revolution, Riza Shah was unique in resisting the temptation to allow foreigners control of the army.

After Riza Shah's abdication in 1941, the struggle resumed in earnest between the monarchy, buttressed by foreign military missions, and the nationalist opposition, determined to see their removal. With the state greatly weakened, the new power in Iran, the United States, was once again able to insist on missions of its officers serving in the country.[60] As in the late Qajar period, it was the shah, Muhammad Riza (1941–1979), who accepted this imposition against nationalist opinion, and suffered accordingly. Once again, as in the years before 1921, foreign missions intended to further imperial objectives in fact provoked intense Iranian resentment, and became a major factor in bringing about another dramatic political rupture, the revolution of 1979.

[60] After 1941 U.S. missions came fast and furious. See Thomas M. Ricks, "U.S. Military Missions to Iran, 1943–1978: The Political Economy of Military Assistance," *Iranian Studies* 12, 3–4 (1979): 163–93.