

Sovereign, Subject, or Slave? Revolutionary Iranian Reactions to Anglo- Russian Imperialism (1890-1907)

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Between 1890 and 1907, reactionaries, revolutionaries, and reformers ravaged the ruling Qajar dynasty of Iran. These advocates of drastic change were not simply inspired by domestic affairs, however. A combination of the incompetence of the Qajar Shahs and the blatant affronts to Iranian sovereignty by European Imperialist powers, not simply one or the other, led to such movements and their eventual legal victories.

For nearly an entire century, following the fall of Napoleon in 1815 to the onset of the First World War in 1914, the British and Russian Empires dueled in Central Asia. Since neither of these “Great Powers” were strong enough to conquer their rival, they played a “Great Game.” Through puppet rulers, economic conflict, and the bare minimum of military involvement they struggled to protect their respective interests from the encroachments of their adversary. Britain had to defend its conquered “Crown Jewel,” India. Russia found the southern borders of its homeland under possible assault. Consequently an oppressive climate of mutual fear hung over the region like a rank fog and, in the middle of it all, sat Iran.

For their part, the Powers viewed Iran in a relatively positive, if not ignorant, light. Percy Sykes, a British spy, diplomat, and all-around raconteur, recollected

the peasant in Persia, and especially in the cold part parts of the country, is certainly better housed, better clad and better fed than people of the same class in the Panjab. The household comforts, too, are greater. In the Panjab the peasants are in the hands of the

money-lenders to a considerable extent, whereas [sic] in Persia this is rarely the case.¹

Of course Sykes fails to mention a major difference between India and Iran. The former was under nearly total British control, and he is obviously (perhaps willfully) ignorant of the fact that the economic disparity between the two countries' peasants may, therefore, be caused by himself and his fellow Imperialists.

That minor degree of respect would not prevent both powers finding occasion to invade Iran under any available instigation. The Russians engaged in a succession of wars with Iran, starting in 1722, long before the "Great Game" even began, and finally ceasing in 1828. The British invaded in 1856 following an Iranian attempt to squash rebellious intent in the city of Herat, managing to defeat the Iranian forces relatively quickly, with the war ending in 1857.

Such overt military action was rarely needed, however. The Powers had the ability to manipulate Iranian political and economic concerns practically at will and, more importantly, they were greatly aided by a relatively accommodating monarchy, especially in the latter half of the period.

That monarchy, the Qajar dynasty, was an ethnically Turkic royal house that had assumed power in 1785. Unfortunately, they are known mostly for the tragic mismanagement of Iran that occurred under their authority, which lasted until they were overthrown in 1925. Whether their royal bungling was self-derived or a result of increasing European intervention is a debate for another time, but the Qajars failed in almost every aspect of leadership during their reign. Militarily they experienced nothing but defeats, not only at the Powers' hands but also, on occasion, to

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¹ Percy Sykes, *History*, vol. II, 392, quoted in Gad G. Gilbar, "The Opening Up of Qajar Iran: Some Economic and Social Aspects," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 49 (1986): 81.

various tribal groups in Iranian frontier regions. Politically, almost all Qajar Shahs were more concerned with their self-image than the well being of the country. Economically, however, they failed most magnificently.

The Qajars' favorite method of raising personal funds was the granting of monopolies or concessions to foreign firms. These concessions were arranged so that the Shah received a large, lump sum of currency as a down payment and a yearly percentage of that industry's future profits. The Qajars rationalized behind granting such overbearing economic rights to alien syndicates with the fact that they actually sped up development of the country in several aspects, especially in technological matters such as laying telegraph lines². In any case, most concessions were rather limited in scope, either by geographical or subjective restrictions. It was when those concessions began to be true, nation-wide monopolies that the Iranian populace was provoked to the point of public protest.

In 1890 such a concession was granted by the reigning Shah, Nasir al-Din Shah Qajar, to a British citizen, Major G.F. Talbot. In return for "an annual rent of 15,000 pounds sterling, and a quarter of the annual profits after the payment of all expenses and a 5 percent dividend on the capital,"³ Talbot received an absolute monarchy over all the tobacco in Iran for fifty years. Tampering with such an expansive domestic commercial behemoth was not Nasir's smartest decision, as Axworthy explains how it

drew opposition from a formidable alliance of opponents: landlords and tobacco growers, who found themselves forced to sell at a fixed price; bazaar traders,⁴ who saw themselves once more frozen out of a lucrative sector of the economy; the readership of

² Ironically enough, those same telegraph lines produced by concessions would later be used to a rather significant extent to mobilize protestors (who were upset about concessions) during both the Tobacco Revolt and the Constitutional Revolution.

³ Mansoor Moaddel, "Shi'i Political Discourse and Class Mobilization in the Tobacco Movement of 1890-92," in *A Century of Revolution: Social Movements in Iran*, ed. John Foran (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 11.

⁴ Also known as bazaaris.

the new reform- and nationalist-oriented newspapers operating from overseas; and the ulem,⁵ who were closely aligned to the bazaar traders and disliked the foreign presence in the country.⁶

Such an extensive collection of oppositional leaders drew immediate, overwhelming support from the general Iranian populace, and after several enormous protests and a widely followed *fatwa*⁷ declaring a boycott on tobacco products, the concession was repealed.

The sense of success the Iranian people experienced after their victory in the Tobacco Revolt was tangible, and a profound belief that change was at least possible moved through the Iranian populace. Nikki R. Keddie writes

the movement was the first successful mass protest in modern Iran...the 'religious-radical alliance' had shown its potential for changing the course of Iranian policy, and the government did not dare grant further economic concessions for several years. The basic alliance of bazaaris (especially merchants), ulama, and secular or modernist reformers continued to be important.⁸

Furthermore, the Revolt had greatly weakened British interests in Iran, and the Shah's power, thought to be unquestionable for centuries, was now challenged.

Simultaneously, in a more tangible fashion, Nasir felt the Revolt's sting in his wallet. The Shah had to pay Talbot's company around half a million British pounds in damages. Obviously, in order to do so without emptying his personal accounts, Nasir attempted to gather those funds in more surreptitious ways. Disgusted with this and other major abuses of power by the Qajars,

⁵ Usually spelled "ulama." The Iranian Shi'i Islamic clergy.

⁶ Michael Axworthy, *A History of Iran: Empire of the Mind* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 196.

⁷ A legal decision or declaration expressed by a member of the ulama.

⁸ Nikki R. Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 62.

Mirza Reza Kermani⁹ assassinated the inept Shah on May 1st, 1896. After a brief period of minor chaos, and heavily supported by the Cossack Brigade¹⁰, his son, Mozzafar od-Din Shah Qajar, assumed the throne.

Mozzafar further exacerbated the damage Nasir had done to the Iranian economy. Gad G. Gilbar explains,

expenditure increased in the period...from *qn* 42.5 million to *qn* 105 million, while revenue increased in the same period from *qn* 48.4 million to only *qn* 75 million. The increase in expenditure was affected by a rapid increase in consumption by both the court and the central administration. Nasir al-Din and Muzaffar al-Din's various trips to Europe, the increase in allowances and pensions both to members of the royal family and the upper echelon of the bureaucracy were, to a great extent, responsible for this development. There was also a considerable increase in the expenditure of the central government on defence, subsequent to the formation of the Persian Cossack Brigade in 1879.¹¹

The country could not suffer through such a drastic discrepancy in its balance of payments and the correspondingly high-interest loans the Shah took out from foreign banks. Iranians began, once again, to grumble in their mosques and bazaars.

In December 1905, Mozzafar, in an effort to deflect blame resulting from the deteriorating economy off himself, ordered that

⁹ The follower of a radical Pan-Islamic anti-Imperialist, al-Afghani, Kermani was an ex-con with a relative heart of gold, as he told his interrogators that he had a previous opportunity to kill the Shah in a park, but did not want the death to be blamed on some Jews that were in the park that day, fearing it may have sparked a wave of anti-Semitic attacks across Iran.

¹⁰ A Russian derived and Russian trained sort of Praetorian Guard for the Qajars.

¹¹ Gad G. Gilbar, "The Opening Up of Qajar Iran: Some Economic and Social Aspects," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 49 (1986): 84.

two bazaaris be publicly *bastinadoed*¹² for price gouging. Unfortunately for the Shah, both men were not only very wealthy and influential in *bazaari* circles but also deeply devout Muslims and generous contributors to the *ulama*, with whom they shared the lion's share of the middle class' population. Outrage amongst the *ulama*, therefore, was high, and motivated them to begin to mobilize their individual communities. When combined with the general economic discontent of the Iranian populace, this public humiliation led to the onset of several large street protests across the nation. After a *sayyed*¹³ was killed in one of those protests, a great deal of the influential revolutionary leaders sought sanctuary at the British consulate in Golhak¹⁴.

The British, perhaps seeing a chance to both hurt the Russian Empire's growing influence and avenge their shrinking authority after the Qajar court repealed the Tobacco Concession, decided to grant the protestors refuge. A great *bast*¹⁵ was formed within the British compound, and constitutionalists of all sorts began to flock to Golhak to take part.

Meanwhile, some Russians, afraid of losing the great deal of influence they finally enjoyed in the Qajar court, pushed for armed intervention. *Novoye Vremya*, a heavily conservative Russian newspaper, published an editorial stating,

“Whether Russia can endlessly tolerate these outrages...Tatar semi-intellectuals in Transcaucasia, forgetting that they are Russian subjects, have displayed warm sympathy for the disturbances in Tabriz and are sending volunteers to that city. ...*What is much more important for us* is that Aderbaijan [sic], which borders on Russia, should be pacified. Deplorable though it may be, circumstances

¹² An incredibly painful corporal punishment wherein the soles of the victims feet are brutally beaten.

¹³ A Muslim who can trace his lineage back to the family of Mohammed.

¹⁴ Axworthy, 201-02.

¹⁵ An austere form of “sit-in,” the traditional Iranian expression of protest.

might compel Russia, despite her strong desire not to interfere, to take this task upon herself.”¹⁶

This ultra-Imperialistic approach, however, would not be undertaken, and Russia, at least in any overt capacity, would remain on the sidelines of the Constitutional Revolution, at least until the Shah succumbed and finally signed the new document¹⁷. Their apprehension was understandable, considering both the great patience Russia had exhibited in slowly wresting Iranian political and economic influence away from Britain as well as the vast opportunities for wealth that were at stake. Domestic concerns reigned supreme however, and the unrest following Russia’s loss to the Japanese kept the Romanovs’ focus near their court, especially after Russia’s first revolution of the period began in 1905.

In fact, the presence of Russian turbulence during the Constitutional Revolution was not merely a happy coincidence for the Iranian reformers. Nikki R. Keddie argues,

“revolutionary sentiment was strengthened by the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05 and the Russian Revolution of 1905. Iranians knew that Russia would intervene against any attempt to overthrow or undermine the Qajar government, but with the Russian government fully occupied first with war and then with revolution, it was a propitious time to move. Also, the strength shown by the supposedly backward Japanese against the dreaded Russians gave people courage, as did the shaking of such a potent

¹⁶ Quoted by V.I. Lenin. “Events in the Balkans and in Persia,” in *Collected Works*, vol. 15 (Moscow: Progress, 1978), 226, quoted in Janet Afary, “Social Democracy and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906-11,” in *A Century of Revolution: Social Movements in Iran*, ed. John Foran (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 28.

¹⁷ Thanks to the Cossack Brigade, however, with its Russian officers, Russian equipment, and Russian-trained soldiery, they would not lack a military presence in Iran. Eventually, Reza Khan, the first Iranian commander of the Brigade, would actually take over rule of the entire country in 1925. Obviously this occurred too late to benefit Imperial Russian interests, but the new Bolshevik regime took significant advantage of this old Iranian friend, at least until he became too close to the Nazis and found himself at the displeasure of both the U.S.S.R. and Britain.

autocracy as Russia by revolution. The sight of the only Asian constitutional power defeating the only major European nonconstitutional power not only showed formerly weak Asians overcoming the seemingly omnipotent West, but aroused much new interest in a constitution as a ‘secret of strength.’”¹⁸

Therefore, not only was the opportunity present, but also the inspiration for revolution. When combined with the pre-existing grievances of many Iranians, the kettle boiled over and the relatively weak Qajars could do little to stem the tide.

What had been relatively unorganized street protests re-emerged as a unified reformative movement after the Golhak captivity. Afary explains

“The Constitutional Revolution was made possible through an initial hybrid coalition of forces, which included liberal reformers, members of the ulama, merchants, shopkeepers, students, trade guildspeople, workers, and radical members of secret societies who promoted the formation of an assembly of delegates and a constitution. This coalition was first formed during the tobacco protests of 1891-92, partially overcoming a long history of hostility and animosity between the religious/secular reformers and the orthodox members of the ulama.”¹⁹

Combined with near-mutinuous sentiment from the Cossack Brigade,²⁰ Mozzafar al-Din Shah had to relent and agreed to a meeting of the *Majlis*²¹ in October of 1906. They worked at a breakneck pace and, using the Belgian equivalent as a base in order

¹⁸ Keddie, 66-67.

¹⁹ Janet Afary, “Social Democracy and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906-11,” in *A Century of Revolution: Social Movements in Iran*, ed. John Foran (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 21.

²⁰ Due to his financial issues, the Shah had been unable to pay them fully, consequently incurring their ire.

²¹ This is the Persian name of the Iranian National Assembly, a unicameral legislative body with 156 elected (through a relatively complicated process) representatives from across the country.

to insure a practical, stable document, formulated Iran's first constitution. Mozzafar ratified them on the 30th of December. This was rather good timing, as he died from a heart attack less than a week later. While his death was an interesting coincidence, what was truly remarkable was the rapid cooperation put forth by the *Majlis* in issuing the constitution for ratification in the first place.

Michael Axworthy writes that the *Majlis* was elected on the basis of partial suffrage, on a two-stage system, and represented primarily the middle and upper classes that had headed the protests in the first place. The electors were landowners (only above a middling size), ulema [sic] and theological students, and merchants and bazaar-guild members with businesses of average size or above. ...Numerically, the *Majlis* [sic] was dominated by the bazaar merchants and guild elders, and it divided roughly into liberal, moderate, and royalist groupings-of which the moderates were the most numerous by a large margin.²²

At first glance, this would lead one to assume that the *bazaaris* were exceedingly overrepresented, but at this point, members of the *ulama* were still essentially forbidden²³ from taking any form of actual political authority or office. Therefore, they were enthusiastically represented by their major presence in the electorate. Furthermore, it would appear that the Iranian intelligentsia was completely slighted in the *Majlis*. However, once one considers the fact that they were a vastly insignificant minority numerically and mostly hailed from the *bazaari* class, they are

²² Axworthy, 203.

²³ By common theological consensus, if not by actual law. For a more complete and eloquent explanation of the "correct" role of Shi'i clergy in politics, the political ramifications of the occultation of the lost Imam, and the acceptance of constitutional monarchy, consult Hamid Algar, "The Oppositional Role of the Ulama in Twentieth-Century Iran" (paper presentation, Conference on the Structure of Power in Islamic Iran, University of California, Los Angeles, CA, June 1969).

shown to have the appropriate amount of legislative representation befitting a vocally expressive margin of the revolution.

Therefore, these relatively diverse factions, in the briefest of timespans, managed to come to a consensus and produce a constitution. This was only possible because the Iranian people viewed the Shah's mismanagement and foreign dalliances to be so egregious that it was almost universally agreed something had to be done. As Ahmad Seyf writes,

Iran's commercial policy was manipulated by the interests of these powerful partners via the activities of Russophiles and Anglophiles who enjoyed power within the state apparatus of Iran. ...in view of this power relationship, the price of items exported from or imported into Iran was not determined by the so-called market forces. The powerful partners could create artificial shortages or gluts which would in turn affect prices in the market place.²⁴

Such blatant and overwhelmingly complete manipulation of the economy not only affected the *bazaaris* and their businesses, but also the budgets of normal Iranians, and thereby incensed practically the entire populace.

The Constitution of 1906, then, was both a rejection of foreign influence and the Shah's fiscal encroachments. Obviously, such royal financial missteps were only conceived through foreign methods, but the reformers knew that limits were needed on both outsiders and the Shah himself, not simply the sovereign alone. To that extent, they based the constitution primarily on its Belgian primogenitor, with several unique Iranian adaptations. Articles 22-26 fully expressed the primary motivations behind the Revolution, stating

Art. 22. Any proposal to transfer or sell any portion of the [National] resources, or of the control exercised by the Government or the Throne, or to effect any change in the boundaries and frontiers of the

²⁴ Ahmad Seyf, "Foreign Trade and the Economy of Iran in the Nineteenth Century," *Iran* 34 (1996): 125.

Kingdom, shall be subject to the approval of the National Consultative Assembly.

Art. 23. Without the approval of the National Council, no concession for the formation of any public Company of any sort shall, under any plea whatsoever, be granted by the State.

Art. 24. The conclusion of treaties and covenants, the granting of commercial, industrial, agricultural and other concessions, irrespective of whether they be to Persian or foreign subjects, shall be subject to the approval of the National Consultative Assembly, with the exception of treaties which, for reasons of State and the public advantage, must be kept secret.

Art. 25. State loans, under whatever title, whether internal or external, must be contracted only with the cognizance and approval of the National Consultative Assembly.

Art. 26. The construction of railroads or chaussees, whether at the expense of the Government, or of any Company, whether Persian or foreign, depends on the approval of the National Consultative Assembly.²⁵

These economic restrictions upon both the Shah and foreign companies exposed the pragmatism behind the Constitutional Revolution. Their focus on railroads, natural resources, and especially the detailed mentions of concessions and loans illustrated the Iranian peoples' concerns with the Qajars more perfectly than any intellectual treatise or theological sermon ever could have. The rest of the Constitution is mostly foundational verbiage concerning the policies of the *Majlis*, the Ministry, and other such day-to-day concerns. What is remarkably important to note, as well, is the

²⁵ *Majlis. Iranian Constitution of 1906 and The Supplementary Fundamental Laws of October 7, 1907.*

continuing reinforcement of the Shah's authority, with phrases similar to "His Imperial and Most Sacred Majesty" being very common. This validates the fact that the Constitutional Revolution was far more reformative than revolutionary. There was no true rejection of monarchy, but rather an inquisition of its intrusions into personal and national rights.

Interestingly enough, there is little mention of Shi'ism, general Islam, or any other sort of religious structure in the 1906 Constitution. Apart from the initial dedication of "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Forgiving"²⁶ and the numerous mentions of the Shah's rule being "Most Sacred" there is no further mention of the divine. Most strangely, there is absolutely no mention of the *ulama*. That would change drastically upon the ratification of the Supplementary Fundamental Laws of October 7th, 1907.

The initial constitution of 1906, due to the brevity of its birth and the driving economic concerns it had to address as quickly as possible, was a barebones document. Especially considering the Western, secular, nature of its Belgian inspiration, it did not truly fulfill the beliefs and concerns of the overwhelmingly Shi'i Iranian populace. However, due to different views of theological technicalities by several leading *ayatollahs* amongst the *ulama* it took almost a year to come to a consensus over the new content the supplement would include.

The Supplementary Fundamental Laws they finally agreed upon were just that, supplementary. Rather than modifying the nearly completely secular constitution, it provided a sort of Islamic bandage to the document, along with clarifying several murky points and rectifying a few grave omissions. Its first article proclaimed "The official religion of Persia is Islam, according to the orthodox Ja'fari doctrine of the Ithna 'Ashariyya (Twelve Imams), which faith the Shah of Persia must profess and promote."²⁷ It continued on in such religious fashion, and established more legal oversight positions for the *ulama*. This nod to their role in the

²⁶ Majlis. *Iranian Constitution of 1906 and The Supplementary Fundamental Laws of October 7, 1907.*

²⁷ Majlis. *Iranian Constitution of 1906 and The Supplementary Fundamental Laws of October 7, 1907.*

mobilization of the populace during the revolution was expected and, apart from several members of the intelligentsia, went unprotested.

Another addition introduced by the supplement was a clause enforcing the inflexibility of Iran's borders. Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet writes,

Qajar Iran failed to produce a Turnerian thesis to frame its frontier experience. Still, the preoccupation with land and borders profoundly affected Iranian politics even if this phenomenon did not generate an official doctrine. By delineating the country's frontiers, Iranians attached new connotations to the territorial space to which they belonged and popularized political allegories that encapsulated their frontier drama.²⁸

This complete reversal of Turner's frontier thesis²⁹ is an excellent way to explain both the lack of regicidal rhetoric in the Constitutional Revolution and its overall speedy mobilization. If Turner's thesis were correct, the centralization of the constitutionalists would indicate a lessened degree of individualism, placing them in an ideal mindset for organization. Furthermore, the Turner thesis would state that, due to the frontier's remote presence in their lives, the constitutionalists would be among the least democratically minded individuals in the nation. While that assertion may seem odd, it does help to explain the overall lack of any demands for the removal of the Shah.

Similarly, the supplement introduced many more addendums directly learned from the revolution, such as protecting the privacy of telegraphic correspondence and forbidding the

²⁸ Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, *Frontier Fictions: Shaping the Iranian Nation, 1804-1946* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 102.

²⁹ The idea that the expanding American frontier fostered individualism, and, consequently, those who lived on the frontier were the most democratic of all Americans.

presence of foreign troops in the Shah's service³⁰. The only odd spot in the document was the presence of article 6, which declared "The lives and property of foreign subjects residing on Persian soil are guaranteed and protected, save in such contingences as the laws of the land except."³¹ This is an understandable addition, however, when one considers the tenuous position the new constitutional government held on the world stage. Any violent actions taken against foreign diplomats could upset the balance and lead to either an invasion or an Imperial financed/supported coup attempt. A clause protecting such foreigners was, therefore, necessary.

That symbolic statement of respect would mean little however, as, British and Russian diplomats signed the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 on August 31st. This new Anglo-Russian Entente was formed for several reasons. Primarily, it was a response to an increasingly powerful German Empire. It was clear that the Germans were becoming a serious threat to both Russian and British interests, and it was even more evident that needing to watch their Central Asian frontiers would prove to be a major hindrance to both powers in the event of a European conflict.

The Iranian Constitutional Revolution troubled Russia and Britain to a far lesser degree. But it was still another catalyst in the push for mutual control over the country. Iran, of course, not only represented a major source of potential wealth, but also, geographically, was the principal buffer between the two empires. The diplomats involved clearly understood that, because the main body of the agreement is wholly concerned with setting up the following zones:

³⁰ A direct reference to the Cossack Brigade, which would not take kindly to that vilification, assaulting the Majlis in 1908 (under the Shah's orders) for a short period with artillery.

³¹ Majlis. *Iranian Constitution of 1906 and The Supplementary Fundamental Laws of October 7, 1907*.



Map of the Russo-British Pact, 1907³²

The blue belonged to Russia, the red to Britain, and the yellow would remain a neutral sector. These zones represented absolute monopoly. In both political and economic matters only the controlling power could participate. Military matters were a slightly different affair, as the document goes on to affirm

In the event of irregularities occurring...the British and Russian Governments undertake to enter beforehand into a friendly exchange of ideas with a view to determine, in agreement with each other, the measures of control in question and to avoid all interference which would not be in conformity with the principles governing the present Agreement,³³

³² Wikipedia, "The Russo-British Pact in 1907 (spheres of influence in Persia)," W. Morgan Shuster: *The Strangling of Persia*. New York 1912, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:The_Russo-British_Pact_in_1907.jpg (accessed December 2, 2013).

³³ Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers*, London, 1908, Vol. CXXV, Cmd. 3750, under "The Anglo-Russian Entente," http://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/The_Anglo-Russian_Entente (accessed November 21, 2013).

meaning that the powers would discuss any form of martial intervention before undertaking it.

Such blatantly imperialistic actions were rationalized in the agreements introduction, which avowed that it was undertaken by Russia and Britain “to respect the integrity and independence of Persia, and sincerely desiring the preservation of order throughout that country and its peaceful developmnt.”³⁴ Obviously that statement was not indicative of their primary motives, as the simultaneous scramble for Africa and overall European arms race was far more pressing than the concerns of minor Central Asian Imperial subjects. The elimination of mutual tensions over the “Great Game” was a preparatory diplomatic stroke that set up the preliminary alliances of the First World War. Coincidentally, Anglo-Russian forces in Iran would actually undertake several campaigns against Ottoman forces during the war itself, further proving the validity of the Agreement in an overall Imperial sense.

The presence of foreign powers intervening in sovereign Iranian affairs then, was to continue. In an unfortunately bleak reality, such Imperialism would not truly vacate Iran until the Islamic Revolution of 1979, after which foreign Imperialism would be replaced with outright isolationism. That revolution could, perhaps, be viewed as a relative parallel of the Constitutional Revolution. A Shah, heavily influenced by foreign powers, ruined the nation’s economy. The people, roused by the ulama and what they viewed to be violations of their individual rights, looked to leaders for radical³⁵ change. Once that change was achieved, foreign powers again intervened in attempts to revert it. It appears that, in Iran at least, history may indeed be cyclical, and Imperialism in the region, although drastically changed, did not die alongside Anglo-Russian tensions.

³⁴ Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers*.

³⁵ In 1906 the idea of removing any of the Shah’s authority was, beyond any doubt, a radical notion indeed.