

4 Social networks and border conflicts

The First Herat War 1838–1841

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The story of the Great Game of Anglo-Russian rivalry in Central Asia is usually told from the point of view of high politics, of British and Russian diplomatic manoeuvres, and of the response of the Iranian Shah and his ministers to British and Tsarist policies. Great power rivalry, however, touched not only the government and elite of Iran, but also those further down the social scale, and indeed, through their networks, people at an ordinary level. This article seeks to study the impact of a phase in the Great Game, namely the First Herat War lasting from 1838–1841, on social networks in Iran and along its borders, and the ways in which they were able to exert influence on Iranian policy. It provides an example of the interaction of the population below the elite level with a great power, in this case Britain, and with its own government, during a border conflict. The article argues that social networks can influence the central government over a border conflict, as well as collaborate with it. They also are revealed to have some influence on the foreign power in the form of a deterrent, but equally, are vulnerable to manipulation by that power.

First, therefore, it is necessary to assess the part played by the First Herat war in the context of the Anglo-Russian rivalry in which it was set; second, the role of the social networks in the conflict, with particular attention being paid to the south of Iran will be discussed.

THE FIRST HERAT WAR IN CONTEXT

In 1834 Mohammad Shah acceded to the throne, with aspirations to restore Iranian ascendancy in Afghanistan. Such a move was contrary to the interests of Britain, which feared that the extension of Iranian influence would lead to the increase of Russian influence as a result of the Treaty of Turkomanчай signed in 1828. The British feared an alliance between Iran and Afghanistan under Russian influence would threaten British India from the north-west frontier, given that the Russians intended to make Iran the agent of their policies in Central Asia. So from 1837 the principal aim of the British was to prevent such an event, and keep these states separate as buffers

for India. The Great Game, however, was no simple conflict, and it should be observed that events did not always unfold as might have been anticipated. The Herat problem formed part of a whole skein of issues involving Britain and Russia stretching from the eastern Mediterranean to Afghanistan, and indeed, Europe itself, though this is outside the scope of this chapter. In essence, whilst engaged in relentless rivalry, Britain and Russia also needed each other to settle local differences so as to avoid their own direct military engagement, circumstances which could produce ironic and anomalous outcomes to local disputes. In addition, the pursuance of their interests in one part of the vast area of their struggle could lead to their neglecting seemingly obvious opportunities in another.

These characteristics of the Great Game were manifest at the time of the First Herat War. As will be observed, Russia's ambitions to extend her influence in Afghanistan were hampered by her aspirations to control the turbulent and inhospitable terrain of the Caucasus. Events in the eastern Mediterranean, on the other hand, impeded British aspirations to confront the Russians more firmly in Afghanistan. These latter involved the ambitions of Mohammad Ali, Pasha of Egypt, to be Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, and his consequent conquest of Syria. The Ottoman Empire was, of course, the buffer against Russian penetration in the Mediterranean, and its collapse would destabilize the balance of power in Europe, which was of much greater significance to British interests than Iran. A British offensive towards Iran would make Russia much harder to deal with in the eastern Mediterranean.¹ A further problem at the time of the First Herat War was that Mohammad Ali's subordinate, Khorshid Pasha, marched into Najd with the ostensible purpose of suppressing resurgent Wahhabism, and the British were concerned that he might attempt to overturn their agreements with the Sheikhs of the Persian Gulf littoral, and try to seize Baghdad.

It was against this background that the British made every possible effort to persuade Mohammad Shah to abandon his plans in Afghanistan and give up Herat, which in their eyes represented a particular danger given its position as a gateway to the route to Kabul, and thence to India.² They were also afraid that the Afghan amirs would form an alliance with Iran, supported by the Russians. The Shah, however, encouraged by the Russians, moved his forces into Khorasan in 1837, and prepared to besiege Herat.

The British representative, McNeill, met the Shah at his camp in March 1838. During discussions, the Shah argued that the Anglo-Persian Treaty of 1814 permitted Iran to intervene in Afghanistan.³ McNeill pointed out that, from the British perspective the main purpose of the Treaty was to protect India, and that it would be undermined by an Iranian occupation. McNeill failed to dissuade the Shah, and on 7 June 1838, he withdrew from the Shah's camp, and cut relations between Britain and Iran, subsequently moving to Erzurum in Ottoman territory. The British then decided that they needed a bargaining counter to force the Shah to withdraw, and therefore on 16 June 1838, they invaded Kharg Island in the Persian Gulf. A full-scale assault by

Persian troops on Herat on 23 June 1838 did not succeed, and the Shah, by now under a variety of pressures, raised the siege of Herat and withdrew. The cumulative effect of the failure over Herat and the British occupation of Kharg Island on 19 June 1838 persuaded the Shah to agree to a variety of British demands on 9 September, promises, however, which he did not keep. McNeill remained in Erzurum until relations between Britain and Persia were finally restored by the treaty of 28 October 1841, ironically with the assistance of the Russians.⁴

INTERNAL IMPLICATIONS IN BUSHEHR AND KHARG ISLAND

The principal internal effect was that from 1839 in particular, trade became dislocated by the estrangement between Iran and Britain, a downturn exacerbated by the drop in trade in the south in this period due to being rerouted so as to enter Iran through the north.⁵ The economy was also already affected by foreign imports and the Shah had had to issue an order in 1840 that no Russian cloth be brought in.⁶ Evidence of the disturbed state of the country is provided by the fact that there was disorder at Shiraz, Kashan, Isfahan and Kerman at the same time, and that these towns were deemed to have passed out of government control.⁷ In Yazd, the population, with the local *mujtahid* at its head, had expelled the governor.⁸ In Isfahan a form of class warfare began in which the poorer social groups robbed the wealthier ones, particularly its merchants and traders.

The British were well aware that one of their weapons against Mohammad Shah was the economic disruption that a conflict over Herat would cause. In July 1838 McNeill reported that: "The whole of the Persian authorities and the entire population of Tehran (as he put it) and its vicinity are anxious to dissuade me from leaving Iran and are disapproving of the Persian government".⁹ This awareness lies behind McNeill's letter to the renowned *mujtahid*, Mohammad Baqir Shafii. Ostensibly intending to express the goodwill of the British government towards the people of Iran, it sought to explain the British point of view and imply that the cause of the conflict was the Shah's obduracy. McNeill stated that he had tried to explain to the Iranian government the consequences of failing to meet his request, but in vain. He would therefore have to withdraw from Iran, and the resulting strife and contention would be the responsibility of the Shah. McNeill was anxious to distinguish between the British attitude to the Shah and their attitude to the Iranian people, demonstrating his understanding of the possible influence of popular reaction not only on the British position but on the Shah's policy. Naturally he hoped the *mujtahid* would pass on the message to the non-elite groups, whom the *ulama* so often represented.¹⁰ Alert to the manoeuvre, Shafii responded by saying that the difference which had arisen between the Shah and the British did not concern the Shi'a faith, and that he recommended

to the people that even if relations led to outright war, they should not take part in the quarrel.¹¹ In his relatively neutral response, the *mujtahid* demonstrated his understanding of the controversy the Shah's venture was arousing among the population at large.

The removal of the British minister from Iran immediately began to disturb the delicate structure of control and balance in the south. The attitude of the people of Bushehr, in particular, towards the British was complex, and to some extent contradictory. On the one hand they depended on the British for the protection and prosperity of their trade; on the other hand the people mistrusted the British presence and intentions. Even before the Shah's attack on Herat, the people in Bushehr had begun to take advantage of the growing disagreement between Britain and Iran to reduce British influence there. There was an increasing number of anti-British incidents, including in 1836–1837 the suspending in the bazaar of an effigy of Griboyedov (the Russian emissary previously murdered by the populace in Tehran in 1829) from a sort of gibbet for the edification of the British Resident,¹² and an insult to the Residency *sarraf* (banker) by Seyyed Salman, the nephew of the leading local *mujtahid*, Shaikh Hasan. When the Shah marched on Herat in the late summer of 1837, the deterioration in relations gave the people a new opportunity to express their animosity towards the British, particularly when a fight broke out between a British apothecary and a dervish that ended in a dispute over legal jurisdiction.¹³

The local altercation exacerbated the differences over larger issues. When Britain drew up a list of conditions for peace, it included the relinquishment of the Shah's right to punish the apothecary, as well as an equitable agreement over Herat, indicating how the popular pressure in Bushehr impacted on relations at the national level. The Iranian government itself responded to British complaints with a policy of stonewalling and evasion.¹⁴ Frustrated, the British invaded Kharg Island on 19 June 1838, as mentioned. They were immediately visited by the leading local notable, and periodic governor of Bushehr, Shaikh Nasir, an Arab tribal Shaikh, who saw an opportunity to attack the Iranians for the many grievances he considered that he had suffered from them.¹⁵ The British made arrangements with him to maintain a base in Kharg Island, his acquiescence thus assisting their pressure on the Shah, and demonstrating how they could manipulate the discontent of local powers to serve their own ends.

Meanwhile the final full-scale assault by Iranian troops on Herat on 23 June 1838 had not succeeded, and the Shah raised the siege of Herat and withdrew. The cumulative effect of the failure over Herat and the British occupation of Kharg Island persuaded the Shah to agree to a variety of British demands on 9 September, including the punishment for the attack on the Residency *sarraf*, the dismissal of the newly appointed Governor of Bushehr, Mirza Asadullah, the evacuation of the fort of Ghorian and the conclusion of a commercial treaty to place British personnel on the same footing as the Russians. However, he kept none of these promises. The curious juxtaposition

of comparatively minor demands with major ones demonstrates the significance of the popular attacks on British interests. British prestige required that restitution be made for even the most minor slights to Britain and British personnel. The maintenance of such prestige was the means by which Britain dominated the politics of the region, and indeed her empire, at relatively low cost, particularly in terms of achieving her objectives without major military ventures.

In November 1838 relations further deteriorated as a result of a dispute in Bushehr originating in a disagreement over taxation between the local merchants.¹⁶ It led to an attack on the Jews on the pretext that a *farash* (aide) of the governor had been found intoxicated from wine they supplied. A mob attacked the Jewish quarter, most particularly the house of the British Residency *sarraf*, who was engaged in the wine trade. In this fashion, the people of Bushehr at once resisted higher taxation, and vented their displeasure at the British occupation of Kharg Island and overall policy towards Iran.¹⁷

Both the Iranian authorities and the population kept up the pressure. In early March 1839, in a further demonstration of hostility, Mirza Asadullah, who had recently replaced Shaikh Nasir as Governor of Bushehr, cut off supplies to British ships, in effect placing an embargo on the export of grain to Kharg Island. He also prohibited the British from using Iranian stonemasons to repair the fort on Kharg.¹⁸ McNeill feared the loss to British prestige in the Gulf if such hostile Iranian measures continued, and that there would consequently be attacks on British commerce. The British Resident, Hennell, now had the option of either withdrawing or occupying Bushehr itself, which he did not feel able to hold in view of popular hostility towards the British, which shows how such pressure acted as a deterrent.

Meanwhile there was disagreement between the government in London and the government of India over the Kharg Island policy. The latter saw Kharg not so much as a bargaining counter with Iran over Herat as an opportunity to implement a long-standing British Indian objective of securing an island base in the Persian Gulf.¹⁹ The government in London, on the other hand, was worried about provoking a Russian intervention in the north, and was anxious that occupation of Kharg Island should not extend to Bushehr itself. A further perceived obstacle to invasion was the financial cost that might be incurred through a military force facing stiff popular resistance. The idea of actually invading the mainland was therefore abandoned. The Russians, meanwhile confined themselves to protesting over the occupation, as other alternatives appeared too costly as long as Britain did not make a further move.²⁰ They therefore endeavoured to enhance their prestige by negotiating a settlement to the Irano-British conflict.

Matters in Bushehr itself finally came to a head in late March 1839, when Admiral Maitland and a British fleet appeared at Bushehr to demonstrate support for the Resident. When the Admiral tried to land, ostensibly to meet

the Governor, the people of Bushehr threw sticks and stones, and Iranian soldiers under the command of a local khan, Baqir Khan Tangistani, fired on the British. The upshot was that the British Resident decided to withdraw the Residency to Kharg on 30 March 1839.²¹ In the British mission there was much disquiet at what had taken place. The British Representative, Sheil wrote to Lord Palmerston, the Foreign Secretary, fulminating on the loss of British influence consequent on what he considered a trial of British forbearance over a long series of indignities. He pointed out that the British Admiral and Resident had retired, in the eyes of Iranians, before the "rabble" of Bushehr. The British were particularly disturbed as the event coincided with a setback in Kandahar.

The British withdrawal was greeted with mixed feelings by the local population. Realizing the implications for trade, the Bushehr merchants and the *qazi* (principal judge) wrote to the British Resident expressing disquiet at his departure. Letters were also sent to the Governor of Bushehr asking him to promise not to impede British trade. The conciliatory view of the merchants of Bushehr was not shared by Mohammad Shah, who seized the opportunity, realizing the implications for British prestige. He summoned Baqir Khan Tangistani, the *qazi* of Bushehr and his nephew, Shaikh Salman, to court, where they received robes of honour, decorations and substantial pensions and were received by the Shah with great condescension and respect. It was officially reported that an English admiral in command of a ship of 80 guns had, by a stratagem, taken Bushehr, but had been defeated with great loss by Baqir Khan and his force of Dashtestanis, and driven from the town. It was additionally reported that a large quantity of English heads had been sent to Shiraz.²²

The Shah made his version known throughout Iran and down the Persian Gulf,²³ undermining British prestige, which, of course, resulted in additional financial burdens from reduced commerce from the Iranians. This event caused more damage to British prestige in the Persian Gulf than had their retreat from Kabul in 1841–1842. It is evident from the vehemence of Sheil's dispatches that it really was a victory for the populace.²⁴

The British eventually evacuated Kharg Island in February 1842. A British presence in the form of a coaling station, representing the long-standing aspirations of the government of India, clung on until it was finally removed as a result of repeated remonstrations by the Persian government to London in 1944.

The people of Kharg Island had benefited from the war as they had paid little in the way of taxes for three years, their main dues normally being paid to Shaikh Nasir to support the island garrison through a pilotage tax.²⁵ They had restructured their administration and grown used to managing their own affairs by council. They remained, however, loyal to the Shah. Why did the British go? The main reason was that if they seized part of the south, the Russians might do the same in the north; but also, in those days there was little financial advantage in staying if the locals were not friendly.

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS IN FARS

Meanwhile the impact of the war, and the Shah's loss of authority through his failure before Herat, produced disturbance and defiance on the part of the provincial authorities throughout Fars. Fereydun Mirza, the Shah's brother, and governor of the province, regarded the people of Fars as secretly in league with the British – and indeed Baqir Khan Tangistani sent them friendly messages. However, there is not much evidence of a direct connection between the British and the local powers. The main problem was that the continuing economic difficulties exacerbated the political situation, particularly in Shiraz. In August 1839, for example, Mirza Ahmad Khan, the principal administrator of Fars and the governor's leading official, was driven from the town by popular discontent.²⁶ On 9 August 1839 a tumultuous crowd gathered in objection to his return. In desperation, the prince-governor, especially dressed in military uniform, gave an order that the town should be destroyed and the people massacred; however, he too was forced to quit the city by the angry populace,²⁷ leaving the people victorious. Despite bringing pressure on the leading *mujtahid* Shaikh, Abu Turab, in September 1840, Mohammad Shah had little success in imposing his will on Shiraz, and less in raising any taxes. The people of Shiraz, like those of Kharg Island, used the period of the war and its aftermath to further their own interests.

IMPACT ON THE WAR BY POPULAR NETWORKS IN THE EASTERN AND WESTERN REGIONS

With regard to the war on the eastern front it is difficult to assess the level and nature of popular involvement. This is partly because of lack of source material; partly because of the localized nature of the struggle in Afghanistan rather than Iran – by contrast to Bushehr, which was radicalized by the actual British presence; and partly because the eastern border that was underpopulated. One observer remarked that if the Shah really wanted to extend his rule in Khorasan he had better start by re-peopling Torbat-e Shaikh Jam.²⁸ The majority of local potentates appear to have resisted British pressure to join them: Amir Assadollah Alam fought in the Iranian army;²⁹ Mohammad Reza Khan and 'Ali Khan of Sistan and certain leaders of the Baluch tribes reportedly gave their allegiance;³⁰ however, the chief of Kelat Naderi sought alliance with the British.³¹ As Mojtahed-Zadeh has observed, while the peoples of the eastern frontier were at war with the British, they collaborated, but once the threat was past, they reverted to their customary tribal and ethnic rivalries.

To the west and north-west there was trouble in Kermanshah, where the people turned against the governor,³² and also in the area between Erzurum and Khoi, where there were attacks by the Kurds, who constantly harassed the villages there.³³ However, such problems were endemic and not noticeably worse than at any other period, unlike the situation in the south. The Shah

was fortunate in that the Ottomans were engaged in a struggle to control Mohammad Ali (the Pasha of Egypt), and to reassert their authority in the eastern Mediterranean, and therefore did not take advantage of the Shah's difficulties to stir up the tribes on the border.

In the north-west, there were disturbances amongst the tribes on the frontier, which related partly to the Shah's aspirations in Herat and Khorasan, and partly to the decades-long advance of Russia in the Caucasus. At the time of the Treaty of Turkomanчай in 1828, it had been Russian policy to break up Azerbaijan into independent Khanates but not actually to annex the province.³⁴ From 1828 Russia sought influence rather than control on the Iranian side, being primarily concerned with the need to continue to subdue the tribes on its side of the border. From the point of view of events in our period the tribes most affected were Lezgis, a Sunni group originating in Daghestan, some of whom had historically either moved or been moved to the Iranian border. Before the advance of Russia this latter group had been under Persian rule, but local khans had asserted their authority as Safavid power declined. These in turn were now threatened by the Russians and also divided amongst themselves as to whether their interests lay with the Iranians or the Russians, or in a continued struggle for independence.³⁵ According to Tapper, the Russians were welcomed in some parts of the eastern Caucasus, as they provided a release from the local khans.³⁶ Other inhabitants of the region felt obliged to declare war against the Iranians on the Russians' side as they were in no position to resist them. Some of them already resided inside the Iranian border, but at this period the concept of a border was nebulous as far as such tribes were concerned. In their mountain habitats they migrated as they pleased, and without much reference to the local authorities.³⁷ Although the Russian campaigns put some pressure on Iran to settle the nomadic tribes, for example by persuading them to migrate to Iranian territory and to acknowledge the suzerainty of the Shah, Iran also benefited from their pastoral produce and their services as frontier guards.³⁸ On the other hand, both Russians and Iranians played the tribes off against each other. All in all, for a variety of reasons, Iran did little to settle its frontier population before the 1850s.

The Russian struggle to control the Lezgis went on regardless of the war over Herat and, in strategic terms, seemingly independent of it. In the autumn of 1838 the Lezgis achieved some success against the Tsar's forces, seizing the town of Kuba and plundering Shekki. They were reportedly much under the influence of their *mullas* in their revolt against the power of Russia,³⁹ which was evidently seen in religious terms. The Lezgi tribes felt the Shah (as the Muslim power in the region) was failing them, and it is reported that they sent an emissary who was the bearer of:

a man's cap and a woman's headdress and is instructed to request that the Shah will either choose the former and act as a man by coming to their assistance, or receive the latter and acknowledge that he has no right to wear any other than a woman's attire.⁴⁰

The Shah's neglect of the Lezgi interest, and failure to reprove the Russians, thereafter became entangled with general unrest in Azerbaijan over the war. The Shah, who still clung to the fortress of Ghorian in Afghanistan, much to the annoyance of the British, and continued to harbour yearnings towards Herat, ordered his brother in the early summer of 1839 to lead 20,000 men to Khorasan, with the intention of protecting the fortress.⁴¹ Members of the 'ulama representing their respective regions arrived from Khoi and Salmas and warned the Tabriz authorities that the government must relinquish its current oppression of the peasantry, or they would all migrate to Russia or the Ottoman Empire. The state of the economy was indicated by the fact that the previous year's corn remained unsold.

In addition, the 'ulama of Tabriz in particular expressed support for the Lezgis, and criticized the government for not protecting them against the Russians.⁴² The British Consul, who watched the difficulties of the Iranians and Russians with some satisfaction, commented that:

Surely if the Russians intended to assist the Persians in their new campaign they would give them some money to get them off, as time must be an object and they are at a dead stand here for one hundred toman.⁴³

Reports that the Lezgis were gaining advantages over the Russian troops, would also seem to suggest that the Russians might wish to facilitate the Shah's departure,⁴⁴ but they did not. In other words, all in all the evidence would suggest that the Russian campaign in the Caucasus was not particularly linked to their policy over Afghanistan.

If the Shah could not get money from the Russians, he was equally unsuccessful with his own subjects, who either evidently had no intention of supporting his ambitions to the east, or merely saw it as an opportunity for pecuniary advantage. The merchants of Tabriz refused point blank to provide funds to the government to pay the troops,⁴⁵ and the troops themselves mutinied over pay.⁴⁶ Such lack of support indicates that there were internal impediments to the Shah pursuing his campaign, in addition to those imposed by great power rivalry.

In central Iran there was a popular uprising in Isfahan in 1840, so serious that it brought the Shah in person to the city. At this time Isfahan was dominated to an extraordinary degree by *lutis* (the turbulent urban poor), which is perhaps a testimony to economic problems and unemployment. Certainly, there seem to have been struggles between different social groups with merchants being subjected to constant robbery by *lutis*.⁴⁷ The disorder became so great that the Shah marched to Isfahan with a force of 30 guns and 14 corps of infantry, a most unusual event, which was to remain for some time in the popular memory. Hundreds were seized, several dozen beheaded and three hundred imprisoned. The Shah had evidently curbed the worst of the disorder,⁴⁸ but he could not eradicate it without resolving the underlying economic problems. The seriousness of this revolt demonstrated that the

Shah could not afford to go on ignoring popular unrest, which constituted a pressure on him to settle with the British.

In conclusion, the Shah was responsive to great power politics, but the picture of the period of the war is not complete without some understanding of the role of social networks. On the one hand they could act as a deterrent to great power intervention. They could cooperate with the state officials and even the Shah himself in undermining the enemy. Not unexpectedly their influence was greater on the Iranian government than on external powers. On the other hand they represented an impediment to the Shah's progress and a threat to his back with riots, refusal to pay taxes and mutiny. They detained him and at the same time, as in the Tabriz example, clamoured that his absence in the east provided opportunities for the Russians in the west. In 1839–1840 there is some evidence that the Shah intended to return to Khorasan; he possibly even had new designs on Herat, which he certainly never gave up. However, the turbulence of his kingdom in the wake of the war, notably more threatening in the cities than amongst the tribes, was a serious disincentive, and in the event he had to march south to curb rebellion.

The Shah finally gave up the fortress of Ghorian in March 1841 and the conflict between Britain and Iran over Herat was eventually settled on 28 October 1841. The British had less success with their minor demands as no reparation was offered to them for the insults to the British admiral; Mirza Asadullah lost his post as Governor of Bushehr, but for other reasons, which were not made clear; and there was no punishment for the attack on the Residency *sarraf*, the *qazi* and his nephew in particular continuing to be held in high honour. This outcome was not atypical, as the local people were regularly in a position to resist British pressure on their government because of the strength of their networks.⁴⁹ In addition, when the Resident eventually returned to Bushehr he was obliged to endure relentless petty harassment from the populace for some time.

Relations between Britain and Iran had been so severely exacerbated over the Herat conflict that resolution was not an easy matter, largely because of the Shah's resentment over the crushing of his aspirations. Peace required prolonged negotiations, and ultimately, was partly achieved through the Great Game itself. The differences between Britain and Russia had varied priorities, with the eastern Mediterranean coming highest for both powers, and when relations there were tense it was preferable to settle disagreements elsewhere. Therefore Britain used Russian influence to help solve the conflict over Herat, which had been started to keep Russia out of Afghanistan.⁵⁰

PAST PRACTISES AND POLICY SUCCESS

There is a broader question concerning the relations between an outside power and the society of the country with which it is in conflict, whether over a

border or any other issue. In the nineteenth century the British were at great pains to be well-informed on all aspects of Iran. Not only did their diplomats often have long experience in the country, but many of the travellers there were military personnel seeking information and understanding. For most of the nineteenth century, British policy in Iran was based on sound intelligence, rigorously interpreted. In the First Herat War, the local policy was set carefully within the broader framework, however inviting alternatives might have been. The principal example of this was the decision of the government in London to force the government of India to relinquish Kharg Island. The British used the understanding and information at their disposal in dealing with local society and in evaluating the implications in terms of popular response to a proposed policy, for example, in the decision on whether or not to occupy Bushehr in 1839. Thus knowledge, insight, and careful and dispassionate interpretation of intelligence are vital to achieving success in any given policy towards another country, and to avoiding the pitfalls of ignorance and naivety.

Notes

- 1 M. E. Yapp, *Strategies of British India*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 276.
- 2 J. B. Kelly, *Britain and the Persian Gulf 1795–1880*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), p. 292.
- 3 Ibid., p. 293.
- 4 M. E. Yapp, *Strategies*, p. 373.
- 5 See, e.g. Charles Issawi, "The Tabriz-Trabzon Trade 1830–1900: Rise and Decline of a Route", in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 1/1 (January 1970).
- 6 Hennell to Sheil, 25 May 1840, FO 248/99. Part of the problem was that the Russians imported cloth dyed with indigo from Iran.
- 7 Encl. in No. 19, 12 May 1840, FO 60/73.
- 8 Encl. in Hennell to Sheil, 18 June 1840, FO 248/99. Following retribution by the authorities, he had taken refuge with Sayyid Muhammad Baqir, referred to as the chief *mujtahid* of Persia, from whose house, on the Shah's orders, he was dragged and bastinadoed very severely. The beating of a *mujtahid* was not unknown, but it was unusual.
- 9 See report of 22 July in No. 40, 3 Aug. 1838, FO 60/58. At the time of the British withdrawal from Bushehr to Kharg Island, the merchants of Bushehr, and the Imam Jum'a, realizing the implications for trade, wrote to the British Resident asking him to return. IO R/15/1/81, No. 80, p. 33. Interestingly, McNeill also received separate appeals from both the mother and the wife of the Shah.
- 10 See No. 53, 5 Oct. 1838, FO 60/59.
- 11 The text of the exchange has been published in Jan Malik Sasani, *Siyasatgarani-i daura-yi Qajar* (Tehran: Kitabkhana-yi Tahuri, 1338), 2, pp.128–39. It has also been discussed by A. Amanat in "Pishva-yi ummat va vazir-i mukhtar 'bi tadlis' Inglis", *Iranshinasi* 3 (1368): 11–41. For a detailed analysis of the language see R. M. Gleave, "The 'ulama and the British", in Vanessa Martin, ed., *Anglo-Iranian Relations since 1800* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 47–9.
- 12 Mackenzie to McNeill, 3 Dec. 1836, FO 248/85. Griboedov was a Russian special emissary who had been murdered by a mob in Tehran in 1829 for perceived arrogance towards Islam.
- 13 Mackenzie to McNeill, 27 Dec. 1837, FO 248/85.

- 14 Kelly, *Britain and the Persian Gulf*, pp. 295–6.
- 15 Encl. of 20 June 1838, in No. 44, 7 Sept. 1838, FO 60/59.
- 16 Hennell to McNeill, 21 Nov. 38, FO 248/85. A rescript from Faridun Mirza, Governor of Fars, specifically stated that the sale of wine was forbidden in a Muslim country. See, 14 Dec. 1838, FO 248/85, on receipt of rescript.
- 17 Hennell to the Government of India, 12 Dec. 1838, FO 248/85.
- 18 No. 18, 8 Dec. 1839, FO 60/65; see also Farman-Farma-yi Fars to Mohammad Shah in I. Safa'i, *Yak sad sanad-i tarikhi* (Tehran: Anjuman-i Tarikh, n.d.), pp. 37–8. Although the letter is dated Sha'ban 1256/September–October 1840, it appears from the tone and content to have been written when he was Governor of Fars, i.e. in 1838–1839.
- 19 Yapp, *Strategies*, p. 277.
- 20 Ibid., p. 295.
- 21 No. 35, 26 May 1839, FO 60/66.
- 22 No. 42, 6 June 1839, FO 60/66.
- 23 It was recorded in Hasan Fasa'i's *Farsnama-yi Nasiri* that Shaikh Hasan, the *mujtahid* of the 'Usfur tribe, his nephew Shaikh Salman and Baqir Khan had risen in rebellion with the inhabitants of Bushehr and expelled the British regular soldiers and Resident from the town. See H. Busse's translation, *History of Persia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 260.
- 24 Encl. 2 in No. 13, 7 April 1840, FO 60/73.
- 25 Robertson to Sheil, 21 June 1842, FO 248/108.
- 26 Encl. in No. 72, 17 Oct. 1839, FO 60/67.
- 27 Busse, *History of Persia*, p. 266.
- 28 Encl. of 8 June 1839 in 10 July 1839 FO 60/66.
- 29 P. Mojtahed-Zadeh, *Small Players of the Great Game*, (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 65.
- 30 No. 66, 28 Nov. 1838, FO 60/66.
- 31 No. 69, 28 Nov. 1838, FO 60/60.
- 32 Bonham to McNeill, 1 July 1839, in No. 51, 17 July 1839, FO 60/66.
- 33 Bonham to McNeill, 25 Nov. 1841, FO 60/82.
- 34 Yapp, *Strategies*, p. 105; R. Tapper, *Frontier Nomads of Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 190.
- 35 According to Cunynghame, the Lezgians were warlike and their main centre was Bodlith near Avari in the Eastern Caucasus. A. A. Cunynghame, *Travels in the Eastern Caucasus* (London: John Murray, 1872), p. 213. He adds that no woman was allowed to remain a widow for more than three months, so great was the shortage of the population in that area during the wars with the Russians (p. 214).
- 36 Tapper, *Frontier Nomads*, p. 149.
- 37 Ibid., p. 168.
- 38 Ibid., p. 190.
- 39 No. 52, 5 Oct. 1838 and No. 61, 5 Nov. 1838, FO 60/59.
- 40 No. 61, 5 Nov. 1838, FO 60/59.
- 41 No. 42, 6 June 1839, FO 60/66. The Shah was not clear as to his intentions in Khorasan, thereby arousing intense suspicions in the British.
- 42 Encl. in No. 51, 17 July 1839, FO 60/66. The exact connection is not clear, but their support may well have arisen from sympathy for the struggle of Muslims against control by a Christian power. Certainly Islam bound the Lezgians to other tribes fighting the Russians in the region, and perhaps to Shamil in Daghestan (who, however, is not named in the contemporary dispatches). Possibly also there were economic links through pastoralism, and even, on the frontier itself of landownership. It may be noted that the Lezgians had a reputation for legalism, and would travel long distances to settle legal cases. Cunynghame, *Eastern Caucasus*, p. 215.
- 43 No. 38, 2 June 1839, FO 60/66.

44 No. 38, 2 June 1839, and No. 43, 6 June 1839, FO 60/66.

45 Encl. of 8 June 1839 in No. 46, 21 June 1839, FO 60/66.

46 No. 43, 6 June 1839, FO 60/66. See also No. 46, 21 June 1839, FO 60/66.

47 No. 42, 24 Aug. 1840, FO 60/74.

48 Encl. in No. 42, 24 Aug. 1840, FO 60/74; encl. in Hennell to Sheil, 25 May 1840, FO 248/99.

49 For further examples see Vanessa Martin and Morteza Nouraei, "The *Karguzar* and Disputes over Foreign Trade", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Series 3, 16/2 (2006): 1–13.

50 M. E. Yapp, *Strategies*, p. 373. For an example of their efforts at an earlier stage see correspondence of 8 June 1839 in 10 June 1839, FO 60/66.

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