**British Policy towards Iran 1809-1914: the Question of Cost**

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There have been many interpretations of British policy in Iran between 1809 and 1914, but not infrequently a lack of precision as to what it was, with a certain tendency to believe that the British wished for greater control and influence over the country than they in fact did. This article seeks to demonstrate that Britain’s paramount concern was the defence of the route to India, and that, by contrast with the Russians, they refrained from involving themselves further until the increasing disorder from 1909 to 1914. The evidence for the argument is provided by the constantly expressed desire to curtail cost demonstrated by their attitude to expenditure. The article throws new light on the influential role of the government of India, which was required through out to bear a proportion of the cost, and which objected in the strongest terms to any further expenditure than was strictly necessary. Apart from the one deviation over the Tobacco Concession in 1890, the policy which Grey took over, rather than initiated, was military and strategic, aimed at a new enemy, Germany, rather than just Russia.

Key words: Iran; Russia; British defence of India; curtailment of cost; restrictions on policy; Government of India

**Introduction**

This article argues that though there have been multiple perspectives on British policy in Iran between 1809 and 1914 in the Qajar period, none have focussed specifically on the question of cost. There has been a tendency, in particular with regard to the years leading up to the First World War, to see Britain as taking advantage of Iranian government weakness to gain control of territory,[[1]](#footnote-1) rather than, as was the case, to protect their interests. The British Government held the view that India might be the most significant land in the British Empire, but it must also be the most self-sufficient, and must not be allowed to become a financial burden upon Britain. Defence expenditure should not exceed what India could not itself afford.[[2]](#footnote-2) At the same time the fundamental economic inter-dependence of Britain and India was recognized, and their link was primarily guarded by naval power.

The advance of Russia in the Caucasus in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries meant that a land power would be needed to act as a buffer between Russia and India, and that land power was Iran. Accordingly, Britain began to negotiate with the newly emerged Qajar dynasty over the potential role of Iran as an ally protecting India. There followed in the subsequent century numerous negotiations over strategic, defence and commercial interests, all of which were subsidiary to Britain’s paramount concern, the defence of India. As Salisbury remarked in 1889, ‘Were it not for our possessing India, we would trouble ourselves but little about Iran.’[[3]](#footnote-3) Over the course of the period in question the often considerable burden of subsidising the land defence of India in Iran was borne at various times by London or India or both, with much reluctance on the part of each.[[4]](#footnote-4) Therefore, in the formulation of British policy towards Iran as a buffer for India the question of cost played an important role, and if not explicit, it was certainly implicit in nearly every major decision the British took on the subject of Iran. The purpose of this article is to try and show how, when and why cost played a part in British policy towards Iran, and the consequences that followed at each turn in the policy to which it related.

Firstly, it is necessary to explore the relationship of London and India on the question of defence, which requires some understanding of the problems for India itself in financing the Indian Army. Defence was a major issue for the government of India, as it was the heaviest charge on its budget, and London would not contribute.[[5]](#footnote-5) Therefore the size of the army was dictated by the financial position as well as by India’s defence and internal needs. The proportion of government income spent on defence was high, and in 1908 it counted for one third of Indian government expenditure, whereas the British government spent 22% on its own.[[6]](#footnote-6) The arrangements whereby London and India divided their responsibilities for British representation in Iran are not always clear, but came under the heading of an agreement known as dual control. India appointed most of the southern consuls, which came under the British Resident in the Persian Gulf (also responsible to India). Much of the funding, personnel, and where necessary, military force, also came under India.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Up to 1798 Britain had little interest in Iran beyond certain commercial connections. In that year, following the establishment of the Qajar dynasty and the advance of France towards the East, Britain’s attitude began to change, and a connection was formed with Fath ‘Ali Shah (1797-1834) with a view to keeping France, then under the expanding Napoleonic regime, out of Iran. The concept of Iran as a buffer state, influence over which would protect the northern borders of India, began to emerge. John Malcolm, a soldier and administrator, advised the government of India in 1800 to establish a forward military base in the Persian Gulf, possibly on Kharg Island. The argument was rejected on the grounds of the likely ‘enormous cost’.[[8]](#footnote-8) A similar proposal was rebutted on the same grounds in 1810 and 1812.[[9]](#footnote-9) Nevertheless, in 1801 two treaties, one political and one commercial, negotiated by Malcolm, established an alliance between Britain and Iran against France. At this point, vying with the French, the British spared no cost.[[10]](#footnote-10)

Little consideration was given to Russia as a threat until 1806-7,[[11]](#footnote-11) when Fath ‘Ali Shah, fearful of the advance of the Russians in the Caucasus, turned to the British for support. As a result, Harford Jones negotiated a Preliminary Treaty of Friendship and Alliance between Britain and Persia on 15 March 1809, which initiated the long period of British endeavours to keep Russia out of Iran and away from the route to India. It also succeeded in finally ending French ambitions in Iran.

Included in the Preliminary Treaty was the promise of a subsidy and military assistance. The terms agreed were that if Russia invaded Iran, Britain would give Iran either a force or a subsidy of 200,000 tomans with ammunition. The amount of the subsidy proposed was judged so as to be effective, but too small to encourage Iran to pursue war with Russia unless necessary.[[12]](#footnote-12) A further complication was that Russia had in 1807 changed sides to join France in the war in Europe, so Jones was for payment of the subsidy so that Iran might divert Russian forces to Asia.[[13]](#footnote-13) Despite his pressure, however, India showed a marked reluctance to produce the funds,[[14]](#footnote-14) until the Court of Directors of the East India Company in London obliged Minto, the Governor General of India, to pay.[[15]](#footnote-15) This series of manoeuvres demonstrates how tightly the British controlled costs, and also shows how pressure from the Government on the Company Directors in London could force them to take on a financial obligation they considered burdensome and indefinite.[[16]](#footnote-16) They expressed the hope, which was not met, that they might be allowed Kharg Island by way of recompense (a theme to which they would later return).

Extracting the subsidy from the British proved no easy matter for the Iranians. It was paid in piece meal advances and extracted in arrears.[[17]](#footnote-17) In the Definitive Treaty of March 1812, which set out the mutual obligations of the two countries in the face of a threat from a European power (which really meant Russia), Britain agreed to continue to pay the existing subsidy as long as such a war lasted, and to provide officers to drill and discipline the army. The Treaty was agreed in March 1812 and confirmed as the Treaty of Tehran in 1814.

However, Britain’s interest in supporting Iran in the Caucasus was further diminished by the conclusion of peace between Britain and Russia in November 1812, which produced a resumption of friendly relations, [[18]](#footnote-18) and a decline in British interest in paying the subsidy, as being no longer worth the cost. The Iranians pressed on with the war and suffered a severe defeat by Russia at the Battle of Aslanduz in December 1812. Meanwhile the British were angry at resumed Iranian correspondence with France, and once again contemplated occupying Kharg Island. However, it was considered that, though such action would enable Britain to achieve her objectives with better security, it would involve greater expense.[[19]](#footnote-19) In the event, no agreement was concluded between Iran and France, so no action was taken.

Britain, now firmly at one with Russia in the European war, focused on trying to persuade Iran to make peace with that country, and warned Fath ‘Ali Shah that if he declined ‘reasonable terms’ the subsidy would be terminated, as it was meant ‘for the annoyance of his enemies, but not of our friends’.[[20]](#footnote-20) Finally, on 24 October 1813 Iran and Russia made peace by the Treaty of Golestan. This point marked the beginning of a continuing trend for Britain to withdraw from subsidizing Iran and limiting her military commitment. Furthermore, a main concern of the British was fear of annoying the Russians by continuing to provide officers to train the Iranian army. Accordingly, a new version of the Definitive Treaty negotiated with this point in view was signed in 1814 and ratified on 21 September 1815. However, Iran was left pursuing the British for arrears of the subsidy from the period when, in their view, it should have been paid, and in 1825 was still showing impatience on the subject.[[21]](#footnote-21)

Differences between Iran and Russia again came to a head in 1825 in that the area around Lake Gokcheh in the Caucasus was under threat of Russian occupation, which raised the issue of Britain’s obligation to pay the subsidy under the terms of the Definitive Treaty. The Iranians were told, however, that further payment of the subsidy was inappropriate as Britain was endeavouring to mediate between Iran and Russia,[[22]](#footnote-22) which was a way of indicating that Britain felt Iran would do best by making peace with Russia before it lost more territory. Nevertheless, the dispute between Russia and Iran led the latter to attack Russia in May 1826. The Shah again appealed to the British about the indemnity in 1826, but Canning’s instructions to MacDonald in Tehran were ‘pointe de tomans’ and that the original arrangement had never been agreed by Parliament anyway.[[23]](#footnote-23) To this, he added that there always would be encroachment by Russia in the Caucasus. The Governor General of India commented in December 1826 that, ‘The aggression by Russia must be very clear and the danger of withholding the subsidy very great, before India can revive its payments’.[[24]](#footnote-24) The war resulted in loss of territory in the Caucasus and the imposition of a substantial indemnity by the Russians in the Treaty of Turkomanchai 1828. The British view was implicitly that the territory lost was not part of Iran’s homelands, and MacDonald calculated that the Russians were unlikely to press further into Iran because of the difficulty of supporting an army in hostile territory and the religious fervour of the people, though land north of the Arras river might be lost.[[25]](#footnote-25) However, one last payment of subsidy was agreed to help pay off the indemnity owed to Russia in return for the abrogation of obligations with regard to the subsidy under the Treaty of Tehran.[[26]](#footnote-26) Thereafter, the Arras river being set as a boundary in the British mind, no further subsidy was forthcoming.

However, a crisis over the succession loomed in 1834 as the Shah, anxious not to alienate his relatives, refused to name a successor. Having ascertained that the Russians supported Mohammad Mirza, the son of his own most able son, the deceased ‘Abbas Mirza, the British government concurred with them. It was in their interest to ensure that one candidate was recognized and supported so that the country did not spiral out of control in a struggle for the throne. Muhammad Shah (1834-1848) duly ascended the throne with the political and military support of both the British and the Russians, who thereby averted violent power struggles between the rival claimants.[[27]](#footnote-27) Muhammad Shah was conscious of the losses sustained by Iran in 1828 and saw a means of compensating for them by achieving Iran’s long-standing claim to Herat, despite his weak financial position. His aspirations ran counter to British concerns over Russia gaining influence in Afghanistan, and thereby threatening the security of India, chiefly through establishing consulates in Herat and further afield. Since Iran, backed by Russia, not unreasonably considered its claim to Herat as legitimate, Muhammad Shah ignored the British, and embarked on the conquest of the city. The result was the first Afghan war 1838-1841, ostensibly between Afghanistan and Iran, but really between Britain and Iran, which country was unsurprisingly puzzled by the British argument, especially as Iranian subjects were being abducted by Turkomen tribesmen and sold into slavery. A war was inevitably costly for the British, but they feared a victory by Iran would enable the Russians to establish considerable influence through consulates in Herat and elsewhere in Afghanistan, and thus extend their power to the borders of India. They further feared that the Afghan chiefs might be persuaded to shift their loyalty to Iran for protection, and away from India.[[28]](#footnote-28). Accordingly, they were willing to pay whatever it cost to keep Iran, and therefore Russia, out of Herat.

Having tried, and failed to make their point to the Shah, who was by now marching to Khorasan, the British resorted to military measures. In August 1837 observations were carried out in Kharg Island, long a subject of their interest, with particular reference to conditions relating to troops landing.[[29]](#footnote-29) At the end of November the shah began a siege of Herat. Subsequently, in April 1838, he further alarmed the British by signing a treaty with the Sirdar of Kandahar under the guarantee of the Russian ambassador to Iran.[[30]](#footnote-30) As a consequence the British came to the conclusion that, given the Shah’s indifference to their views, and seeming sympathy with, and indeed subservience to, the Russians, an actual display of force was necessary.[[31]](#footnote-31) Having forewarned him of their views, they invaded Kharg Island at the end of June 1838.[[32]](#footnote-32)

However, Palmerston, then Foreign Secretary, had a problem in curtailing the aspirations of the government of India, to whom the British Representative in Iran, McNeill, was at this stage responsible. He vetoed a suggestion by McNeill that 5000 men, whom McNeil had requested from India, should march into the interior of Iran, on the grounds that such an expedition was too great for a mere demonstration, and inadequate to win a war. He emphasized Britain did not aim to replace the Shah, nor did it want to incite an insurrection or to dismember Iran.[[33]](#footnote-33) He was further concerned that such an expedition could destabilize the Shah, and make him more dependent on Russia.[[34]](#footnote-34) This view was subsequently endorsed by the Government of India.[[35]](#footnote-35) However, the Government of India did go on to say it might be a good idea to keep Kharg Island, a suggestion which was not taken up by London.[[36]](#footnote-36) In other words, British objectives should be focused and specific, and avoid causing Iran to slide into chaos, with all that such a situation would imply for British interests, not least in terms of cost.

The arrival of the small force at Kharg Island in late June 1838 caused a sensation in Iran (where its size was much exaggerated). The Queen Mother engaged to use her influence as far as possible to persuade the Shah to withdraw from Herat.[[37]](#footnote-37) This and other representations finally had an effect, and on 9th September 1838 the Iranian army began its march back from Herat.[[38]](#footnote-38) On 14th August, the Shah informed the British that he consented to all their demands, and requested them to arrange terms between Iran and Herat.[[39]](#footnote-39) The expedition to Kharg Island was achieved at some cost, but in the circumstances, nevertheless enabled the British to make their point without engaging in all-out war in Afghanistan. From their point of view, it was therefore effective, particularly cost effective.

By contrast with the accession of Mohammad Shah 1834-1848, which had involved both Britain and Russia in military action to support his claim, Nasir al-Din Shah came to the throne peacefully assisted by British and Russian collaboration, and by Iranian notables.[[40]](#footnote-40) The British congratulated themselves that no Shah had ever come to the throne so peacefully (meaning with fewer political and financial problems caused by disorder). The accession of Nasir al-Din Shah saw the emergence of his principal advisor, Mirza Taghi Khan Farahani, who was appointed Amir-i Nizam (Commander in Chief of the Army),and then Amir Kabir ‘the First Person in the kingdom responsible to the Shah for all the affairs of state’ in October 1848.[[41]](#footnote-41) In February 1849 he married the Shah’s sister despite the reservations of her mother.[[42]](#footnote-42) At the first private meeting between Amir Kabir and Farrant (the British Representative) the former set out his ‘considerable’ hopes for reform, particularly financial. Farrant emphasized the need to keep good order.[[43]](#footnote-43) From the beginning there was thus a marked divergence of views between Amir Kabir and the British. Both Farrant and his successor, Sheil, constantly expressed concern at the way the Amir’s reforms were antagonising certain sections of society, particularly the elite. However, Amir Kabir was popular with the army, and he did everything in his power to court it,[[44]](#footnote-44) albeit limited by financial constraints. In the face of possible trouble, Palmerston advised Farrant that strict accord should be maintained between the British and Russian Legations ‘for the tranquillity of the country’.[[45]](#footnote-45)

As anticipated, the Amir’s financial reforms began to cause widespread discontent, and in this context the stability of the country actually owed a great deal to accord between Britain and Russia. In May 1849 one of the regiments in Tehran mutinied over lack of pay. Demonstrations ensued in Tehran, and at Farrant’s request the Imam Juma’ succeeded in calming the mutineers.[[46]](#footnote-46) There was much stronger support for the Amir in Tabriz than in Tehran.[[47]](#footnote-47) With regard to the army, the Amir managed to improve the conditions of the soldiers by ensuring that they regularly received their pay and food.[[48]](#footnote-48) Such treatment was part of a strategy to give himself a power base by attracting the army to his interests, which proved fairly successful.

By October 1851, there were signs that Amir Kabir’s influence over the Shah had declined,[[49]](#footnote-49) and events moved with considerable speed. By mid-November 1851, he had been dismissed as Grand Vizier, and his rank had been reduced to Commander in Chief of the Army. The Shah began to act increasingly on his own initiative.[[50]](#footnote-50) Amir Kabir sent an urgent message to Sheil expressing the hope that he might be allowed to take refuge in the British Legation if he were in danger. Bearing in mind British policy objectives and the question of cost Sheil was now in a quandary, which preoccupied him above all else in the days that marked the fall of Amir Kabir. He was caught by the need to ensure that British prestige did not suffer for lack of support for a person so admired and distinguished in Iran, and to some extent also abroad, and the problem that should the Amir seek refuge in the British Legation, it might be surrounded by Iranian government troops, with all the uncontrollable consequences (not least in terms of expense,) which that implied. He therefore informed London, with an appropriate degree of enthusiasm, that, ‘ I need hardly state that my reply contained an intimation of these doors being open to him when he thought fit to enter’.[[51]](#footnote-51) The new Sadr-i ‘Azam (Prime Minister), ‘Itimad al-Daula, offered Amir Kabir a governorship of Fars or Isfahan, which he declined fearing for his life.[[52]](#footnote-52) However, he accepted the governorship of Kashan, but then decided not to go. At this point Sheil felt able to inform the Sadr-i ‘Azam that he would not be further involved in the Amir’s affairs.

The Russians, however, put guards round the Amir’s house, on which, asked by the Sadr-i Azam for his view of the situation, Sheil replied that the Russian Minister was not entitled to act in such a manner, and his own government would probably not agree. The Shah then acted. The Amir’s house was surrounded by guards, and the Shah informed the Russians that the house was his own property, and his mother and sister were living there. As a result, the Russians withdrew. By the 26 November, the Amir was on his way to Kashan.[[53]](#footnote-53) On 9th January 1852 the Amir was murdered in Kashan by order of the Shah.[[54]](#footnote-54)

In 1854 Iran began demonstrating an enhanced interest in the affairs of Afghanistan, and particularly of Herat, to which Iran still considered it had a rightful claim. In December 1855 the *Tehran Gazette* reported that Dust Mohammad, Sardar of Kabul, had taken Kandahar and was marching towards Herat with a confidence inspired by his support from the British. The Iranian government, for the good order of Khurasan, considered that it was necessary to maintain the integrity of Herat, and would take the necessary steps to do so.[[55]](#footnote-55) Herat was then divided into rival parties, continued the Shah’s argument, one of whom, Muhammad Yusif, sought to rule as an independent prince. As previously, in the 1838 war, the Iranians did not understand or accept the British view, which was that turbulence in Afghanistan would give an advantage to Russia to become involved and advance its interests in the area. The dispute was also considered by the British as likely to incite problems in Afghanistan which would be a drain on the resources of the Government of India.[[56]](#footnote-56) In July 1856 the British therefore demanded the immediate recall of Iranian troops from Herat, and made plans to seize Kharg Island and hold it until Iran had withdrawn. They estimated that only a small force would be needed to destabilize southern Iran.[[57]](#footnote-57)

Despite a warning from Russia on 18th October 1856 of the dangers of his siege of Herat,[[58]](#footnote-58) the Shah persisted and at the end of October 1856 Herat fell to the Iranian army. Accordingly, a campaign was launched from India with a formal declaration of hostilities on 1 November 1856, and British troops had landed on Kharg Island on 3rd December 1856.[[59]](#footnote-59) The campaign lasted six months with the British capturing Bushehr, and marching on to Borzajan. They also sailed up the Persian Gulf and took Mohammareh on 26 February 1857.[[60]](#footnote-60) The Iranian government, faced with widespread internal discontent, took the point and peace was made with the British by the Treaty of Paris on 4 March 1857.[[61]](#footnote-61) The British did not feel compelled to use military action again till the period of disorder following the Constitutional Revolution of 1906.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, European economic interest in the wider world and the quest for profitable projects for surplus capital brought a growing number of European entrepreneurs to Iran eager to engage in its development. The initial view of the British government on this trend was not particularly positive as plans for development introduced an element that presaged economic upheavals that might be difficult to control. It was at this stage it was therefore not much interested in concessions. Therefore, when, on 25th July 1872 Baron Julius de Reuter, a British subject, was granted an exceptionally broad concession that included the development of railways, telegraph, factories and mills and the exploitation of mineral resources, the British were sceptical of its broad character and unenthusiastic. The concession was not popular, and rebellion led by the clergy broke out over such a broad ranging grant over the country’s resources. As a result, the Shah was obliged to cancel the concession, and the British refused to support Reuter’s attempts to claim compensation.[[62]](#footnote-62) An important point about this concession, however, was that Reuter had engaged in the venture as a British subject, but without the involvement of the British government.

By the 1880s, perceiving the development projects being carried out successfully by non-British entrepreneurs, and in the belief that Iran’s integrity would be strengthened by the development of its resources, the British government changed its mind, and gave its official support to two other projects. The first was the Imperial Bank of Persia fully established in 1889. It provided a means of exerting influence through loans, notably to the Shah between 1892 and 1911, but at the same time enabled the bankrupt Iranian government to stay afloat.[[63]](#footnote-63) A more ambitious and wide-ranging project was the Tobacco Concession.[[64]](#footnote-64) The idea for the project came from Henry Drummond Wolff, who had a background in international finance, and, who, with a view to using his experience in Iran, was appointed as British Envoy there in 1887. His mission was to attract British capital and commerce to Iran. Through his initiative a concession was granted to Gerald Talbot in 1890 for a fifty-year monopoly of the collection, manufacture and export of Iran’s entire tobacco crop for fifty years. The Iranian government was to receive an annual rent of £15,000 and a quarter of net annual profits. Having established the Imperial Tobacco Corporation of Iran, Talbot began operations in early 1891. The move triggered widespread discontent and agitation, led by the clergy and the leading merchants, on the grounds that the resources of the country were being sold to foreigners. The opposition culminated in a *fatva* issued by the principal cleric of the ‘Atabat prohibiting the sale of tobacco. The result was the abolition of the concession by the government, which was forced to pay the huge sum, given its financial resources, of £500,000 in compensation to the company. The problem was compounded by the fact that the Iranian government was obliged to negotiate a loan from the British Imperial Bank to pay off the sum.

Until this point the British, in pursuit of their objective of defending the route to India in Iran at minimum cost, had made no serious errors of judgement in terms of their own interests. The Tobacco Concession produced results detrimental to their main policy. Firstly, by contrast with the Reuter Concession, the British government itself was involved in the person of Drummond Wolff, and it lost prestige, and therefore respect and influence in Iran. Secondly, the Iranian government deficit grew from 300,000 tomans at the beginning of the 1890s[[65]](#footnote-65) to a point where, as a result of loans from Russia, the situation was becoming, in Hardinge’s view, highly unsatisfactory and even dangerous to British interests. Britain had to be prepared to risk money in the form of advances on inadequate security. The current financial dependence of Iran on Russia meant there was a danger of Russia using it to obtain a coaling station on the Persian Gulf. He therefore advocated a loan from the Imperial Bank to stop further borrowings from Russia.[[66]](#footnote-66) Under growing pressure financially, the Iranian government resorted increasingly to such measures as selling governorships and state lands for financial resources to maintain control of the country. Given the British preoccupation with good order to protect the route to India, and control Russian penetration of Iran, further weakening the Iranian government, as they had done with the over ambitious Tobacco Concession, was a misjudged policy, that ran contrary to their own interests.

Up till the turn of the century, British attitudes to the idea of loans to Iran had been negative as they considered them as money potentially lost. The Russians, however took a different view particularly in two large loans, one of 22,500,000 roubles made in 1900 and the second of in 10,000,000 roubles made in 1902, their policy being that by making Iran financially dependent they would ultimately secure Russian dominance. Both loans carried the stipulation that no loans were to be taken out from any other country until the Russian loans had been paid off. When, in 1903, the imminence of a third Russian loan seemed to make Iran dangerously dependent on Russia, the British began to consider that some assistance was desirable.[[67]](#footnote-67) In 1905, when the Shrine in Mashhad asked for a loan of £1,800 from the Imperial Bank, the Russians expressed a willingness to pay, which the British interpreted as design to gain influence over the clergy, and therefore agreed a loan from the Imperial Bank,[[68]](#footnote-68) as part of a policy of curtailing the influence of Russia near the eastern border of Iran.

Their main concern, however, was the quest of the Iranian government for a loan of £300,000, urgently needed to assist their rapidly deteriorating financial situation. India was reluctant to assist, and commented that:

The government of India did not purchase shares in the Imperial Bank of Persia with Indian money for no *quid pro quo* except the power of making loans in the future. We could not justify such a use of Indian funds. If the latter are to be employed, we would have to point to a positive and immediate return.[[69]](#footnote-69)

London, however, took a more purely political view. It pointed out that the use of the Imperial Bank was being made in order not to provoke the Russians to try and block the loan on the basis of the aforementioned stipulation in the Russian loans.[[70]](#footnote-70) The situation then became one of bargaining over contributions. The Viceroy of India declared that:

We have all along contended that to justify a loan from Indian revenues, we must be able to point to material protection of Indian interests. This condition is absent from the proposed transaction. Therefore, HMG should share the loan with ourselves.[[71]](#footnote-71)

The difference was resolved in an agreement to half shares on the security of the southern customs (then paid into the Imperial Bank), and the Iranian Government accepted the offer.[[72]](#footnote-72) However, it insisted on using the term the security of the southern customs of ‘Fars and the ports in the Persian Gulf’[[73]](#footnote-73) which India felt was too vague and therefore still provided opportunities for the Russians. Nevertheless, the final terms of the loan of £200,000 at 5%, including this phrase were signed on 8th April 1903.[[74]](#footnote-74) Although the purpose of the loan was to prop up the Iranian government, its real objective was not only to stop Russian influence spreading, but also more specifically to prevent the Russians offering another loan on the security of the customs receipts of the south. The Iranian Government managed to avoid a more comprehensive term for fear of annoying the Russians.[[75]](#footnote-75) By October 1904, however, Russia was embroiled in war with Japan and the Iranian government was desperate for money. The British were therefore able to secure a loan on the basis of the revenues of ‘Fars and the Persian Gulf ports’[[76]](#footnote-76) in the sense of the all-embracing phrase of ‘the customs of southern Iran’,[[77]](#footnote-77) and thus strengthen their position against Russian infiltration on the Persian Gulf shores.

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By the end of the nineteenth century, British attitudes to the situation of Iran had become increasingly influenced by the complicated politics of Europe, in particular by the balance of power and emergence of the alliance system. An alliance between Austria and Germany had been in place since 1879. In 1894 France and Russia signed a Mutual Agreement. At this stage Britain pursued a policy of non-commitment to other powers. However, by the beginning of the twentieth century, Britain increasingly saw Germany as a potential threat because of the growth in the power of its navy, and consequent threat to the route to India. In 1904 it entered the Entente Cordiale with France. In addition, continuing fear of their common enemy, Germany, led Britain and Russia to seek to settle their relations in Iran, which produced the signing of the Anglo-Russian Agreement on the affairs of Iran 1907.[[78]](#footnote-78) The Agreement divided Iran into a British Zone in the South, a Russian Zone in the north and a Neutral Zone in between. Although it was an attempt to try and create boundaries that would reduce friction between the two countries, it was viewed by the Iranians as an intention to carve up their country.[[79]](#footnote-79) Despite the fact that Britain became increasingly concerned about Russian plans for railways in Iran, the two counties endeavoured to collaborate over the situation there in the next few years.

In the meantime, in 1905 a movement against the government in Iran on account of its oppressive policies and the mismanagement of the finances, and with a view to establishing representative government led, in 1906, to the Constitutional Revolution, which brought in a new reformist order. Britain favoured the constitutional government partly from sympathy with its ideals, partly because the old absolutist order had failed, but mainly as the best means to preserve order.[[80]](#footnote-80) Unfortunately, the new government suffered from the same weakness as the old, namely that that it did not have sufficient income to govern the country effectively and to ensure good order and protection for trade. As a result, from 1907 security in Iran began to deteriorate rapidly, severely affecting trade, and therefore British interests. These consequences were to have a considerable influence on British policy towards Iran in the years up to the First World War, as the country began to slide from relative order to near chaos. The resultant need to protect their interests was to force the British to confront the question of cost to a greater extent than ever before.

Initially, in 1907, the British decided not to use any force unless for the protection of foreigners. This view was gradually enlarged to include the sending of small bodies of troops as consular guards if necessarily.[[81]](#footnote-81) A problem, however, soon arose regarding the protection of the Oil Syndicate installations in the south, then still at the stage of exploration. It had been agreed expenses of the oil services must be divided so half were paid be by London and half by India.[[82]](#footnote-82) Although the situation in the area was already deteriorating in terms of order, the British were reluctant to protect the Oil Syndicate by military means.[[83]](#footnote-83) However, by September, the situation was dangerous as the Bakhtiari guards hitherto engaged to protect the employees, were unable to cope with aggressive tribesmen.[[84]](#footnote-84) As a result, India agreed to the despatch of guards for the oil works.[[85]](#footnote-85) Two officers and 20 men duly arrived early in 1908.[[86]](#footnote-86) It was decided to retain the guards in April 1908, and there they remained after oil was struck on 26 May 1908 in Masjed Soleyman near Shushtar in southwest Iran.

The question of the indebtedness of the Iranian government itself fell primarily within the responsibility of the Foreign Office, but from time to time India was requested to consider it (according to the Government of India). India had already made the abovementioned advance towards a loan to Iran in 1903, for which the main security was the customs receipts of the southern ports, with which India was more closely connected than London.[[87]](#footnote-87) However, there was a problem of obtaining payment from the Persian government of the interest on the British loan of 1903, particularly as the Shah was under financial pressure to pay his troops.[[88]](#footnote-88) In May 1909 it was suggested that the British contribute half of a £400,000 advance by Britain and Russia to the Shah to meet urgent expenditure needed to secure the establishment of his regime. London requested the advance be made by India to which they received the response that:

It had been made clear to the FO that apart from objections on the grounds of general imperial policy to financial and other entanglements in Persia, Lord Morley could not admit that Indian interests in Persia were of a nature to justify expenditure from Indian revenues for establishing a reformed government in Persia.[[89]](#footnote-89)

In the event, it was agreed that India would accept responsibility for half of the British contribution, and London the other half. Although this proposed loan was subsequently discussed by Britain, Russia and Iran, it was never made, due to the impossibility of obtaining security for it, especially as the one reliable source of income so far, the revenues of the customs, was tied up as security for the previous British loan made in 1903.

In March 1909 an Islamist led revolt threatened Bushehr and took over the customs.[[90]](#footnote-90) As a result, on 10 April, in the interests of supporting the central government in an increasingly chaotic situation, the British sent in a warship and landed forces in Bushehr, who regained control of the customs, and ended the Islamist revolt there.[[91]](#footnote-91) Cox, the Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, was subsequently asked to account for the necessity of such a substantial expenditure. He explained that, as the revenues of the customs of the southern ports were pledged to the British government as security for the loan of 1903, and the ports had to be closely protected.[[92]](#footnote-92)

By early 1910 the Iranian government was once more urgently in need of

an advance, and the matter was discussed at the meeting of the 6th January 1910 between Nicolson and the Russian Foreign Minister, Izvolsky.[[93]](#footnote-93) The main question was from where the funds were to come, and no answer was forthcoming. In fact, Russia was refusing to pay the first part of their half-share of the above-mentioned proposed £400,000 joint loan, and wanted to impose conditions on the Iranian government.[[94]](#footnote-94)

There was thus little chance of the Anglo-Russian advance taking place, [[95]](#footnote-95) making the withdrawal of Russian troops in the north unlikely. Meanwhile the Government of India was pursuing the payment of the interest on its debt of £300,000, which now stood at £314,281, and demanded to know when it would receive the receipts of the Persian Gulf ports.[[96]](#footnote-96)

There was growing insecurity on the roads particularly between Shiraz and Isfahan, and in Shiraz itself, for which India had been requested to send a change of guard. [[97]](#footnote-97) However, a new proposal arose in late 1910 to establish a gendarmerie recruited from Sweden, and the situation was somewhat alleviated by the actual arrival of Swedish gendarmes in August 1911.[[98]](#footnote-98)

By the end of 1911 the level of disorder in Iran was such that Russia decided to send in troops on 11 November 1911 and they soon reached as far as Rasht. At this point Curzon, in London, made a speech in support of Iranian nationalism,[[99]](#footnote-99) thereby indicating a failure to understand the financial implications of the situation, which he did not mention. Grey took a more pragmatic stand, and threatened to resign if the Russians extended their occupation, which would end the Anglo-Russian Agreement.[[100]](#footnote-100) Russia stopped short of taking Tehran but called for the dismissal of Morgan Shuster, the American financial advisor to the Iranian Government, who in their view, had shown insufficient respect for Russian interests in the north. The Russians, moreover, further demanded a payment of 150,000 roubles as compensation for the military expedition necessitated by his policy.[[101]](#footnote-101)

Britain, given its policy of only deploying troops to protect its interests in the south, confined its actions over the Russian occupation to verbal protests. More specifically, it objected to heavy Russian financial demands in the North as being too great a burden on Iran, particularly as it would prevent her from restoring security on the trade routes in the south.[[102]](#footnote-102) In fact, during 1911-12, Russia was establishing a military regime of occupation in the north. However, seemingly the understanding of 1907 held with regard to the south up till World War I, risky expansionist policies having been relinquished by the Russians as a result of the Revolution of 1905. [[103]](#footnote-103)

By 1911, the British attitude was also shifting. Initially, a suggestion to send troops to the towns in southern Iran was rejected by India on the grounds that its policy was to maintain order in the Gulf ports, and only occasionally disembark troops elsewhere. Therefore, the Secretary of State for India would not sanction any expenditure for this plan, on the grounds of military costs to India, and the negative view of public opinion there.[[104]](#footnote-104)

However, the situation altered after the entry of Iranian soldiers into the consulate in Shiraz, and an attack on the British Consul, Walter Smart, travelling with an escort of Indian sowars. India therefore agreed that troops should be sent solely for the protection of the life and property of British subjects in Iran.[[105]](#footnote-105) Further, 160 infantry had been landed at Bushehr on 30 December 1911, and 100 more on 2 January 1912, to ensure the town was secure. However, by 1911 the situation with regard to order in the south was no longer a concern simply on account of disorder. The British were anxious to protect the south effectively to avoid giving Russia a pretext to move into the neutral zone,[[106]](#footnote-106) (especially after the Russian ultimatum over Shuster’s policies in November 1911). Such a development would not simply mean an increase in the Russian area, but also a dangerous coterminous British-Russian Border. [[107]](#footnote-107) (In other words, the British movement of troops was no longer simply responsive, but becoming strategic with a view to defending the British zone against the Russians.) A new detachment of consular guards from India was sent to Shiraz, and it included a Maxim gun and crew.[[108]](#footnote-108) Thus the government of India showed an increasing need and willingness to send troops to Iran, where in the past it had refused, and therefore also demonstrated commitment to deal with the problem of keeping order in the south. Meanwhile the opposition in London ignored the growing need to protect British interests in view of the disorders in the south, and continued to champion constitutional government despite its inability to keep order.[[109]](#footnote-109)

By 1912, the increasing disorder in Iran was noted by India, along with the growth in the number of Russian troops in the north. By now the British had two main objectives: to maintain British interests and security on the roads, and to be prepared to act in emergencies. The number of British troops in the south (then mostly employed as guards), could not be reduced. It was noted that as there were no Iranian government funds for the administration of the provinces, there were no troops and no means to enforce order. Further, the tribesmen and peasantry were well-armed. As a result, trade was dwindling.[[110]](#footnote-110) The pressure on the Government of India to send troops was growing with a consequent need for greater expenditure.

In a response to an appeal from Kerman in 1913 for British officers to assist in securely the trade route which was seriously hampered by disturbances, India considered that the Iranian government had no grounds to complain if British officers were brought into ‘their own sphere’. Nor would they have reason to argue that as a *quid pro quo* Russian officers could be appointed in the north, where there was already a large number of Russian troops.[[111]](#footnote-111) Loans were therefore secured on the southern customs receipts at an interest rate of 7% per annum. The total amount advanced in 1912-13 was £440,000,[[112]](#footnote-112) so Britain was relentlessly drawn into increasing cost to protect its interests in Iran.

**Situation 1914**

On the eve of World War I, whatever the differences between them, Britain was bound to Russia not only by the Triple Entente, but also by the situation in Iran. The heart of the matter was the vital necessity of protecting the route to India, to which other considerations and differences with the Russians, no matter how significant, had to be sacrificed. In July 1914, the Clerk Memorandum argued that the independence of Iran in the Russian zone had long been a fiction, and any attempt to preserve it was ‘a waste of powder’. It continued that, ‘We are, moreover, in the process alienating the friendship, and keeping alive the suspicions of the one power with whom it is our paramount duty to cultivate the most cordial relations.’[[113]](#footnote-113)

Fundamentally the British policy towards Iran, was military and strategic, with a political and diplomatic superstructure built on the need to protect the route to India. Being military, and therefore liable to incur large expenditure it was very carefully costed. In this respect it resembles the Palestine Mandate between 1918 and 1948, itself constructed to protect the route to India at the Suez Canal stage. The policy was viewed by the contemporary liberal opposition as constructed by Grey to deal with Russia as a threat to British security at the expense of Iran.[[114]](#footnote-114) Grey was seen ‘desperate to get out of the Iranian bind’ and as being willing ‘to speed up the Iranian military occupation of Tabriz (in 1909) before further complications could arise in the Iranian civil war’.[[115]](#footnote-115) Such an interpretation fails to take account of his underlying objective, to try and settle the situation in the north, and stabilize the country so as to protect British interests in the South, and the route to India. In reality, what was termed ‘Grey’s policy’ towards Iran was simply a continuation of the long-term British policy of defending a section of the route to India in that country. As such it also formed part of an overall imperial defence policy in a changing world, one where Germany was emerging as a dangerous naval rival. In Europe the policy led Britain to ally with Russia. As a result, in Iran Britain had to defend her most vital interests (i.e.in the south), but also to propitiate Russia by tolerating her growing occupation in the north, whilst being prepared to draw a line in the Neutral Zone of the Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1907.

(9319 words)

1. See, for example, Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran between Two Revolutions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982:108); Chosroe Chaqueri, *The Soviet Socialist Republic of Iran 1920-21* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995: 37); Cyrus Ghani, *Iran and the Rise of Reza Shah* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998: 13). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. M.E. Yapp, *Strategies of British India. Britain, Iran and Afghanistan, 1798-1850* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980: 590). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Quoted in R.L Greaves *Persia and the Defence of India 1884-1892* (London: Athlone Press, 1959: 25). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. In the late nineteenth century, for example, India was paying twelve seventeenths of the cost of the British establishment in Iran. Greaves, 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Madan Paul Singh, *The Indian Army under the East India Company* (New Delhi: Sterling Publications, 1976: 92, 93, quoting J.W. Kaye, Administrator of the East India Company, London, 1852). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Dharmar Kumar, ‘The Fiscal System’ in *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983: 932, 933.) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. H. Lyman Stebbins, ‘British Imperialism, Regionalism and Nationalism in Iran, 1890-1919’ in *Iran Facing Others*, eds Abbas Amanat and Farzin Vejdani, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012:152, 153). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Edward Ingram, Britain’s Persia Connection 1798-1828 (Oxford:Clarendon

   Press, 1992: 40). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Ingram, 150. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. For details see Denis Wright, The English amongst the Persians (London: Heinemann, 1977: 4). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Yapp, Strategies,41-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. NA, No. 5, 4 Apr. 1809, FO 60/2. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. NA, No. 14, 18 May 1809, FO 60/2. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. NA, No. 20, 25 Oct. 1809, FO 60/2. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. NA, No. 30 Jan. 1810, FO 60/3, 62.

    [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. NA, East India Company to Dundas, President of the Board of Control for India, 22 Feb. 1810, FO 60/4, 152. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. NA, 17 Sept. 1810, FO 60/4; No. 4, 4 May 1814, FO 60/9; NA, No. 4, 27 March 1811, and No. 8, 27 Oct. 1811, FO 60/6; NA, No. 4, 4 May1814, FO 60/9. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. NA, 26 Nov. 1812, FO 60/7, 170. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. NA, No. 33, 24 Dec. 1812, FO 60/7. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. NA, 10 July 1813, FO 60/8. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. NA, 21 Jan. 1825, FO 60/25, 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. NA, No. 24, 28 Nov. 1825, FO 60/25. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. NA, Canning to Wynn, 9 Oct. 1826, FO60/29, 95. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. NA, Copy of letter from the Governor General of India in 17 December 1826, FO 60/30, 109. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. NA, MacDonald to Chairman of the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors. 21 April 1827 FO 60/30. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Macdonald to the Secret Committee, 12 October 1827, IOR, I.O. Persia/41 quoted in Edward Ingram ‘Family and Faction the Great Game in Asia. The Struggle over the Persian Mission, 1828-1835’ Middle Eastern Studies, 17, 1981, 296. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. NA, for details of British military support and its extent, particularly the forced march of Henry Bethune, see No. 24, 15 April 1835, FO 65/217. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. NA, encl.3 in No. 65, 16 July 1836, FO 60/41. See also, J. B. Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf (Oxford: OUP, 1968 :293). [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. NA, No 56, 1 Aug. 1837, FO 60/50. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. NA, No. 24, 11 April 1838, FO 60/57. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. NA, McNeill to Auckland private, 11 April 1938 FO 60/57. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. NA, No 46 1 July 1838, FO 248/85. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. NA, No. 57, 12 Oct. 1838, FO 248/91. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Kelly, Persian Gulf, 297. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. NA, 24 Oct. 1838, encl. in No. 58, 7 Nov. 1838, FO 248/91. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. In fact, the Indian interest lingered on in the form of a coaling station till 1844, when, at the urging of London, it was finally removed on 1 May. See NA, Hennell to Sheil, No. 307, 25 June 1844, FO 248/113. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. NA, No. 40, 3 Aug. 1838, FO 60/58. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. NA, No. 20, 9 Sept. 1838, FO 60/59. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. NA, No. 4, 14 August 1838, FO 60/59. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. NA, No. 81, 19 Sept. 1848 FO 60/138. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. NA, No. 91, 3 Oct. 1848, and No. 96 27 Oct. 1848, FO 60/138. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. NA, No. 13, 26 Feb. 1849, FO 60/144. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. NA, No. 97, 28 Oct. 1848, FO 60/138. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. NA, No. 4, 26 Jan 1849, FO 60/144. The Shah was entirely guided by his advice. On the army see also NA, No. 15, 26 February 1849, FO 60/144, No. 37, 24 March 1850, FO 60/150, and No. 64, 25 May 1850, FO 60/152. The Amir improved the pay and conditions of a considerable body of troops in Tehran, who were devoted to his interests. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. NA, No. 7, 31 Jan. 1849, FO 60/144. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. NA, No. 18, 17 March 1849, FO 60/144. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. NA, No. 20, 25 March 1849, FO 60/144. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. NA, No.37, 25 March 1850, FO 60/150; No. 64 25 May 1850, FO 60/151. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. NA, No. 182, 13 October 1851, FO 60/163. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. NA, No. 203, 18 November 1851, FO 60/164. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. NA, No. 203, 21 November 1851, FO 60/164. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. NA, No. 209, 21 November 1851, FO 60/164. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. NA, No. 214, 26 November 1851, FO 60/164. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. NA, No. 9, 16 January 1852 FO 60/169. The veins in his limbs were cut, so he took four hours to die. He died because his influence had become an anomaly in the absolutist power structure of Iran, particularly as he was Amir Nizam (Commander-in-Chief of the Army). In addition he was an Azerbaijani, so the manner of his death was probably intended as a warning by the Qajar dynasty to its most potentially dangerous enemies, his followers in the army, recruited largely from Azerbaijan, and in Azerbaijan itself. On the Qajars involved, see also Feridun Adamiyat, Amir Kabir va Iran (Tehran: Intisharat-i Kharazmi, 1354/1975: 723). [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. NA, No. 2, 4 January 1856, FO 60/208 and No. 32, 7 March 1856, FO 60/208. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. NA, No. 25, 15 Feb. 1856, FO 60/208. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. NA, No. 76, 25 August 1856, FO 60/209. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. NA, No. 76, 23 October 1856, FO 60/212. Russia was then withdrawing resources from military action to expand its industry and communications networks. No. 92, 1 November 1856, FO 60/210. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. NA, No. 26, 2 January 1857, FO 248/169, and No. 1, 2 January 1857, FO 60/217. *The Bombay Government Gazette* of 27 December 1956, reported that 10,000 persons with all their equipment and 1100 horses had landed safely IOR/R/15/1/159, 2051. Shuja‘ al-Mulk, the Governor of Shiraz, wrote to the Sadr-i Azam that 20,000 men, of whom three hundred were sappers and miners, had landed, and requested that five or six regiments be sent. No. 659, 25 Dec. 1856, IOR/R/151/1/159. Possibly he thought the siege of Herat had lasted long enough. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. NA, No. 24, 26 March 1857, FO 60/217. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. NA, No. 22, 10 April 1857, and No. 25, 20 April 1857, FO 60/217. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. On the Reuter Concession see Firuz Kazemzadeh, Russia and Britain in Persia (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013, 101-9, 118, 124, 130). [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Wright: 10, 106. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. On the granting of the tobacco concession and its consequences see Nikki Keddie, Religion and Rebellion in Iran (London: Routledge, 1966); Wright:106-8;Kazemzadeh: 248-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. NA, Lascelles to Russell, No. 106, 20 June 1893, FO 60/543.

    [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. NA, Hardinge to Lansdowne, No. 11,29 Jan. 1902, FO 60/650. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. NA, from India, 5 Feb. 1903, FO 60/676. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. NA, No. 105, 25 Feb. 1903, FO 60/1903. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. NA, private telegraphic, India to Hardinge,12 March 1903, FO 60/676. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. NA, No. 11, 17 March 1903, FO 60/676. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. NA, from Viceroy, tel. 1 April 1903, FO 60/676. This was in accordance with a recently agreed principle, recorded in the Report of the Royal Commission on the Expenditure of India, of equal division between the British and Indian governments of charges in Persia. IOR/L/PS/18/C.120, 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. NA, No. 35, 3 April 1903, No. 37, 6 April 1903, No.53. tel., 7 April 1903, FO 60/676. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. The problem was that Mohammereh, one of the most significant ports and 60 miles inland on the Shatt al-Arab River, might still be used by the Russians as security for another loan, giving them a foothold on the Persian Gulf. The British preferred phrase was ‘the customs of southern Persia’. See also IOR/L/PS/18/C. 1203, 6, 8, 9, and 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. NA, Encl. 41 in 29 February 1904, FO 60/681. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. NA, India Office, 13 July 1903, FO 60/677. It should be noted that the revenues of the Persian Gulf ports were the best security Iran could offer for a loan. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. NA, No. 143, 4 October 1905, FO 60/714. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. This phrase was used in a letter to the British Representative from the Foreign Minister, Mushir al-Daula, dated 23 Oct. 1897, which assured him that in no circumstances ‘would the control of the customs of southern Persia be ceded to a foreign power’. IOR/L/PS/18/C. 120. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. An additional factor was that after the October Revolution in 1905, the Russians retreated to defending their position in Iran and gave up risky expansional policies for the time being. Dietrich Geyer, Russian Imperialism. The Interaction of Domestic and Foreign Policy 1860-1914 (Gottingen 1977: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, and Leamington Spa 1987: Berg, 275). [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. The Secretary of State for India, however, considered it as ‘the best means to reduce army commitments in India’. Mansour Bonakdarian, Britain and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906-11 (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2006, 66). [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Mangol Bayat, Iran’s First Revolution (Oxford: OUP, 1991)

    232). The Foreign Secretary from this time was Edward Grey. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Memorandum on the Situation in Southern Persia, 16 February 1912, IOR/L/PS/18/C125, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. No 361, 1 Sept. 1909, FO 248/975. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. No. 254, 29 June 1908, FO 248/923, 539. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. NA, No. 192 Isfahan, 1907, 13 September 1907, FO 248/923, 262. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. NA, No. 305, 29 October 1907, FO 248/923, 351. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. NA, No. 21, 22 January 1908, FO 248/923, 454. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Memorandum of information for August 1909, No. 80, India 09, 1 Sept. 1909,

    IOR/L/PS/18/C/120, 1.

    [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. NA, No. 46 India, 1 March 1908, No. 101 India, 1 August 1908, FO 248/945. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. NA, Memorandum on Persia May 1909, 52 India 1909, 1st June 1909, FO 248/975. India, it would seem, did not distinguish between the Shah’s ‘reformed government’ and the previous constitutional government, both being insolvent. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. NA, Persian Gulf Diary, 28 March 1909, FO 248/ 961. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. NA, Local news summary, 11 April 1909, FO 248/961. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. NA, No. 68 India 10, 25 October 1911, Annual Admin. Report for the Persian Gulf Region for 1909, FO 248/1039. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. NA, No. 30 India 10, 1st March 1910, Memorandum on Persia January-February 1910, FO 248/1005, 4-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. NA, No. 46 India 10, Memorandum on Persia, 1st March 1910, FO 248/1005, 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. NA, 96 India 10 Memorandum on Persia 1 August 1910, FO 248/1005. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. NA, No. 323, 17 Nov. 1910, FO 416/46. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. No. 479, 29 September 1910, FO 416/45, and No. 397,1 October 1910, FO

    416/46. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. No. 331, Tel. 15 Aug. 1911, FO 416/49. British bank advances were authorized and used to establish the gendarmerie in the south, Robert McDaniel, The Shuster Mission and the Persian Constitutional Revolution (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1974, 120. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. Christopher Ross, ‘Lord Curzon and E.G. Browne confront the Persian Question’ The Historical Journal, 52, 2, June 2009, 403. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Janet Afary, The Iranian Constitutional Revolution (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996, 330). [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Afary, 331. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. Afary*,* 331. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. Geyer, *Russian Imperialism*, 275, 337. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. Memorandum on the Situation in Southern Persia, 16 February 1912,

     IOR/L/PS/18/C125, 9. In 1910 the editor of *Habl al-Matin* (who was Iranian) had been warned that he would not be permitted to remain in India unless he modified his articles, which were ‘no less offensive to the British than the Russian government’. He had argued that Britain was now in alliance with Russia, and appealed to Indian Muslims for their sympathy with their fellows in Iran, and to prevent the enemies of Islam trampling on Iran. NA, No. 24, 28 September 1910, FO 416/46. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. Ibid., p. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. NA, Admin report for 1912 61 India 13, 22nd October 1913, FO 248/1080, 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Bonakdarian, 261.

     [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. NA, No. 114 23 January 1911, FO 416/47. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. Bonakdarian, 242, 261. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. NA, Admin report for 1912 61/India 13, 22nd October 1913, FO 248/1080. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. NA, No. 175S From Simla, 317 India/13 tel., 19 June 1913, FO 248/1080. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Annual Report 1913, No. 10403, 18 February 1914, IOR/L/PS/18/C123-149, 79. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. NA, Clerk Memorandum, 23 July 1914, FO 371/2076, quoted in Rose Greaves, ‘Some Aspects of the Anglo-Russian Convention and its Working in Persia, 1907-1914’, Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*,* XXXI, 1968, 305. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. Bonakdarian, 325, 332, 339. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. Bonakdarian, 171. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)