Politics of Persian Purity: Great power Rivalry and the Emergence of Linguistic Nationalism in Early Twentieth Century Iran

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Class of 2012

A thesis submitted to the faculty of Wesleyan University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts with Departmental Honors in Sociology

Middletown, Connecticut 12 April 2012
Table of Contents:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acknowledgements</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.  Introduction</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Chapter One: 1911-1921</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Chapter Two: 1921-1925</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Chapter Three: 1925-1941</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.  Conclusion</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To JF LM & AC without whom this story would never have ended

To SL FM & JC without whom this story would never have begun
I. INTRODUCTION

In a period of thirty years that coincide with the rise and fall of Reza Shah Pahlavi (1911-1941), there emerged a quest in Iran for the “pure” Iranian identity. What I attempt is not a meditation on man’s philosophical or psychological pursuit of origins. Instead, I examine the question of “true Iranian identity” as it was posed and reposed by Iranian nationalists at a time when the country was forced to answer to the greater forces of modernism, orientalism and imperialism.

During the nineteenth century, Anglo-Russian rivalry in Iran had played out through a series of economic concessions between the two great powers. In turn, the monarchs of the financially bankrupt and militarily incompetent Qajar dynasty endeavored to make a profit by selling away Iran’s natural resources.1 Observing the steady decay of the central government, a newly formed group of Iranian intellectuals sought to fortify the country against European domination. This involved a process of reinventing a past in which modern political concepts such as patriotism, self-reliance and national unity could be imagined. In order to confer legitimacy to this new political project, intellectuals looked to Iran’s pre-Islamic past to reimagine an “authentic” modern nation. The contingent forgetting and remembering of the past served as an invaluable rhetorical tool by which otherwise controversial political moves were disguised as expressions of “true” Iranian character. I propose that, although propagated as “purely Persian,” the twentieth-century nationalist project was informed in its entirety

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1 Keddie and Ghaffary, *Qajar Iran and the Rise of Reza Khan*, 15. Following two Russo-Persian wars, Qajar rulers granted Russia vast concessions of northern territories in the Treaties of Gulistan (1812) and Turkmanchai (1821). On the other hand, the British were granted exclusive rights to the exploitation of tobacco (1872) and oil (1901).
by the ways in which Iran came into contact with modern nations of the West, most notably, Britain, Russia, France, Turkey, Germany and the United States.

In the course of my research, I have found that the account I provide fits best into three distinct periods. Chapter one (1911-1921) begins with an Anglo-Russian occupation triggered by the presence of an American in Iran. From the Great War, a new nationalist project emerged as Iranian intellectuals looked to Germany as a check against the double menace of the British Raj and the Russian Bear. By tracing the intellectual and political growth of Berlin-based exiles, I attempt to locate the origins of the statist and secular pro-German nationalism that grew to dominate Iran during the Pahlavi state. As the Qajar state remained dependent on Allied forces, this movement was originally oppositional to the state. By war’s end, Britain had moved to consolidate its power over Iran, but the threat of Bolshevism prompted the British to reconsider their plans. Chapter one ends with the 1921 coup d’état and the establishment of Reza Khan as Army Commander.

Chapter two (1921-1925) begins with Reza Khan’s march on the capital and ends with his coronation. As the future shah attempted to consolidate his power over the state, Iran entered an age of nation-building. For the first time in Iran’s political history, the state began self-consciously using nationalism as its political ideology. During this period, the intellectuals introduced in chapter one carried out the work of reconciling Iran with the new demands of modernity. These Iranians attempted to forge a stronger alliance with Germany through a propagation of nineteenth-century Orientalist scholarship such as Indo-Aryan theory. European archaeologists and philologists were praised for having “scientifically proven” the natural union of Germans and Iranians.
In chapter three (1925-1941), I examine the role of the Pahlavi state vis-à-vis the emergence of societal and linguistic reforms. With the help of Western-educated Iranians, the new Shah sought to build a modern, autonomous Iran in its former image as the center of a great civilization. The existence of tribal, regional and linguistic disunity, however, came as an obstacle to his centralization of state power. The Persian language, the locus of cultural memory, was propagated both militarily and educationally as the answer to national unity. The language was pruned of its “foreign” elements, but the definition of “foreign,” like the definition of “Iranian,” remained contingent on broader political and social projects. Ultimately, Reza Shah’s violent and inflexible implementation of “modern” reform alienated him from the intellectuals who had once shared in his vision. In his last years, the Shah’s close economic and political ties to Nazi Germany prompted an Anglo-Russian invasion and his forced abdication.

Historical Prelude

Culminating in 1906 with a Constitutional Revolution, the first stage of nationalism in Iran was aimed at limiting the power of the monarchy. Linguistically, this involved the creation of a new national lexicon for Iran. Weary of adopting a Western term to fight Western domination, European-educated intellectuals chose the term *millat* as the Persian equivalent for nation.\(^2\) Previously symbolizing a “community of believers,” *millat* was removed from its original Islamic context and instead attached to “the life-giving mother-nation” and the “mother tongue.”\(^3\) By grounding the Iranian community

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\(^2\) The English term “nation” originates from the Latin *natio* meaning literally “that which has been born.” Prior to its current usage, it was used to denote a group related by birth or place of origin.

\(^3\) Tavakoli-Targhi, “Refashioning Iran,” 78.
in the Iranian soil, intellectuals were able to argue that the territorial concessions made to Russia by the imperial government had been against the “national will” (bimmat-i milli).

In the five years leading up to the Constitutional Revolution (1900-1905), the Qajar administration financed three royal tours of Europe by borrowing over twenty-two million rubles from Russia. Alarmed by the growth of Russian loans and concessions, the secular intelligentsia formed a coalition with the ulema (the Shi’a clergy) and the bazaaris (the merchant class) to organize against the regime. With Russian troops occupied in a war with Japan in 1905, Iranians seized the moment to act. Hoping to regain control over Iran, Britain aligned itself with the Iranian revolutionaries. In July 1906, some fourteen thousand clerics and merchants were provided sanctuary (bast) at the British legation in Tehran. Although the protesters were predominantly clerics and merchants, secular pro-constitutional intellectuals were successful in putting forth the idea of a representative assembly or Majles. Lacking imperial muscle, the Qajar administration was forced to comply. In October 1906, the first Majles convened. While it seemed the age of reform had dawned at last, a new danger soon appeared.

As Germany emerged as a threat to Britain, the British government negotiated an entente with Russia in 1907, which included a treaty that divided Iran into three spheres: a Russian in the north, a British in the south and an Iranian in between. Situated between two imperial powers, the new national assembly recognized the urgent need to create a financially independent state. As the United States had no conspicuous record of imperialism in Iran, the Majles hired American William Morgan Shuster as treasurer-

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6 Ibid., 70.
general of Iran in May 1911. By November, Russia had sent an ultimatum demanding his dismissal. By December, there was an Anglo-Russian invasion of Iran.\textsuperscript{7}

When the Majles was forced to dissolve, the constitutionalist deputies left with a strong message. The following speech was delivered to the representatives of Great Britain:

Permit me to relate a parable. A horse was fleeing from the pursuit of a wild beast. A man passed by and said to the horse, “I will mount you, if you wish it, and bring you out to a world where no beast of prey can reach you.” The horse obeyed, and was saved from his enemy, but alas! the rider who had saved him refused to dismount, and is sitting on his back to the present day. It is the ardent desire of Persia, and we beg you to inform the British nation of this, that the rider should dismount.\textsuperscript{8}

\textsuperscript{7} Ibid., 71.
\textsuperscript{8} Browne, \textit{A Literary History of Persia, Volume 1}, 430.
II. CHAPTER ONE: 1911-1921

Rising antagonism between constitutional nationalist deputies, the Qajar administration and foreign imperialist powers in the aftermath of the Constitutional Revolution marked a turbulent beginning for Iran at the turn of the twentieth century. Following the Russian ultimatum on American Morgan Shuster and the subsequent military invasion of 1911, the most radical delegates of the Iranian parliament (Majles) were exiled and their newspapers disbanded. The third Majles would not sit until 1914 and the constitutional movement had come to an early end. While the Qajar government fell deeper into foreign dependence, a new nationalist project began to take shape, which, unlike its constitutional predecessor, was no longer ideologically or politically ecumenical. In the years leading up to World War I, this new model of nationalism, as it was mediated through the popular press, moved in a direction that was increasingly secularist, statist and rooted in Iran’s mythical pre-Islamic past.

Situated between British and Russian spheres of influence, Iran was quickly targeted as a strategic location going into the First World War. Wanting a strong loyal army, the collapsing Qajar state lacked the power necessary to defend Iran’s borders and thus left the country highly susceptible to external forces. While the central government formally declared neutrality, Iran nonetheless came to be used as a battleground for four warring armies. By 1914, the Turks had moved into Azerbaijan in the northwest and the Germans, capitalizing on anti-British and anti-Russian sentiments, encouraged Iranians to accept the Ottoman sultan’s declaration of jihad (holy war) against the Triple Entente: France, Britain and Russia.

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9 Keddie and Richard, Modern Iran, 73.
10 Ibid.
In the same year, feeling strong pressure from Iranian statesmen, Russia agreed to allow elections for the third Majles to resume under the condition that no Democrat run for office.\textsuperscript{11} With a long-standing aversion to British and Russian interference in Iran, it was no secret that Democrats and other staunch nationalists leaned strongly towards Germany. By the second round of votes, Democratic delegates occupied more seats than any other party in 1915 despite the Russian ban. As German influence began to grow amongst the Majles, rumors began to circulate that the government was secretly negotiating with the Central powers.\textsuperscript{12} With British approval, in November 1915 Russian troops began to march southeast from Qazvin towards Tehran.\textsuperscript{13} Fearing an Allied offense, Majles deputies and nationalist newspaper editors banded together with German officials in a mass exodus south for the city of Qom, and then Kermanshah, to form a new provisional government.\textsuperscript{14} Reports began to circulate that the young Ahmad Qajar Shah had tried to “ride off on horseback to join the Germans” and the fleeing deputies, but that Allied forces and his own pro-British administration had convinced him otherwise.\textsuperscript{15}

Having forced the dissolution of the third Majles, Russia and Britain had a free hand in selecting officials and official policy in Tehran. As a result, all newspapers

\textsuperscript{11} Ettehadieh, “Constitutional Revolution V. Political Parties of the Constitutional Period.”
\textsuperscript{12} Ettehadieh, “Constitutional Revolution Iv.”
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{14} Keddie and Richard, \textit{Modern Iran}, 74.
\textsuperscript{15} Sykes, \textit{A History of Persia}, \\textit{Vol. II}, 448. In the following passage, Sir Percy Sykes narrates a story used by the British government to delegitimize the central government’s neutrality during the war: “On November 15 there was a trial of strength between the hostile powers. The Shah, unnerved, piteously sought advice on ever side, and at one time had apparently made up his mind to quit the capital and drive to Shah Abdul Azim, where the ministers of the Central Powers were awaiting him. But the British and Russian Ministers pointed out that by breaking his neutrality and joining the representatives of the Central Powers His Majesty would endanger his throne. Then Farman Farma appeared on the scene and, as a Prince of the Kajar tribe, appealed to the Shah not to wreck the dynasty ; and so fervid and so cogent were his arguments that the Shah decided to remain at Teheran. Yet, late at night, he was seized with a panic and wished to ride off on horseback to join the Germans. Farman Farma, however, was watching and prevented this act of madness…There were many rumours of an alliance.”
operating within the capital were shut down except for two: the pro-British *R’ad*¹⁶, edited by Sayyed Zia-al-din Tabataba’i and the pro-Russian *‘Asr-e jadid*, edited by ‘Abd-al-Hamid Khan Matin-al-Saltana.¹⁷ Facing new censorship laws and fearing the encroachment of Allied forces, wartime journalists and critics of Iranian foreign policy found it increasingly difficult to circulate their views from within and found that exile was quickly becoming their best option. Seeing a window of opportunity, Germany began inviting Iranian statesmen, intellectuals and students to form a Persian Committee that would disseminate propaganda from the safety of Berlin.¹⁸

Intrigued by the possibility of creating a nationalist government in Iran, the Germans chose Hasan Taqizadeh, a radical Democrat who had played an instrumental role in the constitutional reforms, to lead the new circle of heterodox intellectuals. Having attended the American Presbyterian Mission School in Tabriz, Taqizadeh had come into contact with European history and epistemology at a young age, which greatly informed his criticism of clerical conservatism and the Qajar monarchy.¹⁹ After having been wrongfully implicated by Mohammad Ali Shah in the assassination of a conservative cleric, the young constitutionalist deputy took political asylum in the British Embassy.²⁰ Conditional on his promise to leave Iran, Taqizadeh was granted reprieve in July 1910 at which point he left for Istanbul and completed his studies as a graduate in

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¹⁶ The newspaper operated until the 1921 coup d’état when Tabataba’i, the pro-British editor, was made prime minister.
¹⁷ Ettehadieh, “Constitutional Revolution Iv.”
¹⁹ Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran*, 50.
²⁰ Following a successful royalist coup d’état in 1908, Mohammad Ali Shah had taken the thrown and, with the help of Russian officers, forced the closure of the Majles. Two years later, the assassination of cleric Sayyed Abdollah Behbehani caused a violent confrontation between the secular and religious parties of the Majles. At this time, Taqizadeh and seventy of his pro-constitutionalist colleagues took refuge in the British Embassy in Tehran where they were pursued by the shah’s Russian-backed forces. This then prompted British monarch King Edward VII to make a direct public plea for the release of the legation and the negotiation of reprieves for the Iranian refugees.
modern languages. Motivated by rising action in the wake of a Russian invasion, Taqizadeh left Istanbul in late 1912 making his way to Paris, London and New York where he worked as a travelling revolutionary-scholar before finally settling in Berlin. In addition to drafting Iranian expatriates for his cause, he met with governmental officials inside the capitals to campaign for Russian expulsion from Iran. His presence in London was particularly important as he worked in conjunction with Orientalist scholar Edward Granville Browne with whom he had exchanged many correspondences to present his case before the British House of Commons. When Taqizadeh arrived in England to advocate the hindrance of Russian interventions on the behalf of his nation, he was vastly disappointed with his ally’s inability to gain influence over the British Foreign Office.

Identifying himself as “an admirer,” Browne had initially reached out to Taqizadeh following the 1908 royalist coup with a proposition: “…I expect of [you], whenever expedient, to compose a summary of the history and events of that calamitous day, so I can translate it in order to accurately inform the public here.” In the four years between Browne’s first letters to Taqizadeh and Taqizadeh’s arrival in London, the British had concluded that an alliance with Russia was in the nation’s best interests. With World War I on the horizon, Britain could not have intervened on behalf of the

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21 Martin, “Constitutional Revolution I: Events.”
22 Marashi, Nationalizing Iran, 51–52.
23 Ibid., 52.
24 Browne and Amanat, The Persian Revolution of 1905-1909, XXXVIII–XXXIX. In a letter to Browne, Taqizadeh wrote: “I had hoped that soon after [my] arrival in London I could visit a few members of the Parliament...Now I see that for almost forty days I have sat in a room with my friends (who had also come here for the same purpose), and have been unable to find anyone [to whom we could express our views]...you should know this too, that all of Iran’s conviction, confidence, and hope, rest with England.” To this accusation, Browne responded in a letter on the following day: “But what can an uninfluential individual do with contrivances of rulers, ministers, and tyrants...I am ashamed in your presence. But my shame is not due to [any] fault of my own. It is due to [constraints of] time and place. Nevertheless, I am always aware of Iran and its welfare.”
25 Ibid., XXXVII–XXXVIII.
constitutional party, because such an act against the Russian-backed Shah would have been interpreted as a clear and direct affront to the Russians themselves. With this in mind, Browne’s “inside” informants of the British consular service in Iran advised him against his support for nationalists and his allegiance to Taqizadeh on at least two documented occasions.26

The first word of caution came from Major C.B. Stokes, the military attaché at the British legation from 1907 to 1912 to whom Browne had sent a copy of his forthcoming book on the events of the revolution. In a letter dated June 20, 1910, he wrote:

I have read the pages you kindly sent me with deep interest and think the book is excellent. I venture to suggest that—as many people think Taqizada a “violent” “anarchist” etc.—the less you mention him as the source of your information, the better.27

The second came from George P. Churchill, the Oriental Secretary at the legation, who feared that Browne was not fully aware of the larger implications of his loyalties. In a letter dated July 15, 1910, he wrote:

I am afraid [the constitutionalists] have been very injudicious and have done themselves and their cause a lot of harm. To begin with I must explain that there is a group in the Majliss…It is composed to Taki Zadeh, Hussein Kuli Khan, Sheikh Hashtrudi, Saikh Hezret…etc. They are inveterate enemies of Russia primarily and of Sipahdar because they consider he is Russophile. They encourage the press to attack Russia & in fact carry on such a propaganda that they are exasperating Russia completely. They do not seem to be able to grasp the fact that if Russia

26 Both warnings date from the two-month period during which Taqizadeh had been forced to take refuge in the British Embassy in Tehran.

really loses patience nothing on earth can save them…I see the Russians
daily and I know what they feel.28

Churchill made it clear to Browne that, in the event of a Russian invasion of Iran,
the British would not be coming to the defense of the Iranians. Paying heed to these
letters, when Browne published *The Persian Revolution 1905-1909* in 1910, he did not make
mention of Taqizadeh’s role as informant. With general reference to Iranian nationalists,
he wrote that “powerful interests and prejudices have been against them, and
misapprehensions as to their aims and motives have prevailed.”29 Browne’s apparent
attempt to distance himself from the nationalist agenda was perhaps best captured in a
skeptical review of *The Persian Revolution* found in the *New York Times*:

Mr. Browne believes that national diversity is a higher law and a more
desirable state than uniformity. But such a conclusion is open to grave
doubts in days when rapid communication, commercial enterprise and
national ambitions seem to be welding the peoples of the world into a
more homogeneous whole. With Persia as a battleground for Russia and
England, the future of this youngster in democracy seems very
unpromising indeed.30

Although united for a time by a shared dream of a constitutional Iran, Taqizadeh
and Browne had irreconcilably different visions of the country’s future. Having fallen out
of the young Iranian’s good graces, Browne was denounced by Taqizadeh as having
published a final draft filled with “flagrant errors.”31 Taqizadeh believed strongly that the
Iranian national project had to be one of unification and, furthermore, did not intend to
keep his convictions secret.

28 Ibid., XXXII.
29 Ibid., xx.
30 Ibid., LV–LVI. The Times was referencing the following passage found in the preface of *The Persian
Revolution*: “That is in this world diversity, not uniformity, is the higher law and the more desirable state.”
31 Ibid., XL.
Leaving England abruptly in May 1913, Taqizadeh spent the eighteen months leading up to World War I in New York. Given American isolationist policies on the eve of war, it is unsure what he sought to accomplish; however, it was during his time in the United States that he was contacted and recruited by German agents. Although the Brits and the Americans had both intervened on behalf of nationalists during the constitutional revolution, Taqizadeh’s respective missions failed and he, therefore, had no qualms in directing the Persian Committee and its adjunct, the “Iranian Committee for Cooperation with Germany.” By 1915, Taqizadeh’s coalition was sending emissaries to the south of Iran to aid Colonel Wassmuss, known as the “German Lawrence,” in his mission to mobilize civilians against the British. When German agents began galvanizing southern tribes into revolt, Britain responded unilaterally by creating a local militia called the South Persian Rifles to regain control of the region. Sir Percy Sykes, the commanding general, favored, as the Germans had, a rhetoric of propaganda over open hostility, and told those recruited that the militia was “being raised for the Shah’s Government and was Persian in its allegiance.”

Unhappy with low levels of Iranian resistance in January 1916, Taqizadeh began the publication of a review, *Kaveh*, grounded in the radically secularist, pre-Islamic-based

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32 Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran*, 52.
33 Ibid.
34 Sykes, *A History of Persia, Vol. II*, 443. Sir Percy Sykes, commander of the South Persian Rifles, described his own disgust at German involvement in *A History of Persia*, a massive work published in two volumes after WWI: “The Germans carried on propaganda which was distinctly anti-Christian and appealed to the fanaticism of Islam, their agents proclaiming the conversion of the German nation and of their monarch to the teachings of Mohamed, and referring to His Majesty as “Haji Wilhelm”! This was the Kaiser who towards the end of July 1914, wrote in his own hand on a state paper the suggestion that, if the British would condone an Austro-Serbian war, they might perhaps have Persia as their reward.”
35 Ibid., 472. Concerning being Persian ‘in allegiance’, it is interesting to note that Sir Sykes had already written extensively on Persia including a person account entitled *The Glory of the Shia World*; his ambition, as stated in the prefatory note, was to “write a second *Haji Baba*, which would serve as a true picture of Persia ten years ago, before constitutional reform appeared on the horizon.” Debunking rumors that he had not been its sole author, he wrote, “for high authorities to consider that my work might have been written by a Persian constitutes high praise.”
theories of nineteenth century intellectuals like Akhundzadeh, which grew to become highly influential in propagating the nationalist interests of Iran.\textsuperscript{36} The semi-monthly Persian-language periodical circulated widely among expatriates in Europe, the Ottoman Empire, India and Iran.\textsuperscript{37} While advocating a pro-German brand of political journalism, Taqizadeh covered the events of the war in his own uniquely “Persian” style by incorporating historical, cultural and literary pieces on Iran’s pre-Islamic past. His intellectual development from the time of the constitutional revolution up until the interwar years in Berlin reflect the political and cultural trajectory of Iran’s nationalist movement. Beginning with the 1911 Russian invasion and thus the end of the constitutional movement, there was a significant shift in the nationalist project, which would emerge from the war to demand the fall of Qajar imperial rule and the rise of the new Pahlavi state (the rise of Reza Khan (Pahlavi) from 1921-1925). By tracing Taqizadeh’s line of thought during this decade of intellectual inquiry, it is possible to locate the origins of the modern nationalism that would dominate Iran for much of the twentieth century.

The popularization and politicization of Iran’s pre-Islamic history as the bedrock for modern identity was a fundamental goal of the Berlin-based nationalists. National myth making was at the very heart of Taqizadeh’s project and he deliberately used classical Persian metaphors to communicate political messages. The journal itself, \textit{Kaveh}, was named after a legendary blacksmith who had led a successful uprising against the evil, snake-eating Zahhak in a story from Ferdowsi’s epic, the \textit{Shahnameh} (Book of Kings).\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{36} Marashi, \textit{Nationalizing Iran}, 76.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 52.
\textsuperscript{38} Browne, \textit{Literary History} 114-115. E.G. Browne provides an interesting commentary on this story in volume one of \textit{A Literary History of Persia}: \textit{“This Dahák represents the snake Azht Dáhák (later Ažzdahák, Ažzdahá, “a dragon”) of the Avesta; and, with, the two snakes growing from his shoulders which require a}
As Iranians had “forgotten” their glorious past, the first issue of *Kaveh* provided a comprehensive account of the cultural and historical significance of the periodical’s eponymous hero. According to Taqizadeh, Kaveh’s name reminded every Iranian of Iran’s “ancient splendor,” thus his story was rewritten as “a national uprising” against “the tyrannical foreign king” to restore the “pure Iranian race” to power.39

In addition to a literary treatise on the historical importance of the epic Blacksmith, first issue of *Kaveh* included the traced silhouette of a Sasanian coin inscribed with the image of a Zoroastrian fire temple and a banner. Taqizadeh identified this banner as Kaveh’s and explained how it had been discovered during a nineteenth-century archaeological excavation of Pompeii where “material evidence” of pre-Islamic Iran had been found.40 Thenceforth, the cover of each issue was devoted almost entirely to a rendering of the epic scene from the *Shahnameh*. The cover featured a bearded man, recognized as Kaveh by the banner in his hands, leading his army of spear-wielding men into battle. On the bottom right hand corner of the drawing was the signature of the artist, “B. Richter,” whose German name stood out amongst the otherwise Persian script. This detail is significant insofar as it illustrates the extension of Iranian-German wartime collaboration to broader historical and cultural projects. The bond being forged between the two nations during the war had resonating effects in Iran. By 1917, journals printed

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40 Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran*, 78.
from within Iran had predicted that “pan-Germanism will take over the world with giant steps.” Still others added: “the French belong to the past, the British to the present, and the Germans to the future.”

In the backdrop of the Great War, Taqizadeh called on Iranians to be more aware of the unifying power of their own history, which provided them with the strength they needed to seek their nation’s independence. Naming his committee “the camp for the national rescue of Iran,” Taqizadeh sent a clear message to his fellow countrymen:

In the midst of this day of resurrection for the nation, several individuals from a poor and unfortunate nation—that is Iran—have gathered in Berlin—the seat of war—to consider the fate of their nation…our intention is not to sit idle but to awaken our compatriots…this is the intention of this small newspaper, to project its weak voice from Berlin to reach the ear of Iranians…our destiny is tied to the outcome of this war and our duty is to fight our enemies with all our strength to secure our independence…our hope is that Iranians will show that the spirit of the nation has not died and that a wise movement will emerge which will again raise the flag of Kaveh.

As seen in his choice of rhetoric and metaphor, Taqizadeh saw himself as an inheritor of the project of earlier nineteenth-century intellectuals like Qajar writer, poet and official Mohammad-Hoseyn Foroughi. In a history of pre-Islamic Iran, Foroughi, whose son later became a contributor to Taqizadeh’s journal, had called Kaveh’s famous banner “the national flag of Iran.” And famous intellectual Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani described Kaveh the Blacksmith (Kavah-yi Ahangar) as a revolutionary vanguard. He wrote, “because of the courage and nationalist aspirations of Kavah-yi Ahangar…

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42 Kashani-Sabet, *Frontier Fictions*, 149.
44 Tavakoli-Targhi, “Refashioning Iran,” 84.
Iranians can truly be proud that they have taught the nations of the world how to remove oppression and repel the repression of despotic kings.”

Taqizadeh retold the “despotic kings” as the Allied forces. From the safety of Berlin, which he described as “the center of the stupendous movements of the world-grasping war,” Taqizadeh called on any Iranian patriot to “awaken and incite one’s fellow residents… and appeal for the cooperation to the camp of the national jihad.” Given his reputation, it would appear counterintuitive for a man accused of irreligious politics by Iranian clerics to summon the “Iranian race” to rise to the occasion of the “great jihad” and fight against “infidels.” However, as Taqizadeh considered Germany to be the ultimate solution to Russia, it is not surprising that he allied with other Central Powers upon Germany’s request.

When Ayatollah Kashani, one of Iran’s leading religious figures, issued a fatwa prohibiting cooperation with the “‘infidel’ forces of Russia, England, Italy and France in th[e] epic national struggle,” Kaveh printed a copy of it. Recognizing the hypocrisy in privileging one infidel force (Germany) over all others, Kashani proclaimed: “although the honorable government of Germany is a stranger in our holy homeland… nonetheless it is incumbent on all Muslims to serve and support [the Germans]… I state on behalf of all the Hujjat al-Islams that as long as the Germans are kind and in accord with your views, Iranians, cooperation with them is a religious duty and obligation.”

In its original context, the term “jihad” denoted a divine institution of warfare with the intention of extending Islam to territories of disbelief or defending it from

45 Ibid., 85.
46 Kashani-Sabet, Frontier Fictions, 148.
47 Ibid., 149.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid., 146–147.
danger; however, in its nationalist reappropriation, jihad was called in the name of an
“epic national struggle,” i.e. as a national, not religious covenant.\textsuperscript{50} The usage of jihad by
champions of Iran’s pre-Islamic past was particularly paradoxical because the seventh-
century Arab-Muslim conquest of Iran had been the result of its earliest institution by
the prophet Mohammad. The \textit{Shabnameh}, from which the story of \textit{Kaveh} had been taken,
was propagated as a purely Iranian national epic insofar as it ended with the fall of the
Sassanid dynasty, that is, when the rule of the land switched from the hands of the
\textit{shahanshah} to the caliph. The subsequent conversion of Zoroastrians to Islam, an
historical event lamented by many of secular twentieth-century nationalist, was a direct
consequence of the jihad, which, according to the Prophet, had to end with the
restoration of order, i.e. when infidels had either accepted Islam or a protected status
within Islam (\textit{dhimmitude}).\textsuperscript{51}

When Kashani demanded, “Oh, Muslims! What has become of your zeal?” to
mobilize in defense of the “holy homeland,” it is clear that the Ayatollah had no interest
in a pan-Islamic movement; the “Muslims” to whom he was referring were Shi’a
Iranians.\textsuperscript{52} During the constitutional movement, the same question had been asked in a
poem written in reaction to the Anglo-Russian agreement by Malek al-Shu’araye Bahar, a
well-known poet of the late Qajar period who later became quite influential during the
Pahlavi state:

\begin{quote}
O…Iranians, Iran is in nuisance
The land of Darius is exposed to Nicolas\textsuperscript{53}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 147.
\textsuperscript{51} Glassé, \textit{The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam}, 209.
\textsuperscript{52} Kashani-Sabet, \textit{Frontier Fictions}, 146.
\textsuperscript{53} This was a reference to the tsar of Russia, Nicolas II.
The land of kings is at the mercy of monsters
Where is Islamic zeal? Where is patriotism?

My brave brothers, why such reticence?
Iran is yours, Iran is yours.\textsuperscript{54}

Although Bahar conflated “Islamic zeal” with “patriotism” a decade before Kashani, his poetry would have been accessible to a narrow social stratum, whereas an issue of \textit{Kaveh} had mass circulation. The usage of a repurposed jihad during the Great War set a precedent for its application in later political struggles of twentieth-century.\textsuperscript{55} The contradictory yet concurrent usage of religious and secular imagery, i.e. mixed pre-Islamic and Islamic metaphors, indicates that nationalists were still in the foundational stages of ideological experimentation.

While Taqizadeh and other nationalists were busy propagating patriotism with pre-Islamic themes, the real-time events of the war were not looking as favorable to an independent Iran. Britain and Russia had negotiated and signed a secret treaty in March 1915 granting the former unique rights to Iran’s neutral territory, as carved out by the Anglo-Russian Agreement; the latter was to maintain “full liberty of action” in its northern sphere.\textsuperscript{56} In return, Russia had been assured postwar control of Istanbul and the Straits. By 1917, Allied troops occupied almost all of Iran, though revolutionary turmoil in Russia had begun to weaken foreign forces in the north. Following the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II, the new Bolshevik government declared the treaty for the

\textsuperscript{54} Abdi, “Nationalism, Politics, and the Development of Archaeology in Iran,” 55.
\textsuperscript{55} Kashani-Sabet, \textit{Frontier Fictions}, 148. Jihad would be used later by nationalists to justify military warfare against the imperial government in the name of defense of the homeland.
\textsuperscript{56} Keddie and Richard, \textit{Modern Iran}, 73. Unlike the 1907 agreement, this contract divided Iran into two sections, i.e. there was no room left over for Iranians. Britain’s specific interest in these areas can be further explained by Iran’s strategic trade routes in respect to India as well as its natural resources given the recent success of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company.
division of Persia null and void and Russian troops arranged to withdraw “immediately after the cessation of military activities.”57 The October Revolution certainly marked a significant turn for Iran coming out of the war.

With the Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1907 discarded, the Qajar administration set its sights on regaining lost frontiers to the north and proceeded down the road of postwar negotiations with strong territorial ambitions. Nationalists had different reasons for celebrating. As an imperial power, Tsarist Russia had financially and militarily supported the Qajar state and its right-wing constituents.58 The central government’s loss of Russian assistance gave nationalists hope that a strong and independent Iranian state was indeed possible; yet, Iranian nationalists were not the only ones with big plans for their country. Russian disengagement from Iran had left the country fully open to British intrigue. By war’s end, many of the positions Russians had abandoned in the north had been filled with British shoes.59 In the years between 1918 and 1921, Britain saw a window of opportunity to consolidate its power over Iran and jumped at the opportunity given its advantageous position coming out of the Great War.

Whether recruited by foreign forces or simply caught in the crossfire, thousands of Iranians had died defending foreign interests and the situation inside Iran was dire. The First World War took a particularly heavy toll on Iran’s large peasant population whose land had been converted into a battleground for four years; in the north, severe famine wiped out almost a quarter of the entire population from 1918 to 1919.60 This being said, the reparations deemed justifiable, i.e. put forth, by Qajar leaders in the wake of postwar negotiations were entirely territorial. Recalling Iran’s mythical past, Iranian

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57 Kashani-Sabet, Frontier Fictions, 150.
58 Kia, “Persian Nationalism and the Campaign for Language Purification,” 18.
59 Keddie and Richard, Modern Iran, 74.
60 Ibid., 75.
foreign minister Nusrat al-Dawlah Firuz demanded territorial redress for former
Ottoman and Russian occupations dating all the way back to the mid-nineteenth century
with the “annexation by tsarist Russia of the Iranian possessions in the Caucasus.” It is
significant that the Iranian government claimed its “right” to the aforementioned regions
to be “natural” in consideration of not only anterior possession, but also race and
language. In a letter to British Foreign Secretary Lord Cuzon, Nusrat al-Dawlah Firuz
explained, “[T]he population of the countries in question are in large part of the Aryan race, they speak Persian, [and] they are Muslims.”

The Iranian government was attempting to negotiate diplomatic terms with the
hegemonic elites of Europe’s strongest colonial powers on the basis of race, language
and religion. Assuming world peace to be in the “best interest” of all parties, Nusrat al-
Dawlah argued that restoring Iran’s “natural limits” would bring order to regions of
tribal violence. The Iranian foreign minister made a plea to Cuzon on behalf of “the
aspiration of [those] populations themselves… to reenter the mother country (Mère Patrie).” Busy exploiting the race and language of a handful of “orphaned” tribes, the
Qajar administration had no voice left over when the time came to speak up for its own
“children,” the people of Iran. Needless to say, Britain remained unconvinced by Qajar
appeals to gendered patriotism or mythical ancestry and Iran was denied representation
at the Paris negotiations. With French support, the British rejected Iran’s neutrality as
superficial; both claimed that, while the administration had masqueraded on the Allied

61 Keddie and Ghaffary, Qajar Iran and the Rise of Reza Khan, 73.
62 Kashani-Sabet, Frontier Fictions, 151.
63 Ibid. In his letter, he wrote: “[I]t is in effect at the frontier that the tribes are most pillaging and
turbulent… The return to Persia of these regions will therefore contribute to putting an end to this state of
disorder.”
64 Ibid.
side, public opinion during the war had shown sympathy for the Central Powers.\textsuperscript{65} The following account provided by Sir Percy Sykes sheds light on how the Iranian Foreign Minister’s demands were met in Britain; however, as previously noted, the general was partial to all-things-Persian and reacted more gently than his fellow countrymen.

It is to be regretted that the Delegation could not be allowed to lay its case before the Peace Conference, since the refusal gave the impression that its members were being slighted, but even more regrettable is the utter lack of practical statesmanship that inspired the fantastical claims put forward by the Persian representatives. Persia, however, was not penalized for the small sense of proportion shown by her Government.\textsuperscript{66}

To a certain extent, Sir Sykes was correct insofar as Iran’s punishment would not become fully apparent until two months later (August 1919), when British foreign minister Lord Cuzon and Iranian prime minister Vosuq al-Dauleh privately settled on the Anglo-Persian Agreement. The treaty never made it through the Majles, but this did not prevent the British from beginning to implement its policies. In addition to a two million pound loan, the Qajar government was promised that “Great Britain would not claim from Persia the cost of the defense of her neutrality.”\textsuperscript{67} In exchange, Iran would effectively become a British protectorate with the British maintaining full sovereignty over all domestic spheres, including the military. Having been negotiated in full secrecy, the agreement was not received well on the international stage. A newspaper in Azerbaijan cited the Soviet stance as Greorgy Chicherin, the People’s Commissar for Foreign Affairs, espoused it:

\begin{itemize}
  \item Keddie and Ghaffary, \textit{Qajar Iran and the Rise of Reza Khan}, 73.
  \item Sykes, \textit{A History of Persia, Vol. II}, 520.
  \item Ibid., 521.
\end{itemize}
At the moment when the triumphant victor, the English beast of prey, is trying to put a noose of final enslavement around the neck of the Persian people, the Soviet government of the workers and peasants of the Russian Republic solemnly declares that it does not recognize the Anglo-Persian treaty bringing about this enslavement... The Soviet government of Russia regards as a piece of paper to which it will never accord legal force, the shameful Anglo-Persian treaty through which your rulers have sold themselves and have sold you to the English predator.68

Perhaps lacking in Marxist zeal, the following text from a quarterly report by American Minister John L. Caldwell provides an interesting depiction of conditions in Tehran under martial law:

The manner in which the Anglo-Persian treaty was consummated, against the wishes of the entire Persian public, and forced on the nation by the most unpopular Cabinet (which, as has been before explained was placed in power by the British authorities, and is held there by the presence of a British army...) is constantly in the thoughts of people even though, other than the dangerous method of secretly published articles, there is no manner in which the treaty can be opposed. Silence is enforced but so far as is known, not a single Persian who is honest and uninstigated by a hope of reward is found in favor of this treaty.69

The situation outside Tehran was not as subdued and local uprisings such as the "Jangali" militant socialist movement in the northern province of Gilan had resounding effects in the capital threatening British rule. Despite the official Soviet policy of noninvolvement, Red Army troops were sent to Iran in May 1920 and the Bolsheviks allied with Mirza Kuchik Khan, the leader of the Jangalis.70 It was largely recognized, however, that Irano-Soviet alliance was based, by and large, on the existence of a common foe, Britain. In a letter to the British Minister, the Commander of the British Military Mission wrote that, in comparison to them, "it was thought that Bolshevism

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68 Kashani-Sabet, *Frontier Fictions*, 152.
69 Avery, *The Cambridge History of Iran. 7, From Nadir Shah to the Islamic Republic / Ed. by Peter Avery.*, 345.
could not be worse and might, if their profession of securing justice for the downtrodden was sincere, be much better.”\textsuperscript{71} Accordingly, the Jangalis did not raise the banner of Marx with fire and sword, but instead, like the Berlin-based nationalists, displayed their deep-rooted patriotism with the symbol of Kaveh the Blacksmith. His emblem, the very same printed on the cover page of Taqizadeh’s \textit{Kaveh}, was used on seals, stamps, flags and posters in the northwestern province of Gilan under Communist rule.\textsuperscript{72} In an issue of \textit{Jangali}, the official newspaper of the movement, Ferdowsi’s mythical story of Kaveh was described as “the oldest picture of the hegemony of workers fighting against despotism.”\textsuperscript{73}

Reporting from Tehran on the general consensus (of Americans) concerning the Jangali movement and other nationalistic uprising in Azerbaijan and Caspian provinces in April 1920, United States Minister Caldwell wrote:

> It is believed that this growth in Bolshevism in Persia is like the former alleged pro-German sympathies of the Persians, not love for the Bolsheviks or their principles, but rather the fact that the Bolsheviks are vehemently opposed to the British—whom a great number of patriotic Persians firmly believe to be their greatest enemy…these Persians, have[e] faith in the ultimate independence of their country, which has existed independently throughout so many centuries.\textsuperscript{74}

Nonetheless, the Soviet Socialist Republic of Iran was formed in June 1920 and British commanders within the country felt the increasing need to act. In the same month, Ahmad Shah Qajar arrived in Tehran after a ten-month sojourn abroad at which time Vosuq al-Dauleh demanded unconditional power in his dealing with uprisings to

\textsuperscript{71} Abrahamian, \textit{Iran Between Two Revolutions}, 117.
\textsuperscript{72} Chaqüeri, \textit{The Soviet Socialist Republic of Iran, 1920-1921}, 406.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{74} Majd, \textit{Great Britain \& Reza Shah}, 53.
the North and West. Favoring a policy of appeasement, Ahmad Shah denied the request of the prime minister, who thereupon put in for his resignation and fled Iran for Britain.

In the meantime, having lost their champion in Vosuq, the British grew increasingly weary of the anti-British sentiments of the Bolshevik-backed tribes and began to reconsider their presence in Iran. Edmund Ironside, the strong British general who had accepted a post in Iran on the condition that he would be given a “free hand,” believed that a status quo ante, not a revolution, was in Britain’s best interest. As communicated privately (in his diary) and publicly (to the War Office), Ironside believed that the only way for Britain to “depart in peace and honor” was if a strong leader were to establish “a military dictatorship which would impose sufficient order on the Persian armed forces to prevent a Soviet invasion.” Although historians disagree over the extent of British intrigues in the coup, it is understood that by the winter of 1920, when Britain was planning to withdraw its forces, Ironside had appointed Reza Khan Savad Kouh, a former trooper of the Dutch legation in Tehran, to the rank of lieutenant-colonel in the Cossacks Brigade. Ten years later, in a letter written to a former U.S. chargé d’affaires in Tehran, Ironside wrote of the trooper-turned-shah: “I well remember the day I let him go and he made a coup d’état in Teheran for which Lord Cuzon never forgave me.”

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75 Ibid., 49–50. Caldwell described Vosuq as a British loyalist in both “body and soul.”
76 Chaquéri, The Soviet Socialist Republic of Iran, 1920-1921, 313.
77 Ibid.
78 Ibid., 315.
III. CHAPTER TWO: 1921-1925

On February 21, 1921 Reza Khan and four thousand Cossack troops marched one hundred and fifty miles from Qazvin onto the capital. Upon meeting no resistance, he declared a bloodless coup d’état:

We have only come to Tehran in order to clear the capital, make it worthy of its name as centre of the Government…a Government which would not only be the spectator of the misery of the nation; a Government which would respect the army as the supreme means of the prosperity of the country.\(^79\)

Two days earlier, stationed on the outskirts of the city, Reza Khan had already alerted the shah, his cabinet and the British legation of his forthcoming arrival. He communicated, in short, that he would be taking the liberty of securing the capital in anticipation of a Jangali offensive from the north, i.e. a Bolshevik revolution.\(^80\) He explained that the coup was not directed at the monarchy, as it held no power, but rather at the “Government,” i.e. the oligarchy of landowners and bureaucrats that instead controlled the regime.\(^81\) As a necessary precaution, Reza Khan insisted that someone new be put in charge of the central government. He recommended Sayyid Ziya al-Din Tabataba’i, the reformist editor of the official Pro-British newspaper \(R’ad\). Fearing both his head and his throne, but more so the former, the shah complied. Tabataba’i was offered premiership along with an aristocratic title suited to his new station. Having

\(^79\) Kashani-Sabet, *Frontier Fictions*, 158.  
\(^80\) Shambayati, “Coup D’état of 1299/1921.”  
\(^81\) Ibid.
initially sought dictatorship, the young journalist refused the title but assumed the office.\textsuperscript{82}

In his inaugural address as Prime Minister, Tabataba’i stood by Reza Khan’s initial explanation of the coup. Lamenting the failure of the constitutional movement, he blamed the misery of the nation on a government of “a few hundred nobles, who [held] the reins of power by inheritance, [and] sucked, leechlike, the blood of the people.”\textsuperscript{83} In the same breath, he praised His Imperial Majesty, the powerless Ahmad Shah Qajar, as the “King of kings…whose heart bleeds for the faintness and weakness of his people and realm.” Yet, the order of the day was not governmental reform, but the safekeeping of the capital.

By week’s end, the Anglo-Persian Agreement had been annulled, a Perso-Soviet Treaty of friendship had been signed and some sixty of Iran’s most influential politicians had been arrested.\textsuperscript{84} Throughout Iran, anti-British sentiments ran deep and the general consensus was that the proposed treaty had been cancelled on the grounds of its non-ratification in the national assembly. In a private letter to the British Foreign Office, the new prime minister described the abrogation of the 1919 agreement as a mere formality, and a way to “throw dust in the eyes of the Bolsheviks and native malcontents.”\textsuperscript{85} In order to deceive both the Soviets and the public, Tabataba’i continued, “it was of utmost importance that [the] pro-British (and anti-Bolshevik) character of the [new] administration should, for the present as far as possible, be disguised.”\textsuperscript{86}

\textsuperscript{82} Abrahamian, \textit{Iran Between Two Revolutions}, 118. Tabataba’i thus became the first untitled prime minister in Iran.

\textsuperscript{83} Chaqèri, \textit{The Soviet Socialist Republic of Iran, 1920-1921}, 324.

\textsuperscript{84} Keddie and Richard, \textit{Modern Iran}, 81. The Perso-Soviet treaty renounced all tsarist imperialist treaties with Iran and prohibited any “acts of hostilities” between the two nations. Taqizadeh was sent from Berlin to oversee negotiations.

\textsuperscript{85} Abrahamian, \textit{Iran Between Two Revolutions}, 118.

\textsuperscript{86} Chaqèri, \textit{The Soviet Socialist Republic of Iran, 1920-1921}, 325.
Unconvinced, the Soviets looked unfavorably at Tabataba’i’s lofty reforms such as land redistribution. Describing the general attitude of the Foreign Office, one Soviet official rejected them as empty promises aimed at “snatching away the ground from the national democratic movement for orienting toward Soviet Russia” by making a “noisy declaration promising the largest possible land reform.”87 Fearing exposure, Tabataba’i covered his tracks with a close attention to detail: he discharged British military and financial advisers, dissolved the South Persian Rifles and swept away any relics of the nascent British “protectorate.” By April 1921, a new Soviet ambassador had arrived in Tehran and the last Red Army troops had begun formal to withdraw from Gilan.

Confident in having resolved Soviet tensions, the new Prime Minister focused his attention on Iran’s internal affairs. Despite having championed large-scale reforms, Tabataba’i announced that the prosecution of the regime’s most “vampiric” officials would have to precede any official policy implementation. The “few hundred nobles” he indicted, however, were vastly powerful enemies. It was at their behest in May 1921 that he was deposed of his office and driven into exile.88 Taking advantage of the late prime minister’s departure, Reza Khan moved quickly to consolidate his power over the military and the state. Unlike the journalist, Reza Khan had willingly accepted the new military title that the shah had created for the post of Sardar-e Sepah ‘Army Commander’. From the time of the coup, he had understood the army to be the “supreme means of the prosperity of the country.” As its commander, Reza Khan went to great lengths to ensure that he would not meet the same end as his Anglophile co-conspirator.

87 Ibid., 327.
88 Ansari, Modern Iran Since 1921, 27. Tabataba’i had been offered a convenient refuge in Palestine by the British.
In the capital, martial law was imposed: governmental departments ceased operation, the press halted publication, gatherings were debarred and all bars and theaters were shut. In the provinces, military officers replaced all governors who did not willingly submit to the new government. In October, Reza Khan’s forces easily suppressed the last of the Jangali rebels who had been weakened by the departure of the Red Army and their socialist allies. By December, the head of their leader Kuchik Khan stood on display at the capital. As the initial threat of a Bolshevik revolution had passed, Reza Khan ceased pretending to have the best interests of the Qajar monarchy at heart.

In a public proclamation on the one-year anniversary of the coup, he announced:

If you reminisce a bit, you will realize that the land of Darius was on the verge of destruction because of actions of his evil and illegitimate children…I was unable to allow a group of intrigues succeed in their efforts to strangle this three-thousand-year-old country merely so that they might make a profit. This is why I brought about the coup d’état.

Given the record of previous shahs, many Iranians believed Reza Khan had been installed as a British puppet. Martial law aside, no such suspicion was strongly voiced, for Reza Khan’s ascendancy had acquired the aura of a heroic legend. According to his speech, Reza Khan intended to save the country not only from those who wanted to buy it, i.e. its imperialist stranglers, but also from those who were willing to sell it, i.e. its profit-driven rulers. In the same breath, he asserted himself as the conductor of both a coup and a campaign for remembrance. Situated within a pre-Islamic mytho-history, he was the protector of not only Iran, but also the land of Darius. Through an invocation of

89 Shambayati, “Coup D’état of 1299/1921.”
90 Keddie and Richard, Modern Iran, 81. Some of the Jangali rebels secretly fled to Russia after the Perso-Soviet Treaty.
91 Keddie and Ghaffary, Qajar Iran and the Rise of Reza Khan, 72.
pre-Islamic figures, Reza Khan had launched a critique of over one thousand years of Iranian rule.

The very year this speech was given, Reza Khan had paid his first visit to the ruins of Persepolis where German archaeologists had discovered and translated the following inscription⁹³: “I am Darius, the great King, the King of kings, King of lands peopled by all races, for long King of this great earth, the son of Vishtásp, the Achaemenian, a Persian, son of a Persian, an Aryan of Aryan descent.”⁹⁴ In this context, Reza Khan’s accusation of illegitimacy was illuminated; the “evil” ones, those responsible for the “destruction” of Iran, had not been Persians, sons of Persians, or Aryans of Aryan descent. The “bastards” to whom he was referring were the Arab and Turkic shahs who had taken the Persian throne by force following the Arab-Muslim invasions. Unlike Darius, they could not have been shahanshahi (Kings of kings) because the divine right to rule was reserved for the Zoroastrian descendents of the mythical Aryan peoples, the Kayanians.⁹⁵ Using a spiritually and temporally pre-Islamic vocabulary, Reza Khan made no mention of Allah and called his country three-thousand-years-old, which was a significant move as the official calendar of Iran began with the Hegira, i.e. Mohammad’s departure from Mecca to Medina in 622CE. Reza Khan intended to restore Iran’s ancient splendor; having chosen to speak in the singular, it became clear that he would not be doing so democratically.

After combining the Cossack Brigade of seven thousand with the gendarmerie of twelve thousand, Reza Khan more than doubled his force into a new army of five

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⁹³ Ibid., 60.
⁹⁴ Browne, A Literary History of Persia, Volume I, 94.
⁹⁵ Boyce, A History of Zoroastrianism, 105.
divisions. As commander of Iran’s first modernized institution, Reza Khan held more power in his seat as Sardar-e Sepah than the monarchy and the Majles combined. Yet, a second military coup d'état without popular support would have been far too risky; for an army of forty thousand may have been enough to seize the capital, but not the entire country. Lacking the military muscle, Reza Khan’s best chance to secure the throne was through a lawful change of dynasty. For this, he needed to win the support of the Majles and of its majority party.

After the Great War, four parties dominated Iran’s political sphere: the conservatives of the Reformist party, the radicals of the Socialist party, the revolutionaries of the Communist party and the reformers of the Revival party. Made up of prominent clerics, wealthy merchants and landed aristocrats, the Reformist party held a strong majority in the sitting National Assembly, the Fourth Majles. These conservative upper-class representatives aligned themselves politically and ideologically with the former Moderate party of the constitutional period, which had been formed as a reaction to the centralization policies of the Democrats. The second party, the Socialists, were mainly ex-Democrats with leftist leanings who still retained hopes of mobilizing the lower and middle classes. Lobbying for an “egalitarian society,” their party platform included nationalization of the means of production, equal justice for all citizens “irrespective of birth and nationality,” the right to unionize and strike, compulsory education for all children, the usage of “mother tongues” (zaban-I madari) in schools, education for women and governmental projects to eliminate rural and urban unemployment. Thirdly, the Communists allied closely to the Socialists to the extent

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96 Abrahamian, Iran Between Two Revolutions, 120.
97 Ibid.
98 Ibid., 128.
that many members of the former were also members of the latter. After the failure of the Soviet Socialist Republic in Gilan, the party was forced to completely reorganize; moving forward, it encouraged administrative centralization in the capital over provincial revolt. Its main policy objectives included unification against British imperialism, consolidation of party organization and the creation of trade unions. Despite its efforts to mobilize national peasant support, its members were predominantly Russian-educated intellectuals and Armenians or Azeris who had grown up in the northern provinces of Tabriz and Rasht. Lastly, the Revival Party consisted of ex-Democrats who, unlike the new Socialists, no longer saw reform as a project of the masses. Given the nonexistence of an urban working class in Iran, the Revivalists considered radical Socialists and Communists quite foolish in their pursuits. Instead, they hoped to end feudal states and Shi’a hegemony by consolidating power in the state.

At the start of his rise to power, Reza Khan sought to align himself with the conservative Reformists that dominated the Fourth Majles. He released the aristocrats and politicians who had been imprisoned after the coup by the former prime minister and, in turn, they had him appointed Minister of War within a month of Tabataba’i’s removal. Although Reformists had approved increases in military funding for the purposes of stamping out tribal revolt, they abruptly retracted their support when the new Minister of War proposed a bill for compulsory two-year military service. This bill threatened both landowners, who feared a reduction in their labor force, and clerics, who feared Western-style conscription would bring Western-style thought. Anticipating an impending season of elections for the Fifth Majles in early 1923, Reza Khan no longer

99 Ibid.
100 Ibid., 132–133.
102 Ibid.
needed the support of elites who were unenthusiastic about modernization. Instead, he aligned himself with the liberal, reformist and secularist platform of the Revivalists who had no doubts as to the merits of a strong national army. Among others, his would-be allies included Berlin-based journalist and statesman, Hasan Taqizadeh, influential poet and constitutionalist Mohammad-Ali Bahar, Swiss-educated jurist ‘Ali Akbar Davar, former court tutor and future prime minister Mohammad-Ali Foroughi, Zoroastrian deputy and American school of Tehran graduate Keykhosrow Shahroukh and other prominent nationalists.\textsuperscript{103} With the help of Reza Khan, i.e. via militarily secured manipulations of provincial elections, the Revivalists and Socialists won a strong majority of seats in the Fifth National Assembly.\textsuperscript{104} With Ahmad Shah Qajar informally exiled on an indefinite “European tour,” Reza Khan was appointed Iran’s new prime minister. Accepting premiership on October 25, 1923, he proclaimed:

There are two sorts of misfortune either one of which, if not remedied, is able to destroy the national identity of any deteriorating race or people. These are domestic disorder and insecurity and chaos of thought, ideas and morals.

An examination of the recent events in Iran will show that these two factors, from which emanate all our troubles, existed throughout the country. The first source of adversity has, thanks to Providence, been eliminated. Now it is the time to correct the second and now is the occasion to lay a second foundation for Iranian nationality.

We are fully alert to the fact that the morale of the public has, in general, been lowered to a threatening extent. There are many who, heedless of the principle of self-reliance, have taken on the habit of adopting foreign support as a means for making their living and for promoting their own designs. It is this activity alone which will bring disgrace to the Iranian nation whose chivalrous exploits, fame and eminence have for ages been the ornaments of Iranian history… It is incumbent upon every Iranian to

\textsuperscript{103} Abrahamian, \textit{Iran Between Two Revolutions}, 122.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., 132.
maintain the glory of Iranian history by learning to rely upon himself and upon the powerful force of the nation.\textsuperscript{105}

The new nationalist project called for not only the centralization of the Iranian state, but also the centralization of Iranian thought. For the first misfortune (domestic disorder and insecurity), Reza Khan required an army; however, for the second {the chaos of thought, ideas and morals}, he would have to enlist the help of intellectuals. As seen in his switch from “I” (in the 1922 coup d’état anniversary speech) to “we,” the project of identity building was one that went above and beyond Reza Khan’s capacity as a military man. Revivalist Mohammad-Ali Foroughi became the new foreign minister, Socialist Solaiman Eskandari became the new minister of education, and Reza Khan, while remaining Prime Minister and Minister of War, was rewarded the title of Commander-in-Chief for suppressing Shaykh Khaz’el, the leader of an Arab tribal revolt.\textsuperscript{106} Immediately thereafter, Reza Khan and the Fifth Majles passed extensive reforms that mandated two-year military service, obliged birth certificates and family names, abolished aristocratic titles, levied income taxes to fund a Trans-Iranian railroad, instituted a uniform system of weights and measures and replaced the Islamic calendar with a Zoroastrian one.\textsuperscript{107} That same year, the Majles also drafted a bill that would eliminate the two-thousand-year-old monarchy.\textsuperscript{108}


\textsuperscript{105} Abdi, “Nationalism, Politics, and the Development of Archaeology in Iran,” 58.
\textsuperscript{106} Abrahamian, \textit{Iran Between Two Revolutions}, 132. According to the constitution, this title was vested in the shah; although Revivalist and Socialists had been ex-Democratic constitutionalists, the bill was approved.
\textsuperscript{107} Keddie and Ghaffary, \textit{Qajar Iran and the Rise of Reza Khan}, 85.
\textsuperscript{108} Abrahamian, \textit{Iran Between Two Revolutions}, 133.
published in Berlin from 1922 to 1927 and *Ayandeh*, published in Tehran from 1925 to 1927. These journals, edited by young Western-educated intellectuals and supporters of Reza Khan, elucidate the nature of nationalist experimentation with European forms of governance. Although their writers advocated all sorts of reforms, the only foreign models mimicked were French, German and Italian, not British or Russian. As mediated through the Iranian popular press, the most attractive alternative to monarchy became the republic; as one nationalist poster read: “Long Live Republicanism! New Thought (*fikr-i naw*)! New Laws (*qanun-i naw*)! New Man (*mard-i naw*)!”\(^{109}\)

A daily newspaper published in Tehran, *Mard-e Azad*, served as an important arena for the most ardent supports of Reza Khan to secure his bid to power. Its young editor, Ali Akbar Davar, had become a leading figure of the Revival party in 1921 upon returning to Tehran from Geneva, where he had finished his studies in law. Finding Iran shackled to clerics and despots, he adopted the title for his paper, *Mard-e Azad* ‘Free Man’, from George Clemenceau’s radical French journal *L’homme libre*.\(^{110}\) The first issue, published in January 1923, introduced the paper’s official motto: *kar-e now, mard-e now* (new task, new man).\(^{111}\) Together with the paper’s administrative director Isa Sadiq (the future minister of education and culture), Davar published over one hundred and sixty articles advocating nationalist renewal through the appointment of Reza Khan. After chastising Mohammad-Taqi Bahar and other well-respected Revivalist deputies for their lack of activist zeal, Davar was labeled too radical by his own party and his paper suffered accordingly.\(^{112}\) When Reza Khan was appointed prime minister in October 1923, i.e. when the “new man” had accepted the “new task,” *Mard-e Azad* had fulfilled its


\(^{110}\) Parvin, “Mard-e Azad Daily Newspaper.”

\(^{111}\) Ibid.

\(^{112}\) Ibid. Davar continued to be an influential statesman in the Majles.
function. By November, printing had stopped; yet, Davar’s idea of the “free man” lived on, reincarnated in Reza Khan’s self-reliant subject.

Staffed by an elite group of German-educated Iranians, *Nama-ye farangestan* or *Farangestan* (Europe) was a modernist journal organized in Berlin to advocate “authoritarian modernization” as the answer to Iran’s political woes. Its editor, Moshfeq Kazemi, was a young playwright who had recently relocated to Germany to complete a degree in political economy. Inspired by the growing spirit of reform back in Iran, the first issue of *Farangestan*, published in May 1924, opened with an editorial “What Do We Want?” that hailed triumphantly Iran’s long-awaited freedom from Qajar rule. With respect to the future, Kazemi explained that what “they” wanted and needed was a “revolutionary dictator” who could “forcibly liberate the ignorant masses of the clutches of the superstitious clergy.”

Anticipating a swift passage of the new bill to end the monarchy, *Farangestan* chose to go after the Shi’a order of power from its inception:

> In a country where 99 percent of the population is under the electoral sway of the reactionary mullas, our only hope is a Mussolini who can break the influence of the traditional authorities, and thus create a modern outlook, a modern people, and a modern nation.

In a follow-up article three months later, “The Iranian Press,” Kazemi asserted that while Tehran-based journalists were experimenting with all different sorts of reform, the unequivocal first order of business was to expel the clergy from public life and eliminate widespread superstition. “Only a dictator” he wrote, “can initiate such a

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113 Mir’abedini, “Moshfeq Kazemi.”
114 Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, 124.
115 Ibid.
regeneration.”¹¹⁶ For Kazemi and his young colleagues, an ideal ruler “was a man of law and order, a leader such as Mussolini, who would oversee, with ‘iron fists’, the transformation of Iran into a modern and powerful nation-state.” Whereas intellectuals like Davar glorified the république, the Berlin-based intellectuals of Farangestan did not consider democracy a viable option in dealing with the clergy and preferred, instead, the fascist state of postwar Italy as a template for modernization. Unlike Mard-e Azad, however, Farangestan was not devoted entirely to politics or to the election of Reza Khan; of the some seventy articles published, fifteen dealt with modern education, eight with the status of women, ten with industrial technology, nine with Western political philosophy, including Gobineau’s racism, Anatole France’s socialism, and Marx’s anticolonialism, three with pre-Islamic Iran, three with Azerbaijan, two with secular movements in Turkey, four with international relations, and sixteen with Persian literature.¹¹⁷ Given the revolutionary nature of its contents, religious authorities banned Farangestan from circulation in Iran after merely three issues. Kazemi, along with other well-known contributors such as Jamalzadeh, Mortaza Yazdi, Hasan Nafisi, Ahmad Farhad and Taqi Arani, however, continued to publish the journal in Berlin until 1926, when Reza Khan was crowned shah.¹¹⁸

Published in Berlin from 1922 until 1927, Iranshahr became another platform for students and exiles to express their opinions regarding the political and ideological future of the nation. Under the editorship of Hoseyn Kazemzadeh-Iranshahr, a close friend of Hasan Taqizadeh, Iranshahr was considered the strong intellectual cousin of Kaveh.

During the Great War, Kazemzadeh had moved to Germany upon receiving an

¹¹⁶ Ibid.
¹¹⁷ Ibid.
¹¹⁸ Mir’abedini, “Moshfeq Kazemi.”
invitation from Taqizadeh to join the Persian National Committee for the liberation of Iran against Russia and Britain. Prior to that, he had been working at Cambridge University as an assistant to E.G. Browne, a post he had secured through the recommendation of Mohammad Qazvini. Given Taqizadeh’s aforementioned failure to use Browne as a device against the Russian invasion of Iran, it is likely that the British Orientalist had fallen out of his good graces. As a trusted agent of the Berlin Committee, Kazemzadeh was amongst the first group of emissaries dispatched to Iran during the war to create an allegiance between the Committee and the Democrat Party in Tehran.

When Russian troops threatened the capital, he joined the exodus of Iranian Democrats and German agents to Qom and Kermanshah, where he was imprisoned for some time before escaping to rejoin Taqizadeh in Germany. When Kaveh officially stopped publication in 1921, Kazemzadeh decided to found Iranshahr, unlike Taqizadeh, who was invited back to serve Reza Khan, Kazemzadeh never returned to Iran after the war.

Influenced by waves of reform in Iran as Kazemi had been, Kazemzadeh wrote an editorial in February 1924 entitled “Republicanism and the Social Revolution.” While later experimenting with other European political ideologies, namely nationalist socialism and fascism, Kazemzadeh was quite drawn to the republican model. Kazemzadeh’s pro-republicanism, however, was better understood as a product of his anti-clericalism.

Today almost all of Europe, including Russia, has adopted the republican system of government. There is no doubt in our minds that in the modern age the republican form of government is the best system of government. But while we have no doubts on the merits of republicanism, we must admit that republicanism is not an end in itself but only a means to a higher end—that of destroying royal and clerical

\[119\] Benham, “Iransahr, Hosyn Kazemzada.”
\[120\] Ibid. Also Jamalzadeh and Ebrahim Purdavud
\[121\] Ibid. The two intellectuals were both born and raised in Tabriz.
despotism in order to lead the masses towards a social revolution. You will understand the need for such a revolution if you look at the minority party in the Majles. These clerical deputies have been elected by exploiting public ignorance, fears, backwardness, and superstitions. It is high time we limited the power of the monarchy. Once we have done so, we can turn our attention onto the more reactionary power of the parasitical clergy.¹²²

To combat the “reactionary power of the parasitical clergy,” i.e. the anti-modernism of Shi’a Islam, Kazemzadeh prescribed secular education. According to Kazemzadeh, salvation was contingent on a reawakening of the primordial Iranian spirit whose “hereditary talent,” “sagacity” and “Aryan character” had paled as a result of racial and linguistic deterioration.¹²³ Influenced by the concept of Blut und Boden “blood and soil” used by German national socialists of the time, he believed that twentieth-century Iranian nationality should be founded on the ancient land and the blood of the “Aryan Race.”¹²⁴ In an article of Iransahr published in October 1922, “The War on Moral Decay,” Kazemzadeh lamented the widespread ignorance of the splendors of Iranian history, which could only be remedied through secular educational reform. He wrote, “We must recognize that the greatest enemy facing the Iranian nation, which causes great distress, is moral decay. We must therefore declare war against this enemy…We must uproot the corpulent tree of corruption and decay with the ax of knowledge and social education.”¹²⁵ “Corruption” and “decay” of the Iranian spirit were described as consequences of “clerical dogmatism, political despotism and foreign imperialism, especially Arab imperialism.”¹²⁶ In opposition to the Zoroastrian maxim “good thoughts, good words, good deeds,” these three evils combined had stunted the

¹²² Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, 133.
¹²³ Benham, “Iransahr, Hosyn Kazemzada.”
¹²⁴ Ibid.
¹²⁵ Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran*, 91.
¹²⁶ Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, 124.
“creative abilities of Iran’s talented Aryan population.” Describing “chaos of thought, ideas and morals” as the second misfortune of a deteriorating race in his first speech as prime minister, Reza Khan was strongly influenced by the hyper-nationalist rhetoric found in this article.

Similarly, a recurring theme of *Iranshahr* was the harmful consequence of ethnicity, which Kazemzadeh elaborated on in an article titled “Religion and Nationality;” he wrote, “the problem of communalism is so serious that whenever an Iranian traveling abroad is asked his nationality, he will give his locality- not the proud name of his country. We must eliminate local sects, local dialogues, local clothes, local customs, and local sentiments.”\(^\text{127}\) He was, in fact, one of the first nationalists to prescribe pan-Iranism as the solution to territorial conflicts around both Pan-Turkism and Pan-Arabism.\(^\text{128}\) In his native Azerbaijan, Kazemzadeh supported heavy reforms intended to “propagate there the literary and cultural heritage” of Iran.\(^\text{129}\)

Along with fellow Azeri and *Iranshahr* contributor, Sadiq Rezazadeh Shafaq, Kazemzadeh launched an extensive campaign of proving that the people of Azerbaijan were “true Iranians, on whom the Turkish language had been imposed.”\(^\text{130}\) The theory of the common history of Iranians and Azerbaijanis became the basis for constructing a new hierarchy of racial-linguistic value. In these regions, the “ax of knowledge” had to be fortified by an “ax of language.” Before falling on hard times and being forced to discontinue in 1927, *Iranshahr* enjoyed great success and a global reception. While published exclusively in Berlin, the journal was distributed in some forty towns in Iran,

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\(^{127}\) Ibid.
\(^{128}\) Ashraf, “Iranian Identity Iv. 19th-20th Centuries.”
\(^{129}\) Benham, “Iransahr, Hosyn Kazemzada.”
\(^{130}\) Ibid. R. Shafaq published an article in *Iranshahr* in May 1924 entitled “The Glories of the Iranian National Character.” Other contributors included Rasid Yassemi, Abbas Eqbal, Ahmad Farhad, Yahya Mahdaqi, Hosayn Nafisi and Taqi Arani.
and numerous cities in Europe, Afghanistan, India and Egypt, even boasting readers in the Far East.\footnote{Behnam, “Iransahr (4).}

Another Persian-language journal named \textit{Ayandeh (The Future)} began publication in 1925 and enjoyed a similar readership as \textit{Iransahr}. Published in Tehran under the editorship of Dr. Mahmud Afshar, a European-educated political scientist, it promoted the official platform of achieving national cohesion through the call for universal education and the Persian language.\footnote{Afshar, “Ayanda.”} \textit{Ayandeh} featured articles written by some of the most prominent statesmen and intellectuals of the time, most notably, Hasan Taqizadeh, Ahmad Kasravi, Mohammad-Ali Foroughi, Ali-Akbar Davar, Ali Dashti, Mohammad-Taqi Bahar, Sa’id Nafisi, Rashid Yassemi, Mohammad Qazvini, Mojtaba Minovi and Nasrallah Falsafi.\footnote{Ibid.} Published in June 1925, the inaugural issue of \textit{Ayandeh} opened with a note from the editor entitled “Our First Desire: The National Unity of Iran.” It declared the following:

\begin{quote}
Our ideal is to develop and strengthen national unity. The same ideal created the nation-states of Germany, Italy, Poland, and Rumania. The same ideal destroyed the multinational state of the Ottoman Empire. What do we mean by ‘national unity’? We mean the formation of cultural, social, political solidarity among all the people who live within the present borders of Iran. How will we attain national unity? We will attain it by extending the Persian language throughout the provinces; eliminating regional costumes; destroying local and feudal authorities; and removing the traditional differences between Kurds, Lurs Qashqayis, Arabs, Turks, Turkomans, and the other communities that reside within Iran. Our nation will continue to live in danger as long as we have no schools to teach Persian and Iranian history to the masses; no railways to connect the various parts of the country; no books, journals, and newspapers to inform the people of their rich Iranian heritage; and no
\end{quote}
Persian equivalents to replace the many non-Persian place names in Iran. Unless we achieve national unity, nothing will remain of Iran.\textsuperscript{134}

Upon reading the journal’s manifesto, Reza Khan extended an invitation to its staff of like-minded statesmen, intellectuals and journalists, almost all of whom would occupy the highest governmental ranks in the future Pahlavi state. At the conclusion of this meeting he departed with the following endorsement:

The things you have written are very important… Go and propagate your ideology among the people, open their eyes and ears to these ideas. You put forth the idea and I will implement it. I assure and promise you that I will enforce all your wishes, which are mine too, form the beginning to the end.\textsuperscript{135}

The Prime Minister kept his word and, by 1925, the majority Revivalist National Assembly had already began passing laws that banned the usage of all non-Persian languages in official documents, closed all non-Persian publishing houses and, most importantly, replaced minority language schools with a state-run educational system that used Persian as its only language of instruction.\textsuperscript{136}

In later publications of \textit{Ayandeh}, Afshar elaborated on the dangers facing Iran by creating a coding system with which to identify them: “the red (Soviet), blue (British), yellow (Turkish), green (Arab), and black (clerical).” This color wheel of evil appeared in a November 1926 issue under the headline “The Problem of Nationality and Nation Unity in Iran.”\textsuperscript{137} According to Afshar, the communities most “at risk,” i.e. most susceptible to “coloring,” were the Arab and Turkic tribes occupying border provinces.

\textsuperscript{134} Abrahamian, \textit{Iran Between Two Revolutions}, 124–125.
\textsuperscript{135} Asgharzadeh, \textit{Iran and the Challenge of Diversity}, 104–105.
\textsuperscript{136} Ibid., 88.
\textsuperscript{137} Abrahamian, \textit{Iran Between Two Revolutions}, 125.
In dealing with this “problem of nationality,” he recommended a two-pronged approach: first, to move tribes into the interior regions of Iran and second, to replace non-Persian dialects with the Iranian national language. Afshar’s two-step plan for the recovery of the Iranian race appeared to be, in fact, merely a reinterpretation of the national program Reza Khan had proposed as prime minister. Both men advocated physical coercion as the first step towards the elimination of domestic insecurity. What Reza Khan had defined as the second enemy of the state, i.e. “chaos of thought, ideas and morals,” Afshar had simplified to “chaos of the tongue.”

On the occasion of his first speech as prime minister in 1923, Reza Khan had thanked Providence for the elimination of “domestic disorder and insecurity.” While it is true the army had been quite successful in its campaigns—against the Jangalis of Gilan in 1921, the Kurds of western Azerbaijan, the Shahsavens of northern Azerbaijan and the Kuhgiluyeh of Fars in 1922 and the Sanjabi Kurds of Kermanshah in 1923—tribal unity had not been achieved.¹³⁸ In the following two years, Reza Khan’s path to the throne was paved with heavy provincial violence: in 1924, with the Baluchis of the southeast and the Lurs of the southwest; and in 1925, with the Turkomans of Mazandaran (where Reza Khan was born), the Kurds of northern Khurasan, and the Arabs supporting Shaykh Khaz’el of Mohammerah.¹³⁹ While the government acquired lands confiscated from wealthy tribal lords, the Commander-in-Chief deposited all gold and silver acquired on these military exploits directly into his bank account.¹⁴⁰

In combating territorial disunity, Reza Khan believed, like Afshar, that both military and linguistic strategies were needed to secure Iran’s borders. With the draft, he

¹³⁸ Ibid., 120.
¹³⁹ Ibid.
had been able to amass a large army, but there remained one main obstacle to its centralization. As conscription now operated at a national level, a majority of new soldiers could not understand Persian and a centralized force called for a centralized language. As the paragon for national unity, the army could not afford linguistic disunity. Accordingly, two-thirds of all conscripts spent six months, i.e. a quarter of their time in service, studying the Persian language.\textsuperscript{141}

Before the coup, the only effective military units in Iran had been officered by foreigners: the Persian Cossack Brigade by Russians, the Gendarmerie by Swedes and the South Persian Rifles by Britons. It came as no surprise, therefore, that the Persian language lacked an adequate vocabulary for modern military ranks, rules and concepts. Training an army of exclusively Iranian soldiers, officers and commanders for the first time, Reza Khan decided that in order to avoid the introduction of thousands of new European words, he would create an entirely new military lexicon in Persian.\textsuperscript{142} Reza Khan could not modernize the army without first modernizing the language.

In 1924, the compulsory military service bill passed and Reza Khan commissioned the organization of a military committee devoted entirely to such a task. Overseeing fifty percent of the nation’s budget, the Ministry of War provided funding; however, given the enormity of the project, it solicited the help of the Ministry of Education. The two offices worked together and formed a joint committee of ten members: two generals, four colonels and four civilians. The civilian division included constitutionalist preacher and educational reformist Mirza Yahya Dowlatabadi, writer

\textsuperscript{141} Abrahamian, \textit{A History of Modern Iran}, 77.
\textsuperscript{142} Kia, “Persian Nationalism and the Campaign for Language Purification,” 19.
and journalist Gholam Hossein Rahnama, Kurdish poet and contributor to *Ayandeb* Rashid Yassemi, and former administrative director of *Mard-e Azad* Isa Sadiq.\(^{143}\)

For the first round of reforms, the committee was given a list of French military terms that had been compiled by the Iranian army. The members held weekly sessions for four months, at which they proposed three hundred neologisms to replace modern concepts and commodities of European origin\(^{144}\): *havápeymâ* ‘airplane’ for ‘avion’, *forudgâb* ‘airport’ for ‘aerodrome’, *xalabân* ‘pilot’ for ‘pilote’, and *gordon* ‘army division’ for ‘bataillon’ and calques such as *vâbaste-ye nezâmi* ‘military attaché’ for ‘attaché militaire’.*\(^{145}\)

The following year, in 1925, Reza Khan ordered a second round of word replacement and second committee was organized. The modernizing army required not only new terminology, but also a more simplified language for its manuals.\(^{146}\) Charged with the task of translating military rules and ranks, the second committee was composed of only one army officer and five civilians.\(^{147}\) The army officer in charge was a colonel named Ali Qovanlu who had also been a member of the first joint committee. Of the civilians, the Kurdish writer and poet Rashid Yassemi was also asked back and four new members were added.\(^{148}\) While the first committee was given a list of solely French terminology, the second was additionally asked to create Persian equivalents for words of Turkish and Arabic origin.\(^{149}\)

\(^{143}\) Ibid., 33.
\(^{144}\) Jazayeri, “Farhangestan.”
\(^{146}\) Perry, “Language Reform in Turkey and Iran,” 297.
\(^{147}\) Kia, “Persian Nationalism and the Campaign for Language Purification,” 20.
\(^{148}\) Ibid., 33.
\(^{149}\) Ibid., 20.
In the past, many terms pertaining to “warfare, transportation, and administration” were loanwords of Arabic origin.\textsuperscript{150} As previously mentioned, contact with the Ottoman Empire in the beginning of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century had resulted in Turkish words slipping into the Iranian vernacular. These included, primarily civil terms, such as nazmiyee ‘police officer’, baladiyye ‘municipality’ and adliyye ‘ministry of justice’ as well as military ones such as tup (from Turkish tob) ‘canon’, bârut ‘gunpowder’ and xompâre ‘mortar’.\textsuperscript{151} As the new military hardware, tactics, and organization were primarily Western advancements, many of the past Arab and Turkish terms had already been abandoned for the more highly specialized terminology of Europeans off of which Reza Khan was modeling the Iranian army.\textsuperscript{152}

Although the official platform of the second committee was intended to suit the needs of the new army, some of the words submitted for revision extended far beyond military terms of reference. Arabic words such as vatan ‘fatherland’ and mamlekat ‘country’ were deposed. Instead, equivalents of Persian origin, mihan and keshvar respectively, were named.\textsuperscript{153} The aforementioned terms are of particular interest because they do not fall into an exclusively military domain. “Country” is not a concept exclusive to army manuals, nor is its usage unique to officers or the rank and file. Furthermore, the terms vatan and mamlekat may have had Arabic roots, but the average Iranian would not have recognized them as decidedly “foreign.” One must distinguish between the coinages of a Persian equivalent to “attaché militaire,” a new concept of unmistakably French origin, and vatan, a well-established Arabic loan. The shift in consequence from the former to

\textsuperscript{150} Perry, “Language Reform in Turkey and Iran,” 297.
\textsuperscript{152} Perry, “Language Reform in Turkey and Iran,” 297.
\textsuperscript{153} Kia, “Persian Nationalism and the Campaign for Language Purification,” 20.
the latter is indicative of Reza Khan’s increasing influence in the year leading up to his formal coronation.

The considerable expansion in breadth of the committees’ linguistic responsibilities casts light on the fact that the ministry’s initial proposal was only part of a larger ideological program of language planning. As no linguists or grammarians were hired to propose “indigenous Persian terms,” many of the words put forth by the committees have fallen under harsh criticism by scholars. Many Persian language specialists have proven their etymological inaccuracies. Perhaps the most embarrassing of these misconstructions was the name given for “army,” not only the literal *raison d’être* of the committee, but also the symbolic paradigm for Reza Khan’s vision of modernization: the term *artes* (*artesh*) was the product of a failed analysis of an obsolete term.154

Given the speed at which these committees of nonprofessionals had been asked to mass-produce terms, it becomes quite clear that they had not been motivated by the type of scholarly concern typically associated with language conservation. As previously stated, the first committee had been given a mere four months to manufacture three to four hundred “original” Persian terms.155 Assuming no sessions were missed, the

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154 Sadeghi, “Language Planning in Iran: a Historical Review,” 21. The production of terms like *artes* shows not only a lack of precision on the part of the committee members, but also the obscurity of the given task of working with indigenous terms. Although no documents were released explaining how the term came to be proposed, it is possible to extrapolate by analyzing it diachronically, i.e. with concern to its evolution. *Arestar* can be traced back through time to the Indo-European root *ret*, meaning to roll or to run, from which the Latin term *rota* ‘wheel’ and the English ‘rotate’ are also derived. Later on, in Avestan, *rud* came to mean ‘to run’, *ratha* ‘chariot’, and *ratha-extra* ‘standing on the chariot, soldier’. In Persian, *arrâdeh* became ‘chariot’ and, finally, *artestar* ‘chariot rider, soldier’. Mistakenly, the committee took *artestar*, divided it into *artestar*, and then further broke it into *artes* and *dâr* (“the present stem of the verb dastan ‘to have’”).154 The latter, *dâr*, is used to signify ‘holder, keeper’ in complex words; for example, *ketâb-dâr* ‘librarian’ is taken literally to mean ‘keeper of books’. Deleting the invented suffix (*dâr*) from *artestar*, the committee ultimately proposed *artes* having presumed it to mean ‘keeper of soldiers, a military’. Etymological inaccuracies aside, assuming for a moment that the committee had been correct in its analysis, the term proposed for Reza Khan’s modern European-style army would have literally meant ‘holder of those who stand on the chariot’.154

155 Ibid.
hebdomadal organization would have had to fill the quota of nineteen to twenty-five words per session. As a result, the words haphazardly churned out indicate that a word of Persian origin, regardless of true meaning, was to be privileged over its French, Turkish or, most urgently, Arabic equivalent.

By mid-1925, the army had indeed shaped up to be if not the “supreme means of the country,” then the “supreme means of the Sardar-e Sepah.” As the sole tax collecting body of the government, the army and the Army Commander exercised nearly full control over the nation’s finances. Contrary to the recommendation of administrative general of finances Dr. Arthur Millsapugh, an American economist hired by the Majles, the Ministry of War was allotted over fifty percent of the national budget.156 No matter how deep its pockets, an army of forty thousand was not sufficient to quiet Shi’a clerics with profound influence over popular will. When the ulama in Qom issued a statement that declared republicanism would bring an end to Islam, Reza Khan bowed again to the traditional forces in Iran.157 Recognizing the impossibility of a republic in the face of such opposition, even the ex-Constitutionalists of the secular intelligentsia did not object when Reza Khan visited with the ulama and returned with the following declaration: “At the time when I went to Kum [sic] to bid farewell to the ulama, I took the opportunity of exchanging views with them, and finally we decided that it was expedient to proclaim to the whole people that the question of the republic be dropped.”158 In accordance with

156 Ansari, Modern Iran Since 1921, 34. In 1922, Revivalist deputies of the Majles sought to reestablish the American financial mission in Iran in part to lessen the British monopoly over the country’s assets. When attempts to bring back Morgan Shuster failed, Dr. Millsapugh and a delegation of eleven were sent in his place. Dr. Millsapugh signed a contract with the Iranian government that granted him full control over Iran’s financial administration, including the nation budget. In 1927, the American was dismissed after voicing opposition to Russo-Iranian trade tariffs. Upon ordering his removal, Reza Shah was overheard uttering, “There cannot be two Shas of Iran.”
157 Reza Khan first allied with the religious clerics and conservative elites of the Reform party in 1921 when he freed the Qajar notables arrested by the late Prime Minister Tabataba’i.
158 Ansari, Modern Iran Since 1921, 38.
his new anti-republican platform, Reza Khan announced that the ideology of republicanism had created “social confusion,” publically arrested nine Communist activists (all of whom were Armenian) and declared that the institution of constitutional monarchy was the “best bulwark against Bolshevism.”

Thus the Fifth Majles continued its efforts to bring Reza Khan to power if not as president, then as shah. Encouraged by the failure of the “republican movement” in Iran, Ahmad Shah sent a telegram to the capital in September 1925 announcing his intention to return home shortly from his “European tour.” This news prompted deputies to take definitive action and, on October 31, 1925, the Majles ratified a bill for the formal deposition of Ahmad Shah Qajar. The previous day, an article in the Tehran-based paper *Setareh Iran* had provided the following justification: “in view of the fact that Article 35 of the Constitutional Law provides ‘Sovereignty is a divine gift that is entrusted to the Kajar family by the people of Persia,’ [the Majles] believed that in case the people found that the Kajar dynasty was not able to perform the duties inherent in holding this ‘gift’ they could take it away.”

In wake of the abolition of the nearly one-hundred-and-fifty-year-old Qajar dynasty, the government was “entrusted to His Great Highness, Pahlavi, generalissimo of all the forces, the provisional Government of the country until a constituent assembly is formed to make a permanent arrangement.” On November 4, Mohammad Ali Foroughi was appointed prime minister, on December 6 the Constituent Assembly opened and on December 13 it adjourned with the following

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159 Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, 134. It is important to note that Reza Khan’s compromise with the *ulema* and its like-minded Reform party paved the way for him to establish his own dynasty.

160 Keddie and Ghaffary, *Qajar Iran and the Rise of Reza Khan*, 87. Only four courageous deputies voted against this: the clerical nationalist Hasan Modarres, the radical ex-Democrat nationalist Hasan Taqizadeh, the other radical nationalist Yahya Daulatabadi and the new prominent nationalist Mohammad Mosaddeq.


162 Ibid., 85. Reza Khan packed the constituent assembly with two hundred and sixty deputies from primarily the ministries of War and Interior.
amendment to Article 36: “The Constitutional Monarchy of Persia is vested in the Person of His Imperial Majesty Reza Shah Pahlavi and his male heirs generation after generation.”

That same day, the Sunday edition of The Times published in Britain reported that, as the “Persian” Pahlavi family had replaced the deposed “Turkish dynasty,” “nationalism” had been “served”:

Under the Qajars, who were Turks, the mothers of princes in the line of succession had to be members of the Royal tribe, consequently no son of a Persian mother could sit on the throne of Persia. In future this will be revised.

Two days later, on December 15, Reza Khan took the oath of office as shah before the Majles; the date of his formal accession was set for December 16, 1925. In his first four months as shah, Reza Shah dedicated his time to planning a coronation ceremony that would reflect his “pedigree” as the first “truly Iranian” monarch in living memory. Envisioning an audience of prominent nationalist statesmen, international dignitaries and the ulema, Reza Shah spent four months planning his symbolic first steps as sovereign. The following description of the ceremony comes from Riza Shah Pahlavi, a book written by Donald Wilber using the National Archives of the American Legation in Tehran:

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163 Ibid., 89. Of the two hundred and sixty deputies, only three Socialists abstained. One of the three who abstained was ex-constitutionalist Democrat Solaiman Eskandari, late minister of education and former supporter of the Sardare Sepah following the 1921 coup.

164 Ansari, Modern Iran Since 1921, 37.

165 Majd, Great Britain & Reza Shah, 89.

166 Ansari, Modern Iran Since 1921, 41.
On the afternoon of April 25, 1926, a host of dignitaries was assembled in formal ranks in the audience hall of the Gulistan Palace, a room some one hundred feet long and forty wide, flanked by deep bays housing objects of art, many garnered on the European tours of the Qajar rulers. The witnesses included the high Muslim clergy, the diplomatic corps, generals, ministers, representatives of the guilds and special guests, all except the clergy, clad in splendid court dress. In deference to the religious leaders there was no music; an uneasy silence reigned as the scheduled moment came and went. Finally, the seven-year-old Crown Price clad in a simple khaki uniform, entered the hall and moved toward the far end where stood the Peacock throne and the Nadiri throne…

Light from the great crystal chandeliers shone and sparkled on this brilliant display as all took their assigned places. Outside the trumpets sounded, and in absolute silence Riza Shah entered the hall, wearing the royal garment, a great cloak completely encrusted with precious pearls, and a cap adorned with the diamond aigrette of Nadir Shah. Directly behind him followed the commander of the central army and the high court officers, filling between lines of regimental flags.

Riza Shah seated himself upon the fabulous Nadiri throne, removed his cap, and the minister of the Court moved forward with the new Pahlavi crown upon a red plush cushion. The Shah took it in a firm grasp and set it on his head. Then he rose to buckle on the [“World Conquering”] Nadir Shah sword. Outside the guns of the army boomed the imperial salute.¹⁶⁷

“The Shah took it in a firm grasp and set it on his head…” It was a tradition amongst the Iranian royalty for the eldest member of the Imperial family to crown the new Shah. Given the relative youth of his dynasty, Reza Shah had asked Minister of the Court Teymourtache and high clergyman of Khoi’ to deliver him the new Pahlavi crown. Using “crown jewels amassed over several centuries,” the Shah had carefully designed his crown.¹⁶⁸ Sir Percy Lorraine of the British legation described it as having combined “the forms and motifs of European regalia with those of the tiaras of the Achaemenid and Sasanian dynasties.”¹⁶⁹ In the style of Napoleon, Reza Shah plucked the Pahlavi crown

¹⁶⁷ Wilber, Rìza Shàh Pàhìbà, 114–115.
¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 114.
¹⁶⁹ Ansari, Modern Iran Since 1921, 42.
from the “red plush cushion” held by the elder mullah and crowned himself Reza Shah Pahlavi.
In the thirty years between the coup d’état in 1921 and his forced abdication in 1941, Reza Shah had two overriding and indivisible goals: first, to rebuild Iran in its former image as the center of a great civilization and, second, to claim for himself the seat of absolute power atop this reconstructed nation. His relentless pursuit of these two goals thus fueled the immense nationalist project of constructing a classical past as the basis for a modern Iranian national identity. Although propagated as “purely Persian,” this twentieth-century project was informed in its entirety by the ways in which Iran came into contact with modern nations of the West, most notably, Britain, Russia, France, Turkey, Germany and the United States. The contingent forgetting and remembering of the past served as an invaluable rhetorical tool by which otherwise revolutionary acts were disguised as expressions of an authentic Iranian character. This last point is perhaps most plainly illustrated in the early speeches of Reza Khan where, for example, armed violence against semi-autonomous tribes became rearticulated as the preservation of the integrity of a “deteriorating race.” The political and ideological maneuvers underlying the privileging of certain racial attributes or linguistic utterances as more “authentically” Iranian than others were further masked by Orientalist works that provided the “scientific bases” for the discovery of the “real” pre-Islamic past. Particularly in the fields of philology and archaeology, Europeans who conducted research on ancient Iran were championed as arbitrators of universal knowledge.

One of the earliest advocates of Orientalism was journalist and statesman Hasan Taqizadeh. He had concluded that in order for Iranians to retain their “melliyat” (nationality), which he described in terms of “racial identity, language and history,” it was necessary for them to, “without any exception save language,” “pursue the European
advancements and civilization without the slightest doubt or hesitation.” In a postwar edition of Kaveh, shortly before being invited back to Iran as a member of Reza Shah’s cabinet, Taqizadeh wrote:

Some have argued that those who study the nations of Asia and Africa do so with the political motives of the European powers and work to prevent the freedom and independence of the societies…But others in my opinion do so for the greater good of knowledge…Some of them have been heroes of the weak nations and done great service to them against the interest of their own nations. They have rescued objects by archaeology…Manuscripts have been edited and published…all of this has helped the nations of the East to regain their identity…they [Europeans] know more about our history and culture than we do…not one Iranian knows Pahlavi…it is not only because of Europeans who deciphered the old scripts of Avestan, Sanskrit and Pahlavi that today we know about our kings and ancestors…Iranians must become aware of their ancient culture and their thinkers, artists and their kings so that they will be aware of their great nation in the past before Islam and of what race they derived from, how they have reached their current condition, and how to regain their original greatness as a nation.

Taqizadeh admitted that, although propagated by nationalists such as himself, the excavation and recovery of Iran’s long lost authenticity had been the outcome of European scholarship. He conceded to Orientalists the power to judge universal standards of identity. The national past upon which Iranians were to base their national future was unequivocally a product of Orientalism. The process of reviving antiquity through selective anachronism, however, carried with it significant political implications. By highlighting Indo-European race theory, for example, Taqizadeh was able to argue modern reform on the basis of “factual” historical precedence.

While generally preferring German theorists, Taqizadeh borrowed heavily from Essai sur l’inégalité des races humaines, the seminal work of Compte de Gobineau whose theory of Aryan superiority later served as the bedrock of Nazi ideology. Intrigued by the
French Orientalist’s idea of “ethnocultural homogenization,” Taqizadeh pinpointed the seventh-century Arab-Muslim invasion as having been “the pivotal moment when Iran deviated from its course of progress.” In *Essai sur l’inégalité*, Gobineau had described the resultant “hybrid nation” of Persians and Arabs, i.e. “Aryans” and “Semites,” as “a body half sunk in water, half exposed to the sun, contain[ing] at one and the same times elements of barbarism and of an advanced civilization.” Taqizadeh advocated, in turn, a revalorization of Iran’s Aryan roots as the means of national salvation. For Gobineau, the deterioration of a race and the deterioration of its peoples’ intelligence went hand in hand. Accordingly, Taqizadeh proposed that the greatest social ill facing Iran was its lack of mass education, particularly in the case of women.

Given the influence of Shi’a clerics within Iran, an argument for the education of women on the basis of modern values and Western standards would have been quickly rejected as both anti-religious and anti-Iranian. Anticipating such rebukes, nationalists attempted to instead situate the emancipation of women within Iranian tradition. In a series of articles published by Taqizadeh’s colleague Kazemzadeh-İranshahr in his eponymous journal, the women’s movement of the Zoroastrian-Parsi community in Bombay was presented as a paradigm for Iran’s national revival. Printed in November 1926, one issue of *İranshahr* included a “message” from a successful female lawyer of a prominent Bombay Parsi family named Zarbanu Dinshah Molla. The letter, which had been translated from Gujarati to Persian, was addressed to “our Iranian sisters”:

> I send my greetings to all my Iranian sisters of pure spirit. The purpose of this letter is to send greeting to Iranian women and also to remind them of our mission. Although we Indian Parsis have been separated

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171 Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran*, 82.
from our original home for more than one thousand years, the blood which runs in our veins is still from that land, and the passion for our sacred homeland is in our heart and is the source of great emotion. In these days when Iran is looking for new progress I find it necessary to remind Iranian women of two points: one relates to ancient Iran and the other relates to the future of Iran. In ancient Iran women were possessors of a position of esteem, and according to the laws of the sacred Avesta and the days of old, women were strong and had stature, and in contrast to today, their honor was preserved and they participated in social life with men.”

Included along with these words of encouragement were references to the Avesta, the Zoroastrian scripture, where Zarbanu Dinshah had found “proof” as to the “elevated status” of women in antiquity. Like Taqizadeh, she marked the fall of the Sassanid state, i.e. the Arab-Muslim conquest, as the moment in history when a collective amnesia of the past spread over the Iranian peoples. To avoid the fate that befell their “Iranian sisters,” Zarbanu Dinshah wrote, “we Parsis sought refuge in India and preserved the ancient beliefs.”

“Preserved” in India after the Zoroastrian diaspora from Iran, i.e. removed from the post-seventh-century Arabization and Islamization of Iran, the Parsis were lauded by nationalists as being more authentically Iranian than Iranians themselves.

After providing a brief list of accomplishments made by modern Parsi women, Zarbanu Dinshah explained that her intention was not to brag. Instead, she wrote, “we Parsi women in our blood, race, hearts, and minds are with you Iranian woman. The worthiness which you see today in Parsi women is from the veins and blood which they have brought with them from Iran.” Yet again, the argument for race-based intelligence was indicative of the appropriation of an Orientalist project. Writing of the

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172 Ibid., 84.
173 Ibid.
174 Ibid.
“degenerate Aryan stocks of India and Persia,” Gobineau had posited: “the connection between race and language is so close, that it lasts much longer than the political unity of the different peoples, and may be recognized even when the peoples are grouped under new names.” As the “blood” from their “veins” was “still from that land,” the Parsis were justified, despite linguistic differences, in bringing Iranian women into the larger project of using racialized antiquity as the basis of modern national identity. If “the blood” was the source of human ability, creativity, imagination and power, then Iranian women too were worthy of the success of their Parsi sisters. Although their “bloodline” had been “compromised” by the Arab-Muslim invasions, Iranians had simply to remember their pristine past in order to tap into the “true” Aryan essence that a modern education would redeem.

Friedrich Max Müller was yet another Orientalist scholar and philologist whose seminal work, Lectures on the Science of Language, was instrumental to the mythologizing of Indo-European theory, also known as Aryan theory. Tracing linguistic patterns, the German-born professor of Sanskrit claimed to have proven the mythic movement of the earliest Aryans across the Iranian plateau from their primordial birthplace to the Indus Valley. Synthesizing biology and language, Müller posited “Aryan” as both a racial and linguistic entity. Even E.G. Browne had felt the necessity in citing Müller’s “pretty theory” in the first volume of A Literary History of Persia, which was then translated into Persian after its publication in 1902. “Putting aside the vexed question of an original Aryan race spreading outwards in all directions from a common centre,” Browne wrote, “it at least seems pretty certain that the Indians and Persians were once united in a

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175 de Gobineau, The Inequality of Human Races, 193.
176 Marashi, Nationalizing Iran, 74.
common Indo-Iranian race located somewhere in the Panjab.” Popularized in the late nineteenth-century, Müller’s work had already been used by intellectual predecessors of Iranian nationalists, most notably Akhundzadeh, to attribute the decline of Iran’s great civilization to its Semitic others. The Orientalist project of race theory was appropriated by Akhundzadeh as a useful philosophical and scientific apparatus through which he was able to assert Iran as an “equal and authentic member of a trans-European modernity.” Thus, returning to the question of women’s education, if race science served to delegitimize a thousand years of Arab and Muslim heritage in Iran, then the anti-modernism of the reactionary clergy, Shi’a or not, was attributable to elements external to the pure Iranian character. In turn, secular education was introduced as a movement towards antiquity rather than modernity.

Prior to 1924, the total number of schools in Iran had not exceeded five hundred: two hundred fifty state schools, two hundred clerically administered maktabs (religious primary schools) and forty-seven missionary schools. Women, who, according to Taqizadeh, would have been guaranteed equal education “if ignorance did not exist and if the people of Iran were aware of civilization,” were almost entirely confined to missionary schools. When the Fifth Majles passed a law mandating public education, it fell under the auspices of the Ministry of Education to produce a curriculum suited to the cultivation of little Iranian patriots. Textbooks written under the aegis of the state, therefore, adhered strictly to the basic nationalist formula: one culture, one history, one language.

177 Browne, A Literary History of Persia, Volume 1, 33–34. It is interesting to note that India, the “Jewel of the Crown,” had become the “Cradle of the Aryans.” It was posited as a “scientific truth” that Persians, Indians and even Europeans had been “brothers” of the same linguistic and biological ancestry.
178 Marashi, Nationalizing Iran, 75.
179 Abrahamian, A History of Modern Iran, 84.
180 Marashi, Nationalizing Iran, 83.
The authors commissioned to write these educational texts were chosen for their ability to situate romantic patriotism within dominant forms of knowledge. The field of medicine, for example, provided nationalists with modern metaphors such as the “countrybody.” What the healthy body was to the doctor, the healthy body politic became to the patriot: “When the parts of the human body are in conflict with each other, [when] the feet say, ‘I will no longer walk you,’ when the hands say, ‘we will no longer work for you,’…and in summary [when] the parts of the body refuse to toil, slowly, the countrybody (mamlıkat-i badan) weakens.” Territorial disunity, therefore, was construed as unnatural to the human condition. Anthropomorphized as such, the homeland, like the human, was not immune to disease.

Anatomy too was taught in schools to provide Iranian students with empirical evidence as to the exceptionality of their race. After a cursory chapter on human physiology, one third-grade textbook on the “science of objects” explained that “human beings are divided into four major categories based on the color of their body, the form of their eyes, noses, hair, and face: the white race, the red race, the yellow race, and the black race.” “People of the white race,” the author noted, “are those whose skin color is white, whose face is oval-shaped, and whose noses are extended.” Whereas blacks are still “wild and detached from civilization,” whites are “smarter and more civilized than the other races.” Another textbook of fifth-grade history and geography wrote that the white race “surpassed the other races in science, civilization, industry, trade,

182 Kashani-Sabet, Frontier Fictions, 198.
183 Ibid., 202.
184 Ibid., 199. These lessons in particular were informed heavily by Indo-European race theorists, such as Gobineau, who had “proven” that superior intelligence was attributable to the circumference of skulls.
inventions, and discoveries.”\textsuperscript{185} In both instances, of course, Iranians were both “scientifically” and “historically” proven to be of the white race.

Although textbooks such as those mentioned above were popularized in the early years of education reform, moving into the second half of the twentieth century explicitly race-centered narratives were replaced instead with mytho-histories emphasizing the geography, culture and literature of ancient Iran. As race and language became posited as benchmarks of identity, nationalists grew increasingly aware of the fact that, by these standards, less than half of the people living in Iran actually met both criteria of “Iranian.” Kurds, Arabs, Bakhtiyaris, Qashqa’is, Baluchis, Lurs and other tribal peoples accounted for one-third of the population. And, of Iran’s twelve million residents, roughly six million did not speak Persian.\textsuperscript{186} Forced to acknowledge the existence of diversity, nationalist literature attempted to incorporate Iran’s “others” into the national project by using shared history and shared land as grounds for “compatriotism.”\textsuperscript{187} With reference to Azerbaijanis who spoke a Turkic dialect, one schoolbook explained: “they are counted as our dear compatriots since they share our sadness or happiness, our progress or decline, and our law and government.” Published “according to the mandate of the august ministry of education,” the same book wrote: “[Jews] who are not of our race, but are also deemed our compatriots, since all of us share the potential of this water and soil (\textit{ab va khak}), and its benefits and drawbacks belong to us all.”\textsuperscript{188}

\textsuperscript{185} Ibid., 202.
\textsuperscript{186} Abrahamian, \textit{A History of Modern Iran}, 18. Although no official counts were taken at the time, scholars have been able to estimate these figures by taking into account results from the first state census in 1956, reports from the British Foreign Office and trends in migration.
\textsuperscript{187} Kashani-Sabet, \textit{Frontier Fictions}.
\textsuperscript{188} Ibid., 203.
The concerted effort to incorporate all racial and linguistic minorities into the symbolic boundaries of “Iran” is indicative of a broader nationalist project. When compatriotism was argued on the basis of shared “sadness or happiness,” membership to the national community became contingent on the common experience of universal human emotion. When compatriotism was argued on the basis of shared laws and government, Iranians became united not under one god, but under one flag, i.e. one shah. Depending on their target audience, nationalists promoted patriotism through strategic reformulations of one “tongue,” one “blood,” one “god” and one “land.” The existence of concurrent and conflicting definitions of what it meant to be “truly Iranian” indicates that national unity was, above all, the prevailing political interest of the Pahlavi state. Patriotism, not Aryanism, became the dominant ideology of the nation. “Love of the homeland” (hubb-i vatan) thus remained the single leitmotif throughout all educational texts. But, as Benedict Anderson famously wrote, “what the eye is to the lover, language is to the patriot” and, despite rhetorical variations, the language of instruction remained constant.

Linguistic unity was acknowledged by the state as the “biggest connection to nationality and the strongest tool for ethnic allegiance,” but the Persianization of the new state system of education was not always so effective. When new laws banned instruction in any non-Persian language, many community schools that had operated in tribal dialects were forced to close due to a simple lack of schoolteachers who could read the new instructional material. New language policies were more heavily promoted along the borders of Iran where territorial disunity was considered dangerous to the health of the nation-state. Azerbaijan in particular became a highly contested province of the language debate, because its occupation by the Ottoman Empire during the Great War had led to
an intensification of Turkish propaganda. Although state policy required classrooms to contain posters declaring, “Conversation in Turkish is prohibited,” the implementation of such laws proved quite difficult to oversee. Playing the “Caucus game,” local authorities from Ardibil composed a memo to the central government with the following recommendations: the dispatch of Persian-speaking teachers to Azerbaijan, the transfer of Turkish-speaking teachers out of Azerbaijan and the placement of only Persian-speaking soldiers along the borders. In short, they wrote, “Make the sense of Iranianness prevail over the sense of Turkishness.”

At this point, it is interesting to note that the most outspoken nationalist intellectuals and the forerunners of the “Persianization” campaign, such as Hasan Taqizadeh, Hoseyn Kazemzadeh-Iranshahr, Taqi Arani, Ahmed Kasravi, Rezazadeh Shafaq and Mahmud Afshar were all Azerbaijani. Upset with both the lack of national recognition for their help during the constitutional revolution and the lack of Qajar support in their subsequent Russian and Ottoman occupations, many of these ex-Democrat politician-poets had fled Iran when the conditions in Tabriz worsened leading up to the Great War. As seen in the case of Taqizadeh, Berlin became the ideal outlet from which these erudite exiles were able to distribute their anti-Russian, anti-British, pro-Persian propaganda. During the rise of Reza Khan, they jumped at the chance to incorporate Azerbaijan both politically and linguistically into the modern Iranian nationality.

One of the earliest to tackle the Azeri language was former constitutionalist and popular poet-musician Arif Qazvini. While journalists protested in print, Qazvini did so

\[189\] Ibid., 209.
in song. In October 1923, the same month Reza Khan was named prime minister, he set the following ghazal to music and performed it on a stage:

The Turkic tongue must be torn out by the roots
The legs it stands on should be cut off in this land
Sweep across the Araxes speakers of the Turkic language
O, breeze of dawn arise! Tell the inhabitants of Tabriz:
The sanctuary of Zarathustra is no place for the language of Genghis!
Your women, silent and mournful from the tragedy of Siyavoush
You must not forget these if you are of his race.

Perhaps the most radical advocate of language reform was Taqi Arani, an Azeri who had been heavily influenced by the anti-British nationalist campaign against the 1919 Anglo-Persian Agreement during his time as a student in Tehran. Upon receiving a scholarship in 1922 to complete a doctorate in chemistry at the University of Berlin, Arani arrived in Germany and was quickly recruited into writing for both Farangestan and Iranshahr. Of his articles, two became particularly instrumental in shaping the ideological landscape of Iranian nationalism. The first, entitled “The Great Heroes of Iran,” was a list he had compiled of the most important figures of Iranian History, which included the prophet Zoroaster, the poet Ferdowsi and the kings Darius and Cyrus. He believed that a revival of the ancient Zoroastrian religion along with the rebuilding of a Pre-Islamic style central government was necessary to save the country from “backwardness and imperialism.” The second, titled “Azerbaijan: A Deadly and Vital Problem for Iran,” called for a strict policy of linguistic purification:

190 Ibid., 168.
191 This is a reference to the thirteenth century Mongol invasions of Iran.
192 Asgharzadeh, Iran and the Challenge of Diversity, 132.
193 Kia, “Persian Nationalism and the Campaign for Language Purification,” 33.
194 Ibid., 18.
All patriotic Iranians, especially the officials in the Ministry of Education, must do their very best to replace Turkish with Persian. We must send Persian journals, Persian newspapers, Persian textbooks, and Persian teachers to Azerbaijan—that ancient homeland of Zoroaster and of the Aryans.\footnote{Ibid., 33.}

According to Arani, non Persian-speaking ethnic groups had been too long estranged from their “Aryan ancestry.” Failure to do so would result in a continuation of a vicious and humiliating cycle:

It is a disgrace for an Azerbaijani to be taken for a Turk. . . . To deprive an Azerbaijani of the honor of being Persian is a flagrant injustice…Well meaning individuals must strive to eradicate Turkic from Azerbaijan and replace it by Farsi.\footnote{Asgharzadeh, \textit{Iran and the Challenge of Diversity}, 151.}

In the same year (1924), Rezazadeh Shafaq, a Berlin-educated scholar and contributor to \textit{Iranshahr}, also came out with a statement calling for the complete abandonment of the Azeri tongue:

Iran has to protect Azerbaijan like a heart or an eye which is the target of the enemy’s bullet. The method of protecting Azerbaijan must be both physical and spiritual. . . . To the same extent that it is necessary for cannonballs and enemy-smashing soldiers to line up around the borders of Azerbaijan and await their orders; it is also necessary that the education of thought and soul and the Iranian language be revived throughout this land; and through [the construction of] sufficient modern schools, the youth of this region must be prepared, and . . . competent teachers from Farsi-speaking regions must be brought and stationed there.\footnote{Ibid.}

With the image of a textbook in one hand and an explosive in another, Shafaq’s dual “physical and spiritual” methodology painted a less than ideal vision of...
modernization. If Azerbaijan were to be the “bulls eye” of Russian intrigue, it would be needing Persian ammunition. In a similar fashion, when asked why he had never written anything in Turke, a young Azerbaijani poet answered: “Should one have at his disposal a machinegun and a kitchen knife, which do you suppose he would use for self-defense?” Having made his mark as a soldier nicknamed after the first self-powered machine gun, “Reza Khan Maxim” would quite agree. Years later, when he dropped “Maxim” for “Pahlavi” and became shah, Reza Khan would decorate the entryway of his first palace in his native province of Mazandaran with a large mosaic of a Maxim machine gun. Because of its proximity to the Turkman border, Mazandaran had also become a target of heavy language reform. Due to “imprecisions of the boundaries,” i.e. Russian encroachments along the border, the methods of “protecting” Mazandaran were, as Rezazadeh Shafaq had advocated, “both physical and spiritual.” In an official assessment of the province, patriotic officials reported: “in this vast region, which is home to 300,000 Iranian subjects, at best two hundred people should be conversing in the country’s language: Persian. And among these two hundred one cannot even count twenty people who can write Persian, even though at least one thousand of these families know Russian well.” “Luckily,” the report continued, “not a single Turkish elementary school can be found in the entire Turkoman desert, and for this reason the goals can be brought to fruition more quickly.” Free public schools paid for by national funds were opened to instill bubb-i vatan (love of the homeland), i.e. obedience to the nation-state, and thus the Soviets and the Turks were fought both outside and, more significantly, inside the classroom.

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198 Ibid.
199 Abrahamian, A History of Modern Iran, 63.
200 Kashani-Sabet, Frontier Fictions, 212.
While physical coercion was quick and exact, educational reform did not yield such immediate results. Even with an arsenal of teachers, the state could not disarm children of the “Turkic tongue” as quickly as they could disarm fathers of their weapons. Frustrated with the young inexperienced bureaucrats in the Ministry of Education, Reza Shah ordered the creation of a separate Commission of Education, granting eight of his most prized patriot-intellectuals sole permission to produce Iran’s instructional material. In line with the shah’s war on “chaos of thought, ideas and morals,” the compilation of an “official” comprehensive history of Iran became the order of the day.201 In 1928, this immense task was allocated to three individuals of whom none were formally-trained historians: Hasan Pirnia (Moshir al-Dowleh) was assigned to write on pre-Islamic Iran, Hasan Taqizadeh on the Arab to Mongol invasions and Abbas Eqbal from the Mongol invasion to the Constitutional Revolution.202 As the last two projects never came to fruition, Pirnia’s *The Ancient Iran*, published a year later, became the textbook taught at the high school level for the next two decades.203 Divided so that each chapter corresponded to a school week, the two-hundred-page textbook was actually an abridged version of a three-thousand-page manuscript entitled *History of Ancient Iran*.

Pirnia’s text in significant insofar is it reflects the broader cultural logic of the nationalist project in the late 1920s. Moreover, as the curriculum had been standardized, it held a longstanding monopoly over the country’s historiography. In the introductory pages of his opus, Pirnia began with a section on methodology in which he described two types of historical evidence: the first included “inscriptions which remain from the

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201 Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran*, 100. Years later, Abbas Eqbal said of their task: “[Our mission was to] present a public history of Iran in the style of the collaborative histories produced by scholars in Europe.”

202 Abdī, “Nationalism, Politics, and the Development of Archaeology in Iran,” 56–57. The periodization of Iran’s history as such is indicative of the Commission’s larger agenda. In short, Pirnia was assigned the “golden age,” Taqizadeh the “dark age” and Eqbal the “not so dark, but not so golden age.”

203 Ibid., 56.
Achaemenid and Sasanian shahs and texts of a religious and nonreligious nature of the Aryan Iranians, as well as conclusions that can be drawn directly or indirectly from documentary evidence from other parts of Asia which can shed light on issues [pertaining to Iranian history]” and the second included “stories which were passed down from generation to generation and in the time of the Sasanians were compiled and then in the Muslim centuries transformed into literature, the most famous of which is the masterpiece of Hakim Abu-Qasem Ferdowsi of Tus.” For help with his opus, Pirnia worked closely with Ernst Hertzfeld, a professor from Berlin University who he had met through connection to the Society of National Heritage. The Society of National Heritage (Anjoman-e Asar-e Melli), charged with the mission civilisatrice of cultivating “good Iranian taste,” had hired Hertzfeld in 1925 to give a lecture on the importance of cultural heritage at the Ministry of Culture. The things he had said left such an impression on the nationalists that the German professor was invited to lead the excavations at Persepolis:

Historic buildings and heritage are plenty and everywhere in Iran, and I cannot mention all of them. Since the Aryan tribes, or more precisely because of them, this country is called “Iranshahr,” that is about nine centuries before Christ, and the true ancient heritage dates from that period...If you refer to world history you will see that no nation has so much cultural heritage...European civilization is so relatively young that comparison is simply irrelevant.

National buildings and monuments are not limited to old buildings, inscriptions, and sculptures. For example, the true Iranian heritage is the

204 Marashi, Nationalizing Iran, 102.
206 According to its mission statement, the Society for National Heritage was created to “preserve, protect, and promote Iran’s patrimony.” Its members included: Hasan Pirnia, Hasan Taqizadeh, Mohammad-Ali Foroughi, Isa Sadiq and Keykhosrow Shahrokh.
207 Majd, Great Britain & Reza Shah, 3. In the Franco-Persian Treaty of 1900, Mozzafar-ed Shah Qajar had granted France the exclusive and perpetual right to make archaeological excavations in Persia. After it was annulled in October 1927, Hertzfeld took over excavations at Persepolis.
Shahnameh, which is the masterpiece of Ferdowsi, the only great poet of the country.  

A leitmotif of twentieth-century rhetoric, the *Shahnameh* had become the Iranian national epic and its author, Ferdowsi, the Iranian national hero. According to secular nationalists, Ferdowsi had preserved all of Iran’s authentic history from its primeval beginnings up until the seventh-century Arab-Muslim conquests within some fifty thousand couplets. As less than five percent of the terms found in the medieval poem were Arabic loans, nationalists claimed that he had consciously avoided using the language of the conquerors; they described his text as “extremely pure” and “uncontaminated.” In short, the *Shahnameh* became the finest example of the Aryan mind rebelling against Islam and the Aryan tongue rebelling against Arabic. Upon the suggestion of Mohammad-Taqi Bahar, Hasan Taqizadeh, Mohammad-Ali Foroughi and Keykhusrow Shahrokh, Reza Shah ordered a mausoleum be built in anticipation of the poet’s one-thousandth birthday. In October and November 1934, over one hundred of the most prominent officials and scholars from the Soviet Union, France, Britain, United States and India were invited to Iran for a month of celebrations in the cities of Tehran, Mashad and Tus. The Persian delegation was comprised of forty members and included, among others: Mohammad-Taqi Bahar, Hasan Pirnia, Rezazadeh Shafaq, Abbas Eqlbal, Ahmad Kasravi, Mojtoba Minovi, Ebrahim Pur Davud, Rashid Yassemi, Isa Sadiq and Ali-Asghar Hekmat.

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209 Ibid., 38.
210 Shahbazi, “Ferdowsi, Abu’L-Qasem Iv. Millenary Celebration.” Taqizadeh had worked with German Orientalist Nöldeke to prove that Ferdowsi’s year of birth was between 934 and 935CE.
211 Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran*, 127.
212 Shahbazi, “Ferdowsi, Abu’L-Qasem Iv. Millenary Celebration.”
The millenary celebration began with an international Congress of Orientalists in Tehran, which opened with a speech by prime minister and president of the Society of National Heritage, Mohammad-Ali Foroughi. Welcoming his foreign guests, he addressed the audience in Persian:

You have honored us with your presence, but you have done this rightfully because even though Ferdowsi is of the Iranian people he is also in spirit a child of humanity and, if you will allow me, a child of humanity.²¹³

The Congress ended four days later with a closing note by the minister of education Ali Asghar Hekmat who, speaking in French, elaborated on Foroughi’s theme:

The interest shown in the Millennium celebrations for Ferdowsi in all countries, and the fact that he nations sent their most noted scholars to this country and to the tomb of the creator of the Persian epic, shows that, despite our apparent distinctions, there are no real differences between peoples…It is sometimes said that our century and our world are a century and world of materialism…It is for this reason that we emphatically affirm that where art and science is manifested, the curtain of differences is removed and one and true reality is made apparent: that is to say, the unity of peoples.²¹⁴

With France, America, Germany and a number of other countries also holding Ferdowsi festivals, the conference of Orientalists had received global press coverage. Aware of their audience, Foroughi and Hekmat made speeches that reflected the overall tone of the millennium celebration, which was aimed at universalizing the image of Iran’s national poet. Placing Ferdowsi in both international and national contexts, the speakers were keen on presenting an image of Iran as a rich culture worthy of international

²¹³ Marashi, Nationalizing Iran, 129.
²¹⁴ Ibid.
respect. Hekmat’s emphasis on the “world of materialism” and the importance of art, which he linked together with science, was indicative of the attempt to establish Iran’s sovereignty over the global domain of culture. As the West reigned over the material realm, nationalists knew that they could not compete with the technological innovations or scientific developments of Europe. After Hertzfeld had posited the Shahnameh as “true Iranian heritage,” nationalists saw the promotion of poetry as the way to present Iran as a nation worthy of international respect.

After four days in Tehran, the guests were put on a bus for a two-day trip to Tus, the ancient city on the northeastern border of Iran and Turkmenistan. According to the Society of National Heritage and their resident archaeologist Ernst Hertzfeld, the “trace of two small graves” belonging to the great poet had been “discovered” in Tus and, therefore, the commemorative mausoleum could only be constructed on site. The secular pilgrimage ended with a large ceremony at the new Achaemenid-style tomb designed by French architect André Godard. Standing at the base of the large stone edifice before an audience of two hundred “scholars from East and West,” Reza Shah delivered his speech:

We are very pleased that along with the one-thousandth birthday of Ferdowsi we can also accomplish one of the other enduring desires of the Iranian nation, that is, the establishment of this structure as a measure of our appreciation and gratitude for the pains which Ferdowsi bore to revive the language and history of this nation…It was with this idea that We gave the decree to create this historical monument, this exalted structure, which will not be harmed by wind, rain, or circumstance…

215 Grigor, “Recultivating ‘Good Taste’,” 37. Streets named after him all over Iran M103
216 Marashi, Nationalizing Iran, 130–131.
The following day, Rezazadeh Shafaq addressed the conference and proposed a “manifesto of the moderate wing of the Persian language reform movement.” Building on Reza Shah’s evocation of Ferdowsi as the reviver of the Persian language, Shafaq maintained that the national poet had consciously avoided using an Arabic vocabulary except in “dire necessity,” for example, when mustering a “mythical army.” It is interesting to note that the most significant contribution to this theory had appeared a few days earlier in the form of a gift. Back in Tehran, the German ambassador had presented the Persian delegation with a special edition of Orientalist Fritz World’s newly completed *Glossar zu Ferdosis Schahname*, which contained a full index of the usage of every work of the *Shabnameh*. He urged writers and teachers to show the full measure of their appreciation, as the shah had, to the great hero by following his “measured path” of choosing Persian terms, if available, over their Arabic equivalents. As Europe’s most eminent Orientalists and Iran’s most fervent nationalists converged for the celebration of Ferdowsi’s millennial anniversary, the stage was set for what would come to be recognized as the Pahlavi era’s most controversial project: language purification.

In reaction to Shafaq’s proposal, the Tehran daily paper *Ettala’at* began publishing an enormous number of articles and letters dedicated to the question of

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217 Perry, “Language Reform in Turkey and Iran,” 300.
218 Ibid.
219 Ridgeon, “A mad Kasravi’s Criticisms of Edward Granville Browne,” 223. Not all Iranian scholars, however, appreciated the gesture. Ahmed Kasravi said about the gift: “During the Firdawsi [millennial] festival the Germans brought a book that astounded me. An Orientalist had written a concordance of Firdawsi’s *Shahnama*. (For example, it records how many times the word “from” (az) appears through the *Shahnama*). The Germans commented: “He labored for twenty years to finish the book.” Why did he engage on such a futile and irrational task? Such a German must be either mad or simple-minded to do such a thing, or else his purpose was to deceive Iranians and cause them to engage in such futile projects. The German government sent such a book to us as a gift! More noteworthy is that on the same day some people came to speak with me and they said something like: “These Europeans are amazing people. They engage in incredible tasks. Look what they have done! He laboured for twenty years for the sake of one book. It is not without reason that they are always ahead and we are behind.” I saw in a moment that the seed of the politics [of European imperialism] had grown in their hearts.”
220 Perry, “Language Reform in Turkey and Iran,” 300.
language reform. The ensuing debate between purists and moderates, which grew more polemic by the day, foreshadowed the demise of many of the shah’s most prized officials. In the six months following the Ferdowsi millenary, the most fervent advocates of language purification began inventing new terms to replace the “Semitic words” that they rejected as the “insidious secret agents” of the seventh-century Arab conquerors.221 As newspapers began selectively adopting these inventions, articles published in the new style of “pure Persian” became unintelligible to average readers. Even in official governmental correspondences the arbitrary usage of archaic Persian words caused miscommunications between different ministries.222

It was under these circumstances that Foroughi approached Reza Shah with the idea of creating an Iranian Academy of Language (Farhangestan). To avoid haphazard coinages such as those of the 1924 and 1925 military committees, Reza Shah decreed that all activities pertaining to the Persianization of the language be centralized and appointed the prime minister to oversee the new language-planning organization. Much unlike the staunch purists of his day, however, the prime minister’s primary intention had been to put an end to the activities of both official and unofficial organizations whose attempts at Persianizing the language had rendered it wholly incomprehensible. In 1915, he had made the following statement in an address:

Another one of the strange ideas which has occurred to some of our friends is that in order to perfect the Persian language we should establish scientific and literary societies, or in other words an academy, to coin new words and create new idioms, thinking that in foreign countries where there are academies and literary and scientific societies they do such things. These people are not aware that coining words and idioms is not the function of such societies but rather the scholars and learned

221 Ibid., 301.
222 Jazayeri, “Farhangestan.”
people in the process of writing and lecturing may, according to their
taste and sensibility, when it is proper and necessary, adopt expressions,
and if the adoption is made properly and discriminatingly the expression
will naturally be accepted and will find currency. If scientific and literary
societies work for the advancement of science and literature, it is in a
different way. Their duty is to incite and encourage the seekers of
perfection and to facilitate their affairs.  

Although much had changed in Iran over the course of those twenty years, it
appeared that Foroughi’s general stance on language reform had not. In a letter
addressed to the ministry of education, Foroughi wrote, “Seeing that some people try
these days to coin words for new concepts for which Persian has no means of
expression, and seeing that these people’s methods are unfounded and do not conform
to good taste, it is incumbent upon the ministry of public education to ponder on the
idea of the establishment of such a society.”  

Upon the request of Foroughi, the
Ministry hired Isa Sadiq for the drafting of the new academy modeled after the Académie
Française. The final product was a constitution consisting of sixteen articles. With the
exception of Foroughi, who had been royally appointed by the shah, the academy was
divided into two groups: full members (peyvaste) and associate members (vabaste).  

Twenty-four Iranians were chosen to serve in the high council as full members, which
was to operate as the principle word-producing body.  

According to the new constitution, the primary function of the academy was the
“maintenance, development and promotion of the Persian language.” To accomplish its

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225 Kia, “Persian Nationalism and the Campaign for Language Purification,” 22. Most associate members
were scholars from European countries and Egypt. As an expatriate, Jamalzadeh was also an associate
member.
226 Ibid., 34. The full members of the academy included: Mohammad-Ali Foroughi, Hasan Vosuq (Vosuq
od-Dowle), Hasan Esfandiyari, Ali Asghar Hekmat, Rezazadeh Shafaq, Ali Akbar Dekhoda, Said Nafisi,
Rashid Yassemi, etc. Full members who joined later included: Ebrahim Pourdavoud, Abbas Eqbal (in
1937), Mohammad Qazvini (in 1938-39), etc.
mission, members were expected to replace foreign terms and expression found in the lexicon with equivalents of Persian (not Arabic or Turkish) origin. The academy was charged with five additional tasks: the reform of the Persian writing system, the writing of Persian grammar, the establishment of principles for coining words and accepting or rejecting foreign terms, the collection of artisans’ terms and expressions and the collection of words and expressions from old texts.  

For the sake of efficiency, the twenty-four members were divided up and assigned specific domains in which they would officiate the use of neologisms. The following eight branches were created:

- Committee for general administrative terminology
- Committee for legal terminology
- Committee for scientific terminology
- Committee for Persian grammar
- Committee for compiling a Persian dictionary
- Committee for the guidance of public thoughts and collecting local hymns, tunes, and words and expressions
- Committee for studying medical terms
- Committee for changing Arabic and Turco-Mongol toponyms into Persian

In addition to associate members, who were primarily foreign scholars, a number of linguists, professors and government officials were hired by the high council to deal with the high influx of word suggestions. As a result, the actual process of word selection

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228 Ibid.
and creation usually occurred within these committees. In most instances, committees compiled lists of new terms that were then put before the general assembly of the Farhangestan for consideration. In addition to being easy to pronounce, each proposed term had to “agree with the spirit of the Persian language, with Persian taste, and grammar.” Once a consensus had been reached, the recommendations of the assembly were sent to Reza Shah who authorized their use with his signature. The press and the state bureaucracy were subsequently notified of the proposed changes, which they were required to adopt both internally and in society at large.

Despite the prime minister’s initial intent, the establishment of the Farhangestan had not brought an end to the heated debate between supporters and opponents of language reform. In fact, both groups criticized the policies of the academy whose members favored by and large Shafaq’s “measured path.” Those who favored strict purism and the removal of all Arabic and Turkish terms from both the written and spoken language were a noisy minority. As Persian was an Indo-European language, they considered Semitic terms to be “pollutions.” Influenced by Kemal Atatürk’s language reforms in Turkey, these anti-Islam and anti-Arab intellectuals believed the first step toward restoring pride and glory to the Iranian people was a complete rejection of these terms.

On the other hand, the opponents of language reform were predominantly members of the traditional political elite of the former Qajar state. They argued instead that Arabic had both strengthened the language and added to its overall beauty. As

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229 Jazayeri, “Farhangestan.”
230 Jernudd and Shapiro, The Politics of Language Purism, 96.
231 Perry, “Language Reform in Turkey and Iran,” 299. In June 1928, Kemal Atatürk had established a committee to Romanize the writing system in the republic of Turkey. He also suggested that the language of prayer be changed from Arabic to Turkish.
Arabic was the holy language of the Quran, the most vocal objectors to these reforms were the *ulema*. They view this reform as yet another way to sever the masses from their fate. Situated between these two stances stood those who opposed the lexical dominance of Arabic. This camp favored the “measured path” that Rezazadeh Shafaq had recommended before the Congress of Orientalists. They considered a complete reversal of Arabic influences on the Persian language both an historical and a linguistic impossibility. Even within the camp of the “measured path,” there was a disagreement over whether or not pre-Islamic words and roots should be used to manufacture new words. Although they supported the reduction of Arabic terms, they wanted the Academy to be more lenient on the issue of Semitic root changes. They feared such reforms would irrevocably change the language of classical poets such as Jalal ad-Din Rumi with which the West associated Iran. Although posited as a cultural argument, these nationalists showed a concern with the image of Iran in the eyes of arbiters of prestige, that is, European Orientalists.\(^\text{232}\)

Mohammad-Ali Foroughi was a member of this third group. He advocated a rational and scientific approach to reform and rejected the purists for basing their opinions on “irrational and emotional arguments.”\(^\text{233}\) As a large number of Arabic loans were firmly established in Persian, he argued that their deletion would be unwise. Although appointed as the first president of the *Farhangestan*, his views on academies were far more conservative than those of the Shah. As seen in his 1915 address, he rejected the idea of an academy as a word-manufacturing machine. In an attempt to clarify his stance, Foroughi issued a six-point proposal to language reform:

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\(^{232}\) Ridgeon, “Amad Kasrav’s Criticisms of Edward Granville Browne.”

\(^{233}\) Kia, “Persian Nationalism and the Campaign for Language Purification,” 224.
First, avoid using an Arabic word whenever there was a familiar Persian equivalent for it. Second, whenever there was a common Arabic word which was used in the popular language but also a Persian word which was not familiar, everything should be done in order to familiarize the public with the Persian word. Third, if there was not a Persian equivalent for an Arabic word which was used in a particular profession, trade or governmental department, then a new Persian word had to be manufactured which could be understood and accepted by the members of that profession. Fourth, if there was a familiar and popularly used Arabic word which has no Persian equivalent, the Arabic word could be left untouched unless a better and more acceptable Persian equivalent could be proposed. Fifth, if there were ‘foreign’ words (presumably words from a European language) for which there were no Persian or Arabic equivalents and if these words were international words which belonged to the ‘material domain’ then they could be accepted and used in Persian. Sixth, if there was a foreign word which belonged to the spiritual domain then a Persian or an Arabic equivalent had to be manufactured.  

He then also sought to address his critics. He rejected openly the proponents of language purism who were motivated by extralingual sentiments:

If we expel European words…this is in no way based on enmity with Europeans and if we replace Arabic words we are not at all motivated by animosity toward our religion or to the Arab people.  

In late 1935, the Tehran-based newspaper *Ettela’at* reprinted a copy of an article entitled “The Nationalistic Literary Movement” written by Hasan Taqizadeh for an earlier magazine of the Ministry of Education. Like Foroughi, he advocated the cautious and gradual replacement of established Arabic words with new words of Persian derivation. Criticizing the work of the *Farhangestan*, he wrote that the state should not have the power to determine Iranian culture: “tradition tells us that ‘the sword’ should

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234 Ibid., 25.
237 Karimi-Hakkak, “Censorship.”
not interfere with the work of ‘the pen.” 238 His concern was primarily with the haphazard and undemocratic implementation of the reforms. 239 Approved by both the prime minister and the minister of education, the article was first printed in 1932, but Reza Shah did not read educational magazines. 240 Enraged, the Shah ordered the confiscation of all copies of the newspaper and all issues of the educational magazine. 241 Furthermore, the owner and the editor Ettela’at were both arrested. The owner was questioned in jail for five days, while the editor was imprisoned for three months and banned from the publishing business. 242 When ordered to Tehran, Taqizadeh was serving as a Minister in Paris and thus declined to return. After being deposed of his position, he went to Britain to teach Persian literature at the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London.

Criticism of Reza Shah’s policy was unwise, but William H. Hornibrook, the American minister at Tehran, provided a different interpretation of Taqizadeh’s dismissal:

“his [Taqizadeh’s] ability and statesmanship were too well known to the majority of his people and his popularity was too universally conceded to permit his continuing serving in a high official position under the present dynasty. The incident was seized by the Shah to relieve him of his post and thus disgrace a possible contender for the throne or the Presidency of an Iranian Republic.” 243

238 Marashi, Nationalizing Iran, 101.
239 Perry, “Language Reform in Turkey and Iran,” 303. In 1928, Taqizadeh had written a pamphlet recommending replacing the Arabic script with a modified Latin alphabet of forty letters. He had proposed to do so over a period of forty years. His vision for the Persian language was very different than Foroughi’s. For Reza Shah, it did not matter what their views were, only that they were different from his own.
240 Wilber, Riza Shah Pahlavi, 169.
241 Marashi, Nationalizing Iran, 160.
242 Wilber, Riza Shah Pahlavi.
243 Majd, Great Britain & Reza Shah, 205.
On December 2, 1935, Foroughi was forced to resign as both prime minister and president of the Farhangestan.\textsuperscript{244} According to the Shah, Foroughi’s practice of moderation and gradualism had obstructed the “proper functioning” of the academy, which came into conflict with his renewed fervor for linguistic reform. Furthermore, the fact that Foroughi had authorized the printing of Taqizadeh’s article was unacceptable. As Reza pushed social, cultural and economic reforms with political absolutism, he lost his initial civilian support, enraged the ulema and even antagonized his own cabinet. The decision to push language reform without the support of the nationalist intelligentsia was greatly informed by his interaction with two powerful non-Iranians: Kemal Atatürk and Adolf Hitler.

After a visit to Turkey in June 1934, Reza Shah had been very impressed with Atatürk’s purist modernization efforts.\textsuperscript{245} The Turkish leader’s formula for modernization called for both an immediate westernization and a rejection of traditional Islamic structures. While disguised as a question of purity, it was clear that Reza Shah was more interested in what the centralization of language could do for his powers as monarch. In August 1934, Adolf Hitler proclaimed himself Fürhrer following the death of President Hindenburg. A few months later, the Iranian legation in Berlin suggested to Reza Shah that “since Iran was considered to be the birthplace and the original homeland of the Aryan race, the name of the country be changed from Persia to Iran.”\textsuperscript{246}

\textsuperscript{244} Kia, “Persian Nationalism and the Campaign for Language Purification,” 25. Foroughi’s resignation had also to do with his attempt to intercede on behalf of his son-in-law’s father, Mohammad Vali Asadi. Asadi had been implicated in the Mashad bloody riots over the introduction of the chapeau or “European hat” to replace the kolah, a traditional head covering of Persian men. He had been the keeper of the shrine of the eighth Imam and thus executed by the state.

\textsuperscript{245} Perry, “Language Reform in Turkey and Iran,” 300. It is important to note that at no point did the Shah suggest Romanization, which had been the most overt reform Atatürk had made to the Turkish language.

\textsuperscript{246} Kia, “Persian Nationalism and the Campaign for Language Purification,” 21.
1934, Reza Shah accepted this proposal and ordered the Iranian Foreign Ministry to release an international declaration:

As the members of the Legation are aware, the words “Iran” and “Irani” are rendered in most foreign languages, following ancient Greek historians, by the words ‘Persia,’ ‘Persian,’ ‘Persien,’ ‘Perser,’ etc. Nevertheless, these appellations, as is shown by historical, geographical, and racial evidence, do not correspond with the real significance of the words, ‘Iran’ and ‘Irani’; and the proper course is to translate ‘mamlikat-i-Iran’ (the country of Iran) into the various languages simply by ‘Iran,’ and to represent the word ‘Iraniha’ (people of Iran) by ‘Iraniens’ or the like in the other European languages. For this reason the authorities of the Imperial government are proposing to remedy this etymological and historical inexactitude. Therefore the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will be exceedingly obliged if, from the first day of Farvardin, 1314 (21 March 1935) the Legation will cease to employ the words ‘Perse’ and ‘Persian’ in conversation and correspondence, and will employ in their place the words ‘Iran’ and ‘Iraniens’.

The question of an “Aryan race” that linked Iran and Germany had already been part of the nationalist discourse dating back to the nineteenth century. In the mid-1920s pro-German nationalists like Taqizadeh and Kazemzadeh had used Indo-Aryan theory in their political and historical discourses, but the international climate had changed by the time Reza Shah decided to align himself with Germany. While continuing to alienate his public, the clergy and even the intelligentsia, Reza Shah deliberately fostered very close economic and cultural relations with Germany. By 1938, Germany held a monopoly over Iran’s foreign trade and its ports, railways and factories were mainly German-equipped. The National Library in Iran was presented with a large collection of pro-Nazi books and German propaganda was broadcast via radio and press. As the state resorted to violence in suppressing opposition, Europeans and Iranians began speculating whether junior officers would overthrow the regime, or whether social tensions would eventually

bring about a bloody revolution. With the advent of war in 1939, these speculations ended shortly after Germany invaded the Soviet Union in 1941. In August, Britain and Soviet Russia invaded Iran and the Shah brought Mohammad-Ali Foroughi out of retirement. Acting to save Iran from imminent destruction, Foroughi secretly negotiated with the Allied powers, thus becoming the Shah’s first and last prime minister. The “supreme means” of the shah, his army, crumbled in less than one week. Upon receiving news that Russian forces had advanced from Qazvin, Reza Shah signed a deed of abdication, drafted by Foroughi, in favor of the Crown Prince.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁹ Ansari, *Modern Iran Since 1921*, 72.
V. CONCLUSION

The British legation informed the Iranian government on the fourteenth that a joint Anglo-Russian Occupation of Tehran would take place in the near future. That evening the British radio stations at London broadcast an attack in the Persian language against Riza [sic] Shah. The program stated that he had stolen a large part of the valuable real estate of the country, giving payment, if at all, at only a fraction of the true value, that the owners had been forced to sell to him under threat of death, and that poverty-stricken peasants had to sweat and toil to fill his pockets with gold. A poem written by a Persian jailed eight years earlier was read on this program; it likened the ruler to the tyrant Zohak and asked where were men today like Feridun and Kava who conquered that tyrant, but it did not quite go so far as to suggest that British were such men.251

Shown above is an account of a British broadcast aired two days before the abdication of Reza Shah. The BBC Persian Service had been established at the beginning of the Second World War as part of a larger campaign to disseminate anti-Pahlavi propaganda. This political and ideological campaign was accompanied by a bidirectional military invasion: the Soviets from the north, and the British and the Americans from the south. Thus my work is framed by a period of exactly thirty years, beginning and ending with an Anglo-Russian invasion.

As seen in chapter one, Kaveh was propagated as the originator of an Iranian “national will.” On the pages of Taqizadeh’s journal, his story was used to foster anti-British, pro-German and pro-Iranian sentiments. Nearly thirty years later, on the broadcast of the British radio, his story was used instead to inspire a revolt against the Pahlavi shah. I have chosen to end with the above quote as it shows that a symbol posited as “purely” Iranian was already always contingent on its political, social and

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251 Wilber, Riza Shah Pahlavi, 207. This account is provided by American spy and writer Donald Newton Wilber. He was the architect of “Operation Ajax,” the successful CIA plot to overthrow Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadeq. The coup installed Mohammad Reza Pahlavi who ruled Iran until the Islamic revolution of 1979.
ideological context. Recalling the parable of the constitutional revolution, there was always another rider waiting to mount. [See footnote #251.]
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