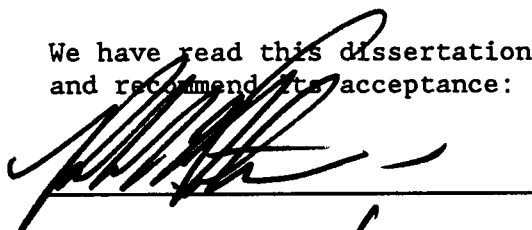


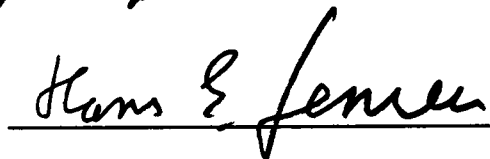
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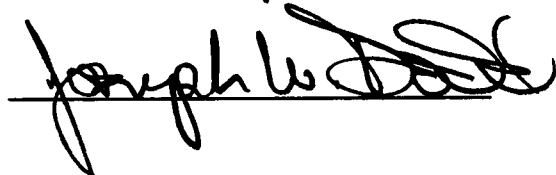
I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Mohammad Reza Takhsid entitled "The Ulama of Iran; Fluctuations in Power 1796-1941." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Political Science.


Vernon R. Iredell, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:







Accepted for the Council:


Vice Provost
and Dean of The Graduate School

THE ULAMA OF IRAN; FLUCTUATIONS
IN POWER 1796-1941

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Mohammad Reza Takhshid

June 1988

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to analyze the history of Iran from the nineteenth century to 1941 to determine the factors which contributed to fluctuation in the ulama's influence on Iranian politics.

The study is divided into three parts. The first covers the period from the formation of the Qajar dynasty to the end of the Tobacco Protests (1797-1892). The second covers the Constitutional Revolution including its prelude and aftermath (1892-1921). The third covers the reign of Reza Shah, the founder of the Pahlavi dynasty (1921-1941). The conclusions provided an analysis of developments following Reza Shah's reign. They include a brief description of the Islamic Revolution of 1979, and speculations with respect to future of the ulama's role in Iranian politics.

This study concludes that during the first period and that part of the second which extends up to the victory of the Constitutional Revolution of 1906, the ulama's influence and power was on the rise. On the other hand, after the establishment of the constitutional government in 1906, the ulama's power to influence the politics of Iran started to decline. This decline continued through the Reza Shah period.

This study concludes that three major factors contributed to fluctuations in the ulama's power and influence. These factors are (1) the attitudes of the kings and their advisors toward the ulama and religious matters, (2) foreign influences, and (3) the status of the religious hierarchy.

This study concludes with the conjective that the dominance of the ulama in Iranian politics is a lasting phenomenon which will last for years to come.

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GLOSSARY

[All items in this glossary from Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969).]

akhund	a lesser member of the religious classes, performing everyday religious functions such as leading prayer in the smaller mosques, etc.; synonymous with mulla.
alam	one who is most learned (relative of alim).
alamiyat	the quality of being most learned.
atabat	the "thresholds:" the Shii Holy Places in Iraq, at Karbala, Kazimayn, Najaf, and Samarra.
auqaf	the plural of waqf.
bast	the sanctuary from secular authority provided by mosques, residences of the ulama, and other places.
bidat	reprehensible innovation in matters of faith.
faqih	a jurisprudent.
fatva	a legal ruling; an expression of opinion, by one of the ulama, on a point of religious law or on a legal case.
fiqh	jurisprudence.
furu	the branches of the religious law, deduced from its principles (usul).
ghaybat	the occultation of the Twelfth Imam.
ghaybat-i kubra	the "Greater Occultation," the period marked by the absence of human intermediaries between the Imam and the faithful, beginning with the death of the last wakil (agent) in 940, and still continuing.
hadith	the traditions concerning the sayings and deeds of the Prophet; for the Shiis, also those relating to the Imams.
haram	that which is prohibited by the law of Islam.
imam	the leader of congregational prayer.

Imam	for Ithna ashari Shiis, one of the succession of twelve divinely appointed guides of the community.
imam juma	one designated by the monarch to lead congregational prayer and pronounce the Friday sermon in each major city.
ithna ashari	"Twelver"; a believer in the cycle of Twelve Imams which culminated in the occultation of the last in the series.
jihad	personal striving for the cause of religion, particularly in religiously sanctioned warfare.
khums	a fifths of all profit earned in trade, to be levied as a charitable tax.
madrasa	a college of religious learning.
Mahdi	for the Ithna ashari Shiis, the Twelfth Imam, reappearing at the end of the Greater Occultation to establish the true faith throughout the world and inaugurate a brief reign of justice before the coming of the apocalypse.
maktab	an elementary, primarily Quranic, school.
masjid	mosque.
mujtahid	one who may act according to his own judgment in matters relating to religious law; who practices ijtihaad.
mulla	a lesser member of the religious classes; synonymous with akhund.
muqallid	one who is unable to exercise independent judgment in matters relating to religious law and is obliged to follow an exemplary model; who practices taqlid.
sayyid	a descendant of the Prophet.
shar	religious jurisdiction.
shariat	the law of Islam.
sunnat	the exemplary practice of the Prophet; and, for Ithna ashari Shiis, that of the Imams.
takfir	the formal denunciation by the ulama of an individual as an infidel.

taqlid	the process of following the practices and pronouncements of a scholar more learned than oneself in matters relating to the religious law, with faith in his correctness and without independent investigation of his reasons.
tullab	the student at a madrasa (employed both as a singular and a plural noun, although an exclusively plural form in Arabic).
toman	a unit of currency, equivalent to ten rials.
ulama	those learned in the religious law (pl. of alim).
urf	secular jurisdiction; customary law.
usul	the principles or sources of the religious law.
vajib	enjoined by the law of Islam.
vaqf	an inalienable endowment, established for religious or charitable purposes, or to ensure security of tenure within a family.
vazir	a minister.
zakat	the "purifying tax" levied on the property of Muslims for purposes enumerated in Quran, Chap. IX v. 60, often translated erroneously as alms.

INTRODUCTION

After years of resistance and struggle against tyranny, dictatorial monarchy, and kingship, the wishes of the Iranian people were realized on February 11, 1979, in the victory of the Islamic Revolution under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini and in the subsequent establishment of an Islamic state in Iran.

The victory of the Islamic Revolution was so unexpected that it caught everyone by surprise. Suddenly the whole complexity of the Middle East power structure was changed, and the introduction of an Islamic government in Iran became a great concern for the superpowers and their allies, particularly the rulers of the Muslim nations of the Middle East.

There are, of course, reasons for that concern. First is the strategic location of Iran and its economic and military significance. Second, and most important, is the impact of the Islamic Revolution of Iran on other Muslim nations.

Since the Islamic government of Iran is the only Islamic government which has come to power in recent decades, or even centuries, it is important to study it because its emergence may shed light on the future of Islamic revival and revolution elsewhere and the stability of pro-western rulers of such Muslim countries as Iraq, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia. The stability of these rulers is important for the western powers.

One group of people has dominated every aspect of the Iranian Islamic Revolution. This group is the ulama (clergy). No one disputes the overwhelming significance of the role they played. As A. H. Abidi states:

The clergy had a historically credible tradition and in a situation of simmering, popular discontent, they articulated the demands of the people and attracted mass attention. In the wide political spectrum of Iran, not only did ulama and the akhunds (teachers of theology) constitute a well-knit and organized class, but they were also the largest pressure group. The number of ulama, akhunds, and mullas (teachers of theology and sacred law) was estimated to be 180,000. It could be said that they constituted the only core body of activists who functioned freely and contributed to the strength of the protest movement.¹

Because of their major role in the victory of the Islamic Revolution, the ulama are today more involved in the everyday social, political, and economic life in the Islamic Republic of Iran than ever before. As Elaine Sciolino in her article, "Iran's Durable Revolution" states:

The thousands of mosques were transformed from a very old religious institution into a political organ. Using the mosques as administrative centers, more than 100,000 mullahs now pass regulations, run courts, collect taxes, write schoolbooks, oversee the army, dispense ideology, recruit war volunteers, and funnel rationed goods to the deserving masses.²

It must be remembered, however, that this study provides the reader with an opportunity to analyze the interaction of the ulama and the religious hierarchy with the secular authority only in the Shii context. The majority of the Muslim nations are Sunni, and since the clergy play a very different role in Sunni countries the Islamic revival may lead to very different results there.

¹A. H. Abidi, "The Iranian Revolution. Its Origins and Dimension." International Studies, March 1979, p. 141.

²Elaine Sciolino, "Iran's Durable Revolution," Foreign Affairs, Spring 1983, p. 898.

The development of the influence of the ulama gained momentum in the early sixteenth century when the Safavids proclaimed Shii Islam to be the state religion of Iran. By consolidating their position during the Safavid dynasty, the ulama gradually became a dominant force in Iranian politics in the nineteenth century. During this period, on many occasions the ulama participated in political activities, confronted the state authorities, and influenced the government's policies. This was evident during the Tobacco Protest (1890-1892) which is regarded by most scholars of Iranian history as one of the first comprehensive and broad involvements of the ulama in Iranian politics. It was actually the beginning of a long struggle for the establishment of an Islamic government in Iran which was finally realized on February 11, 1979. During this period, there were times when the ulama enjoyed considerable power and were able to strongly influence the course of events in Iranian politics as during the Tobacco Protest and the Constitutional Revolution of 1906. There were other times when the ulama's political activities and influence were diminished as after the Constitutional Revolution and throughout Reza Shah's reign.

This study looks at the history of Iran from the nineteenth century to 1941 to determine the factors which contributed to the fluctuations in the ulama's influence on Iranian politics.

This study consists of five main chapters and a concluding chapter. The first two chapters cover nineteenth-century Iran under the rule of the Qajar dynasty. After a brief account of the history of Shiism in Iran prior to the nineteenth century, major attention

is given to the attitude of the Qajar rulers toward the ulama and the religious hierarchy, foreign involvement in Iranian politics and its impact on the ulamas power, and the role of the ulama in the Tobacco Protest and the cancellation of the Tobacco Concession which represents a triumph of the ulama's power. Chapters III and IV deal with the Constitutional Revolution and its aftermath. It was considered the first major attempt to modernize and democratize the Iranian political system. The constitutional movement started with the full participation of the religious leaders and the masses who, under the leadership of the ulama, forced the creation of a constitutional monarchy modeled after those of the Europeans. These chapters will begin by focusing on the history of modernization in Iran and the impact of the west on Iran during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Then the effect of modernization and reform on the ulama's power will be discussed. Particular attention will be given to the impact of the Constitutional Revolution on the ulama's power and how the behavior of the Qajar rulers during this period affected the ulama's influence on Iranian politics. In Chapter V the reign of Reza Shah and the impact of his policies on the role of religion and the ulama in Iranian policies is discussed. The era of Reza Shah lasted from 1920 to 1941 during which time he systematically, on a national basis, tried to decrease and eventually eliminate the influence of religion and the role of the ulama in Iranian social and political life. In Chapter V we will first look at Reza Shah's military and administrative reforms and explain these reforms resulted in a strong central government which he used in

implementing reforms in areas where the ulama had enjoyed enormous amounts of power and to violently crush any opposition to his rule and reform policies. Particular attention will be given to reform of the judicial systems, the educational system, and the administration of auqaf (inalienable endowments), and to the effect of such reforms on the ulama's power. Finally, the status of the religious hierarchy and the ulama's leadership during each period under study will be analyzed and its impact on the power of the ulama to influence Iranian politics will be assessed.

CHAPTER I

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY IRAN - PART I

In 1501 Shah Ismail, the founder of the Safavid dynasty, proclaimed the "Ithna Ashari" or "Twelver" Shi'i as the official religion of the newly established, but still vulnerable, Safavid state. The Safavid state had a small amount of territory under its control in northeastern Iran. This was the beginning of a new power base in Iranian politics called the "ulama." The development of Twelver Shi'i, of which the ulama were an inseparable part, started when the prophet Mohammad died in the seventh century. This chapter looks at the development of Shi'i Islam following the prophet Mohammad's demise and its impact on Iran. Major attention is given to relations between the state and the religious hierarchy in the first half of the nineteenth century. Finally, the Anglo-Russian rivalry in Iran during the same period will be discussed.

According to the Shi'ite belief, when the prophet Mohammad died the leadership of the Muslim community was passed on to his cousin and son-in-law Ali. This leadership then was passed to eleven descendants of Ali. The infant son of the eleventh Imam went into "occultation" in the ninth century. During this "Lesser Occultation," which lasted seventy years, the twelfth Imam was in contact with four agents. After the last agent (vakil) died in 940, this limited communication with the Muslim community ended, and the twelfth Imam

entered into the "ghaybat-i kubra" or "Greater Occultation" which will last until the hidden Imam's return to earth as the Savior.¹

When the Arab forces defeated Yazdgerd III (632-651) of Iran (then called Persia)² in the seventh century, a majority of the Iranian people were converted to Islam. For several centuries after the occupation of Iran by Arab forces, Iran (like other parts of the Muslim world) was under the control of the Umayyad (661-750) and the Abbasid caliphate (749-1259). Both the Umayyad and the Abbasid caliphate claimed the leadership of the Muslim community around the world. During this period, there were many local dynasties, but there was not a dominant force in control of Iran. During the Abbasid period, there were three significant dynasties with "Twelver" Shii loyalty. One was the Buwayhid dynasty (945-1055) which was able to capture the Abbasid capital of Baghdad; they did not change the caliphate to a "Twelver" Imami one but gave formal allegiance to the Abbasid caliphate.³ During the same period, according to S. A. Arjomand, "The rise of the Shiite Buwayhid ruler in central Iran in the tenth century . . . gave an impetus to the growth of 'Twelver' Imami Shiism. The period witnessed the birth of enormous theological

¹Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), p. 3.

²Before Reza Shah (1925-1941) formally changed the name, Iran was known as Persia. In this work, the two names are used interchangeably.

³Nikki Keddie, Roots of Revolution (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 9.

literature and the spread of many Shiite religious and propagandist practices which were revived in later centuries."⁴

The Mongols' invasion of Iran, which started in 1220, made a major impact on religion and life in the Islamic East. During most of the Mongol period, there was a relative freedom of religious practices and activities. As a result, religious gatherings, discussions, and writings increased, and some of the most famous of Iranian Shii scholars, including Nasir ud-Din Tusi (d. 1273) and his student Ibn-al Mutaahhar Al-Hilli (d. 1324) emerged. These two wrote many books which included some on religious matters, were very influential in Mongols' court, and many times acted as their advisors. Once Al-Hilli was able to influence Sultan Ulgho Hodabarda to see his point of view and, for a decade in the fourteenth century, Twelver Shii became the official religion of the Mongol land.⁵ Generally speaking, according to Mazzaovi: "One can safely state that during the period of the Post-Ilhand (Mongol) dynasties, there were signs that Shiism was the favored form of Islam. . . . However, no formal total adherence to "Ithna Ashari" Shiism can be noted." ⁶

⁴S. A. Arjomand, "Religion, Political Action and Legitimate Domination in Shiite Iran: 14th to 18th Centuries," European Journal of Sociology, Summer 1979, p. 74.

⁵Michel Mazzaovi, The Origins of the Safavids (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag GmbH, 1972), p. 3.

⁶Ibid., p. 66.

The Safavid Period

When Shah Ismail decided to announce that Twelver Shii was the official religion in Iran under the newly established Safavid dynasty, some of his advisors expressed concern about the dangers of his decision. There were several reasons: First, it was believed that a majority of the Iranian population at the time were Sunni Muslim. Second, "Of 200,000--300,000 people in Tabriz," his advisors argued, "two-thirds are Sunnis . . . we fear that the people may say they don't want a Shii sovereign, and if the people reject Shiism what can we do about it?"⁷ Finally, the newly established dynasty had a long way to go in consolidating its power because of formidable internal and external threats to its existence.

The factors which might have contributed to his decision to announce Twelver Shii as the official religion of his newly established dynasty were: First, he needed something to use as a dynamic force to consolidate his rule and to spread his dynasty over the total territory of Iran. Shii was his answer since Shii was a dynamic religion with many emotional qualities. A ruler could greatly benefit from proper exploitation of these forces. Second, since Iranian territories were constantly under threat and occupation from the powerful Sunni Ottoman empire to the west, Ismail felt a need for a religion that could give a national identity to Iran and could compete with that of the Sunni Ottoman empire. The answer to that need was Shii Islam.

⁷Roger Savory, Iran Under the Safavids (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 29.

It is reported, though to an extent it might be exaggerated,⁸ that once Ismail had declared "Twelver" Shiism as the state religion of the Safavid dynasty, he ordered his men to look for books containing Shii jurisprudence and other governmental and religious laws. His men found only one book which was written by the fourteenth century Shii scholar Al Mutahhar Al-Hilli, and it was in a private library.⁹ There was also a shortage of Shii ulama, so some were invited from Shii centers such as Syria and Lebanon.¹⁰

Against this background, Ismail established a state where, for the first time, Shii Islam became the official religion and an inseparable part of the conduct and decisions of the government. There was a forceful and aggressive attempt to convert and confirm the people to the Shii faith, and an adherence to the religious law was sought; this was done through preaching and force. The religious nature of the Safavid dynasty required many people to be knowledgeable of the Shii beliefs and laws and that (as Henri Corbin, a famous scholar of Shiism has explained) produced "something like an official clergy, exclusively concerned with legality and jurisprudence, to such a point that original Shiism, in its essence gnostic and theosophic has, so to speak, to hid itself."¹¹

⁸Nikki Keddie, Roots of Revolution, p. 11.

⁹Michel Mazzavi, The Origins of the Safavids, p. 6.

¹⁰Michael Fischer, Iran, From Religious Dispute to Revolution (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), p. 29.

¹¹Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran, 1785-1906, p. 5.

As the Safavid kings were expanding their control and rule over all the Iranian territory and were consolidating their dynasty, the ulama's numbers, role, and strength were also growing. The consolidation of "Ithna Ashari" Shii started under the rule of Shah Abbas I (1587-1629), and the domain of the Safavid dynasty was transformed into "a centralized empire in which the ulama formed a hierocracy with definite institutionalized bases."¹²

During the more than two centuries that the Safavid kings were in power in Iran, theologians did not give the shahs any political or ideological trouble. At the end of the Safavid rule, there were some minor incidents such as when some of the ulama argued "that they had more right to rule than did the impious, wine-bibbing shahs,"¹³ but they never claimed that they should get rid of the shahs and rule the country by themselves. Some of the factors which kept the ulama from becoming involved in any major and direct confrontation with the state include the following: First, they were not yet financially independent of the state. Second, the ulama (at the beginning of Safavid) were very few, were unorganized, and were spread throughout Iran without any systematic contact. Third, before Safavid came into power, the majority of the Iranians were Sunni or non-Twelve Shii. The ulama spent a great deal of time researching and writing on Shii doctrine and converting the Sunni Muslims and later the Sufis to the Shii faith. These tasks, which consumed all the time of the ulama,

¹²S. A. Arjomand, "Religion, Political Action and Legitimate Domination in Shiite Iran: 14th to 18th Centuries," European Journal of Sociology, Summer 1979, p. 91.

¹³Nikki Keddie, Roots of Revolution, p. 18.

and the fact that the state itself was not competing with the ulama gave the ulama a lot of room and help in expanding Shii faith and practices, thus "little attention was paid (by ulama) to relations with the state."¹⁴

Gradually the factors which contributed to the alliance between the ulama and the rulers of the Safavid started to change in favor of the ulama. During the first part of the Safavid dynasty, many *madresas* (schools for ulama education) and *masjids* (mosques) were built. Through the *madresas* the ulama were able to increase their numbers, expand their knowledge, and, through the networks of mosques, build nationwide contact with the ordinary people. These people [who contributed money or property as "*vaqf*" (inalienable endowments)] and other charitable and religiously obligated contributors [who contributed "*zakat*" (alms) and "*khums*" (one fifth)] gave economic independence to the ulama. As the result, by the latter part of the Safavid dynasty a gradual increase in the power of the ulama in relation to the state can be detected. Under the rule of Sultan Husayn, the post of "*Mullahboshi*" (Chief Mulla) that was occupied by a prominent cleric, Bagir Majlisi (d. 1700), was created and the role of the ulama in the politics of the state changed. They started to enjoy more power in some areas of political and religious activity.¹⁵

The invasion of Shii Iran by Sunna Afghan forces in 1722 (which marked, in effect, the end of the Safavid dynasty) interrupted the

¹⁴Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran, 1785-1906, p. 28.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 29.

growth of the ulama's power which was at its highest during the Safavid dynasty. During the Afghan invasion (which lasted only eight years), the majority of the leaders of the Shii ulama moved to other Shii centers. They moved primarily to the Shii holy cities of Najaf and Karbala located in Ottoman, Iraq. The ulama were able to establish some of the main centers of Shii education in Najaf and Karbala, and "this area remained the center of Shii leadership from then until the late 1940s."¹⁶

The invasion of Iran by Afghan forces was ended by Nadir Shah in 1730; and in 1735 he declared himself the new shah of Iran. For a short period of time he was able to rule Iran under a centralized government but not on the basis of Shiism. He limited the power of the ulama by confiscating most of the "vaqf" property, limiting their judicial powers, and refusing to give them any governmental positions such as those they held in Safavid times. Though his true intentions were not clear, he offered a five-part plan for the uniting of Sunni and Shii Muslims.¹⁷ His attempt failed, mainly because of the lack of cooperation by the Shii ulama and the Ottomans.

Nadir Shah's death in 1747 was followed by a state of chaos, disorder, and tribal conflicts. During the period between Nadir Shah's death and the coronation of Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar (the founder of Qajar dynasty) in 1785, there was a short period of relative order when Karim Khan Zand (1750-1779) ruled Iran. By

¹⁶Nikki Keddie, Roots of Revolution, p. 21.

¹⁷Yahya Aramjani, Iran (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1972), p. 102.

building and repairing mosques and holy shrines, endowing madresas, and contributing money to religious causes, he established himself as a pious person; but no significant change occurred in the status of the ulama because of the brevity of his reign.

The Safavid period was an era when the ulama's capability for influencing aspects of Iranian politics was consolidated. The period of the Qajar dynasty saw the gradual development of the ulama's role in respect to the state and the people. With respect to the state, the ulama gradually developed into a major opposition group. During this era in Iranian history the ulama not only influenced the decisions of the government and the behavior of the people but eventually became for all practical purposes the de facto leaders of the nation. The period of the Tobacco Protest and the era which led up to it witnessed a fluctuating rise in the influence of the ulama on Iranian politics together with an increase in their activity. The factors which affected the role of the ulama included the behavior of the kings and their advisors, foreign influences, the ideological diversity of the ulama, and the existence of the undisputed and charismatic leadership of the ulama.

The Doctrinal Basis of the Ulama's Power

Before any attempt is made to analyze the status of the ulama and its relationship to the state and the people, it would be appropriate to consider the doctrinal basis of the source of power of the ulama. As mentioned, central to the Shiite faith is their belief that the twelfth Imam entered into the "Lesser Occultation" for a period of seventy years during which time the hidden Imam had contact

with four agents. After the last agent died in 940, the twelfth Imam entered into the "Greater Occulation" which ended his limited contact with the Muslim people. According to the "Twelver" Shii doctrine, the primary duties of the followers of the Shii faith are, among other things, (1) to believe in God (Towhid) and the last prophet Mohammad (Nebovat), and (2) to follow the leadership of the twelfth Imam (leader) after the demise of the prophet Mohammad (Imamate).¹⁸ This belief in Imamate (leadership) after the prophet's demise is to continue until the advent of the hidden Imam. Actually, the belief in the hidden Imam has been emphasized to the point that "he who dies without recognizing the Imam dies an unbeliever."¹⁹ Therefore, it is necessary for the Shii believers to follow the leadership of the twelfth Imam until his advent. How can they follow his leadership while he is in "Greater Occulation" which may last for many years to come? According to Shii jurisprudence (fiqh), the answer lies in the person or persons who occupy the position of "vilayat faqih" (the ulama). The Shii jurisprudence depends upon Koranic verses such as "O you believers, obey God, obey the Prophet and obey those in charge among you."²⁰ In interpreting this verse, Ayatollah Khomeini states that "the people in charge after the Prophet are the imams who have been entrusted with explaining the Islamic laws and roles and with disseminating them among the Muslims

¹⁸Michael Fischer, Iran From Religious Dispute to Revolution (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), pp. 13-21.

¹⁹Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906, p. 6.

²⁰The Glorious Quran, sura IV, verse 59.

and other people of the world. The imams have also been entrusted with implementing these laws and rules. The just jurists have been required to carry out these tasks after the imams."²¹

There are also many "hadith" (traditions) that the Shii jurisprudence relies upon which contend that the "qualified ulama" is the imam (leader) of the Shii community and the hidden Imam's vicegerent on earth during the "Greater Occultation."²² One of the hadith which has frequently been cited from Umar ibn Hanzalah (one of the authoritative sources of Shii hadith) is when Ibn Hanzalah asked the sixth Shii Imam, Jafar Sadegh, who should judge a case where two Shii quarreled over a debt or inheritance. In a lengthy dialogue, the Imam said,

Whoever has sought the arbitration of the sultan and of the courts has sought the arbitration of the false god. Whoever is given the favorable sentence will take whatever he takes unjustly, even if what he takes is his proven right, because he will have taken it by the rule of the false god and the rule of that which God has ordered us to disavow. . . . I said what should they do? He said: "Let them look among you for someone who has been transmitted our Hadith, who has examined our Permissibles and our Prohibitions and who has learned our rules and let them accept him as an arbitrator because I have made such a man your ruler."²³

Therefore, Shii jurisprudence (fiqh) (based on the interpretation of this and similar verses of Quran and hadith) indicates that the qualified ulama or the mujtahids (jurisprudent) are the represen-

²¹Ruhollah Khomeini, Islamic Government (Arlington: Joint Publication Research Service, 1979), p. 18.

²²Abdul-Hadi Hairi, Shiism and Constitutionalism in Iran (Netherlands: Leiden E. J. Brill, 1977), p. 59.

²³Ruhollah Khomeini, Islamic Government, pp. 68-69.

tatives of the twelfth Imam and the legitimate imam (leaders) of the Shii community during the "Greater Occulation." Based on these premises and the argument that not all regulations and commands of Islam have been explained by the Quran, the Prophet, and the Imams in such a way that every individual can look to them for his needs, the Shii jurisprudence dictates that mujtahids are needed in the Shii community so the people can look to them for advice in carrying out their immediate religious practices.

A Muslim's belief in the fundamentals of religion must be based upon reason and he may not practice imitation in regards to fundamentals of the religion, that is, accepting someone else's statement without reasoning. But in regards to the precepts (ahkam) of religion he must either be an expert (mujtahid) and arrive at those precepts by reasoning or he imitates certainty from an expert, that is, he acts according to his orders.²⁴

Therefore, according to the Shii doctrine and jurisprudence as stated above, the following can be concluded. First, the "qualified ulama" are the leaders of the Shii communities during the "Greater Occulation" of the twelfth Imam. Second, the faithful are divided into two groups: (a) those who are mujtahids and act according to their own judgment, and (b) the vast majority of the people who must follow and imitate the judgment of the mujtahids. That, in brief, is the doctrinal basis of the ulama's power.

When the politics of Iran becomes involved with religious matters, a temporal ruler has two options. First, he can present himself as a religious person, or at least pretend to be one, and can

²⁴Ruhollah Khomeini, A Clarification of Questions. An Unabridged Translation of Resaleh Towzih al-Ma Sael (London: Westview Press, 1984), p. 1.

be cooperative with the ulama and the Shii hierocracy. Second, he can oppose the autonomous acts of the Shii hierocracy and try to limit or prevent any involvement of the ulama in the matters of state and politics. In essence, during the nineteenth century, the manner in which a king or temporal ruler together with his government and advisors dealt with the issue of religion and the ulama was a major factor in determining the magnitude of the involvement and influence of the ulama in Iranian politics. This was very evident during the reigns of the second, third, and fourth rulers (Fath Ali Shah, Mohammad Shah, and Nasir ud-Din Shah) of the Qajar dynasty.

The Ulama in the Qajar Period

The first king of the Qajar dynasty, Agha Mohammad Khan, was ambivalent toward the issue of religion. It was reported that he practiced religious duties such as praying and fasting. He regularly paid respect to holy shrines and also strictly prohibited wine drinking.²⁵ On the other hand, though he respected some of the ulama, he did not associate with them closely and did not allow them to get involved with government affairs. During the interregnum of the Safavid and Qajar dynasties, the central governments, if any existed, became weak; and, in many cases, some of the provinces were ruled independently from the central government. The major task and obsession of Agha Mohammad Khan was to end these defiant local governments and unite the country under the central government of the Qajar dynasty. On the other hand, the ulama (who during the inter-

²⁵Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906, p. 42.

regnum were dispersed from their centers in Iran to neighboring countries, especially Iraq, because of the Afghan invasion of Iran and anti-Shii religious policies of rulers such as Nadir Shah) were preoccupied with returning to the areas they had once controlled and reorganizing themselves. As a result, the reign of Agha Mohammad Khan did not witness any major confrontation between the state and the ulama.

Agha Mohammad Khan's successor, Fath Ali Shah, came to power in 1797. When he inherited the throne almost all major opposition to the central government of the Qajar dynasty had been eliminated by his predecessor and relative obedience of the provincial governments existed. He, like any other monarch who wanted to rule Iran, could deal with the religious establishments either by opposing them or cooperating with them. Fath Ali Shah chose the latter course. As Max Weber says, "If the legitimacy of the ruler is not clearly identifiable through hereditary charisma, another charismatic power is needed, normally this can only be hierocracy."²⁶ Therefore, in order to justify his throne, Fath Ali Shah decided to approach the Shii hierocracy. To show his respect for Shii Islam, to prove he was religious, and "to establish his reputation among the ulama as that of pious sovereign,"²⁷ he started a policy of building and repairing mosques, madrasas (education centers of the ulama), and shrines. For example, "in the second year of his reign alone, more than 100,000

²⁶S. A. Arjomand, The Shadow of God and The Hidden Imam (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 222.

²⁷Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran, 1785-1906, p. 46.

tomans was spent on the shrines of Iraq, Qum and Shah Chiragh in Shiraz."²⁸ In accordance with his policy of respect for religious matters and closeness with the ulama, Fath Ali Shah also exempted the inhabitants of the city of Qum from taxation,²⁹ encouraged religious learning, and visited and paid respect to the prominent ulama. He was reported to have interest in doctrinal matters of theology and managed to have personal relationships with some of the eminent mujtahids of his time such as Mirza Abul-Qasim Qumi and Mulla Ahmad Naragi.³⁰ In his quest for legitimacy, he donated money to religious leaders, appointed "Imam juma" (Friday Prayer Leader), and encouraged ulama settlements in many parts of the country.³¹ In fact, he went so far as to declare "that he was ruling on behalf of the mujtahid of age."³²

The policy of close association with the ulama and promotion of and contribution to the religious causes increased the influence and power of the ulama in many ways. A number of times they were able to influence governmental policies and decisions. For example, on many occasions they were able to force the government to change the provincial governors. In one instance, a popular mujtahid threatened that unless the "oppressive" governor of the central city of Kashan was removed he would organize massive protests against the

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹S. A. Arjomand, The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam, p. 218.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran 1875-1906, p. 50.

³²S. A. Arjomand, The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam, p. 228.

government. Fath Ali Shah had no choice but to meet the demand.³³ The Shii hierocracy was also able to dominate the educational system which was totally independent of the state and under the control of the ulama.³⁴

The ulama also possessed a great deal of influence over the judicial system.³⁵ The judicial system was de facto divided between "sharia" (Islamic law) courts run by the ulama and "urf" (customary law) courts under government control. Fath Ali Shah encouraged the influence of the ulama in the judicial system by personally referring "cases to the courts of the eminent mujtahids."³⁶ Control over a major part of the judicial system gave enormous power to the ulama, and, in some cases, they operated like a government within a government. One of the ulama, who was practically the de facto ruler of the important city of Isfahan, was Sayyid Mohammad Bagir Shafiti Hujjatul-slam --- "the wealthy, assertive mujtahid, whose power--judicial, economic, and political--exceeds that of the secular government."³⁷ His wealth included four hundred "caravanserais," two thousand shops in Isfahan alone, and many villages³⁸ in places, such as Yazd and Shiraz, which were hundreds of miles away from Isfahan.

³³Ervand Abrahamian, Iran, Between Two Revolutions (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 41.

³⁴Nikki Keddie, Roots of Revolution (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 31.

³⁵Ibid., p. 32.

³⁶S. A. Arjomand, The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam, p. 233.

³⁷Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906, p. 60.

³⁸Ibid.

In addition to this wealth, which gave him a lot of power and influence, he had other sources of power. Algar remarks, "Apart from his imposing wealth, which seemed like a divine reward for his piety, and the influence gained through receiving and distributing zakat (alm), his supremacy in Isfahan had another source: his full and unhesitating exercise of the judicial functions of Mujtahid."³⁹ It is reported that in exercising his judicial power, for example, he ordered the execution of between eighty and one hundred offenders.⁴⁰ He was so powerful that if the highest level government officials, such as the governors of Isfahan, wanted to meet with him they had to go to his house and wait among his audience until he noticed them.⁴¹

The ulama were able to influence and alter government policies in many other ways. One such method was "bast" (refuge)⁴² and intercession. Under the policy of bast, people could take refuge from government harassment in mosques, in shrines, and in the homes of religious leaders. Many times the people who were eluding government oppression took refuge in the homes of religious leaders and were protected. There were also many times when the ulama successfully interceded on behalf of those who were threatened by the government. For example, when the holy city of Mashhad was under the

³⁹Ibid., p. 61.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 62.

⁴²Nikki Keddie, Roots of Revolution, pp. 32-33.

occupation of Nadir Mirza Afshar, "twice the ulama were able to dissuade him (Fath Ali Shah) from attacking the town."⁴³

The ulama were a powerful and influential group in Iran when Fath Ali Shah decided to associate himself with them and act as a religious person--"more simply, the appearance of piety was useful, even necessary in gaining popular respect."⁴⁴ As a result, the policies of Fath Ali Shah, apart from his intentions, resulted in a gradual increase in the political actions of the ulama. Overall, it can be concluded that, during the reign of Fath Ali Shah, the Shi'i hierarchy was able to increase its role in many areas of Iranian political life, such as in the administration of justice and education, and to expand its number and influence over the people and the government policy. After many decades of being scattered, following the fall of the Safavid dynasty, they were able to consolidate their religious domination in Iran. "This consolidation was virtually complete under Fath Ali Shah and could not be affected by the policy of his successor Mohammad Shah."⁴⁵

Mohammad Shah, who came to the throne of his grandfather in 1834, adopted a very different policy toward the ulama than that of Fath Ali Shah. While Fath Ali Shah sought a close relationship with the ulama, Mohammad Shah (who noticed a resurgence in the power of

⁴³Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906, p. 47.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 71.

⁴⁵S. A. Arjomand, The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam, p. 219.

the ulama) adopted an anti-hierocracy policy.⁴⁶ While Fath Ali Shah decided to legitimize his throne by associating with the ulama and religious causes, Mohammad Shah abandoned the policy of his predecessor and did not seek any formal legitimacy from the hierocracy.⁴⁷ As was stated earlier, Fath Ali Shah represented himself as a pious Shii believer and allocated much of his time and money to religious purposes. On the other hand, Mohammad Shah became a devote believer of Sufism and appointed his Sufi preceptor, Hajji Mirza Agasi, as the grand vizier which was the next most powerful position to that of king.⁴⁸ As the new monarch became a faithful Sufi, he started to promote Sufi causes. For example, he visited the famous Sufi tombs such as those of Farid ud-Din and Shaykh Mahmud Shabistari.⁴⁹ He contributed money and repaired other places of importance to the Sufi faith such as those located in the cities of Kirman, Nain, and Bistam.⁵⁰ His devotion to Sufism resulted largely from the influence which Hajji Mirza Agasi had over him. As Gobineau says, Mohammad Shah "did not doubt that . . . Hajji Mirza Agasi had direct and frequent communication with the divinity, and that he was himself a being of far from ordinary nature."⁵¹ There-

⁴⁶Peter Avery, Modern Iran (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1965), p. 330.

⁴⁷S. A. Arjomand, The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam, p. 248.

⁴⁸Peter Avery, Modern Iran, pp. 30-31.

⁴⁹Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran 1875-1906, pp. 106-107.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*

⁵¹*Ibid.*

fore, the two most powerful members of the court, Mohammad Shah and his minister, adhered to and publicly promoted the Sufi faith--a faith which was always under attack and was suppressed by prominent Shii ulama such as Mohammad-Bagir Majlisi⁵² during the Safavid dynasty and later in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries by Mohammad Ali Bihbahani who was nicknamed "sufi-kosh" (sufi-killer).⁵³ Thus, access to the government by the Shii religious leaders was totally cut and their influence on the decisions of the government was greatly reduced.

As a result, conflicts between the state and the ulama occurred from the beginning of the reign of Mohammad Shah, and the shah basically ignored the requests of the ulama and tried to curb their activities. For example, shortly after he came to power in July 1834, there was a riot resulting from a shortage of corn and a price increase of bread. Headed by a mulla, the people who attributed the shortage to the shah's entourage gathered in front of his palace to protest. When they refused to disperse, the shah ordered the arrest of the mulla and hanged him in public view.⁵⁴

Mohammad Shah personally got involved in curbing the influence of the most powerful ulama of his time when disturbances were reported in Shiraz and Isfahan. Mohammad Shah brought these unrests

⁵²Michael Fischer, Iran from Religious Dispute to Revolution (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), p. 144.

⁵³Michael Bonine, Modern Iran, the Dialectics of Continuity and Change (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981), p. 42.

⁵⁴Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906, p. 108.

under control⁵⁵ and curtailed the power of the famous mujtahid of Isfahan, Baghir Shafti, who was the de facto leader of that city. Thus, the policies of the regime of Mohammad Shah were defiantly opposed by the ulama, and he attempted to limit their influence and power any time he could. Naturally, these policies of Mohammad Shah and his minister resulted in a decrease in the power of the ulama to influence the policies of the government. On the other hand, one cannot ignore the fact that the Shii religion in Iran (with its deep-rooted emotional hold on the people) gave the ulama a formidable base of power and influence which, after many decades of consolidation, was difficult to obliterate. As Arjomand remarks, "Though Fath Ali's grandson and successor Mohammad Shah (1834-48) was a practicing sufi and, before long, appointed his sufi 'directeur de conscience' Prime Minister, Popular religiosity was by then so securely dominated by Shiite doctors that sufism did not penetrate beyond the courtly circles into the lower layers of society."⁵⁶ Mohammad Shah and his minister, Hajji Mirza Agasi, were well aware of the magnitude of the political power and influence of hierocracy among the Shii population of Iran. Although they were making every attempt to undermine the power of the ulama, they knew that if they pushed too hard the effort might backfire. We can see the court's awareness of the power of the ulama in many instances including the "Karbala incident."

Karbala, which is one of the holy cities of the Shii Muslim, became a center of Shii theologians after the defeat of the Safavids

⁵⁵S. A. Arjomand, The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam, p. 248.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 218.

by Afghan forces in the early eighteenth century. Consequently, many Iranians moved to the city of Karbala where the Shrine of the Third Shii Imam was located. At that time, Karbala (which is located in Iraq) was a part of the Ottoman empire. As the Iranian population in Karbala increased, their disobedience to the Ottoman empire also intensified. Gradually, they omitted the name of the Ottoman Sultan from Friday Prayer "khotba" (the sermon pronounced before congregational prayer at midday on Fridays). They did not pay the proper amount of taxes, and the city became like an independent Iranian state in Ottoman territory under the complete control of Ibrahim Zafarani of Iranian origin.⁵⁷ Finally, the Ottoman ruler, Najiib Pasha, decided to end the situation in Karbala. When his army entered the city, they were fired on by the inhabitants. In response, his troops massacred between 4,000 and 18,000 people.⁵⁸ When the government heard of the massacre, it was in the month of Moharram. Because of a special emotional attachment to the first part of the month, the government did not publicize the massacre. When the public did hear about the massacre at Karbala, many of the ulama demanded war against the Ottoman empire and almost organized an army to wage it.⁵⁹ It took a lot of effort and promises by Agasi to gradually calm the population.

Overall, it can be concluded that "the tension between the hierocracy and the state reached its highest point under Mohammad

⁵⁷Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906, p. 114.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 115.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 116.

Shah. The tension was provoked by Mohammad Shah's Sufism and his anticlerical attitude."⁶⁰ The anticlerical stance of the monarch and his adherence to Sufism greatly reduced the influence of the ulama on the decisions of the government. Generally, when the monarch decided to curb the activities of the ulama and their influence on state politics, there was a decline in their impact and influence on Iranian politics. But this decline was superficial and temporary because (1) the support for the religious hierarchy among the people was too deep-rooted and strong to be altered; and (2) the government was not strong enough. Without any popular support it was not able to implement its policies during the fourteen-year rule of Mohammad Shah.

The anticlerical and heterodox policies of Mohammad Shah also had side effects. They marked the beginning of open confrontation and conflict between the state and the ulama. During his reign, there were numerous conflicts and clashes between the ulama and the authorities in both the provinces and Tehran.⁶¹ "We see then that the rivalry between ulama and state, while resting on a firm doctrinal basis but held somewhat in check by the policies of Fath Ali Shah, became better and explicit in the time of Mohammad Shah. His heterodox tendencies and the slow, almost unconscious, attempts of strengthening the central secular authority exacerbated the inherent hostility of the ulama."⁶²

⁶⁰S. A. Arjomand, The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam, p. 239.

⁶¹Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran, 1785-1906, p. 119.

⁶²*Ibid.*, p. 120.

It can also be seen that during the reign of his successor, Nasir ud-Din Shah, virtually no major event passed without some intervention by the ulama and some degree of confrontation with the state.

When Nasir ud-Din Mirza, next in line for the throne, heard the news of his father's death in 1848, he was seventeen years old. The country was in turmoil;⁶³ and in many cities and provinces (including Kerman, Zanhan, Shiraz, and Mashhad)⁶⁴ the local forces, in most cases with encouragement and leadership from the ulama,⁶⁵ were expelling Mohammad Shah's representatives and, in some cases like Mashhad, individuals like Salar were trying to establish their own independent states.⁶⁶ The young shah appointed Tagi Khan Amir Kabir, a strong-minded and able individual, as his chief minister. Because of Nasir ud-Din Shah's youth and Tagi Khan Amir Kabir's abilities, the minister was very influential in the decisions of the shah. The main concern of Amir Kabir, who was a reformist, was the strength of the central government.⁶⁷ He introduced policies which, among other things, included a reform of the judicial and education systems. These reforms threatened the position and power of the hierarchy because the ulama dominated the education and judicial systems.

⁶³Akbar Rafsanjani, Amir Kabir (Gum: Center for Islamic Publications, 1984), p. 52.

⁶⁴Ibid., pp. 62-64.

⁶⁵Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran, 1785-1906, p. 125.

⁶⁶Akbar Rafsanjani, Amir Kabir, p. 59.

⁶⁷Peter Avery, Modern Iran, p. 51.

Thus, the attempts of Amir Kabir to increase the power of the central government undermined the ulama's sphere of influence, and tension between the state and ulama intensified.⁶⁸ The tension between the state and the religious leaders was diminished after Nasir ud-Din Shah fired Mirza Tagi Khan Amir Kabir and replaced him with Mirza Alga Khan Nuri who, contrary to the policy of his predecessor, "saw in the ulama a means of supporting his own position."⁶⁹

Nasir ud-Din Shah, who reigned for 48 years (the longest reign of the Qajar dynasty), spent a lot of his time enjoying himself. He had a great passion for women and it is reported that "eighty-five of his wives survived him, and his harem probably contained close to 1600 persons, including employees and eunuchs."⁷⁰ His desire for pleasure and, more important, his youthfulness did not allow him to get fully involved in the daily affairs of government or to speak his mind during the first years of his reign. When he was able to get more fully involved in state affairs, he abandoned the confrontational policies of his father with the ulama and began a process of conciliation by making "judicious gestures" to them,⁷¹ paying respect to them, and publicly trying to be cooperative with the ulama and listening to their advise and paying attention to their concerns. For example, once when the ulama in Tehran became angry and showed

⁶⁸S. A. Arjomand, The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam, p. 248.

⁶⁹Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran 1875-1906, p. 153.

⁷⁰Edmond Bosworth, Qajar Iran. Political, Social, and Cultural Change 1800-1925 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1983), p. 8.

⁷¹S. A. Arjomand, The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam, p. 248.

displeasure over the construction of a statue of Nasir ud-Din Shah, "the government promptly removed the bust and admitted that such monuments violated the Islamic prohibition against three-dimensional representation of human beings."⁷² But the calm did not last for long; tension and conflict between Nasir ud-Din and the ulama gradually developed and increased, and by the last decade of the nineteenth century, during the Tobacco Protest, it had reached its highest level.

As the mid-nineteenth century approached and Nasir ud-Din Shah's reign entered its second decade, a new factor was entering more actively into Iranian politics. It was the external factor which eventually dominated events in Iran and resulted in many confrontation between the shah and the ulama. Keddie remarks, "Beginning in the 1850s, a new phase of Iran's relation with European powers was characterized by the European drive to receive concessions for particular economic activities."⁷³

The events in Iran, during a good part of the second half of the nineteenth century, were dominated by the actions of foreign power. These external pressures led to concessions to foreign power by the Iranian regime. The result was a historic confrontation between the ulama and state during the Tobacco Protest which was the prelude to the Constitutional Revolution. Therefore, it would be appropriate to look at the development of the foreign power in Iran and its

⁷²Ervand Abrahamian, Iran, Between Two Revolutions, p. 41.

⁷³Nikki Keddie, Roots of Revolution, p. 58.

impact on the influence and activities of the ulama in Iranian politics.

The Anglo-Russian Rivalry in Iran in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century

George Curzon, the famous British writer on Iran who traveled there for several years starting in 1889, observed that "Turkestan, Afghanistan, Transcaspia, Persia--to many these words breathes only a sense of utter remoteness or a memory of strange vicissitudes and of moribund romance. To me, I confess, they are the pieces on a chessboard upon which is being played out a game for the domination of the world."⁷⁴

The first European attempt to control the world, mainly for economic purposes, began during the fifteenth century when the English, French, Dutch, Portuguese, and Spanish "used their military power to achieve commercial advantages overseas."⁷⁵ As Cohen states:

In their wake went Europe's merchants, quickly seizing upon opportunities to increase their business and profits. In turn, Europe's government perceived the possibilities for increasing their own power and wealth. Commercial companies were chartered and financed with military and naval expeditions frequently sent out after them to ensure political control of overseas territories . . . colonies were desirable in this respect because they afforded an opportunity to shut out commercial competition; they guaranteed exclusive access to untapped markets and sources of cheap materials. . . .⁷⁶

⁷⁴Firuz Kazemzadeh, Russia and Britain in Persia, 1864-1914. A Study in Imperialism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), p. 3.

⁷⁵Charles W. Kegley, World Politics, Trend and Transformation (New York: St. Martins Press, 1981), p. 67.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 67.

Gradually, by the end of the eighteenth century, European countries were able to gain a foothold in every part of the world;⁷⁷ and, by the late nineteenth century, a new form of imperialism had appeared and the major European powers had divided the world into several major empires under their domination. Kegley states, "In contrast to classical imperialism, the new imperialism of late nineteenth century was marked by extra ordinary competition among the imperial powers, for whom colonies became an important symbol of national power and prestige. In the course of this competition, the local inhabitants of the conquered lands were often ruthlessly suppressed."⁷⁸

During the nineteenth century the European powers, particularly Great Britain and Russia, threatened to dominate Iran. In the face of the development of industrial capitalism in the nineteenth century, it was a very difficult task for a country such as Iran to maintain the isolation she had enjoyed for many centuries. With Napoleon having an eye on India, the isolation of Persia started to crumble. Napoleon's "officers were the first of a long line of military advisors to the Persian army."⁷⁹ To protect her interests from Napoleon, who was at the time in alliance with Russia (a threat to the British colony, India, in 1800), England signed an alliance

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 68.

⁷⁸Ibid., pp. 68-69.

⁷⁹Firuz Kazemzadeh, Russia and Britain in Persia 1854-1914, p. 100.

with Fath Ali Shah and gained a foothold in Iran.⁸⁰ At the same time, from the north "Russia, whose own transformation into a modern society was far from complete, played the role of a western nation on the Persian scene."⁸¹ This was the beginning of an intense Anglo-Russian rivalry for the control and domination of Iran.

European powers attempted to gain possession of overseas territories for many different reasons. Robin Winks speaks of "Seven basic thrusts toward imperial expansion: the desire for power, a sense of duty, the wish to promote God's work, racism, commerce, and struggle for markets and supplies of raw materials and a labor force, national pride, and a romantic wish for adventure."⁸² In the Iranian case, although Great Britain and Russia each had reasons of its own, their goals were the same.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, the British interest in Iran, though partly commercial, was deeply related to her imperial interests in India. In order to protect her interest in India from encroachment by other imperial powers (particularly Russia), Great Britain promoted a policy of status quo in Iran.⁸³

⁸⁰Bradford G. Martin, German-Persian Diplomatic Relations 1873-1912 (Gravenhage, Netherlands: Mouton and Company Printers, 1959), p. 13.

⁸¹Firuz Kazemzadeh, Russia and Britain in Persia 1864-1914, p. 100.

⁸²Robin Winks, The Age of Imperialism. (Englewood Cliff: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969), p. 36.

⁸³Rouhollah K. Ramazani, The Foreign Policy of Iran. A Developing Nation in World Affairs 1500-1941. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1966), p. 36.

Thus, their prime objective was to prevent Russian influence in Iran which was a real threat to the British interests in the region.

On the other hand, Russian interest in Iran started during the time of Peter the Great when he was looking for a route to India in order to avoid the Central Asian desert. In a conversation with a naval officer, Peter said, "Have you been in the Gulf of Astrabad [on the Caspian Sea]? Do you know that from Astrabad to Balkh [in Afghanistan] it is only twelve days by camel? . . ." ⁸⁴ From then on Peter the Great, in line with his irredentist policy, focused his attention on Iran. Between 1721 and 1723, after facing some boundary problems, he attacked Northern Iran and occupied part of it. ⁸⁵ Peter the Great died in 1825 before he could fulfill his desire to conquer Persia. In his will he suggested a future foreign policy for his successors. He urged them to make Iran "weaker and weaker day by day;" so weak that Iran could be conquered and used for other purposes including control over India. It would be useful for this purpose because of its vast resources and commercial market. ⁸⁶

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the imperial interests of these two nations (Russia and Great Britain) collided, and Iran became their battlefield.

⁸⁴Lobanov A. Rostousky, Russia and Asia (Ann Arbor: The George Wahir Publishing Company, 1951), pp. 75-76.

⁸⁵Ibid., pp. 76-77.

⁸⁶Ibrahim Taymuri, Asr-i Bikhabari ya Tarikhi Imtiyazat dar Iran (The Epoch of Unawareness or the History of Concessions in Iran) (Tehran, Iran: Iqbal, 1953), p. 238.

Of course, Great Britain and Russia did not publicly acknowledge their intentions. They primarily argued that they were more advanced and civilized nations and that their intentions were for the good and welfare of the people of Central Asia and Persia. As Prince H. Gorchokov said in 1864:

The position of Russia in Central Asia is that of all civilized states which are brought into contact with half savage, nomad populations, possessing no fixed social organization. In such cases, it always happens that the more civilized state is forced, in the interest of the security of its frontier and its commercial relations, to exercise a certain ascendancy over those whom their turbulent and unsettled character make most undesirable neighbours. First there are raids and acts of pillage to put down. To put a stop to them, the tribes on the frontier have to be reduced to the state of more or less perfect submission.⁸⁷

On the other hand, Great Britain declared that its purpose in Iran was to help maintain Iran's integrity by developing its economic resources in order to build a strong, modern, and stable state.⁸⁸

Overall, the Anglo-Russian rivalry in Iran during the nineteenth century can be summarized as follows. During the first half of the nineteenth century, the Anglo-Russian rivalry was situated in northern and northeastern Iran for military and economic reasons.⁸⁹ When the advance of the Russian military in Central Asia reached northeastern Iran, it threatened both Iran and Great Britain's interest in Afghanistan and, subsequently, India. Iran also was threatened by Russia from the north. By the end of the 1820s, Iran

⁸⁷Firuz Kazemzadeh, Russia and Britain in Iran 1864-1914, p. 8.

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 186.

⁸⁹Rouhollah K. Ramazani, The Foreign Policy of Iran 1500-1941, p. 37.

had fought two wars and lost a great deal of territory.⁹⁰ According to Bradford Martin, one of the reasons for the Russian conquests was that "during the 1820s the still embryonic Russian textile industry provided a new stimulus for conquests. This industry both imported much raw cotton from Persia and sold finished goods there."⁹¹ The Russian advance in Iran and Central Asia affected Iran in two different ways: (1) By advancing in Central Asia, Russia, for the first time, became Iran's immediate northeastern neighbor. (2) "Iran was affected by the strategic significance that the Russian advance in Central Asia added to the areas covered by Iran. Sistan was one of these areas . . . its future affects the destinies of all three countries."⁹² As a result, Great Britain became directly involved in Iran's border problems with Afghanistan which, in one instance, in 1838 led to the occupation of some Iranian territories in the south by the British Army.⁹³ Also to confront Russia's expansionist policy in Iran and Central Asia, England entered into alliance with Iran for the first time in 1800.⁹⁴ This was the first Iranian alliance with a European country. It initiated a long series of treaties between Iran and England, mainly aimed at curtailing Russian influence in

⁹⁰Bradford Martin, German-Persian Diplomatic Relations 1873-1912, pp. 13-14.

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²Rouhollah Ramazani, The Foreign Policy of Iran 1500-1941, p. 53.

⁹³Mikhail Volodarsky, "Persia's Foreign Policy Between the Two Herat Crises, 1831-1856," Middle Eastern Studies, April 1985, p. 119.

⁹⁴Bradford Martin, German-Persian Diplomatic Relations, 1873-1912, p. 13.

Iran and Central Asia. For example, "between 1809-1814 four treaties were signed between Iran and Russia."⁹⁵ However, these alliances and other British attempts did not stop the Russian advances in Central Asia. In 1885, the Russian army's advance into Central Asia was halted when the British government declared war on Russia over Russia's encroachment on Afghanistan.⁹⁶

This early foreign involvement in Iranian politics, which as we saw was primarily in the form of military action against Iranian territories in the first part of the nineteenth century, helped to boost the prestige and influence of the ulama. The Iranian response to these foreign acts of aggression against Iranian territory and foreign interference in Iranian domestic affairs, primarily by Great Britain and Russia, showed the degree to which the Iranian people were motivated by their religious beliefs. In order to analyze the impact of the foreign factor on the ulama's power and influence in Iranian politics during the first half of the nineteenth century, we must look at the second Russo-Persian War of 1826-28.

The Ulama And the Russo-Persian War of 1926

Iran was defeated in the first Russo-Persian War which ended in 1813. In that year she "signed the unfavorable Treaty of Gulistan with Russia,"⁹⁷ thus acknowledging the loss of some of her northern

⁹⁵Rouhollah Ramazani, The Foreign Policy of Iran 1500-1941, p. 42.

⁹⁶Firuz Kazemzadeh, Russia and Britain in Persia 1864-1914, p. 96.

⁹⁷Rouhollah Ramazani, The Foreign Policy of Iran 1500-1941, p. 45.

territory to Russia.⁹⁸ It was soon reported that Prince Abbas Mirza (the heir to the throne who commanded the Iranian forces in the first Russo-Persia War) was planning a new war to impress the shah. He had unhappy memories of the defeat of 1813. There were also other reasons why Iran entered into war with Russia in 1826. The vagueness of some parts of the Gulistan Treaty left room for Russian occupation of new Iranian territories including some cities, and their refusal to leave resulted in new hostilities.⁹⁹ Another factor which contributed to the determination of Iran to go to war with Russia and which opened the way for extensive involvement of the ulama in persuading the people and government to fight the Russians was a series of reports of savage mistreatment of Muslim residents in territories occupied by Russia. This mistreatment included theft and rape. It is said that "Yermbev, both commander-in-chief of the Russian forces and head of the administration of the Caucasus (former Persian territory) used to sell Chechen women captives at one ruble each, and slaughtered whole villages of Cricassians."¹⁰⁰ When the news of the mistreatment of the Muslim inhabitants of former Persian territories reached the Shii ulama, they issued fatva (a religious decree) for jihad (holy war)¹⁰¹ which required defending Islam and the Muslims. The declaration of jihad by the ulama was widely

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹Ibid., p. 46.

¹⁰⁰Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran 1783-1906, p. 86.

¹⁰¹Rouhollah Ramazani, The Foreign Policy of Iran 1500-1941, p. 46.

accepted by the people, and as Algar states, "The direct intervention of the ulama brought the agitation to a new stage of enthusiasm, which it no longer required stimulation, and absorbing all lesser motives, showed the ulama as the de facto leaders of the nation."¹⁰² The news of Russian barbarity also reached Aga Sayyid Mohammad Isfahani, one of the prominent ulama who was residing in the holy city of Karbala in Iraq at the time. At first he sent a representative to Tehran to see if Fath Ali Shah's intention was to declare jihad. The response was positive and Sayyid Mohammad decided to go to Iran and participate in the war with Russia.¹⁰³ When he reached Tehran in June 1826, he was received with a high degree of respect by the people, princes, and the ulama.¹⁰⁴ Soon after his arrival, he sent messages to the ulama in the provinces and asked them to preach for jihad against Russia and then to join him in the capital, Tehran.¹⁰⁵ The ulama of the provinces cooperated with him and started to join him. On June 11, 1826, Sayyid Mohammad with a group of ulama started to move toward the north. When they arrived at Sultaniya, the news spread that the shah had sent a message of good wishes to the new Russian leader.¹⁰⁶ This convinced them that Fath Ali Shah was not committed to jihad with the Russians. They increased their pressure for jihad; and, when it was resisted by some

¹⁰²Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906, p. 90.

¹⁰³Ibid., p. 87.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., p. 88.

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

of the courtiers, the ulama silenced them "by a fatva that opposition to jihad constituted a sign of unbelief."¹⁰⁷ At this point, the religious fever and enthusiasm were rapidly increasing. Willock, the Russian envoy who witnessed the arrival of Aga Sayyid Mohammad in Sultaniya, described it as follows: "Much enthusiasm was manifested by the Populace. To the Sied's (sayyid) person they could get no access, but they kissed the litter, kissed the ladder by which he had ascended to it, and collected the dust which had the impressions of the mule's feet which bore him."¹⁰⁸ Fath Ali Shah felt isolated, and when he saw all the enthusiasm his emotions were stirred and he finally submitted to the ulama's call for jihad.

More ulama and people were joining the holy war against Russia. Although Fath Ali Shah gave the go-ahead for war, it was the ulama who were running the war and "the effective leadership of the people was still in the hands of ulama."¹⁰⁹ As Willock reports, "Affairs reached such a point that the rulings of the ulama were given precedence over the commands of the king were he to have opposed their policy, the people of Iran would have destroyed the monarchy."¹¹⁰ Here it can be clearly seen how much influence the ulama had over the people. However, the outcome of the war was defeat for Iran. Some argued that it was the ulama's pressure for a

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 89.

¹⁰⁸Ibid.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., p. 90.

¹¹⁰Ibid.

premature war which resulted in the defeat.¹¹¹ Others blamed the monarch and his advisors for not being able to properly utilize the people's enthusiasm in fighting the Russians and argued that if it had not been for the ulama's determination to fight and resist the Russian invasion, Russian troops might have tried to conquer additional Iranian territories.¹¹²

Actually at the beginning Iran was winning the war. Then there was a disagreement between the chief ulama, Aga Sayyid Mohammad, and Prince Abbas Mirza over military policy. Aga Sayyid left the front for Tehran and later died.¹¹³ Some thought that Abbas Mirza was afraid his success would be attributed to the presence of Aga Sayyid Mohammad. As Algar observed, "it seems probable that not only the shah but Abbas Mirza was interested in reducing the dangerously elevated stature attained by Aga Sayyid Mohammad, the more so since he had fulfilled his purpose."¹¹⁴

Looking at the second Russo-Persian War, it is clearly evident that the ulama enjoyed enormous popularity. They were able to influence people easily; their words and directives were regarded as those of Islam for the defense of religion. For a period of time it seemed that they were the decision makers and were able to influence the course of events by forcing Fath Ali Shah to enter the holy war

¹¹¹S. A. Arjomand, The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam, p. 241.

¹¹²Ali Akbar Valayati, Moghademh Fekri-yi Nehzateh Mashruteh, (Tehran: Dafter Nashr, 1986), p. 50.

¹¹³Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906, p. 91.

¹¹⁴Ibid.

with Russia even though the monarch was reluctant. Thus, it can be concluded that, in this case, foreign interference boosted the popularity of the ulama and increased their influence on the decision making of the people and the government. This was true in the case of the Russians whom the ulama considered to be infidels who were attacking the Muslim people of Iran and, consequently, Islam. This easily aroused the religious feelings of the people.

The Griboyedov Incident

Another matter involving foreign power which indicated the influence of the ulama in Iran during the first part of the nineteenth century was the "Griboyedov incident." In order to force the government of Iran to pay the indemnity due under the treaty of Turkamanchai, in 1829 the Russian government sent a delegation to Iran headed by the well-known author, Griboyedov.¹¹⁵ Arriving in Iran, he acted very proud, rude, and arrogant. He tried to put down what the Iranians honored and was disrespectful to the high Iranian officials, including the shah himself. Griboyedov, for example, refused to remove "his boots for an audience with the Shah."¹¹⁶ His entourage also committed offenses and badgered people and "acted foolhardy with disregard for basic tenets of Iranian behavior and honor."¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵Nikki Keddie, Roots of Revolution, p. 45.

¹¹⁶Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906, p. 94.

¹¹⁷Nikki Keddie, Roots of Revolution, p. 46.

Griboyedov's mission to Tehran was in connection with the Treaty of Turkamanchai. One of the articles of the treaty provided for the return of all prisoners.¹¹⁸ With this as an excuse, they were looking for Georgian women who were married to Iranians. A report reached Griboyedov that some Christian Georgian or Armenian women had been converted forcibly to Islam and forced to marry Iranians. Griboyedov's men were forcefully entering homes and taking these women to Griboyedov for questioning as to whether they wanted to stay in Iran or wished to return to their homes of origin.¹¹⁹ In the process, the Griboyedov mission announced that two Georgian women, who had converted to Islam and married an anti-Russian Iranian and given birth to children, wanted to leave Iran for their homeland, and the mission held these women overnight. Rumors spread that the women were held against their will, that they were prevented from leaving the mission, and that they were forced to renounce Islam. At this point, the ulama intervened and unsuccessfully tried to obtain the women peacefully. Then one of the ulama, Hajji Mirza Masih, "issued a fatva (religious decree) saying the rescue of Muslim women from unbelievers was lawful."¹²⁰ The day after the fatva was issued, the shops in the bazaars were closed and the people headed for the Russian mission where the women were being held. Again the ulama requested the release of the women but were refused by the Griboyedov mission. Subsequently, they entered the mission and released the

¹¹⁸Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906, p. 95.

¹¹⁹Ibid.

¹²⁰Nikki Keddie, Roots of Revolution, p. 46.

women.¹²¹ In the process, some shots were fired by the Russians and an eight-year-old boy was killed. By now, the people who had been increasing in numbers were out of control. They attacked the house and "Griboyedov and his whole mission, with one exception, were killed."¹²²

On the basis of the events of the second Russo-Persian War and the Griboyedov incident, it can be concluded that in the first part of the nineteenth century, foreign interference boosted the ulama's popularity and increased their involvement in and influence on political activities in Iran. As can be seen, there was a clear connection between the religious and national feelings of the people, and in examining these two incidents, we can "see in as yet undefined form the conviction that the survival of Iran as a nation was equivalent to its survival as an Islamic nation."¹²³ In accordance with the Shii doctrine, the words and directives of the ulama in the form of "fatva" are considered a part of religious beliefs. Therefore, the ulama were easily able to influence the behavior of the people and the monarch and, subsequently, the government policies by simply declaring a fatva (religious decree). And when this concept of fatva was directed against a foreign infidel, as it was in the cases of the Russo-Persian War and the Griboyedov incident, acceptance was even more widespread and enthusiastic.

¹²¹Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906, p. 97.

¹²²Nikki Keddie, Roots of Revolution, p. 46.

¹²³Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906, p. 90.

CHAPTER II

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY IRAN - PART II

One must understand Anglo-Russian involvement in Iran if one is to understand the Tobacco Protests. Thus this chapter begins with Anglo-Russian involvement which arises during the second half of the nineteenth century and then moves on to consider the development of the Tobacco Protests. In addition, it analyzes the impact of foreign interference and government policies on the power of the ulama. Finally it discusses the impact of the status of the ulama's hierarchy on their power during this period.

During the second part of the nineteenth century, Anglo-Russian rivalry took a new turn in Iran. With the progress of the industrial revolution in Europe new inventions and discoveries resulted in over-production in major industrial countries. The accumulation of capital and finished products rose so rapidly that a new market was essential for progress and the survival of the capitalist nations. It was here that the economic significance of India and Iran became more evident to imperialist nations such as Russia and Great Britain. While there was a market for products in other countries, "competition with industrial states, especially those with high tariff like United States and Germany, was stiff."¹ Therefore, there was a need for colonies where the industrial nations could easily manipulate rules to obtain cheap raw materials and new markets for their products. India was such a place for Great Britain, and her

¹Rouhollah Ramazani, The Foreign Policy of Iran 1500-1941, p. 63.

need for India also made Iran more valuable to British Imperialism.² As Lord Curzon states, "Indifference to Persia might mean the sacrifice of trade that already feeds hundreds of thousands of our citizens in this country and in India. A friendly attention to Persia will mean so much more employment for British ships, for British labour, and for British spindles."³

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Russian economic interests also were increasing in Iran. Although Russia's economy, unlike that of England and other European industrial nations, was not booming, it did not have problems of over-production, comparable with those found in the economy of Iran which was still medieval.⁴ Therefore, in the second half of the nineteenth century, the Anglo-Russian "rivalry became a furious economic competition"⁵ in Iran. Great Britain and Russia tried to exclude each other from or limit each other's access to the Iranian market by seeking economic concessions from the Iranian government. Major concession hunting began as early as 1864 when "a certain Monsieur Savalan appeared in Tehran with a project for the construction of a railway and the exploration of mines"⁶ and culminated by the end of the century.

²Ibid.

³George Curzon, Persia and the Persian Question (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1966), p. 604.

⁴Rouhollah Ramazani, The Foreign Policy of Iran 1500-1941, p. 54.

⁵Ibid., p. 63.

⁶Firuz Kazemzadeh, Russia and Britain in Persia 1864-1914, p. 101.

During the first part of the nineteenth century, foreign interference mainly involved military actions and other clearly visible actions which the ulama could easily direct the attention of the people to. But in the second half of the nineteenth century, foreign involvement in Iran was more cultural, political, and economic. It was more sophisticated and more difficult for laymen to identify and understand.

As mentioned previously, with the approach of the second half of the nineteenth century, the Anglo-Russian rivalry in Iran turned into furious economic competition. The foreign powers sought economic concessions from the government of Iran which would give them exclusive control of vital parts of the Iranian economy extending from production to transportation to marketing. The opposition of the ulama and people to these economic concessions arose slowly but ultimately reached a point where, during the Tobacco Protest, it threatened the foundations of the monarchy itself.

The Ulama and the Reuter Concession of 1872

The first major economic concession was granted to England in 1863.⁷ England was seeking an alternative telegraph line to India to protect her interests, and they also needed an easier access to Iran for "exploitation and control over economic resources."⁸ The British government approached the Iranian monarch and was granted a

⁷Rouhollah Ramazani, The Foreign Policy of Iran 1500-1941, p. 66.

⁸M. S. Ivanov, Inghalabeh Mashruotiat-i Iran (Constitutional Revolution of Iran) (Tehran, Iran: 1976), p. 8.

"concession for the establishment of an overland telegraph line through Iran"⁹ in 1863. It appeared that the grant of the telegraph concession did not result in any known major protest from the ulama and the people. The first economic concession that resulted in major disturbances and protests from the ulama and others was the Reuter Concession of 1872. Reuter originally approached the monarch for a railway concession in Iran; but when the documents (which were drafted by Reuter) were signed by Nasir ud-Din Shah, they gave the control of the most important areas of economic activities to Reuter. Regarding the Reuter concession, the British George Curzon states: "The concession was dated July 25, 1872. When published to the world, it was found to contain the most complete and extraordinary surrender of the entire industrial resources of a kingdom into foreign hands that has probably ever been dreamed of, much less accomplished, in history."¹⁰

The interest of Baron Julius de Reuter (a German-born British subject) in the economic concession in Iran began when he met Mohsen Khan Moin al-Molk, a Persian minister in London. To be able to get such an extraordinary concession on easy terms, Reuter used bribery extensively from the beginning. He started with Mohsen Khan. To secure continued support of Mohsen Khan, it is claimed that Reuter bribed him to the sum of 20,000 pounds of sterling.¹¹ In early 1872,

⁹Rouhollah Ramazani, The Foreign Policy of Iran 1500-1941, p. 66.

¹⁰George Curzon, Persia and the Persian Question, p. 480.

¹¹Firuz Kazemzadeh, Russia and Britain in Persia 1864-1914, p. 104.

Reuter sent his agent to Iran in order to assemble support for his plans. There he also bribed with money those who could influence the opinion of the shah, including his grand vizier (Prime Minister), Mirza Huseyn Khan.¹² As for Nasir ud-Din Shah himself to whom "even a useful invention such as the telegraph did not appeal. . .The one thing he understood well was money, of which he never had enough yet, which seemed to flow in abundance in Europe."¹³ Plenty of profit was promised starting with "ample funds" for the shah's first visit to Europe in 1873.¹⁴ George Curzon summarizes the major provisions of the Reuter concession as follows:

Exclusive of the clauses referring to railroads and tramways, which conferred an absolute monopoly of both those undertakings upon Baron de Reuter for the space of seventy years, the concession also handed over to him the exclusive working for the same period of all Persian mines, except those of gold, silver, and precious stones; the monopoly of the government forests, all uncultivated land being embraced under that designation; the exclusive construction of canals, kanats, and irrigation works of every description; the first refusal of a national bank, and of all future enterprises connected with the introduction of roads, telegraphs, mills, factories, workshops, and public workers of every description; and a farm of the entire customs of the empire for a period of twenty-five years from March 1, 1874, upon payment to the shah of a stipulated sum for the first five years, and of an additional sixty percent of the net revenue for the remaining twenty. With respect to the other profits, twenty percent of those accruing from railways, and fifteen percent of those derived from all other sources, were reserved for the Persian Government. Such was the amazing document that

¹²Ibrahim Taymuri, Asr-i Bikhbari, p. 107.

¹³Firuz Kazemzadeh, Russia and Britain in Persia 1864-1914, p. 101.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 111.

fell like a bombshell upon Europe just before the shah started upon his first foreign journey in 1873.¹⁵

On Nasir ud-Din Shah's first trip to Europe in 1873, the opposition to the Reuter concession came from several directions. One source of opposition was the Russian government. The Russians, who would have lost a great deal of profit and the door to many future economic activities which seemed to be closed by the Reuter concession, showed their disapproval of the concession to the shah when he was passing through Russia to Europe and tried to arouse local opposition to the Reuter concession in Iran.¹⁶ The second group opposing the Reuter concession was headed by the shah's wife, Anis od-Dowleh, who blamed Mirza Huseyn Khan, the grand vizier, for the shah's refusal to take her to Europe¹⁷ and included a number of ministers and courtiers who either were rivals of the grand vizier or had not received a satisfactory bribe.¹⁸ The third source of opposition to the Reuter concession came from the ulama.

Before leaving for Europe, Nasir ud-Din Shah tried to persuade the ulama to tell the people of the usefulness of his European trip but it was seemingly objected to by the ulama.¹⁹ This in itself indicates the importance of the ulama's opinion in a matter. Some of the documents seem to show that the ulama were against the

¹⁵George Curzon, Persia and the Persian Question, I, pp. 480-81.

¹⁶Firuz Kazemzadeh, Russia and Britain in Iran 1864-1914, p. 114.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 117.

¹⁸Akbar Rafsanjani, Amir Kabir, p. 369.

¹⁹Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran, 1785-1906, p. 174.

development of any new technology and were against any progress at all. One such document is a report by Mirza Huseyn Khan to the shah about his meeting with the British charge' d'affaires at which he explained opposition to the Reuter concession to try to find a way out of it. Mirza Huseyn Khan explained to the British charge' d'affaires that "in the mind of the ulama railway is harmful to both religion and the state. Although we try hard to explain the benefits and usefulness of the railway to them, no result has been achieved yet. . . ."20 On the basis of this kind of document, some allege that the inherent opposition of the ulama to change and progress was the cause of their opposing the Reuter concession.²¹ However, a letter of protest against the Reuter concession which was sent to the shah by Tehran's chief, Mujtahid Hajji Mulla Ali Kani, indicated "that though irrationality played a part at popular levels, the attitude of the ulama was not dictated by mere obscurantism."²² In a lengthy letter to the shah, Hajji Kani (the leader of the ulama against the Reuter concession) advised him, among other things, not to give to foreigners all of the economic resources which were the main sources of revenue for the government. He continued by asking how, when the main economic resources were in the hands of foreigners and the government treasury was empty, the people could defend themselves and the country if this became necessary. Kani also warned the monarch about the danger of allowing a large number of

²⁰Ibrahim Taymuri, Asr-i Bikhbari, p. 137.

²¹Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906, p. 176.

²²Ibid.

foreigners in Iran to have key positions.²³ An analysis of the Hajji Kani letter to the shah suggests that the main reason why the ulama opposed the Reuter concession was the increasing influence of foreigners in Iranian economic activities, the harmfulness of signing away the main economic resources of the country to foreigners, and the effect on government revenues.

Opposition to the Reuter concession and Mirza Huseyn Khan, who the opposition believed was responsible for granting the concession, culminated toward the end of Nasir ud-Din's European trip. On his way back, the shah was informed of the opposition to the Reuter concession and his minister. He also received telegrams demanding dismissal of Mirza Huseyn Khan and cancellation of the Reuter concession.²⁴ When the shah realized the seriousness of the opposition, he dismissed Mirza Huseyn Khan as the grand vizier and cancelled the Reuter concession upon his arrival in Tehran in 1873.²⁵

Although some sources stress the Russian opposition as the cause of the Reuter cancellation,²⁶ the evidence shows that the ulama played an important and determining role and also that "the coalition against Mirza Huseyn Khan was headed by the ulama and that the objections to him were stated chiefly in religious terms. Rumors arose that the Sipahsalar (Mirza Huseyn Khan) wanted to Christianize

²³Ibrahim Taymuri, Asr-i Bikhbari, pp. 124-126.

²⁴Firuz Kazemzadeh, Russia and Britain in Iran 1864-1914, p. 118.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 119-131.

²⁶Nikki Keddie, Religion and Rebellion in Iran. The Tobacco Protest of 1891-1892 (London: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd., 1966), p. 5.

Iran, and Hajji Mulla Ali Kani issued a fatva declaring that his dismissal was wajib (religiously incumbent)."²⁷ The ulama also threatened to leave Tehran if the Sipahsalar was not dismissed by Nasir ud-Dir Shah.²⁸ Further evidence that of the ulama was the determining factor in ending the Reuter concession is confirmed in a dispatch from W. T. Thomson, the British minister in Tehran, to his government. He reports his meeting with Mirza Huseyn Khan as follows:

He (Huseyn Khan) said his Majesty found himself in so delicate a position towards his own subjects, whose cry was that he had delivered his country and religion into the hands of the Europeans, and that the opposition of the clergy in particular was so formidable that contrary to his wishes he believed it was necessary that the concession should be cancelled.²⁹

Thus, it is clearly evident that the ulama, particularly under the leadership of Hajji Mulla Ali Kani, played an important role in opposing the Reuter concession and the ministership of Sipahsalar. The opposition was stated in religious terms and the factors which produced the opposition were related to the foreign involvement in Iran. Foreign involvement increased the role of the ulama in political affairs, and they were able to influence the policies of the government and force the shah to dismiss his minister and cancel the Reuter concession--the two demands which were requested by the ulama. The protest against the Reuter concession and the shah's

²⁷Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran 1785-1905, p. 177.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Firuz Kazemzadeh, Russia and Britain in persia 1864-1914, p. 123.

minister did not become as widespread as the Tobacco Protest, partly because the opposition was "perhaps the earliest manifestation of the Iranian national awakening,"³⁰ and also because quick action was taken by Nasir ud-Din Shah to cancel the concession and dismiss his minister. There is no doubt that external factors were an impetus to the protest against the concession. The opposition was so great and effective that the shah himself was surprised and shaken, as Sir Henry Rawlison (scholar, colonial administrator and diplomat) observed:

The Shah, indisposed to the concession by the pressure exerted against it in Europe, acted under 'force majeure' in his final act of authority; for the popular feeling against the surrender of his royal powers into the hands of foreigners which had been fanned and fed, directed and intensified during his Majesty's absence in Europe, by certain powerful malcontents at court, declared itself so strongly on his return that it could not be prudently resisted. It is indeed a matter of notoriety that the shah's crown was in jeopardy for some weeks after his return to Persia, an insurrection in the capital being imminent, and the two declared objects of the public rancor being the Grand Vizier and the Reuter concession on both of which heads his Majesty was compelled to yield, before he could venture to leave his palace and resume his ordinary avocations of pleasure or of business.

The Shah hurried his return to Persia in consequence of rumors of intrigue and disaffection, and he had no sooner landed on the shore of Ghilan than the threatened explosion took place. Elements of opposition, discordant in their nature, but each of considerable power had confederated to force the Grand Vizier from office, and for the first time in the present reign the authority of the sovereign was set at naught.³¹

Another instance of foreign involvement in Iranian affairs was the lottery concession. It resulted in the opposition of the ulama

³⁰Rouhollah Ramazani, The Foreign Policy of Iran 1500-1941, p. 68.

³¹Nikki Keddie, Religion and Rebellion in Iran, pp. 5-6.

and again showed their influence. During his third and final trip to Europe in 1889, Nasir ud-Din Shah granted the lottery concession to Buzic de Cardonal. The deal was masterminded by de Cardonal's collaborator, Mirza Malkum Khan, the Iranian minister in England.³² When Nasir ud-Din Shah returned to Iran, the lottery concession grant became public. The ulama expressed their opposition to it on the grounds that a lottery was a form of gambling. Since gambling was prohibited by "sharia" (Islamic law), the ulama issued a fatva against the lottery concession.³³ When Nasir ud-Din Shah realized the extent and nature of the opposition of the ulama to the concession, he came to the conclusion that its execution would result in difficulties. The shah ordered his foreign minister to send a telegram to the Iranian minister in London saying that "since lottery is against 'sharia' and will result in fetna (sedition) and corruption, thus it (the lottery concession) is cancelled by the rule of government."³⁴

Here again it is clear that foreign involvement was an impetus for the ulama's opposition to a decision of the government. In this case, the ulama were easily able to change government policy. This event again shows the great influence which the ulama enjoyed. The government was not able to resist or ignore their actions.

³²Ali Akbar Valayati, Mugaddima-yi Fikvi Nihzat-i Mashrutiyyat, p. 91.

³³Ibrahim Taymuri, Asr-i Bikhbari, p. 215.

³⁴Ibid., p. 216.

In general, it can be concluded that even before the Tobacco Concession, concession granting as a form of foreign involvement in Iran was a source of discontent. This foreign factor was a stimulus to the involvement of the ulama in political affairs, and, on occasions when they acted, they were able to influence government policies with relative ease.

The Tobacco Protests and the Role of the Ulama

With the approach of the last decade of the nineteenth century, concession hunting by foreign countries intensified. During this period, Russia and Great Britain were using all means at their disposal to get economic concessions in Iran, primarily for their own economic benefit. Some of these concessions, which were granted to foreign nationals, included the opening of the Karun River in 1888, the building of a highway from Tehran to Tabriz in 1889, and "the launching of the British-owned Imperial Bank of Persia"³⁵ in the same year. But it was the Tobacco concession, "granting full monopoly over the production, sale, and export of all tobacco in Iran"³⁶ to Major G. Tablot, a British concessionaire, that resulted in an unprecedented, massive, national protest under the leadership of the ulama against the concession and the government and which became the prelude to the constitutional revolution. During the nineteenth century, many concessions were granted to foreign nationals. Some concessions, including the Reuter concession, practically placed the

³⁵Nikki Keddie, Religion and Rebellion in Iran, p. 9.

³⁶Ibid.

main economic resources of the nation under foreign control. But it was the Tobacco concession that resulted in mass, unified, and uninterrupted protests against the government until the fulfillment of the protesters demand for the cancellation of the concession was met. There are several reasons why this crisis evolved as it did.

1. The economic impact of the west on Iran. During the nineteenth century, Iran suffered several military defeats at the hands of Russia and Great Britain which ended with treaties at Turkamanchai (1827) and Paris (1857).³⁷ Besides territorial concessions, these treaties resulted in "harsh commercial capitalizations that lowered imports, duties, permitted Britain and Russia to open trading agencies anywhere within Iran and exempted their merchants from local laws, tariffs, and road tolls."³⁸ The special treatment of Russia's and Great Britain's economic activities in Iran also coincided with the industrial revolution in Europe which opened the way to a dramatic increase in European-manufactured goods in Iran. This was evident in the increase of foreign trade; in real terms foreign trade increased by threefold between 1800 and 1850 "and quadrupled again by 1914."³⁹ This increase in trade was a disadvantage to the Iranian economy. A. Bausani observed: "Because of Persia's feudal conditions and the absence of any tariff controls, this sudden opening up of

³⁷Ervand Abrahamian, "The Causes of the Constitutional Revolution in Iran," The International Journal of Middle East Studies, 10 (1974), p. 391.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Charles Issawi, The Economic History of Iran, 1800-1914 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 132.

trade with European nations resulted in a huge increase in the imports of goods, and reduced almost to nil the production of those articles which she needed and which she could have manufactured herself. Thus local industry eventually degenerated. . . ."⁴⁰ The dramatic increase in the share of the Iranian market held by Europeans resulted in a loss of business for Iranians. Many industries were closed and people were out of jobs. In a letter to a Persian newspaper based in Istanbul, Shaikh Hasan Karbalai (who was one of the ulama participants in the Tobacco protests) complained that the number of Europeans in Iran was gradually increasing, and that they were not only taking away the main economic activities from Iraniana but "they are also interfering in small and petty businesses. Now in Muslim Bazaars, not only one or two, but tens of European shops have been opened . . . and have taken away and stolen the people's jobs and business . . . and for the Muslim people of Iran nothing remains except small handicraft jobs. . . ."⁴¹

During this period, the external factor also caused a sharp increase of inflation. Between 1850 and 1900 there was a price increase of nearly 600 percent.⁴² The introduction of modern medicine, health care, and better control against epidemics resulted in the near doubling of "the population from five million in 1850 to

⁴⁰Alessandro Bausani, The Persians From the Earliest Days to the Twentieth Century (New York: St. Martin Press, 1971), p. 167.

⁴¹Hasan Karbalai, Qarardad-i rezhi 1890 m. (Tehran: Intesharat-i Mobarizan, 1982), p. 8.

⁴²Ervand Abrahamian, "The Causes of the Constitutional Revolution in Iran," p. 392.

nearly ten million in 1900"⁴³ and, subsequently, in an expanding demand for food and in price increases.

Thus, the economic impact of Europe on Iran resulted in a loss of business and jobs and also in increased prices all of which caused discontent among the Iranian people.

2. The cultural impact of the west on Iran. Western culture was introduced in part in Iran through Christian missionaries. During the nineteenth century many Christian missionaries entered Iran to convert the people to Christianity. "It was the deepest desire of the missionaries to change Iran by converting the people to Christianity but realizing the impossibility of that, a large number of them were happy to change the attitude of young through education and the introduction of the best values of the west."⁴⁴ In accordance with this policy, by the end of the nineteenth century the foreign missionaries, including Americans and British, had established schools or hospitals or both in a number of Iranian cities including Tabriz, Hamadan, Tehran, Kermanshah, Mashhad, Isfahan, and Yazd.⁴⁵ Shaikh Hasan Karbalai, who lived during this time, discussed in his writing the impact of western ideas and cultures on Iran. He wrote that because of Iranian contact with Europeans, some people had become critical of the ulama and were complaining that their knowledge and education were backward while

⁴³Ibid., p. 392.

⁴⁴Yahya Armajani, Iran, p. 121.

⁴⁵Ibid.

European science, knowledge, culture, and behavior opened the door to progress and happiness.⁴⁶

The contact between the Iranians and the Europeans increased as the economic role of the Europeans in Iran grew. With the expansion of the European share of the Iranian market, many European business people came to Iran. By the end of the nineteenth century, their numbers were considerable,⁴⁷ and they joined the missionaries in spreading European culture. This angered the religious people, particularly the ulama.

3. The meddling of Russia and Great Britain in the internal affairs of Iran. The rivalry between Russia and Britain and the military and economic interests of these two countries in Iran have already been discussed at some length. Both Russia and Great Britain were firmly committed to preventing Iran from making any genuine progress toward becoming economically healthy and militarily strong. For example, at one point, the Russians sought a concession to build a railway in Iran. When they concluded it was not going to benefit them, Zinove (the Russian Ambassador in Iran) persuaded his government not to help Iran build the railway and to force Iran to abandon any plan of building the railway by itself or with the help of others. When Zinove was asked about Iran's need for the railway, he replied, "My minor interest should be dearer to me than the major interest of others, in the East principles are inapplicable, there

⁴⁶Hasan Karbalai, Qarardad-i Rezhi 1890 m., pp. 5-6.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 25.

one must be guided by opportunism alone."⁴⁸ Later, the Russian government exerted pressure on the Iranian government to sign a document providing that "the Persian government engages for the space of ten years . . . neither itself to conduct a railway in Persian territory nor to permit nor grant a concession for the construction of railway to a company or other persons. . . ."⁴⁹

The British also, aside from getting economic concessions in Iran, frequently meddled in Iranian affairs. Throughout most of the nineteenth century, their policy was to keep Iran the way it was-- weak and economically dependent. This can be seen in a dispatch from the British Ambassador in Iran to his government in 1844: "It is my sincere opinion that having the safety of our Indian territory in view it would be better policy to leave Persia in her present state of weakness and barbarism than pursue an opposite plan."⁵⁰

In many cases, in order to keep the central government weak, the British government supported groups rebelling against it, provided help to these groups, and sometimes insisted in keeping people who were their allies in important positions, even though they were incompetent.⁵¹ In other instances, the British tried to prevent those who did not support them from holding government offices.⁵²

⁴⁸Firuz Kazemzadeh, Russia and Britain in Iran 1864-1914, p. 235.

⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 238-239.

⁵⁰Akbar Rafsanjani, Amir Kabir, p. 103.

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 27-43.

⁵²Ibrahim Safai, Asnad-i Siasi Dowran-i Qajar (Tehran: Babak 1974), p. 151.

Sometimes they asked the shah to prevent the ulama from returning to their hometowns because of their anti-European activities.⁵³ The British and Russian interference in Iranian affairs was so widespread and evident that sometimes the princes would approach Britain and Russia to seek their support for the throne. In November 1856, P. Jones, the British representative in the Persian Gulf, wrote in a letter that the Prince, who was the provincial governor, had told him that if the British selected him as the Persian king he would bring peace between Britain and Persia.⁵⁴ Actually the decision as to who should succeed Fath Ali Shah and Mohammad Shah was influenced by both Russia and Great Britain.⁵⁵ Thus, we see that the meddling of Russia and Britain in Iranian internal affairs is quite evident.

4. The unpopularity of the Qajar dynasty. The Qajar dynasty, which ruled Iran for more than 130 years, was one of the most unpopular dynasties in Iranian history. The savagery and cruelty of the Qajar rulers was evident from the beginning when Agha Mohammad Khan, the first Qajar ruler, after capturing the city of Kerman "is said not to have been satisfied until 35,000 pairs of eyes had been handed to him upon a dish, while very fine buildings were razed to the ground, and 30,000 women and children were carried off into slavery."⁵⁶ The Qajar rulers had a fondness for pleasure as is

⁵³Ibid., p. 148.

⁵⁴Ali Akbar Valayati, Mugaddima-yi Fikri Nihzat-i Mashrutiyat, p. 61.

⁵⁵Rouhollah Ramazani, The Foreign Policy of Iran 1500-1941, p. 35.

⁵⁶George Curzon, Persian and the Persian Questions, p. 243.

extravagantly shown by Fath Ali Shah who married 192 times⁵⁷ and Nasir ud-Din Shah who spend a lot of his time in his large harem, in hunting, and on taking trips. Their word was law; they did anything they wanted, and they did not care for the welfare and well-being of their subjects. The nature of the Qajar dynasty and its rulers is well summarized by Ervand Abrahamian.

The Shahs, also as shadows of God, Divine conquerors, and guardians of the folk, exercised extensive authority over life, honor, and property. They claimed ownership of all land they had not previously granted. They possessed sole right to give concessions, privileges, and monopolies. They intervened in the economy, occasionally regulating production and prices, frequently buying, selling, and stocking food. They considered their word as law so long as it did not openly contradict the fundamentals of Islam. As one chronicler stressed, "wise men realize that when you have an opinion contrary to that of the shah, you must make a sacrifice of your blood. They moreover made and unmade all high officials: the famous Hajji Ibrahim was boiled in oil, another minister was strangled. Yet another had his veins cut open, some were blinded and many had their property confiscated."⁵⁸

It is clearly evident from eyewitness accounts of the foreigners that the Qajar dynasty was very unpopular, and many observers during the nineteenth century predicted that because of their selfishness, ruthlessness, and lack of concern for their subjects the dynasty would be overthrown.⁵⁹ Some British observers have implied that the reason this did not happen and the dynasty lasted so long was because Great Britain and Russia guaranteed the existence of the dynasty.⁶⁰

⁵⁷Ervand Abrahamian, Between Two Revolutions, p. 48.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Nikki Keddie, Religion and Rebellion in Iran, p. 2.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 3.

Furthermore, Keddie observes "that there was an interconnection between Qajar misrule, popular discontent, and the activities of the foreign government in Iran."⁶¹

5. The nature of the Tobacco Concession itself. It was during Nasir ud-Din Shah's third trip to Europe in 1889 that the primary negotiation of the Tobacco Concession took place. To persuade the shah to sign the concession, the concessionaires bribed the shah's ministers and his grand vizier, Amin us-Sultan. After material persuasion, he told the shah that the concession was like a "found treasurer."⁶² Furthermore, the concessionaires gave more bribes and presented money to the shah himself in Iran. According to Feuvrier, the shah's personal physician who was a French citizen, the total amount of the bribes paid to get the concession amounted to two million French francs.⁶³ The concession was granted in March 1890. In the spring of 1891, the first agent of the company arrived in Iran.⁶⁴ Edward G. Browne summarizes the main provisions of the Tobacco Concession as follows:

The concessionaire Mr. G. E. Talbot, was thereby granted full control over the production, sale and export of all tobacco in Persia for a period of fifty years in return for which monopoly he undertook to pay to the shah, or the Persian government, an annual rent of £15,000, in addition to one-quarter of the annual profits, after the payment of

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibrahim Taymuri, Tahrim-i Tanbaku ya Avvalin Muqavamat-i Manfi dar Iran (Tehran: Ketabhai-i Jibi, 1982), p. 25.

⁶³Ibid., p. 28.

⁶⁴Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906, p. 206.

all working expenses and a five percent divided on the capital.⁶⁵

Comparing the Tobacco Concession with the Reuter concession, it seems that the latter was much worse because the foreigners practically gained full control over major economic resources. Then, why did the Reuter concession not result in a nationwide protest like the Tobacco Concession? When we look at the Tobacco Concession carefully we can see why. A large portion of the population of Iran were tobacco smokers; thus, the nature of the Tobacco Concession was such that it affected practically everyone in the country from the growers to the smokers. Article 2 read in part:

Permission for sale etc. of tooton, tobacco, cigars, cigarettes, snuff, etc., is the absolute right of the concessionaires and no one but the proprietors of this concession shall have the right to issue the above mentioned permits.

The guilds of the sellers of tobacco and tooton who are engaged in this trade will remain permanent in their local trade and transactions, on condition of possessing permits which will be given to them by the concessionaires.⁶⁶

The contract also carried a threat: "Anyone attempting to evade rules of these articles will be severely punished as will be those who are found in possession of tobacco for sale or trade."⁶⁷ As is clear from the harsh language of the concession, the tobacco cultivators and growers had just one choice--sell their products to the company. The tobacco merchants were also hurt by the concession.

⁶⁵Edward Browne, The Persian Revolution of 1905-1909 (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1966), p. 33.

⁶⁶Firuz Kazemzadeh, Russia and Britain in Persia 1864-1914, p. 248.

⁶⁷Ibid.

They could not engage in trading tobacco which, in most cases, their livelihood was dependent upon. Finally, the buyers and the middlemen were also affected since they had to buy their products from the company agents, and if they wanted to sell the tobacco products they had to get the permission of the company. The Tobacco Concession, thus "hit at every town and village where tobacco was grown, processed, sold, bought, or consumed. Thousands of tobacco merchants and peddlers were virtually sold to a foreign company and suddenly found their businesses confiscated in fact if not in law, and themselves turned into salesmen working commission for an English firm."⁶⁸ As the result, the people had to deal with "infidel foreigners." Several centuries before (in August 1562) when one of them, Jenkinson, brought a message of friendship from the Queen of England to the Safavid Shah Tahmasp in an attempt to open a relationship, the shah replied: "'Oh, thou unbeliever," . . . "we have no need to have friendship with the unbelievers," and so willed me to depart.'⁶⁹ Furthermore, Jenkinson wrote in his diary that when he was leaving the court someone followed him and spread dust on his footsteps in order to purify the ground.⁷⁰

The concession allowed many foreigners to come to Iran either as agents of the company or for the purpose of opening schools,

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 249.

⁶⁹George Curzon, Persia and the Persian Question, Volume II, p. 533.

⁷⁰Ali Akbar Valayati, Mughaddima-yi Fikri Nihzat-i Mashrutiyat, p. 28.

hospitals, and churches.⁷¹ The contract also left much room for interpretation and misconduct by the agents of the company. These agents acted very harshly and aggressively. They did not pay the tobacco growers fairly, and at times used force against them.⁷² They also set up check points outside the gates of the cities and searched people for illegal possession of tobacco.⁷³ This oppressive behavior by the agents of the company was so evident that it was acknowledged and criticized by the British officials. As the then British Oriental Secretary and Military Attache, T. E. Gordon, states, "An imprudent beginning was made in exercising the right of search in a manner which alarmed some people for the privacy of their homes, a dangerous suggestion in a Mohammedan community."⁷⁴ On October 6, 1891, Robert Kennedy, a British charge' d'affaires at Tehran, sent a telegram to the company. It suggested that the "agents who, with one or two exceptions, are not, unfortunately, the class of men successfully to perform the delicate task intrusted to them, should be told to moderate their zeal."⁷⁵

In summary, the Tobacco Concession aroused the anger of the Iranian population by (1) being economically harmful to a large portion of the population and by (2) violating the religious beliefs

⁷¹Ibrahim Taymuri, Tahrim-i Tanbaku, p. 42.

⁷²Ibid., pp. 45-46.

⁷³Ibid., p. 44.

⁷⁴Keddie Nikki, Religion and Rebellion in Iran, p. 50.

⁷⁵Ibid.

of the people and stirring their emotions and, consequently, their opposition to the concession.

6. The status of the religious hierarchy in Iran. At the time of the granting of the Tobacco Concession, the ulama were in a position to effectively lead the protests and opposition to the government and become the undisputed leaders of the movement against the Tobacco Concession. As previously pointed out, after the establishment of the Safavid dynasty in the sixteenth century, the ulama gradually increased in numbers, knowledge, and economic independence from the state. Thus, they became a powerful force in Iranian society. The "Twelver" Shii doctrine and the Shii jurisprudence (as mentioned earlier) were seriously challenged by the Akhbari school which resided mainly in "the shrine cities of Iraq during the period between the Safavids and Qajar."⁷⁶ Morteza Mutahhari explains the position of Akhbari School as follows:

However about the same time as the rule of the Safavid dynasty there appeared in Iran a sect manifesting the view that the right of ordinary people to refer to the Quran is forbidden, and they claimed that only the prophet and the imams have this right. . . .

This group by denying the right of referral to the Quran, consensus and reasoning were essentially denying ijtiḥad, for ijtiḥad, as has been stated, means precise understanding and profound deducing, and it is evident that profound understanding is not possible without making use of reason. This group came to believe that ordinary people, without the medium of a group known as mujtahids, must refer to the traditions for guidance in their daily affairs and actions, just as today they refer to the treatises of the mujtahids.⁷⁷

⁷⁶Abdul-Hadi Hairi, Shiism and Constitutionalism in Iran, p. 67.

⁷⁷Morteza Mutahhari, Jurisprudence and Its Principles (Albany: Muslim Student Association), pp. 16-17.

According to the Akhbari School which dominated the Shrine in Iraq, every individual could refer directly to the traditions for guidance, which did away with the function of mujtahid, the major source of the ulama's power.

Aga Mohammad Bagir Bihbahani (1705-1803), a prominent ulama of the eighteenth century, effectively ended the Akhbari school and became the chief proponent of usulis (those who employ roots or principles of Shii jurisprudence and practice ijtihad) which became the dominant school of thought throughout the "Twelver" Shii communities in the world.⁷⁸

According to the main-stream "Twelver" Shii doctrine--the usulis--either a person should be a mujtahid himself and act according to his own judgment, or he must follow and imitate the judgment of a mujtahid. This was the doctrinal basis of the ulama's power. This doctrine allowed room for the existence of more than one mujtahid. When there were several major marja-i taqlids,⁷⁹ there was room for disunity among the ulama and their followers because each marja-i taqlid could have a different opinion about an issue that would be passed on to his followers.

This was not the case during the Tobacco Concession. During the second half of the nineteenth century, Shaykh Murtada Ansari established himself as the sole marja-i taqlid for the Iranian ulama

⁷⁸Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906, p. 34.

⁷⁹Marja-i taqlid is "a mujtahid whose practices and pronouncements furnish a binding example for those unable to exert independent judgement in matters relating to the religious law."

and people.⁸⁰ After Shaykh Ansari died in about 1885, there was no one dominant marja-i taqlid for a few years. But gradually one of Shaykh Ansari's pupils, Mirza Hasan Shirazi (d. 1894), "emerged" as the sole marja-i taqlid and the successor to Shaykh Murtada Ansari.⁸¹ The existence of Mirza Hasan Shirazi as the sole marja-i taqlid, who actively participated in the protests against the Tobacco Concession and became the effective leader of the movement, prevented division among the ulama and the people. The resulting unity under a sole marja-i taqlid greatly contributed to the victory of the people over the Tobacco Concession.

According to Feuvrier, the shah's French doctor, the first disturbances in Tehran (the capital) started on May 22, 1891.⁸² Though the concession was signed in March 1890, it was not publicly announced in Iran until February 1891 when the first agents of the company arrived in Iran to start their work.⁸³ Soon after the disturbances in Tehran, the agitation spread through Iran, mainly to major provincial cities at first. The first provincial city to be hit by a disturbance was the southern city of Shiraz. When, in the spring of 1891, the news reached Shiraz that the company agents were about to enter the city, the shops were closed and the people under the leadership of Hajj Sayyid Ali Akbar Falasiri (a prominent ulama

⁸⁰Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906, p. 210.

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Ibid., pp. 206-207.

⁸³Nikki Keddie, Religion and Rebellion in Iran, p. 49.

of Shiraz) staged a protest against the government.⁸⁴ The agents stayed outside the city, and the British embassy and the shah's minister were notified of the situation in Shiraz. After contact was made with the central government, the local authorities argued that the main cause of agitation in the city was the vocal leadership of Ali Akbar Falasiri, and they requested permission to send him into exile.⁸⁵ The permission was granted, and Falasiri was forcefully exiled in Iraq.⁸⁶ When the people heard the news, shops were closed in protest and the people gathered and requested information about Falasiri and demanded his return to the city. The government responded with a show of force in which a number of people were killed and injured.⁸⁷ This temporarily ended the disturbances in Shiraz. However, under the leadership of the ulama the protests against the concessions continued in other cities. The first reported action took place in Tabriz in September 1891. As a sign of dissatisfaction, the ulama stopped teaching in the madrasas, and the commercial life of the city was brought to a standstill by the closure of the bazaar.⁸⁸ The protests against the concession also took place in other major cities including Isfahan where the powerful ulama, Aga Najafi, was the leader.⁸⁹ In the holy city of Mashahd,

⁸⁴Ibrahim Taymuri, Tahrim-i Tanbaku, p. 68.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 71.

⁸⁶Ibid., pp. 72.

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906, p. 209.

⁸⁹Ibid.

the protests were led by two ulama, Hajj Shaykh Mohammad Taghi Burujirdi and Hajj Habib Murtahid Shahidi.⁹⁰ As the company's agents, with the support of the government, were forcefully implementing provisions of the concession, the people continued their resistance against the company. For example, in one case it was reported that a tobacco merchant in Fars burned 12,000 sacks of tobacco before the agents could force him to sell them to the company.⁹¹

The news of mistreatment of the people and aggression of the government and the monopoly agents against the people reached the high ranking ulama, particularly the chief mujtahid and the sole marja-i taqlid, Mirza Hasan Shirazi, who resided in the holy shrines in Iraq. He received the news from an exiled ulama from Shiraz, Ali Akbar Falasiri, and also from a telegram sent by the ulama in Iran. In a letter from the famous Pan Islamic activist, Sayyid Jamal ud-Din Asadabadi (Afghani), Mirza Shirazi was asked to come to the help of the people. Sayyid Jamal described in his letter the oppression of the government, the extent of foreign involvement, and the misery of the people. His letter read in part as follows:

And thou, O Proof, if thou wilt not arise to help this people and wilt not unite them in purpose, and pluck them forth, by the power of the holy laws from the hands of this sinner, verily the realms of Islam will soon be under the control of foreigners, who will rule therein as they please and what they will . . . And thou knowest that ulama of Persia and the people thereof with one accord (their spirits being straitened and their hearts distressed) await a word from thee wherein they shall behold their happiness

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Hasan Karbalai, Qarardad-e Rezhi 1890 m., p. 46.

and whereby that deliverance shall be effected. How then can it be seen one on whom God hath bestowed such power as this to be so chary of using it or to leave it in abeyance.⁹²

Finally, seventeen months after the granting of the Tobacco Concession, Mirza Shirazi actively joined the opposition by sending a telegram to Nasir ud-Din Shah requesting, among other things, the cancellation of the Concession.⁹³ When the telegram did not result in any positive action by the shah and Mirza Shirazi received many emotional letters concerning the actions of the company's agent in Iran and the resistance of the people, he wrote another letter to the shah.⁹⁴ Finally in early December 1891, after his correspondence with the court had failed to bring about any concrete action by the shah, Shirazi issued a fatva forbidding the use of tobacco products.⁹⁵ The text read simply: "In the name of God, the Merciful the Forgiving today the use of tanbaku and tobacco in any form is reckoned as war against the imam of the age (may God hasten his glad Advent!)."⁹⁶ Some historians have doubted the genuineness of the fatva, but "Mirza Hasan Shirazi did not reject the attribution of the fatva to him. . . and it was his fatva permitting the use of tobacco that finally ended the boycott on January 26, 1892."⁹⁷

⁹²Edward Browne, The Persian Revolution of 1905-1909, p. 19.

⁹³Agigi Bakhshayashi, Yeksad Sal Mobarizeh Rouhaniat-i Moteragi I (Gum, Iran: Navid-i-Islam), p. 28.

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 29.

⁹⁵Nikki Keddie, Religion and Rebellion in Iran, p. 95.

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906, p. 212.

Adherence to the fatva was widespread as was its effect. It was reported that in half a day after the announcement of the fatva about one hundred thousand copies of the fatva were written and distributed by the people.⁹⁸ All the tobacco shops were immediately closed, no one could be seen smoking tobacco products even in the court, and religious minorities were reported to be observing the ban.⁹⁹ Immediately after the fatva of December 3, 1891, Feuvrier states:

A letter has come from Karbala, by which the mujtahid recommends making the tobacco company fall by abstention by no longer smoking, and immediately, with perfect accord, all the tobacco merchants closed their shops, all the water pipes have been put aside, and no one smokes any more, neither in town, nor in the entourage of the shah, nor even in his anvdarun. What discipline, what obedience, when it concerns submission to the advice--veritable orders--of an influential mujtahid of some renown!

The mallas are really the masters of the situation. it was in vain to make the head of the merchants, Hajji Mohammed Hasan, responsible for the closing of the shops, and exile him to Qazvin, everyone knows it would be necessary to strike elsewhere if one wished to cut the evil at its roots.¹⁰⁰

The effect of the ban was so widespread that even those people who had broken every Islamic law before adhered to the fatva. It was said that "some of such people were saying that we drink alcohol (prohibited by Islamic law) publicly and we are afraid of nobody, but we don't smoke until Mirza (Shirazi) gives the permission and makes it halal."¹⁰¹ The fatva was adhered to by the people so diligently

⁹⁸Ibrahim Taymuri, Tahrim-i Tanbaku, p. 104.

⁹⁹Ibid., pp. 104-108.

¹⁰⁰Nikki Keddie, Religion and Rebellion in Iran, pp. 96-97.

¹⁰¹Hasan Karbala, Qarardad-i Rezhi 1890 m., p. 70.

that it is reported they asked the ulama whether they could smoke leaves of tea and whether they could touch tobacco, etc.¹⁰² Karbalai, the author of Qarardad-i Rezhi and an eyewitness to the events, stated that when the fatva was announced his father had some tobacco in their house. He did not know how to dispose of it because he did not know whether it was religiously permissible to touch tobacco products or not.¹⁰³

The opposition to tobacco was so great, primarily because of total acceptance of the Mirza Hasan Shirasi's ban, that the shah and the British government realized that the monarchy was in jeopardy and they tried to find a way out. On December 15, Salisbury telegraphed:

The demands made by the company, if we are rightly informed, are quite excessive. Remember that the first thing we have to care for is the maintenance of the Persian state and of the Amin's position. We must support no demand which would run risk of compromising either.¹⁰⁴

The shah and his ministers also realized that there was no way out of the public unrest and disturbances except by approaching the ulama. The government unsuccessfully sent a representative to Iraq to convince Mirza Shirazi to withdraw the ban on tobacco. At the same time, the shah ordered his ministers to assemble a meeting with the prominent ulama of Tehran to find a solution. On December 19, 1891, the ulama of Tehran were invited to a meeting with the shah's ministers, which included Amin us-Sultan, the grand vizier, and Amin

¹⁰²Ibid., p. 71.

¹⁰³Ibid.

¹⁰⁴Nikki Keddie, Religion and Rebellion in Iran, p. 97.

ud-Daula.¹⁰⁵ The ulama who took part in the meeting included Shaykh Fadlullah Nuri, Aga Sayyid Mohammad Tabatabai, and Abdullah Bihbahani.¹⁰⁶ Except for Abdullah Bihbahani, the ulama supported the fatva. The unity of the ulama under the leadership of the sole marja-i taqlid, Mirza Shirazi, was a reason for unity of the opposition as a whole and its ultimate victory.

Mirza Hasan Ashtiani, the representative of Mirza Shirazi in Tehran, was absent from the first meeting with the shah's ministers; however, he participated in later meetings. The first meeting and subsequent meetings of a similar sort were not successful. The government promised to cancel the monopoly on the export of tobacco, but the ulama insisted on the cancellation of the whole monopoly and argued that it was not within their authority to end the ban because the fatva was from Shirazi and he should decide.¹⁰⁷ When the government failed to persuade the ulama to end their opposition to the concession, they decided to use force. The shah sent a message to Ashtiani informing him that either he should smoke publicly or leave Tehran.¹⁰⁸ Of course, he chose the latter alternative, which resulted in a show of support for Ashtiani from other ulama and the people. The use of force did not help the shah; it resulted in a more public determination to protest against the government. The people who had gathered around Ashtiani's house to show their support

¹⁰⁵Ibrahim Taymuri, Tahrim-i Tanbaku, p. 121.

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 127.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., p. 150.

for him moved toward the palace of Nasir ud-Din Shah "shouting religious slogans and threats against the shah."¹⁰⁹ Guards fired on the crowd and a number of people were killed.

After both negotiation and force failed to persuade the ulama to lift the ban on tobacco, the shah realized he had no choice. If he was to survive he had to cancel the Tobacco Concession which he did. Ashtiani then lifted the ban on the use of tobacco "and on January 26 (1892) the town crier announced the end of the ban. Ashtiani based his action on an earlier telegram from Shirazi saying smoking could resume once the concession was cancelled. With the resumption of smoking late in January, the mass protest against the Regie came to an end."¹¹⁰ It can be concluded that throughout the nineteenth century the power and influence of the ulama in Iran was on the increase and culminated during the successful Tobacco Concession protest of 1890-1892. Sir Frank Lascelles, the British minister in Iran, wrote on December 22, 1891:

No sooner . . . had the prohibition against smoking been issued by the Mullahs and faithfully observed by the people, than the shah and the Amin-us-sultan found themselves absolutely powerless to assert their authority and were compelled to the dictation of the Mullahs

I have been informed by persons long resident in Persia that they have been astonished at this assertion of power on the part of the mullahs, both as regards their opposition to the government and the implicit obedience which the people have yielded to their commands with regard to an article which is not forbidden by the religious law.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹Nikki Keddie, Religion and Rebellion in Iran, p. 104.

¹¹⁰Ibid., p. 107.

¹¹¹Ibid., p. 99.

During the course of the nineteenth century, the power and influence which the ulama enjoyed enabled them to influence the decisions and policies of the government and to become the de facto leaders of the nation. This is evident in the examples discussed throughout this chapter which included the second Russo-Persian War, the Reuter Concession, and the Tobacco Concession.

Several factors contributed to the magnitude of the ulama's power and influence during the nineteenth century and particularly during the protests against the Tobacco Concession. These include:

1. The attitudes of the Qajar rulers also contributed to the increase in the influence and power of the ulama during the nineteenth century. As indicated earlier, the kings like Fath Ali Shah tried to show their respect for the ulama and establish themselves as religious persons. They honored the views and judgement of the ulama and tried to avoid confrontation with them. As a result, involvement of the ulama in political activities increased as did their influence on government policy making. On the other hand, kings like Mohammad Shah tried to limit the power and influence of the ulama and adopted a policy of confrontation with the ulama. Since the Qajar dynasty was unpopular and weak both economically and militarily, any attempt to confront the popular ulama who had mass appeal was suicidal. Mohammad Shah failed to prevent the ulama from exercising their power; and when Nasir ud-Din Shah tried to confront the ulama during the Tobacco Protests, he failed and was forced by the ulama to retreat and, in order to save his throne, cancel the concession.

2. Military interference by foreign powers during the first part of the nineteenth century, for example during the second Russo-Persian War, resulted in more involvement of the ulama in political affairs and an increase in their popularity. Also, the appearance in Iran of western products and culture and western concession hunting, in the case of the Tobacco Concession, increased the ulama's influence and power in Iran.

3. The unity and effective leadership of the ulama. Starting in second half of the nineteenth century, Shaykh Murtada Ansari and then Mirza Hasan Shirazi became the sole marja-i taqlid in Iran. This prevented any major discord among the high ranking ulama. The resulting unity and the effective leadership of Mirza Hasan Shirazi and other ulama (including Aga Najafi, Falasiri, Shaykh Fadlullah Nuri, and Mirza Hasan Ashtiani) was instrumental in the victory of the people against the Tobacco Concession.

CHAPTER III

THE CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION - PART I

The gradual increase in the power and involvement of the ulama in state affairs during the nineteenth century did not result in an immediate move by the ulama against the Qajar dynasty and the absolute rule of the monarch. On the other hand, the Tobacco Protest was the beginning of the end of absolute rule by the Qajar dynasty and its replacement by a new political system called the Constitutional Monarchy. In this chapter the modernization of Iran during the nineteenth century, Anglo-Russian rivalry following the Tobacco Protests, and the impact these two forces had on Iranian political life will be examined.

In Chapter II, it was shown how the opposition, under the leadership of the ulama, was able to force the monarch to retreat and to reluctantly cancel the Tobacco Concession. This unprecedented nationwide show of unity and power by the opposition and the ulama did not long continue after the victory against the shah.

Although some opposition groups, especially those outside the country such as the Pan-Islamic Sayyid Jamal ud-Din Asadabadi (Afghani), advocated the continuation of the protest and opposition until the downfall of the shah,¹ the ulama stopped their opposition short of overthrowing the monarch after their victory in the Tobacco Concession struggle. There were several factors contributing to the

¹Nikki Keddie, Religion and Rebellion in Iran, p. 126.

behavior of the ulama. First, after cancelling the concession, Nasir ud-Din Shah, in a meeting with the high-ranking ulama, expressed regret for ignoring the ulama and, after praising them and showing them respect, promised never to give any more concessions and to consult them on all important matters.² Also, the shah and his men tried to influence the ulama by contributing money and giving them titles and allowances.³ Second, immediately after the repeal of the Tobacco Concession, the ulama (whose status and influence were now felt even more) started to exploit the fruit of their victory; and since there was no immediate cause for their cooperation, each one went his own way. Thus, an atmosphere of discord prevailed among the higher levels of the ulama. This discord was further enhanced when Mirza Hasan Shirazi, whose leadership was one of the main causes of the unity of the ulama against the concession, passed away in February of 1895. Shortly after his death, some of the ulama made an attempt to replace him but were not successful. For example, in Tehran "both Shaykh Fadlullah Nuri and Mirza Ashtiani claimed alamiyat (the quality of being most learned) but met with no positive response."⁴ Third, the main reason for the opposition and protest of the ulama against the shah was the grant of the Tobacco Concession to a foreign company. This was discussed in detail in Chapter II. The main objective of the opposition was to oppose the growth of foreign influence in Iran symbolized by the Tobacco Concession. As a result,

²Ibrahim Taymuri, Tahrim-i Tanbaku, p. 196.

³Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906, pp. 218-19.

⁴Ibid.

when the ulama were able to force the shah to cancel the concession they were satisfied with their effort and accomplishment and saw no compelling reason to continue the protests against the monarch.

Last, since the Tobacco Protest was the first nationwide opposition of its kind against a monarch and since the protest and the accomplishments were so spontaneous and sudden, the ulama did not know what to demand next. Even if they had really wanted to change the monarchy and system of government, they did not have any clear plan or idea for replacing the monarchy. More fundamental than that, most ulama did not oppose the monarchy itself; they opposed oppression and misuse of power by the kings. Since they were able, at least temporarily, to curtail the behavior of the shah, they saw no reason to continue their opposition to the monarchy and the throne of Nasir ud-Din Shah.

The ulama did not immediately exploit the power they had gained during the Tobacco Protest to seriously weaken the Qajar dynasty, "yet however, illusory the immediate victory of the anti-concession movement proved to be, its results were far-reaching. Iranians saw for the first time that it was possible to win against the shah and foreign interests."⁵ As Hamid Algar states, ". . . when Russian economic influence came to threaten the independence of Iran, the example of the agitation against the Tobacco Concession was not forgotten. Appeals in religious terms expressed by religious leaders brought about the movement against Qajar monarchy known as the

⁵Nikki Keddie, Religion and Rebellion in Iran, p. 131.

Constitutional Revolution. The events of January 1892 foreshadowed this mass agitation."⁶

In 1896 Nasir ud-Din Shah was assassinated by Mirza Reza Kermani who was one of the followers of Sayyid Jamal ud-Din Asadabadi. In June 1896, the crown prince, Muzaffar ud-Din Mirza, who had a weaker personality, replaced him and became the fifth king of the Qajar dynasty. Otherwise, there was no significant change in the internal and external aspects of the Iranian political life. Internally, the struggle between the state and the ulama continued, but, to an extent, the death of Mirza Hasan Shirazi ended the unity of the ulama. Externally, the British and Russians remained the main contenders in the fight over Iran; however, as the end of the nineteenth century approached, Germany also gradually made an attempt to gain political and economic influence in Iran.⁷ By the turn of the nineteenth century and into the beginning of the twentieth century, the cultural and industrial impact of the west on Iran became more visible and was a determining factor in the struggle of the opposition, under the leadership of the ulama, for change and reform. The twentieth century started with an increase in the influence of the ulama in Iranian political life. But starting late in the first decade and continuing to the second decade of the twentieth century, there was a gradual decline in the ulama's role and influence in Iranian politics. The factors which contributed to

⁶Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906, p. 221.

⁷Bradford Martin, German-Persian Diplomatic Relations 1873-1912, pp. 63-64.

the rise and fall of the ulama's influence were similar to those present during the period of the Tobacco Protest. These included the behavior of the kings and their advisors, foreign influence, the ideological diversity of the ulama, and the existence or non-existence of an effective and charismatic leadership.

The Constitutional Revolution of 1906 resulted from a continuation of efforts which reformers had been making in Iran for more than a century. Of course, the movement for social, political, and economic reform was greatly influenced by the outside world.

From the fifteenth to the nineteenth century, Europe witnessed periods of renaissance, enlightenment, and industrial revolution. Also during this time there was a concerted effort by the intellectuals, the scholars, the religious leaders, and the politicians to question the existing order, absolute authority and the power of the church and the monarch. During this period Europe introduced numerous important reforms, such as the supremacy of law and the guarantee of people's freedom and liberties. The advocates of these reforms included Lock, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Alfieri, and Tocqueville. Changes taking place in Europe resulted in two major developments--the British Industrial Revolution and the French Political Revolution--which had implications far beyond their immediate boundaries. In describing these events, E. J. Hobsbawn states:

If the economy of the nineteenth century world was formed mainly under the influence of the British Industrial Revolution, its politics and ideology were formed mainly by the French. Britain provided the model for its railways and factories, the economic explosive which cracked open the traditional economic and social structures of the non-

European world; but France made its revolutions and gave them their ideas, to the point where a tricolour of some kind became the emblem of virtually every emerging nation, and European (or indeed world) politics between 1789-1917 were largely the struggle for and against the principles of 1789 or the even more incendiary ones of 1793. France provided the vocabulary and the issue of liberal and radical democratic politics for most of the world. France provided the first great example, the concept and the vocabulary of nationalism. France provided the codes of law, the model of scientific and technical organization, the metric system of measurement, for most countries. The ideology of the modern world first penetrated the ancient civilizations which hitherto resisted European ideas through French influence. This was the work of the French Revolution.⁸

Therefore, while the British Industrial Revolution resulted in pressure on other nations for economic reform, modernization, and change, the French Revolution weakened the foundations of absolute monarchy and spread the desire for liberty and freedom around the world.⁹

The Modernization Process in Nineteenth Century Iran

The major impact of western modernization, political reforms, and changes was not felt in Iran until the turn of the nineteenth century when the isolation of Iran was ended "primarily through the rivalry of the great powers in Asia."¹⁰ As the European powers, including Russia, Britain, and France, fought for control of Iran, Iran's contact with the west increased. The influence of the west on

⁸E. J. Hobsbawn, The Age of Revolution 1789-1848 (New York: New American Library, 1962), pp. 74-75.

⁹Hasan Ashkuri, Negahi Be Tarikh-i Sad Saleh Akhir-i Iran (Gum: Nashr Rooh, 1979), pp. 6-10.

¹⁰Ann. S. Lambton, "The Impact of the West on Persia," International Affairs, 33, (1957), pp. 15-16.

Iran was so great that some of the Iranian leaders realized the survival of Iran as a sovereign nation depended upon transformation of Iran from a primitive society into a modern one. The first Iranian leader to become an advocate of modernization was Crown Prince, Abbas Mirza (1788-1833).¹¹ During the first three decades of the nineteenth century, he was the governor of the northern province of Azerbaijan which put him in immediate contact with the Russians. In 1813 and 1828 the Iranian army, under the command of the Crown Prince Mirza, fought two wars with the Russians. The primitive and unorganized Iranian Army was no match for the more modern Russian Army; hence, Iran lost a great amount of pride and territory. "Abbas Mirza's humiliating defeat instilled in him a passion, an obsession, for modernization in Persia."¹² Abbas Mirza came to the realization "that the growth of modern technology in war and other aspects of life had made Europe superior to Iran, and that if Iran were to continue to exist, measures would have to be taken in line with modernization."¹³

To pursue his policy of modernization, in 1811 and 1815 Abbas Mirza sent several students to Europe "for training and thus opened the gates to the world of new ideas and to change which lay

¹¹Abdul-Hadi Hairi, Shiism and Constitutionalism in Iran, p. 11.

¹²William R. Polk, Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East. The Nineteenth Century (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 120.

¹³Abdul-Hadi Hairi, Shiism and Constitutionalism in Iran, p. 11.

beyond."¹⁴ He also hired military advisors from France and England¹⁵ and, among other things, introduced the nizam-i jadid (modern army) and conscription.¹⁶

The increased contact with the west resulted in a better understanding of modernization and change in Europe and also in more effort by some of the Iranian leaders for reform in Iran. This can be seen in the writings of Mirza Salih who was the most distinguished of the first group of students of Europe. In his memoirs, written between 1815 and 1819, he writes, among other things, about the following subjects: "British political institutions, the administration of justice in London, libraries, orphanages, schools of medicine, vaccination, the American War of Independence, the 1789 French Revolution, and so on."¹⁷ Mirza Salih's interest was not just in describing progress in Europe; he was interested also in determining why it took place. He writes that "my intention in discussing on English history . . . is not to tell about the lines of kings, but about the way by which this country has progressed."¹⁸ Mirza Saleh was the first Persian to bring the idea of

¹⁴William R. Polk, Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East, The Nineteenth Century, p. 120.

¹⁵Abdul-Hadi Hairi, p. 11.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 12.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸William R. Polk, Beginning of Modernization in the Middle East, the Nineteenth Century, p. 123.

constitutionalism to Iran.¹⁹ "Freedom of speech, freedom of election, the sovereignty of parliament and other aspects of the British constitutional system (which he discussed were). . . hitherto unknown in Iran."²⁰

Although there was some positive response among some government officials and scholars, the process of modernization was slow at best. There were several reasons for the lack of acceptance of the reforms by the people and the slow progress of modernization. Some of these reasons are: (1) The nature of the foreign impact. "The mortification and staggering burden of reparations brought by the Treaty of Turkamanchai were severe blows to the acceptance of new ideas and to general progress. Contrary to the earlier contacts of Europe in Persia, . . . which contained at least some elements of good will, all now bore an imperialistic aspect to which Persian reaction was hostile or wary at best."²¹ (2) At the time internal conditions were not suited for rapid progress and modernization. Max Weber suggests the following conditions on which the modern state is based:

(1) monopolization of the means of domination and administration based on: (a) the creation of a centrally directed and permanent system of taxation; (b) the creation of a centrally directed and permanent military force in the hand of a central governmental authority; (2) monopolization of legal enactments and the legitimate use of force by the central authority; and (3) the organization of

¹⁹Abdul-Hadi Hairi, "European and Asian Influences on the Persian Revolution of 1906," Asian Affairs, (June 1975), p. 156.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹William Polk, Beginning of Modernization in the Middle East. The Nineteenth Century, p. 124.

a rationally organized officialdom, whose exercise of administrative functions is dependent upon the central authority.²²

These conditions did not exist in nineteenth-century Iran. As indicated in Chapters I and II, the king had absolute power and his word was the law of the land. An inefficient administration with corrupt officials existed. The central government was weak, and no centralized, unified, and modern army was in place. Also the judicial system was divided into two systems--one administered by the government and one by the ulama based on the Islamic law.

It is clear that the conditions in nineteenth-century Iran were unfavorable for any major reforms modeled after those of the Europeans. The first attempts of the Iranian reformers, such as Crown Prince Abbas Mirza, encountered opposition from various directions. For example, his plans to modernize the army, to build a new education system, and to reform administrative processes met opposition at home where, "besides sixty rival brothers, he faced a father who preferred more diamonds and wives to a modern army."²³ The ulama's opposition to his modernization plans was also strong. The religious leaders, for example, opposed his introduction of reform in the armed forces on the ground that "his innovation was un-Islamic, particularly in its use of Western-style uniforms."²⁴

²²Abdul-Hadi Hairi, Shiism and Constitutionalism in Iran, p. 13.

²³William Polk, Beginning of Modernization in the Middle East, the Nineteenth Century, p. 120.

²⁴Nikki Keddie, Roots of Revolution, p. 30.

Although the opposition to reform was considerable and the process of modernization was very slow at best, the idea of reform and modernization did not die. The second major attempt at modernization in Iran was undertaken by the first Nasir ud-Din Shah's grand vizier, Amir Kabir (1848-1851). Before becoming the chief minister, Amir Kabir had taken official trips to Russia and Turkey and had frequent contact with western visitors in Iran.²⁵ Through the combination of his association with the western visitors in Iran and his trips abroad, especially to the Ottoman Empire, Amir Kabir became aware of the progress taking place in Europe and was deeply interested in and committed to reform in Iran. When in 1848 he became the chief minister of Nasir ud-Din Shah, he attempted to implement extensive reforms. Among other things, he sought to reform the judicial systems and the administrative systems and to promote the effective control of the state all over Iran.²⁶ He also

. . . revived the standing army, and established fifteen factories to supply this army and to cut foreign imports: factories for the production of cannons, light arms, uniforms, epaulets and insignias, woolens, cloths, . . . paper, cast iron, lead, copper and sugar. He founded the country's first official newspaper . . . And most important of all, he built the country's first secular high school, the Dar ul-Fonun (Abode of Learning).²⁷

²⁵William Polk, Beginning of Modernization in the Middle East, the Nineteenth Century, p. 127.

²⁶Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906, pp. 128-129.

²⁷Ervand Abrahamian, Iran, Between Two Revolutions, p. 54.

The dismissal and murder of Amir Kabir by Nasir ud-Din Shah in 1851 ended his efforts but the modernization programs continued at a slower pace.

The next major attempt of modernization in Iran was undertaken by Mirza Huseyn Khan Sipahsalar (1826-1881) when he became Nasir ud-Din Shah's grand vizier in 1870. Like most other reformers, Sipahsalar had extensive contact with foreign nationals. After receiving his education abroad, he became Iran's diplomatic representative in Bombay at age 23.²⁸ Before becoming the shah's chief minister, he spent most of his time as an Iranian representative in Russia and Turkey.²⁹ Sipahsalar became aware of and was influenced by the progress in Europe, particularly in Turkey, through his education in France and his long years of residence in India, Russia, and Turkey. He introduced several proposals for reform in the administrative, military, judicial, and economic areas.³⁰

Though his reform plans had some impact on Iran's political life, they did not result in any major breakthrough in modernization in Iran. The reasons for his failure include (1) the lack of resources in terms of money and manpower, (2) "the inadequate executive power to enforce the measures,"³¹ (3) "Mirza Huseyn Khan

²⁸William Polk, Beginning of Modernization in the Middle East. The Nineteenth Century, p. 129.

²⁹Ibid., p. 129.

³⁰Ibid., p. 131.

³¹Guity Nashat, The Origins of Modern Reform in Iran, 1870-80 (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1982), p. 162.

(Sipahsalar) had been away from Iran for so many years (twenty-seven) that he could no longer perceive the realities of Iranian society and its actual needs,"³² and (4) as was discussed in Chapter II, bribes caused him to advise Nasir ud-Din Shah to sign the Reuter concession giving the exclusive control of the main sources of the Iranian economy to a foreign company. Opposition to the Reuter concession resulted in the downfall of Sipahsalar. As Algar states:

The Sipahsalar had acquired a belief in the salubrity of European influence on Asiatic states during his residence in Istanbul. There he had noted the pressure exerted by Britain and France on the Ottoman government to bring about reform and reported favorably of it to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tehran, . . . For Iran too, Mirza Huseyn Khan would have welcomed, and the acquisition of economic interests would clearly have provided the soundest basis for political influence. The Reuter concession, however, proved less effective in obtaining British support for Iranian reform than in enriching Mirza Huseyn Khan: he is reputed to have received more than £50,000 in bribes at various stages of the negotiations with Reuter.³³

Although the attempts of Abbas Mirza, Amir Kabir, and Sipahsalar to modernize Iran ended in relative failure, modernization and reform was not kept to a standstill, because of first, political economic and social changes which started several centuries ago in Europe was continuing in full speed, and secondly, geographic location of Iran had already forced Iran out of isolation and had to deal with progressive movements around the world. These included "constitutional, nationalist, and independence movements (which) reached their

³²Ibid., p. 162.

³³Hamid Algar, Mirza Malkum Khan. A Study in the History of Iranian Modernism (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), p. 114.

height in Europe during the second half of the nineteenth century."³⁴

Abdul-Hadi Hairi summarized the developments in Europe and elsewhere as follows:

In Great Britain, a number of Reform Acts were passed during this period. Italy, after a series of revolts, became united under a monarchy in 1870. As a result of three wars fought between the years 1864 and 1871, four constitutional states came into being: Denmark in 1864, Austria and Hungary in 1869, Germany in 1871, and the Third Republic of France in 1875. In the following years, nationalist movements appeared in the Balkan states, and as a result of the war between Ottoman Turkey and Russia in 1878, Serbia and Rumania were born. In 1876 the Turkish Liberal politician, Midhat Pasha, drafted a constitution and gained Abdul-Hamid II's approval. . .

A constitutional law was drawn up in 1882, after the Urabi revolt, and abrogated the next year. In 1883 another constitution was introduced and functioned under British rule until the First World War. In India there was a series of constitutional developments from the 1850's onwards.³⁵

During the second half of the nineteenth century, there were also constitutional changes and reforms in countries such as Japan, China, and Russia.³⁶

The evidence shows that through increasing contact with the outside world, Iranian nationals became aware of these developments and changes. This was particularly so with respect to the intellectuals.³⁷ In the second half of the century, they "made increasing contact with Europe through diplomacy, commerce, travel,

³⁴Abdul-Hadi Hairi, "European and Asian Influence on the Persian Revolution of 1906," p. 158.

³⁵Ibid., pp. 158-159.

³⁶Ibid., pp. 158-161.

³⁷Ann S. Lambton, "The Impact of the West on Persia," p. 16.

and education."³⁸ Some of those who were influenced by the developments in Europe and elsewhere tried, through their official positions, to introduce reforms similar to those in Europe. One, for example, was Sipahsalar. As was mentioned before, he lived outside of Iran for more than two decades before he became the chief minister of Nasir ud-Din Shah. From 1858 to 1870 he lived in Istanbul. Since Turkey was a Muslim nation and, at the time, was undergoing changes similar to those initiated in the rest of Europe, it was of particular interest to Iranian reformers such as Sipahsalar. Before becoming the chief minister, Sipahsalar wrote many letters from Turkey to Iranian officials. His letters to the Iranians contained many ". . . discussions on political developments in Europe. The establishment of a House of Representatives, and the introduction of constitutional government in Turkey. He encouraged the Persians to adopt the Turkish example."³⁹

During the development of constitutionalism in Egypt a community of Iranians which was small but "very active and vigorous . . . socially, commercially, and intellectually"⁴⁰ existed there. They published several Persian newspapers such as Hikmat (1892), Surayya (1898), Parvarish (1900),⁴¹ and Chihrinima (1904).⁴² "These

³⁸Ibid., pp. 16-17.

³⁹Abdul-Hadi Hairi, "European and Asian Influence on the Persian Revolution of 1906," p. 158.

⁴⁰Mohammed Yadegari, "The Iranian Settlement in Egypt as Seen Through the Pages of the Community Paper 'Chihrinima' (1904-1906)," Middle Eastern Studies, May 1960, p. 99.

⁴¹Abdul-Hadi Hairi, "European and Asian Influence on the Persian Revolution of 1906," p. 159.

newspapers were so popular and influential that they were banned by the Persian government."⁴³

Through travel, foreign residence, and newspaper reading, the Iranians were informed of constitutional developments and other reforms in countries such as India, Japan, and China.⁴⁴

One constitutional revolution which had a more immediate impact and acted as a motivation for the Iranian Constitutional Revolution was the Russian Constitutional Revolution of 1905. Since Russia is located north of Iran and, at the time, had an economy which was more modern than that of Iran, many Iranian workers migrated there for better job opportunities. "In the year 1905 alone, when Russian laborers were mobilized for service in the Russo-Japanese War, these migrants numbered sixty-two thousand."⁴⁵ These migrant workers, whose numbers reached almost two hundred thousand by 1910, brought back revolutionary ideas from Russia to Iran.⁴⁶ Ivan Spector states:

In 1905 an organization of Iranian revolutionaries was created in Tiflis. The result was that when these Iranian migratory laborers returned to their homeland, they took with them revolutionary ideas, printed propaganda, and weapons to incite strikes and disturbances there. It should occasion no surprise, therefore, that the Revolution

⁴²Mohammed Yadegari, "The Iranian Settlement in Egypt as Seen Through the Pages of the Community Paper 'Chihrinima' (1904-1906)," p. 98.

⁴³Abdul-Hadi Hairi, p. 159.

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 158-161.

⁴⁵Ivan Spector, The First Russian Revolution. Its Impact on Asia (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1962), p. 39.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 39.

of 1905 in Iran followed close on the heels of that in Russia.⁴⁷

After comparing the different aspects of the Russian Constitutional Revolution of 1905 and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution, Ivan Spector argues that the impact of the former on the latter was so great that, with few exceptions, we can conclude that the Persian Constitutional Revolution was modeled after the Russian Constitutional Revolution of 1905.⁴⁸

By looking at the roots of modernization and reforms in Iran and by examining the changes and modernization movements in Europe and Asia, we can see that the constitutional movement in Iran, which was the culmination of modernization attempts in the nineteenth century, was greatly influenced by the events outside the country. Actually we can conclude that:

. . . the Persian Constitutional Revolution of 1906 was, in part, an extension of a widespread constitutional development then taking place in many parts of the world. Because of Persia's proximity to the Revolutionary nations of Ottoman Turkey and Russia, and because of the Persians' relations with Egypt and India and their awareness of happenings in Japan and China the attempt to bring about a new regime in Persia was a logical event at that time.⁴⁹

The developments in the west also created a new breed of secular intellectuals. "Western ideas, especially the French Enlightenment convinced them that history was neither the revelation of God's will, as the 'ulama' believed, nor the cyclic rise and fall of dynasties,

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 40-47.

⁴⁹Abdul-Hadi Hairi, "European and Asian Influence on the Persian Revolution of 1906," p. 162.

as the court chroniclers endlessly described, but rather the continual march of human progress."⁵⁰ These intellectuals became aware of developments in Europe and elsewhere by their long residence outside Iran in countries such as Russia, Turkey, Britain, and France. They began to influence Iranian politics in the second half of the nineteenth century. In their writings, they criticized the existing order in Iran and blamed the backward conditions there on the tyrannical monarch and involvement of the ulama in Iranian politics. Their remedy was to institute a secular constitutional government modeled after the European governments.

One such Iranian intellectual was Akhund-Zaddah (1812-1878) who was born into a Persian family and grew up in Russia.⁵¹ Akhund-Zaddah, as a liberal secularist, was strongly opposed to religion, particularly Islam.⁵² He was the first Muslim who understood and discussed the conflict between Islam and democratic constitutionalism.⁵³ By rejecting religion in general and Islam in particular and by strongly criticizing "inequality between man and women, Muslim and non-Muslim and also the penal law in Islam, he rejected the attempt of some Iranians, such as Mustashar al-Dawlah, to "reconcile Islam with modernism."⁵⁴

⁵⁰Ervand Abrahamian, Iran, Between Two Revolutions, p. 61.

⁵¹Abdul-Hadi Hairi, Shiism and Constitutionalism in Iran, p. 25.

⁵²Ibid., pp. 26-28.

⁵³Ibid., p. 25.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 27.

Akhund-Zaddah was a committed secularist and advocate of western ideas. Addressing the Iranian people, he wrote in 1863, "Oh! Iranians! If you could realize the advantage of liberty and human rights, you would have never tolerated slavery and humility; you would have studied the science, have set up societies, have united your powers, and have decided to save yourself from the tyranny of the despot."⁵⁵

Akhund-Zaddah was one of the first Iranian intellectuals who, through his long residence in Russia, became aware of developments in the West. He was an advocate of secularism and a constitutional government which is not originated from the top "but rather made by the people themselves."⁵⁶

Another individual who advocated constitutionalism in Iran was Talebov (1834-1913). Like Akhund-Zaddah, Talebov spent most of his life in Russia. By witnessing the reforms in Russia and by closely following the process of modernization in Europe, he first exposed the backwardness of the Iranian society and the lawlessness of the despotic rule of the shahs in Iran in his writings for Iranian audiences.⁵⁷ He described the advantages of modernization and modern systems of government in Europe and advocated similar reforms for Iranian society.⁵⁸ Noting that Talebov's writings "were widely

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 26.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Ali Akbar Valaiati, Moghademeh-i Fekri Nehzateh-i Mashrotiat, p. 64.

⁵⁸Ibid., pp. 65-71.

read in Persia and carried considerable influence among the intelligentsia," M. F. Farmayan states that:

These writings varied in content and in range. In "Ketab-e Ahmid" (1894), noticeably derivative of Rousseau's Emile, Talebov discoursed on education, law, religion, history, and European democracy. In "Masalek al-Mohsenin" (1904) and "Masael al-Hayat" (1905), he devoted his attention to nature, philosophy, and social progress. Talebov's works, popular as they were, certainly increased the flow of western ideas into Persia.⁵⁹

There were other individuals whose writings or actions contributed to the flow of western ideas to Iran. Some of these were Mostashar od-Dowleh (d. 1895), Mirza Aga Khan Kermani (1852-1896), Majd Al-Mulk (1809-1880), and Malkam Khan (1833-1908). Here, we will discuss one more of these reformers, Malkum Khan, who was more controversial and more talked about.

Similar to some other advocates of reforms in Iran, Malkum Khan became aware of the developments in Europe through his education and long residence there. He was only eighteen years of age when he finished his education in France,⁶⁰ and "out of sixty years of his life, less than a decade was spent in Iran and that not continuously."⁶¹ During his stay abroad, he held government positions. For example he was a member of the Persian Embassy in

⁵⁹William Polk, Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East, p. 142.

⁶⁰Hamid Algar, Mirza Malkum Khan: A Study in the History of Iranian Modernism, p. 18.

⁶¹Ibid.

Paris in the 1850s, and starting in 1874 he was the chief of the Persian legation in London for sixteen years.⁶²

Several times, his controversial nature raised the wrath of the shah against him. One such time was when he introduced free masonry into Iran in the late 1850s. In 1862 Nasir ud-Din Shah turned against the organization and sent him into exile to Turkey.⁶³ Another time (in 1890) Nasir ud-Din Shah turned against Malkum as the result of the lottery concession which was discussed in Chapter II.

Malkum Khan wrote on many different political, social, and economic issues, including taxation, absolute monarchy, freedom, equality, the cabinet system, the provincial division of the Persian territory, the judiciary, secular education, banking, the modern Army, national unity, the national consultative assembly, western technology and civilization, the reform of the Arabic alphabet, and the inefficiency of the traditional way of life in the modern age.⁶⁴ Though he frequently supported the role of Islam and the ulama and acknowledged their significance in Iranian society, Hamid Algar (who has done extensive research on Malkum Khan) maintains that, "what should be remarked in connection with Malkum's attitudes, is that his facile identification of westernization with the spirit and dictates

⁶²William Polk, Beginning of Modernization in the Middle East, p. 136.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Abdul-Hadi Hairi, Shiism and Constitutionalism in Iran, p. 39.

of Islam was a purely tactical device, based neither on detailed argumentation nor upon personal conviction."⁶⁵

It can be concluded that Malkum's remedy for Iran was not just the acceptance of some aspects of western modernization but the complete acceptance of the totality of westernization without any modification. "The survival of Persia," he wrote, "depends on the adoption of western civilization."⁶⁶ Another time, in rejecting any attempt to modernize independently or borrow selectively, Malkum writes,

If you wish to discover the path of progress by your own intelligence, then we will have to wait for three thousand years. The Europeans have discovered the path of progress and the principles of order [nazam - a word much beloved by Malkum] in the course of three thousand years, just as they have discovered the telegraph, and they have reduced them to one well-defined law. Just as we can introduce the telegraph from Europe and set it up in Tehran without any difficulty, so too we can adapt their principles of ordering [the affairs of state].⁶⁷

Anglo-Russian Rivalry in the Early Twentieth Century Iran

Another side of the foreign impact on Iran during this period was the imperialistic quest of European powers for economic, political, and military dominance over Iran. In Chapter I, the attempts by the major European powers to control Iran was discussed. As was indicated there, though countries such as France and Germany

⁶⁵Hamid Algar, Mirza Malkum Khan: A Study of the History of Iranian Modernism, pp. 14-15.

⁶⁶William Polk, Beginning of Modernization in the Middle East, p. 138.

⁶⁷Hamid Algar, Mirza Malkum Khan. A Study of the History of Iranian Modernism, p. 17.

made sporadic attempts to influence Iran, the dominant contenders for economic and political influence were Great Britain and Russia. This Anglo-Russian rivalry continued into the twentieth century with Russia gaining the upper hand. As N. Keddie observed:

The first years of the twentieth century saw the Iranian government complete two large Russian loans and a new customs and commercial agreement with Russia. Their combined terms plus the compliance of the Prime Minister Amin us-Sultan toward the Russians made the Iranian government at this time a virtual tool in Russian hand.⁶⁸

Toward the middle of the first decade of the twentieth century, a dramatic change in the relations between Britain and Russia began to emerge. Several new developments forced the two rivals to change their attitudes. For the first time in their age-old rivalry, Russia and Britain decided to cooperate for their mutual interest. In advocating a policy of understanding and cooperation with Russia, Edward Grey (who was then the foreign secretary of Britain) contended that:

Russian advances toward the Indian frontier were the most sensitive and dangerous point. If we were to get out of the old, bad rut in which we had so often come to the verge of war with Russia, we had to work for a definite agreement. Russia was the ally of France; we could not pursue at one and the same time a policy of agreement with France and a policy of counter-alliances against Russia. Nor was there any third country with interests in the region of the Indian frontier with whom we could concert a policy to control Russian advance. An agreement with Russia was the natural complement of the agreement with France; it was also the only alternative to the old policy

⁶⁸Nikki Keddie, "Iranian Politics 1900-1905: Background to Revolution," Middle Eastern Studies, January 1969, pp. 3-4.

of drift, with its continual complaints, bickerings, and dangerous friction.⁶⁹

Russian policymakers were also forced to adopt a new approach toward Britain as a consequence of the Russo-Japanese war and "internal strife."⁷⁰

But most of all, it was the new aggressive quest of Germany for political and economic influence in Iran and other middle-eastern countries which forced the two old rivals to reconsider their policies concerning Persia.⁷¹ The British ambassador at Constantinople, Sr. Nicholas O'Connor warned Grey that "it appears to me very probable that if Great Britain and Russia do not very soon come to an agreement with regard to their respective interests in Persia, they may find themselves confronted then with Germany very much as did France in Morocco."⁷²

On August 31, 1907, the Anglo-Russian rivalry in Persia officially ended. After fifteen months of negotiations without either consulting or informing Iran, Britain and Russia signed an agreement on August 31, 1907. They divided Iran into three spheres of influence with northern and central Iran in the Russian sphere, southeast Iran in the British sphere, and an area between the neutral

⁶⁹Thomas Boyd, "Anglo-Russian Colonial Relations 1907-1914," unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Tennessee, 1973, p. 15.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Rouhollah Ramazani, The Foreign Policy of Iran, 1500-1941, p. 89.

⁷²Thomas Boyd, "Anglo-Russian Colonial Relations 1907-1917," unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Tennessee, 1973, p. 24.

sphere.⁷³ There followed even more direct involvement and interference by Britain and Russia in Iranian affairs. For the next fifteen years, Britain and Russia often imposed their wills upon the Iranian government through their military strength.

The Russians who had opposed the constitutional revolution in Iran, intervened in favor of Mohammed Shah, and literally destroyed the first Majlis (Parliament). "On June 23, 1908, . . . the Russian officers gave the order to fire on the buildings (Parliament)." In the process, many of the Parliament members were killed and wounded.⁷⁴ In appreciation for the accomplishment of the Russian officers, Mohammed Shah appointed Liakhoff as the military governor of Tehran. "He practically ruled the capital until the 'Nationalist Victory' of July 1909."⁷⁵ Russia also caused the overthrow of the second Majlis by (1) trying to impose its will over the Parliament and (2) militarily supporting the ex-shah's quest for power after his defeat by the Constitutionalists in 1909.⁷⁶ Though the Constitutionalists were able to defeat the ex-shah and to further influence the events in Iran by the end of 1912, thousands of Russian troops entered Iran and forced their demands upon the Iranian government.⁷⁸ With British cooperation, a government was installed in Tehran and, by this time, Iran was practically under their

⁷³Rouhollah Ramazani, The Foreign Policy of Iran 1500-1041, pp. 92-93.

⁷⁴Ibid., pp. 96-97.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 99.

control.⁷⁷ Ramazani summarizes some of the other Russian actions in Iran as follows:

Russia meanwhile was acting like a predatory power in Iran. On March 29, 1912, Russian troops bombarded the holy shrine of Imam Riza at Mashhad . . . The wanton bombardment was accompanied by looting. The treasury containing the rich gifts of monarchs and other pilgrims was removed to the Russian Bank. Later it was restored with some of its contents missing. . . .

While the Majlis was being destroyed and shortly thereafter, Russian troops in Iran began unrestrained shootings, hangings, and tortures. Men were blown from cannons, and women and children were butchered in the streets. The Russians were determined to kill off the constitutionalists. . . .

The city of Tabriz bore the brunt of Russian atrocities. The Russians massacred the inhabitants of the city in late December 1911 after a fight between them and the Iranian police had developed . . . After shattering the resistance of the constitutionalists, the Russian military governor hoisted Russian flags over the government buildings at Tabriz.⁷⁸

The direct involvement of Russia in Iran continued at about the same pace until the Communist Revolution in Russia in 1917 after which two important diplomatic gestures were made to Iran by the new rulers of Russia. These were (1) the opening of negotiations for the withdrawal of Russian troops from Iran, and (2) the denunciation of the Anglo-Russian agreement of 1907 by Trotsky.

While Britain was cooperating with the Russians in Iran and was aware of what the Russians were doing there, they were also involved in their own activities in Iran. For example, Britain continued her presence in southern Iran after one of her subjects, William Knox D'Arcy, was granted "a concession for oil in all Iran except the five

⁷⁷Ibid., pp. 99-104.

⁷⁸Ibid., pp. 104-106.

northern provinces. . ."⁷⁹ Since the central government did not have full control over all Iranian territory at the time, the British government entered negotiations with some of the tribal leaders, including the Arabs⁸⁰ and Bakhtiyaris,⁸¹ to protect their subjects and the operation of the oil company. The British presence grew rapidly, and at the start of World War I "British troops were stationed in neutral zone regions and the British exercised a control in the south comparable to that held by Russia in the north."⁸²

Therefore, we can conclude that the opening of the nineteenth century brought the beginning of the end of Iranian isolation from the rest of the world, particularly the West. Prince Abbas Mirza was one of the first Iranians who felt that Iranian's survival as a sovereign nation was dependent on her acquisition of modern technology and reforms in the areas of education, the economy, and the military among others. With his help several individuals were sent to Europe for western education. This facilitated the introduction of western culture into Iran. In the following years many Iranians, including Amir Kabir, Sipah Salar, and Malkum Khan, who had either extensive foreign education or contacts tried to introduce reforms in Iranian's economic, political, and social systems which opened the way for more western influence in Iran.

⁷⁹Nikki Keddie, Roots of Revolution, p. 78.

⁸⁰Gene Garthwaite, "The Bakhtiyari Khans, The Government of Iran, and the British, 1846-1915," International Journal of Middle East Studies, January 1972, p. 36.

⁸¹Ibid., pp. 25-41.

⁸²Nikki Keddie, p. 78.

At the same time developments outside Iran, such as the Russian Constitutional Revolution of 1905 and the ever-increasing Anglo-Russian interference in Iranian political and economic affairs, created tension, discontent, and desire for change. As we shall see in the next chapter, these foreign developments and instances of interference in Iran contributed to the ulama's involvement in the Iranian political process.

CHAPTER IV

THE CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION - PART II

In the previous chapter we discussed how external factors, either directly or indirectly, influenced Iranian political life. Now we will examine how external factors, in combination with internal factors, contributed to the rise or fall of the power and influence of the ulama in Iranian politics during this period.

As was indicated in Chapter I, a temporal ruler has two choices. First, he can present himself as a religious person and cooperate with the religious establishment. Second, he can oppose the autonomous acts of the religious establishment and try to limit or prevent any involvement of the ulama in the matters of state and politics. How a king or temporal ruler and, subsequently, his government or advisors deal with religion and the ulama is a major factor in determining the degree of the ulama's involvement and influence in Iranian politics.

The Ulama and the Constitutional Revolution of 1906

When Nasir ud-Din Shah was assassinated in May 1896, Muzaffar ud-Din Shah became the fifth ruler of the Qajar dynasty. Muzaffar ud-Din Shah, who had a weaker personality than his father, adopted a non-confrontational policy toward the ulama. Because of his personality and lack of power, Muzaffar ud-Din Shah assumed a low profile in running state affairs. Therefore, it was the policies of his chief minister and advisors which influenced the actions of the ulama. For the first year of his rule, Amin us-Sultan was his chief

minister. He and his successor, Abd ul-Husayn Mirza, were well aware of the power of the ulama and the fact that Nasir ud-Din Shah had promised the ulama he would consult with them on important state matters. The first two chief ministers of Muzaffar ud-Din Shah adopted a policy of cooperation with the ulama. During this period, the ulama had a great deal of power and were able to influence the government in the making of its policies. For example, the ulama had a representative in the cabinet meetings, and "their fatvas determined the appointment and dismissal of provincial governors and other officials."¹

There are many examples which show how government policies influenced the ulama's involvement in political affairs. One such example is the policies of Amin ud-Daula, the third chief minister of Muzaffar ud-Din Shah. As was noted above, the first two ministers of the shah were cooperative with the ulama, but a new chief minister, Amin ud-Daula, came into power by the end of 1897. Amin ud-Daula, who as a matter of principle was against the intervention of the ulama, tried to prevent their interference in state affairs.²

Not only did Amin ud-Daula try to prevent the ulama from being involved in the political process, but also he adopted policies which the ulama had opposed. For example, he invited the founder of a European-type school in Iran, Mirza Hasan Rushdiya, to build the new type school in Tehran. This policy was destined to result in opposition by the ulama because the ulama had previously destroyed

¹Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906, p. 223.

²Ibid.

his school and pronounced him an infidel.³ Now under the protection of Amin ud-Daula, he was going to build schools which ulama like Ashtiani declared "would bring about a weakening of religious faith."⁴ Another reason why the ulama opposed the new kind of school was that the establishment of such schools would result in the loss of the ulama's control over the education system. The traditional education system in Iran had been dominated by the ulama since the Qajar period, and any attempt to build a secular school would reduce their influence over the education process in Iran.

After several months of opposition to Amin ud-Daula by leading ulama of Tehran including Mirza Hasan Ashtiani, who played a leading role during the Tobacco Protest, Amin ud-Daula was forced to resign in June 1898.⁵ This again is evidence of the power of the ulama in influencing the decisions of the government.

The new chief minister, Amin us-Sultan (who also was the first chief minister of the shah), adopted several policies which met with opposition from the people and the ulama. One such policy was his negotiation for a loan from Russia for the shah's trip to Europe. The people were angry because the principles under which the loan was granted to the shah were disadvantageous to Iran, and even worse the money was spent by the shah and his entourage in Europe.⁶ The people

³Ibid., p. 224.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., p. 225.

⁶Ahmad Kasravi, Tarikh-i Mashruti-i Iran. (Tehran Amirkabir, 1976), pp. 24-25.

blamed the chief minister for these bad decisions. His other policies, which included being closely associated with Russians and giving great power to Naus, who was a Belgian national in charge of customs in Iran, made him unpopular and a target for the ulama's opposition.

The opposition to Amin us-Sultan was under the leadership of the ulama. It was reported that some of the leading ulama, including the co-leader of the constitutional revolution in Tehran, Sayyid Mohammad Tabatabai, made a promise to work for the removal of Amin us-Sultan.⁷

Opposition to Amin us-Sultan was also expressed in other cities, including the shrine cities of Iraq.⁸ Since, at the time, the highest ranking Shii ulama resided in the shrine cities of Iraq (including Najaf and Karbala), their opposition to the policies of the chief minister was very important. After the shah heard about the continued opposition of the ulama and others, including some of the courtiers, he dismissed Amin us-Sultan in September 1903 and replaced him with Ayn ud-Daula.⁹ The dismissal of Amin us-Sultan is also an example of power of the ulama to influence the policies of the government. It is another indication that when government officials adopted policies which were contrary to the wishes of the

⁷Ibid., p. 30.

⁸Nikki Keddie, "Iranian Politics 1900-1905: Background to Revolution," p. 26.

⁹Ahmad Kasravi, Tarikh-i Mashruti-i Iran, p. 32.

ulama, they were forced to retreat while the ulama's role and influence in Iranian political life increased.

The people and the ulama hoped for a change for the better when Ayn ud-Daula became the new chief minister of the shah. However, from the beginning the new chief minister adopted harsher policies toward the ulama. The first incident which showed his firm stand against the ulama happened during his first month of office. It started when the tullab (the students at religious schools) of two schools started to fight over some financial matters. The governor of Tehran arrested some of them; and, under the orders from Ayn ud-Daula, they were beaten and, in a humiliating manner, banished to the northern city of Ardabil.¹⁰

Historian Kasravi explains that at the time of the incident the people respected the religious class ("mullaahs and tullab") very much, and no one had seen such treatment of the religious class by anyone.¹¹ This hostile action of the government against the tullab angered the people. In Zanjan, the people closed their shops in protest¹² and "obtained the freedom of the tullab even before they reached Ardabil."¹³

As this incident clearly shows, the policies of the new chief minister of the shah toward the ulama were disrespectful and confrontational. The popularity of the ulama among the people and

¹⁰Ibid., p. 34.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid., p. 35.

¹³Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906, p. 241.

the reverence of the people for the ulama can also be seen. Though this incident did not result in any policy changes by the government or any major direct confrontation between the ulama and the state, without doubt the incident was the beginning of the fight by the people and the ulama against absolute monarchy and despotism. The ulama triumphed in the Constitutional Revolution in 1906.

There were several other incidents in which government officials mistreated the ulama. For example, during a fight between two rival groups in the Province of Kirman in which the ulama were involved the authorities arrested several of the ulama and, after beating them, forced them out of the city.¹⁴ The people in Kirman were angered by the actions of the authorities toward the ulama. News concerning the incident reached Tehran and added to an already existing hostility toward the state. After some of the leading ulama, including Mohammad Tabatabai, vigorously protested the harsh treatment of the ulama by the authorities in Kirman, the government was forced to change the governor of Kirman.¹⁵ We can see that while the incidents increased the influence of the ulama, they decreased the respect of the public for the government. As Algar concludes:

This disrespect shown to the ulama of Kirman supplies the clerical opponents of the government with material for their Ramadan sermons. The occasion for the disturbances was less important than the outcome - a clash between ulama and state. Yet another example of the impiety and tyranny of the state was furnished and the popular indignation

¹⁴Ahmad Kasravi, Tarikh-i Mashruta-i Iran, pp. 52-53.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 54.

inspired by disrespectful treatment of the ulama increased.¹⁶

Before discussing further the impact of the behavior of the state toward the ulama, it is necessary to look at the impact of foreign intervention on the ulama's power.

As was suggested in Chapters I and II, throughout the nineteenth century foreign intervention in Iran acted as an impetus for the ulama's involvement in political life. This was again the case during the first years of the twentieth century.

The short reign of Muzaffar ud-Din Shah was dominated by the controversy over foreign loans for the shah's trip to Europe. On three occasions during his eleven-year rule, Muzaffar ud-Din Shah borrowed money from Russia to visit Europe.

The ulama voiced their opposition to these loans. They argued that (1) the loan money was wasted on the pleasures of the shah and other courtiers, and (2) the loans were "leading to Russian control over Iran."¹⁷ In 1902 while the shah's chief minister, Amin us-Sultan, was negotiating the loan to finance the second trip to Europe, the leading ulama, including Sayyid Abdullah Bihbahani (the co-leader of the Constitutional Revolution in Tehran), voiced their strong opposition to the request for the loan.¹⁸ The reaction was so massive and alarming that the shah, "despite his enforced isolation from what was occurring," wanted to know about the extent and

¹⁶Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906, p. 244.

¹⁷Nikki Keddie, Roots of Revolution, p. 71.

¹⁸Nikki Keddie, "Iranian Politics 1900-1905: Background to Revolution," p. 23.

seriousness of the people's opposition. He called on one of the leading Tehran ulama, Sayyid Ali Akbar Tafrashi, to inquire about the attitude of the people toward the loan. The following conversation took place between the shah and Tafrashi:

"The people," answered the Sayyid, "repeat that your Majesty is bent on going to Europe, that for this purpose you are borrowing from Russia without caring what price you pay, and that the ports of southern provinces are to be pledged as security for the loan."¹⁹

To get the support of the leading Shii ulama in the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala, the leaders of the Tehran ulama wrote two letters explaining their opposition to the loan and requesting help. The summary of one of the letters which follows shows the nature of their opposition to the loan and indicates how the foreign factor was the focal point of their opposition.

This appeal is made by a body of distressed Moslems to the leading lights of the faith to whom on all points of law they look for orders and guidance. . . . Last year the government inopportunately and surreptitiously borrowed 12 million tomans from Russia. . . . The whole of the customs of Persia have been placed in the hands of foreigners. God knows how traders suffer. And now the Persian government again wishes to borrow a sum almost as large. The Russians demand as security the Gulf Ports. The government is prepared to yield and will certainly do so if the nation and the ulama consent.

If once we fall into the grasp of Russia our wives and our children are no longer our own. The most sacred ties are under the control of foreigners. All power is taken from the ulama. How is Islam humbled! Were you to repudiate and cast off this second loan they could not but obey you. The matter is on the eve of completion. If it is completed Islam disappears. A means must be found to avert this evil. . . . To whom can we look save to the heads of the faith. . . . At the time of the Regie what extraordinary endeavours the later Mirza Shirazi made against that institution.* (*Reference is to the boycott of tobacco and other activities against the British

¹⁹Ibid.

monopoly carried on by the leading mujtahid in the Iraq shrine cities, Majji Mirza Mohammad Hasan Shirasi.)

We call to witness all the prophets and Holy Ones of Islam that this our protest is dictated not by hatred of any one individual but by zeal for the interests of Islam. We had wished to draw up a petition in our ordinary handwriting but feared detection. God knows what might then have happened to us. We await your answer. The matter is urgent.²⁰

The content of this letter shows the significance of external factor in instigating the ulama "to save Islam from foreign threat," to actively seek a change in government policies, and to become more involved in Iranian politics. The ulama of Tehran were able to get the leading Shii ulama of the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala in Ottoman, Iraq, to oppose the loan request. Though the ulama's opposition "failed to stop the 1902 loan from Russia, the opposition became menacing enough to help force the dismissal of Amin us-Sultan . . . in 1903."²¹

Another incident which indicates the role of external factor in increasing the power of the ulama happened in 1905. There was a dispute between the ulama and a Russian bank official over a piece of land. The conflict started when the Russians began building a bank on land which had been the site of a Muslim cemetery and a school for the ulama. The Russian official had bought the land from an individual who had in turn bought it from a leading ulama, Shaykh Fadlullah Nuri.²²

²⁰Ibid., p. 24.

²¹Nikki Keddie, Roots of Revolution, p. 71.

²²Ahmad Kasravi, Tarikh-i Mashruta-i Iran, p. 55.

When the news of the Russian construction of a bank on the disputed land reached leading ulama such as Tabatabai, he voiced his opposition by writing letters to the president of the Russian bank and to the Iranian foreign and interior ministers arguing that it was against Islamic law to destroy a Muslim cemetery and school to build the Russian bank.²³ He did not receive a positive response.

Gradually the opposition grew and the news spread until it reached the Shii ulama in the cities of Najaf and Karbala. During the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, the ulama lectured the people about the bank issue. Since the government was not listening, the ulama decided to do something about it themselves.

Finally, during the last week of Ramadan, one of the ulama, Shaykh Mohammad Vayz, again talked to the people about the bank and the disrespect of the Russians toward the Muslim dead. He, with help from other ulama, persuaded the people to go to the site of the half-completed building and destroy it.²⁴ The Russian bank officials protested to the government about the incident. The shah ordered them not to harm the ulama. It was reported that the government paid compensation to the bank officials.²⁵ "Here again, we observe the use of a well-chosen, expressive pretext to arouse agitation against the government: religious feelings were shown to be affronted and the

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid., p. 57.

²⁵Ibid.

government to be associated with the foreigners who behaved thus insultingly."²⁶

Another example of foreign involvement in Iranian affairs started in 1898. Shortly before his dismissal as the shah's chief minister, Amin ud-Daula hired a number of Belgians (among them was Monsieur Naus) to reform and modernize the customs system in Iran. Naus gradually gained more power, and when the shah took his first trip to Europe in 1900 Naus became the minister of customs and had enormous power and responsibilities.²⁷ His new policies resulted in higher tariffs for some people and this produced opposition by the ulama to Naus.²⁸ The merchants who were to be hurt the most by Naus policies considered the new tariffs harmful to their interests. They accused Naus and the other Belgians working in the custom service of "discriminating in favor of Armenian and other non-Muslim merchants."²⁹ Of course, the assumption of control of a ministry by a non-Muslim foreigner provided an ideal opportunity for the ulama to oppose state and foreign interference in Iranian affairs.

The opposition against Naus in Tehran was followed by protests in other cities, including Tabriz where there were "serious ulama-led

²⁶Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran, p. 246.

²⁷Ahmad Kasravi, Tarikh-i Mashruta-i Iran, p. 29.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran, p. 226.

riots . . . directed against the Belgian custom officials . . ." and other foreign interests.³⁰

While the opposition of the people, under the leadership of the ulama, to Naus and other foreign intervention in Iran was continuing, four high-ranking ulama of the shrine cities in Iraq sent a message to the shah indicating that they were concerned about foreign involvement in Iranian affairs. The message read in part:

But of course your Majesty will see that it is necessary to put a stop to liberty and the imitation of "Feringees" [Europeans] which has become widespread in the protected state. The laws of the Prophet are becoming perverted, and these innovations and the unbelieving sects of Babas and others no longer fearing to express their unbelief and denial the purchase and sale of liquor and various other "Feringees" initiating actions are now finely practiced. .

Besides the promises made previously by your Majesty, at this moment there are also questions spoken of and renounced concerning new improvements. [refers to reforms of maliat (tax) under Naus' auspices] and this is very detrimental to the influence of Islam and is the cause of much perturbation among the Moslems, and is of greater moment than previous complaints. . . .

Two other questions also we are petitioning through our love for our country, although the petition of these things is outside our province, but it is necessary, in view of the great unity existing between the Church and state, each of which depends for support on the other.

. . . in the customs, etc., which are the cause and basis of complaint of the public, and whereby the people are tyrannized and oppressed. . . .³¹

The opposition against Naus continued during 1903 and 1904, but the government ignored it. By the year 1905, members of the ulama

³⁰Nikki Keddie, "Iranian Politics 1900-1905: Background to Revolution II," Journal of Middle Eastern Studies, May 1969, p. 156.

³¹Ibid., pp. 159-160.

and other opponents of "the government began a concerted campaign to get rid of Naus."³²

In April 1905 an incident happened which gave more ammunition to the opponents of Naus and other Belgians, and protests flared. The incident was the release of a photograph of Naus in the dress of the ulama. This angered the ulama, and they claimed that Naus' action was "insulting and threatening" to Islam.³³ The ulama became more united and determined to oust Naus and Sayyid Abdullah Bihbahani; other leading ulama gave inciting speeches about the matter and requested the shah to dismiss Naus.³⁴ Protests against the Belgians also took place in other cities including Tabriz and Kermanshah. At the same time, along with the Naus photograph in the dress of a mulla, a small card was circulated in Iran which said: "O Muslims! Islam is dead and infidelity is up. The sovereign is Naus. The Vizier is Lavers [another Belgian], and the statesmen Christians. It is the end."³⁵

The opposition to Naus, the foreign influence, and other government policies was continuing. But the court was ignoring the protests. The lack of attention to the people and demands of the ulama, the harsh treatment of the ulama, and other factors, including the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05 and the Russian Revolution of 1905,

³²Nikki Keddie, "Iranian Politics 1900-1905: Background to Revolution III," Journal of Middle Eastern Studies, October 1969, p. 241.

³³Ibid., p. 241.

³⁴Ibid., p. 242.

³⁵Ibid.

created a revolutionary sentiment among some Iranians which was bound to explode.

"The beginning of the Iranian constitutional Revolution is usually dated December 1905;" the month in which the authorities in Tehran beat several prominent merchants for not lowering high sugar prices which they blamed on increases in import prices.³⁶ In protesting the government's action, the shops were closed and the merchants took their grievances to the ulama.³⁷ The next day the ulama and the people gathered in the main mosque to protest. While one of the ulama was giving a speech and complaining about the government policies, some of the people who had been bribed by Ayn ud-Daula, the chief minister, interrupted the gathering, and the meeting dissolved in chaos.³⁸ "This use of force by Ayn ud-Daula against the ulama was to characterize his policy throughout the agitation."³⁹ Also it was the last straw. In protest against the violent reaction of Ayn ud-Daula and the governments disregard of the grievances of the merchants and ulama, a large group of prominent ulama, including Abdullah Bihbahani, merchants, and other people decided to leave Tehran for the security of the Shrine of Shah Abd ul-Azim which was several miles south of Tehran.⁴⁰ They were acting

³⁶Nikki Keddie, Roots of Revolution, p. 72.

³⁷Ahmad Kasravi, Tarikh-i Mashruta-i Iran, p. 60.

³⁸Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran, p. 246.

³⁹Ibid., pp. 246-47.

⁴⁰Ibid.

on advice from Sayyid Tabatabai (one of the leaders of the Constitutional Revolution).

The exodus of the ulama from Tehran was a serious threat to government authority, and the shah and his ministers were well aware of it. First, the government tried to end the exodus through bribes and promises. Then the Minister of War was sent to Shah Abd ul-Azim with two hundred troops. He tried to persuade the ulama peacefully, but when they did not listen he gave their leader an ultimatum in which he ordered them to disperse or face the force.⁴¹ The people in Tehran and Abd ul-Azim heard about this; and their vigorous protests, including the closure of shops in Abd ul-Azim and Tehran, forced the government to withdraw its threat to use force.⁴²

From Abd ul-Azim, through the Ottoman ambassador, the two leading ulama (Tabatabai and Behbehani), who had practically become the leaders of the movement against growing foreign influence in Iran and against growing abuse of the people and ulama by the government officials, conveyed to the shah their demands and the conditions under which they would end their sanctuary in Shah Abd ul-Azim. They had eight demands⁴³ including "replacement of the governor; dismissal of Naus; enforcement of the sharia; and establishment of a House of Justice."⁴⁴ After the shah and Ayn ud-Daula reluctantly gave in to

⁴¹Ahmad Kasravi, Tarikh-i Mashruta-i Iran, p. 66.

⁴²Ibid., pp. 66-67.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ervand Abrahamian, Iran, Between Two Revolutions, p. 82.

the demands of the ulama and dismissed the governor of Tehran, the ulama returned to Tehran in triumph in January 1906.⁴⁵

Upon their arrival in Tehran they met with the shah, and he promised them that he would establish the adalatkhaneh (House of Justice).⁴⁶ While it seems that the shah, because of pressure, was perhaps ready to accept a House of Justice, his chief minister was making every effort to prevent its establishment.⁴⁷

When the ulama realized that the shah and Ayn ud-Daula were not fulfilling their promise to establish a House of Justice, they sent a letter to the shah and Ayn-ud-Daula trying to persuade them to keep their promise. At the same time, "acts of violence against the innocent continued in both Tehran and the Provinces."⁴⁸ There were also demonstrations under the leadership of the ulama against the violent behavior of the government and for the establishment of the House of Justice. In the summer of 1906 during the holy month of Moharram, the protests intensified. "They were caused mainly by the failure of the shah to convene a House of Justice and dismiss Naus, and partly by the rash attempt made by the police to arrest a local preacher for his public denunciation of the government."⁴⁹

The authorities were not paying attention to the demands of the people and the ulama, and they were violently suppressing the

⁴⁵Nikki Keddie, Roots of Revolution, pp. 72-73.

⁴⁶Ahmad Kasravi, Tarikh-i Mashruta-i Iran, p. 74.

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 74-82.

⁴⁸Nikki Keddie, Roots of Revolution, p. 73.

⁴⁹Ervand Abrahamian, Iran, Between Two Revolutions, p. 82.

protests and opposition to the government. The situation was tense, and Nikki Keddie summarizes the events of the summer of 1906 as follows:

Preaching against the government by the popular radical preachers Sayyid Jamal ud-Din Esfahani and Shaykh Mohammad was increased, and provided a potent means of mass political enlightenment in the absence of an open oppositional press. Sayyid Jamal was expelled from Tehran. Confronting a strong popular attempt to keep Shaykh Mohammad from being ousted, an officer killed a young Sayyid. After this, a great mass of mollas and some others left Tehran to take bast (sanctuary) in the city of Qum in July 1906. Even more bazaar, merchants and tradesmen in numbers reaching twelve thousand to fourteen thousand took bast in the British legation, and Tehran business was at a standstill. Now the protestors demanded not only the dismissal of Amin ud-Daula but also establishment of a representative assembly or "majles."⁵⁰

Finally, under constant pressure from the ulama, merchants, and people, Amin ad-Daula was dismissed at the end of July,⁵¹ and the declaration of a constitutional assembly was signed by the shah in early August.⁵² A few days later the victorious ulama returned to Tehran and a large group of people gathered outside the city to welcome them back.⁵³ Though this was not the end of the struggle for a constitutional government, it marked the beginning of a gradual decline in the participation and influence of the ulama in Iranian political life for the rest of the Qajar dynasty.

The discussion thus far clearly indicates that a combination of the direct and indirect western impact on Iran and the government

⁵⁰Nikki Keddie, Roots of Revolution, p. 73.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ahmad Kasravi, Tarikh-i Mashruta-i Iran, pp. 118-119.

⁵³Ibid., p. 120.

policy of confrontation with the ulama contributed to the increase in the political activities of the ulama and their power to influence Iranian political life.

In each example which we discussed, the ulama were directly involved with trying to oppose foreign influence in Iran, and in each case they were able to either change the government policy or arouse public feelings against the system for future purposes. The demand for a constitutional form of government, the idea of reform and modernization, and the need for economic and political change all had their impact in Iran and resulted in an increase in the power and political activities of the ulama.

The behavior of the court also served as impetus for the ulama's involvement in political activities. The weakness and low profile of the shah and the confrontational and violent policies of his chief ministers resulted in an increase in the power of the ulama, and they were able to force the dismissal of four of the shah's chief ministers in a period of a little more than ten years.

The attempts of Ayn ad-Dauleh, the shah's chief minister, to curb the power of the ulama by not paying attention to their wishes and by disrespectfully and violently confronting them not only did not do any good, it backfired and resulted in Ayn ad-Dauleh's dismissal. Thus a combination of internal and external factors contributed to an increase in the involvement of the ulama in Iranian politics. Their involvement and influence in such activities culminated when they were able to force Muzaffar ud-Din Shah to grant a constitutional form of government. As Hamid Algar concludes:

Whatever the attitude of the ulama was to the constitution as such, their dominant role in the events leading to the issue of decree cannot be denied. Throughout, religious motives determined the course of the agitation, and these motives were directed and pressed by the ulama. In this sense, the movement was no more than a repetition of the ulama's traditional role of leading opposition to the state. The state was seen to be surrendering the control of the nation's economic life to foreigners, and added to this burden of guilt by treating the tullab and the ulama with disrespect, murdering sayyids, and violating shrines.⁵⁴

Another factor, which also contributed to the enhancement of the ulama's power and the effectiveness of their leadership and influence during the period was the status of the religious hierarchy. As was indicated in Chapters I and II, during the second half of the nineteenth century, there were two mujtahids each of whom was able to establish himself as the sole marja-i taqlid and the sole leader of the Shii community. These were (1) Shaykh Murtada Ansari who died in about 1865, and (2) after a few years, Mirza Hasan Shirazi who established himself as the sole marja-i taqlid. As we indicated in Chapter II, it was Shirazi's effective and undisputed leadership which resulted in the cancellation of the Tobacco Concession by Nasir ud-Din Shah.

When in February 1895, Mirza Hasan Shirazi passed away, no member of the ulama could establish himself as the sole marja-i taqlid even though some attempted to do so. Therefore, the unity of the marja-i taqlid and, consequently, the unity of the ulama was unable to survive the death of Mirza Hasan Shirazi. On the other hand, the common interests which existed among the ulama (mainly

⁵⁴Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran, pp. 251-252.

opposition to the foreign control of Iran and to monarchy and despotism) brought the ulama together for unified action against the state.

During the Constitutional Revolution, some of the prominent ulama resided in the shrine cities of Iraq, Najaf, and Karbala. The most prominent of the Persian ulama of Iraq were Akhund Mulla Mohammad Kurasani, Shaykh Abd Allah Mazandarani, and Mirza Husan Tehrani and their assistants such as Naini and Mahallati. "Right from the beginning of the Persian Revolution, the three high-ranking ulama were on the side of the Constitutionalists."⁵⁵

During this period other prominent ulama resided in Tehran. By the turn of the twentieth century, there were several leading ulama there; the most popular were Shaykh Fadlullah Nuri, Sayyid Mohammad Tabatabai, and Sayyid Abdullah Bihbahani.⁵⁶ From the beginning of the reign of Muzaffar ud-Din Shah, there was no formal understanding or cooperation among these ulama with respect to political activities. But in November 1905, on Bihbahani's initiative an alliance for more united action against the state was made between Bihbahani and Tabatabai.⁵⁷ This alliance played a significant role in the victory of the constitutional revolution. Actually historian Kasrani considers the making of the pact between the two to be the

⁵⁵Abdul-Hadi Hairi, Shiism and Constitutionalism in Iran, p. 87.

⁵⁶Edward G. Browne, The Persian Revolution of 1905-1909, pp. 112-113.

⁵⁷Ahmad Kasravi, Tarikh-i Mashruta-i Iran, pp. 48-49.

beginning of the Constitutional Revolution.⁵⁸ Algar also observed that:

. . . conscious preparation for the overthrow of Ayn ud-Daula and for the achievement of more far-reaching aims appears to have begun only with the alliance between Sayyid Abdullah Bihbahani; and Sayyid Muhammad Tabatabai, founded on Ramadan 25, 1323/November 23, 1905. . . .The leadership of the movement, at least outwardly, was to be provided by these two men, in particular the latter, and the large popular following their prestige commanded was a force considerable enough to arouse fear in the government and readiness to submit to the ulama's demand.⁵⁹

Less than a year later, in July 1905, the other leading and celebrated mujtahid of Tehran, Shaykh Fadlullah Nuri, joined the two sayyids in their protest against the government and demanded an assembly. After he joined the two sayyids practically no prominent ulama remained actively opposed the ulama's campaign against the government.

The unity of the ulama during this period was evident in many instances which we discussed earlier. These included their opposition to the chief ministers of the shah, the Belgian financier, Naus, and their demand for a House of Justice and an assembly.

We can conclude that the existence of two charismatic leaders, Tabatabai and Bihbahani, and the cooperation of Shaykh Fadlullah and other leading ulama (particularly the prominent ulama of the shrine cities of Iraq) played a major role in forcing the shah to sign the constitution decree. Thus, the unity of the ulama and the existence of effective and charismatic leaders in combination with foreign

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 49.

⁵⁹Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran, pp. 244-245.

intervention and the behavior of the shah and his minister contributed to an increase in the power and influence of the ulama which culminated in forcing the shah to sign the constitution decree.

The Ulama's Status After the Establishment of the Constitutional Regime

The grant of the constitution by Muzaffar ud-Din Shah at the end of the summer of 1906 and the opening of the first majles in October 1906 marked the beginning of the decline of the ulama's participation in political activities. The major factors which contributed to this decline of power of ulama were (1) the emergence of disunity among the ulama and (2) the emergence of a new breed of leaders and politicians, the nationalists.

It is generally believed that prior to the victory of the constitutionalists, the majority of the ulama did not fully understand the constitutional form of government.⁶⁰ This is evident in the writings of one of the leading ulama of Tehran, Shaykh Fadlullah Nuri, who supported and participated in the constitutional revolution at the beginning and later on became a leader of the anti-constitutionalists. In his writing, we can see that he did not have a clear knowledge and understanding of the nature and main principles of the constitutional form of government. This is evident in the following passage from a letter explaining why his early support for the constitutional revolution was later replaced by disagreement and opposition. He states:

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 239.

I shall briefly declare [the following]: the sources of this calamity [the Persian constitutional revolution] were the new sects of the naturalists who received the idea of constitution from [our] neighbours [i.e., Russia and Ottoman Turkey] and presented it in a very appealing manner. Obviously, anyone who was fascinated by this [pleasant] presentation, and was a lover of [justice, and saw a number of people] seeking justice, automatically made an effort to earn it [as soon as] he heard this agreeable word; he did not refrain from giving his life and wealth as much as he could. This writer, for example, took part in this affair and experienced a lot of trouble while traveling or at home. [there were] also [some] means which were agreeable. When we began to put the matter into effect, I noticed that a group of people who had always been accused of deviations [from the right path], involved themselves in the affairs. Little by little I heard some equivocal words from them, but I interpreted them as [sound] ideas. Then they unveiled the matter to an extent and established the [fact] that the representatives [of Parliament] should be elected and the majority of the votes relied upon. Again I ignored [these things], interpreting that these [measures might have been taken] to establish order and to promote justice.⁶¹

Therefore, during the constitutional revolution which was prior to the end of the summer of 1906 when the constitutionalists forced the shah to accept a constitutional form of government, the ulama with few exceptions were not fully aware of the nature of a constitutional regime. The ulama, in accordance with the Shii doctrine and Iranian custom, assumed the leadership of the people during the agitations when either the government was weak or general discontentment among the population existed or when they saw a foreign threat to Islamic Iran. In the case of the constitutional revolution "As already indicated, the period before the constitutional movement in Iran was characterized by misgovernment, corruption, foreign influence, and intense rivalry between Great

⁶¹Abdul-Hadi Hairi, "Shaykh Fazl Allah Nuri's Refutation Idea of Constitutionalism," Middle Eastern Studies, October 1977, p. 331.

Britain and Czarist Russia. This situation, coupled with the emergence of an intellectual group that wanted to liberate and modernize Iran, created a period of unrest and general dissatisfaction among the Iranians."⁶² In a situation like this, we can conclude that the ulama had expected by opposing the despotic role of the monarch and foreign intervention and by participating in the constitutional movement to place themselves on the side of the oppressed people, and to save Islam and Iran from foreign infidels. At the same time "they might legitimately have expected from its [constitutional form of government] realization a systematic application of Islamic Law . . . but little if any thought was in fact given to their role in a constitutional system of government."⁶³

The "secular" and "radical" reformers were well aware of the ulama's power and role in Iran and the need for their cooperation and leadership in agitation against the state. There is evidence that, during the period leading to the constitutional revolution, the "radical" reformers systematically and consciously tried to use the ulama's influence and leadership in opposing the state. One of the ways in which this was done was through "the secret societies that began to flourish especially in 1904 and 1905 (which) were vanguard force in giving direction to the revolutionary discontent that came

⁶²Asghar Fathi, "Role of the Traditional Leader in Modernization of Iran, 1890-1910," International Journal of Middle East Studies, November 1980, p. 90.

⁶³Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran, p. 255.

to a head in this period."⁶⁴ An account of an attempt by one of these secret societies to approach the ulama is given by Malekzadeh, one of the founders of such secret societies. As Keddie states:

The discussions and resolutions of the first meeting of this group of some sixty persons, as reported by Malekzadeh, reveal how consciously the advanced modernizers worked to bring the leading Shii ulama back into active opposition to the government. This group, in the eighteen-point programme that it adopted, advocated working together with the influential ulama of Tehran without their being aware of the group's revolutionary aims; establishing contact with the ulama of Najaf; being certain that their own writings said nothing, inconsistent with Islam; and henceforth ceasing to participate in any non-Islamic religious meetings.⁶⁵

As was mentioned before, the participation, leadership, and unity of the ulama was instrumental in forcing the shah to sign the constitutional declaration in 1906. But soon after the victory of the constitutionalists, the situation changed; and, with the ratification of the fundamental law on December 30, 1906, and the start of debates on its supplement (to be ratified in October 1907), the ulama for the first time dealt with the specifics of a constitutional form of government.⁶⁶

It was at this point that some of the leading ulama of Tehran, Najaf, and other provinces started their opposition to some aspects of the constitution and gradually withdraw their support from the constitutionalists and declared their support of an Islamicised

⁶⁴Nikki Keddie, "Iranian Politics 1900-1905: Background to Revolution - III, p. 243.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 244.

⁶⁶S. A. Arjomand, "The Ulama's Traditionalist Opposition to Parliamentarianism: 1907-1909," Middle Eastern Studies, April 1981, p. 177.

constitution (mashrutah-i mashruah).⁶⁷ This group, which consisted of many ulama including some of the leading ulama of Tehran and Najaf, stated that they objected to some parts of the constitution on the ground that it was un-Islamic in nature. Shaykh Fadlullah Nuri who originally "allied himself with the other two Tehran mujtahids, Sayyid Mohammad Tabatabai and Sayyid Abd Allah Bihbahani and supported the establishment of a constitutional form of government"⁶⁸ now assumed the leadership of the opponents of the constitutionalists. Nuri was considered by many to be the most learned ulama of Tehran, argued against the constitution as follows:

First of all [both the writing of] a constitutional law and the following of the opinion of the majority [are against Islam. The idea of depending on the majority] even though it is originally allowed in permissible affairs (umur-i muhah), is an unlawful legislation; it is an innovation in religion because it is made as a law to be obeyed. [And of course] every innovation is a straying from the right path. Also, it is unlawful to make a permissible action as a person's duty to be obligatorily performed and to punish the person for his refusal of performing that duty. "Say: Hath Allah permitted you, or do ye invert a lie concerning Allah?"⁶⁹

Shaykh Fadlullah also argued that Islam was perfect and did not need new laws to be perfected; therefore, legislation was forbidden in Islam. On this ground he argued that a mujtahid cannot make or change laws. He asked, "Does change mean [a deviation] from Islam to

⁶⁷Abdul-Hadi Hairi, "Shaykh Fazl Allah Nuri's Refutation of the Idea of Constitutionalism," p. 327.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 327.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 334.

infidelity, or from infidelity to Islam. The fallacy of both [alternatives] is evident."⁷⁰

Shaykh Fadlullah Nuri also argued that the principle of equality mentioned in Article 8 of the supplementary fundamental law which read, "The people of the Persian Empire are to enjoy equal rights before the law,"⁷¹ is contrary to Islamic law. Among other examples of legitimate inequality, Shaykh Fadlullah discussed the differences between the treatment of Muslims and non-Muslims before Islamic law. He states:

The zimmi [free non-Muslim subjects living in a Muslim country], for example, are subject to special provisions in their marital relation with Muslims. Non-Muslim men cannot marry Muslims, but Muslim men can have non-Muslim women as concubines and on a temporary basis. Apostasy of either partner of the married couple entails the cancellation [of the marriage]; conversion of either partner of a [non-Muslim] couple to Islam also has special different provisions. With regard to the problem of inheritance, infidelity denies a person of inheritance. A non-Muslim may not inherit from a Muslim, but the reverse is permissible . . .⁷²

The concept of liberty in the constitution was also objected to by Shaykh Fadlullah and his supporters because of its non-Islamic nature. According to Article 20 of the supplementary fundamental law:

All publications, except heretical books and matters hurtful to the perspicuous religion [of Islam] are free,

⁷⁰Abdul-Hadi Hairi, Shiism and Constitutionalism in Iran, p. 209.

⁷¹Helen Miller Davis, Constitutions, Electoral Laws, Treaties of States in the Near and Middle East (Durham, N.C., Duke University Press, 1947), p. 80.

⁷²Abdul-Hadi Hairi, Shiism and Constitutionalism in Iran, p. 222.

and are exempt from the censorship. If, however, anything should be discovered in them contrary to the press law, the publisher or writer is liable to punishment according to the law. . . .⁷³

In reference to Article 20, Shaykh Fadlullah also argued that the scope and degree of freedom and liberty which was granted to the press and others was contrary to the principles of Islamic law. He states that:

According to this article many of the unlawful things which should be forbidden have been made lawful because only two matters are excepted, whereas [in fact] one of the imperatively unlawful things is malicious accusation (iftira). Another indisputable unlawful matter is backbiting of a Muslim (ghaybat). Also, slander against a Muslim, harm abusive language, insult, intimidation, threatening, and the like, are forbidden by the Shariah and are considered unlawful by God. Is freedom in these things not solely declaring lawful what God has made unlawful.⁷⁴

Therefore, the opposition of some of the ulama to constitutionalism was fundamental and their argument was based on the non-Islamic nature of the Persian constitution which was a copy of the Belgian constitution. Actually Shaykh Fadlullah, with the cooperation of other leading ulama, was able to write and have passed by the majlis in the second week of July 1907 Article 2 which was a supplement to the fundamental law.⁷⁵ According to this article, a group of at least five ulama must oversee the work of the assembly. This group was to have the power to "reject and repudiate wholly or

⁷³Helen Davis, Constitutions, Electoral Laws, Treaties of States in the Near and Middle East, p. 81.

⁷⁴Abdul-Hadi Hairi, "Shaykh Fazl Allah Nuri's Refutation of the Idea of Constitutionalism," p. 335.

⁷⁵S. A. Arjomand, "The Ulama's Traditionalist Opposition to parliamentarianism: 1907-1909," pp. 178-179.

in part, any . . . proposal which is at variance with the sacred law of Islam so that it shall not obtain the title of legality."⁷⁶

This parliamentary victory did not satisfy Shaykh Fadlullah and in protest, he and a group of his supporters including Molla Mohammad Amali moved to the shrine of Abd al-Azim. There he started a vigorous campaign against the constitutionalists. To obtain support he wrote many letters to high-ranking ulama in provinces and cities such as Najaf and also a "series of open letters published and distributed from Abd al-Azim which became known as the ruznameh (newspaper) of Shaykh Fazlollah."⁷⁷

Shaykh Fadlullah's campaign was very effective. He was able to win the support of many high-ranking ulama including Sayyid Mohammad Yazdi and Mirza Abu Talib Zanjani,⁷⁸ since his opposition to the constitution was rooted in Islamic thought and he argued that the establishment of a constitutional form of government which the "liberals" and "nationalists" wants was contrary to the Islamic law. As a result, he was able to get the support of the conservative and liberal ulama for his cause. Arjomand observes:

. . . that in the clerical anti-Parliamentarian party of 1907 to 1908 we encounter not only a staunch reactionary like Molla Ali Akbar Barujerdi, who had even opposed the demand for an adalat-khaneh, but also Mirza Mohammad Reza, the mujtahid of Kerman, Shaykh Mohammad Vaez and Mirza Aga Esfahani - the clerics whose humiliation and banishments

⁷⁶Helen Davis, Constitutions, Electoral Laws, Treaties of States in the Near and Middle East, p. 79.

⁷⁷S. A. Arjomand, "The Ulama's Traditionalist Opposition to Parliamentarianism: 1907-1909," p. 180.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 181.

have been mentioned among the precipitating causes of the 1905 to 1906 protest movement.⁷⁹

The disagreement among the ulama resulted in bitter conflicts between them and, subsequently, between their supporters. Fights between supporters and opponents of the constitution erupted in Tehran and other provinces. For example, in Tehran during the Fall of 1907, the opponents of the constitution surrounded the majlis (assembly) and attacked it with stones.⁸⁰ Even more serious conflicts between the two groups erupted in Tabriz when they fought each other with guns for the first time.⁸¹

Another factor which influenced the conflict between pro- and anti-constitutionalists was the crowning of a new king. In January 1907 the mild-tempered and low-profiled Muzaffar ud-Din Shah died. "His son, Mohammad Ali Shah, a strong-minded despot who bitterly resented the constitutional limits to his role, was determined to overthrow the constitution."⁸² To achieve his goals, Mohammad Shah made contact with anti-constitutionalist ulama and tried to widen the division between the ulama in respect to their view of the constitution.⁸³

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 182.

⁸⁰Abdullah Jasami, Inghlab-i Mashrutiat (Tehran: Islamic Republic Party, 1980), p. 71.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 75.

⁸²Richard Cottan, Nationalism in Iran (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1979), pp. 15-16.

⁸³Ahmad Kasravi, Tarikh-i Mashruta-i Iran, pp. 292-295.

With violent conflict between those favoring and opposing the constitution continuing in many cities including Isfahan, Ardabil, Zanjan, and Ghazvin,⁸⁴ Mohammad Shah pressed his opposition to the majlis and the constitution. He declared "that as a good Muslim he could accept the Islamic term mashru [lawful] but not the alien concept mashrut [constitutional],"⁸⁵ and with the help of Russian-led Cassack Brigade in June 1908 he bombarded the majlis (National Assembly) and attacked and occupied other centers of constitutionalist activities in Tehran.⁸⁶ The process of closing the Assembly resulted in the killing or arrest of many prominent constitutionalists.⁸⁷

During the reign of Mohammad Ali Shah (1907-1909) a period referred to as the period of "Minor Deposition", Iran witnessed another result of western influence--the emergence of new power bases and a new brand of leaders, the nationalists. These developments in combination with disunity among the ulama, contributed to a new decline in the ulama's influence which started right after the victory of the constitutionalists and extended well into the second decade of the twentieth century. As Abrahamian states:

Increasing contact with Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century undermined this traditional relationship between State and Society. The old basis of legitimacy--the divine right of kings - was gradually replaced by the concepts of elective institutions, representative

⁸⁴Ibid., pp. 385-409.

⁸⁵Ervand Abrahamian, Iran, Between Two Revolutions, pp. 90-91.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 96-97.

⁸⁷Ibid.

governments, and inalienable rights of man. Secularism gradually eroded the political influence of Shiism which had served as a narrow but useful bridge spanning the wide gulf between the governor and the governed.⁸⁸

The emergence of nationalist ideas, which started during the period of the constitutionalist movement, gradually gathered momentum during the period of "Minor Deposition" and afterwards. The opposition of the nationalist leaders, such as the deputy of Tabriz in Majlis, Sayyid Hassan Tagizadeh, to some of the articles of the draft constitution which had religious implications resulted in a bitter argument with some of the leading ulama.⁸⁹

The introduction of the ideas of nationalism and secularism also gave "radicals" outside parliament the opportunity to pursue and advertise secular reforms. For example, the paper *Sur-i Israfit* carried an article which suggested that the "ulama should keep their hands out of politics and . . . (satirized) . . . the mullas as 'money grabbers' . . ."⁹⁰ This article "was the first anticlerical article to be published in Iran."⁹¹ It was followed by other articles criticizing the ulama.

At the same time, the growth of secularism and constitutionalism (free from religious interference) was witnessed among the people in cities such as Tabriz. It was during the height of the arguments about the degree of Islamization in the laws that a telegram from

⁸⁸Ervand Abrahamian, "Kasrari: The Integrative Nationalist of Iran," Middle Eastern Studies, October 1973, p. 273.

⁸⁹Ahmad Kasravi, Tarikh-i Mashruta-i Iran, pp. 315-322.

⁹⁰Ervand Abrahamian, Iran Between Two Revolutions, p. 93.

⁹¹*Ibid.*

Tabriz was sent to the majlis saying "we want the law of the constitution . . . not the Shariat [the law of Islam]." ⁹² As Cotton states, this was "the first time a significant group had chosen to stand in open opposition to clerical influence." ⁹³ The telegram was the result of a conflict between some of the ulama and nationalists in Tabriz "which after a fierce struggle resulted in the triumph of the liberal element and the expulsion of several mullahs from the city." ⁹⁴

The nationalists' influence grew during their armed struggle for restoration of the constitution which had started after the closure of the national assembly by Mohammad Ali Shah.

Nikki Keddie summarizes the events which led to the defeat of Mohammad Shah's forces by nationalists and constitutionalists and their triumphant return to Tehran which resulted in the restoration of constitutionalism and increasing influence of the nationalists, as follows:

While the rest of the country bowed to royal control, the city of Tabriz which, exceptionally, had formed an armed and drilled popular guard, held out against royal forces. The leaders of this popular resistance were men of humble origin . . . Many of the popular forces, known alternatively as Mojahedin or Fedaiyan . . . left for the nearby Caspian Province of Gilan, where they were joined by a local revolutionary armed force, and together they began a march on Tehran. Meanwhile, the Bakhtiari tribe which had some leaders who were genuinely liberal and others who wanted to control the central government themselves, helped liberate Isfahan from royalist forces and began moving northward toward Tehran. The Bakhtiaris and the northern

⁹²Richard Cotton, Nationalism in Iran, p. 142.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Ibid.

revolutionaries converged on Tehran in July 1909. The shah took refuge with the Russians and his minor son Ahmad was made Shah with the moderate Oxford-educated Naser al-Molk as regent.⁹⁵

During the constitutionalist's armed struggle for restoration of a constitutional form of government, a sharp conflict between the constitutionalist and anti-constitutionalist ulama existed. The active involvement of the leading constitutionalist ulama who were in shrine cities in Iraq out of range of Mohammed Shah was a significant element in the victory of constitutionalist forces which overthrew Mohammed Shah. As Hairi states:

It seems that had the ulama not risen against Muhammad Ali Shah and his Russian allies, Muhammad Ali Shah would have continued his reign. He would not have declared the re-establishment of a constitutional regime; the nationalists forces would not have arrived in Tehran so victoriously, and the Persian constitution would not have been restored in July 1909.⁹⁶

After the victory by constitutionalist forces in 1909 and well into the second decade of the twentieth century, the ulama were active in opposing foreign intervention in Iran.⁹⁷ Several incidents divided the ulama from constitutionalists and caused them to grow increasingly aloof from political activities during the 1910s.

The first of these incidents was the hanging of Shaykh Fadlullah Nuri by constitutionalists. Although Shaykh Fadlullah was an active opponent of the constitutionalist ulama, the hanging of such a pious, knowledgeable, high-ranking mujtahid was unacceptable to the ulama.

⁹⁵Nikki Keddie, Roots of Revolution, p. 76.

⁹⁶Abdul-Hadi Hairi, Shiism and Constitutionalism in Iran, p. 98.

⁹⁷Ibid., pp. 116-120.

"This event created fear among the ulama and brought about a deep hatred for the constitutionalists on the part of the advocates of the traditional regime."⁹⁸

Another event which discouraged the ulama's involvement in political activities was the assassination of Hajj Sayyid Abdullah Bihbahani by a "left extremist" in 1910.⁹⁹ Bihbahani was one of the active constitutionalist ulama and his alliance with Tabatabai was an important factor in the Revolution.

Furthermore, the constitutionalist ulama soon became dissatisfied with the results of the constitutional regime they had helped to establish in Iran. This was evident in a telegram sent to Nair ul-Mulk (who was to become the Regent) by two leading ulama of shrines in Iran in June 1910. "Making reference to the freedom of the press, the ulama complained about the absence of clerical censorship on the publications dealing with religion. They also complained about the irreligiosity of the political authorities, heavy taxation, retention of political prisoners, etc."¹⁰⁰

The ulama's disillusion with constitutionalism and their aloofness from political activities were evident in the behavior of one of the leading ulama who was a strong supporter of the constitutionalist cause, Mirza Mohammad Husayn Naini. He was the theoretician of the constitutionalist ulama and wrote an important

⁹⁸Ibid., pp. 114-115.

⁹⁹Nikki Keddie, Roots of Revolution, p. 76.

¹⁰⁰Abdul Hadi Hairi, Shiism and Constitutionalism in Iran, p. 116.

book, Tanbih, in defense of constitutionalism from the Islamic standpoint.¹⁰¹

Like other ulama, Naini was negatively influenced by events that took place after the nationalist' victory. He was so dissatisfied with the constitutional regime that he isolated himself from constitutionalist activities, refused to listen to any discussion about constitutionalism, and even refused to use the word mashrotah (constitutional) anymore.¹⁰² It was reported that he ordered people to collect all copies of his book in defense of constitutionalism, Tanbib, "and to throw them into Tigris River."¹⁰³

We can conclude that, during the Persian Constitutional Revolution, the power and influence of the ulama at first increased and this increase culminated in the forcing of Muzaffar ud-Din Shah to sign the declaration of a constitutional regime in Iran at the end of the summer 1906. Ironically, the victory of constitutionalists under the leadership of the ulama in the summer of 1906 also marked the beginning of the decline in the ulama's power and influence in Iranian political life. This decline continued through the second decade of the twentieth century.

As already discussed, several factors contributed to the increase in the ulama's power and influence during the period which led to the victory of the constitutionalists in 1906. These factors included the impact of the west which was felt in Iran in two

¹⁰¹Ibid., pp. 4-8.

¹⁰²Ibid., p. 124.

¹⁰³Ibid., p. 125.

different ways. First, the cultural impact of the west which was the result of modernization in the west necessitated change in Iran. This was evident during the period of the constitutional movement in 1905 and 1906 when the ulama got fully involved and assumed leadership. Second, the interference of foreign powers and nationalities in Iranian affairs acted an impetus for the ulama's involvement in Iranian politics as we saw in the case of the Naus affairs and the Russian loans.

Another factor which contributed to the increase in the ulama's power and influence during the first period of the Persian constitutional revolution was the unity and effective leadership of the ulama. As has already been mentioned, it can be argued that the forging of the alliance between Bihbahani and Tabatabai marked the start of the constitutional revolution and their leadership and the cooperation of Nuri and other leading ulama of the shrine cities in Iraq was instrumental in bringing about the victory of the revolution.

Finally, the behavior of the king and his advisors also contributed to an increase in the ulama's power and influence in Iran. While Muzaffar ud-Din Shah himself had a weak personality and was aloof from political activities, his chief minister's disrespect for the ulama and their harsh treatment of the ulama gave the ulama a pretext for becoming involved in anti-state activities. We saw, for example, how Ayn ud-Daula on several occasions ordered the beating of the ulama in Tehran, Kerman, and other cities which resulted in more involvement of the ulama in opposing the state. As Algar states,

"This use of force by Ayn ud-Daula against the ulama . . . succeeded only in giving the movement greater momentum."¹⁰⁴

The victory of the Persian Constitutional Revolution of 1906 also marked the beginning of the decline of the ulama's political activities and a decrease in their power and influence in Iran. The factors which contributed to the decline of their power were (1) the discord among the ulama in their support of a constitutional regime for Iran and (2) the emergence of new leaders and a new power base in Iran that is the emergence of the nationalists and secularists as a result of foreign influence.

¹⁰⁴Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran, p. 246.

CHAPTER V

REZA SHAH'S PERIOD - 1921-1941

The gradual decrease of the ulama's power and their departure from political activities started after the Constitutional Revolution and continued into the third decade of the twentieth century. During the Reza Shah era, the ulama's influence gradually declined. The factors that contributed to the fall of the ulama's power and influence included the cultural impact of the west, primarily in the form of new ideas such as nationalism and secularism, the strength of the monarch and central government, and the relative aloofness of the leadership of the ulama from political activities, particularly in opposing the monarch. This chapter will cover the period of Reza Shah. It will examine the nature of his ascent to power starting in 1921 and the way in which he dealt with religious issues and the ulama. In addition, it will examine the impact of foreign influence and the status of the ulama's hierarchy on the power of the ulama during this period.

As indicated in the previous chapter, prior to and during World War I, no strong central government existed in Iran, and Iran was practically at the mercy of foreign powers. Although the government of Iran declared its neutrality during World War I, foreign forces occupied almost all of Iran. The northern part of Iran was occupied by Turkey and Russia, and the northern province of Azarbaijan "became a Russo-Turkish battleground."¹ While most of central Iran was also

¹Richard Cotton, Nationalism in Iran, p. 18.

under the occupation of Russia, the southern part of Iran was under the effective control of the British, primarily through the British South Persian Rifles which was a military force organized and headed by Sir Percy Sykes.² At the same time, the German agents who were active in the south organized tribal revolts against the British in order to undermine British power in Iran and increase German influence.³ The authority of the central government was almost non-existent and "the four important northern provinces of Khorasan, Mazonderan, Gilan, and Azarbaijan were virtually beyond the control of the central government, and government finances were in complete disorder."⁴ By late 1917 foreign troops, primarily British and Russian, occupied nearly all of Iran even though no effective central government and internal security existed.

The Communist Revolution in Russia and the end of World War I did not improve the situation in Iran. Actually the situation in Iran became worse than it had been during World War I.

The Communist government of the Soviet Union withdrew its troops from most parts of Iran as a gesture of good will but returned later in 1920 to the northern province of Gilan.⁵ The British Army also stayed in the south. The central government was so unstable that there were six new cabinets in nineteen months and so ineffective and

²Ibid.

³Nikki Keddie, Roots of Revolution, p. 79.

⁴Richard Cotton, Nationalism in Iran, p. 18.

⁵Homa Katouzian, The Political Economy of Modern Iran, Despotism and Pseudo-Modernism 1926-1979 (New York: New York University Press, 1981), p. 76.

weak that "the European community was fleeing Tehran for the security of the south."⁶ Lack of a strong government also resulted in insecurity among the inhabitants of the cities and rural areas. There were many nationalist uprisings, sometimes with separatist aspirations, including the Jangal Movement in Gilan province, the Khiabani Movement in Tabriz, and the Shaykh Khazal uprising in Khuzistan.⁷ The situation in Iran after World War I was so serious that it seemed Iran was on the verge of collapse and could not survive as an integrated and independent nation. Wilber summarizes the situation and conditions in Iran after World War I as follows:

The situation seemed more serious in every way than during the very difficult years of World War I. At least a hundred thousand people had died from starvation during the years of warfare on Iranian soil, some ten thousand farming villages were deserted, and epidemics were sweeping the country. Food was very scarce at Tehran. It was dangerous to be abroad after dark, and many of the well-to-do stayed at home, surviving on hoarded supplies. Millions of cattle and sheep had vanished, purchased by the British forces or taken by the Russians. Anarchy prevailed over much of the country, and banknotes had lost all value. The regular army and the employees of the government had not been paid for months. . . .

The checks and balances that served to maintain some equilibrium among competing forces within the country had largely broken down, and the cement of traditional society was crumbling away. The process of decay had been active for some years, and the impending dissolution of the established order involved every ethnic element and social group within the country. At the end of 1920, the population of some twelve million was made up of tribesmen, peasants, townsmen, and urban dwellers. The entire peripheral, mountainous area of Persian territory was occupied by tribes of varying size and ethnic background. . . . By 1921 practically every tribal group in Iran had reasserted its independence from central government

⁶Ervand Abrahamian, Iran, Between Two Revolutions, p. 117.

⁷Richard Cotton, Nationalism in Iran, pp. 102-129.

control, although only one or two were in active rebellion.⁸

Against this background of chaos and anarchy, in February 1921 Colonel Reza Khan, the commander of the Cossack brigade, in a coup attempt, reportedly with prior British knowledge and help, marched from the city of Quzvin to the capital Tehran and, without any major resistance and bloodshed, took over whatever was left of the government. He declared marshal law and appointed a journalist, Sayyed Zia-al-Din Tabatabai, as the prime minister. The coup was immediately recognized by the Qajar monarch.⁹

The coup was followed by a plan by Reza Khan to establish himself as the undisputed leader of the nation, to strengthen the central government, and to destroy the existing social order by introducing western reforms. At the same time, he was curbing and eventually eliminating religion and the ulama's influence from Iranian society and political life.

As mentioned in previous chapters, during the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century, the foreign impact on Iran (which was dominated by direct military, political, and economic interference and meddling in Iran's internal affairs) helped to boost the ulama's powers and involvement in political activities. But during the Reza Shah period (1921-1941), direct foreign interference in Iran's internal affairs diminished and was replaced by cultural

⁸Donald Wilber, Reza Shah Pahlavi: The Resurrection and Reconstruction of Iran, (New York: Exposition Press, 1975), pp. 17-19.

⁹Homa Katouzian, The Political Economy of Modern Iran, pp. 79-80.

domination of the west in the form of political, economic, and social reforms. This had an adverse effect on the ulama's power.

Reza Shah's Reform Programs

The process of westernization (the term "westernization" is used in the literature since attempts to modernize Iran originated from the west) of Iran which began in the early nineteenth century triumphed during the period between 1921 to 1941. As Banani states, "She now entered an era in which western influences long felt but never before part of a coherent pattern, came to be of decisive importance. Although Iran was not completely westernized, all changes that took place were motivated by western-inspired ideals."¹⁰

Reza Shah first reformed the army and administration so as to consolidate his position and establish a strong centralized government. Secondly, in order to destroy the old political and social order rooted in the influence of religion and the ulama, Reza Shah introduced a series of major reforms in the judicial system, the educational system, and the administration of religious endowments (vaqfs).

After his coup, Reza Khan became the minister of war. His first aim was to defeat all separatist movements and local uprisings, to extend the authority of the central government to all parts of Iranian territory, and to establish a strong central authority and internal security. To achieve his goals, Reza Khan needed a strong fighting force. When Reza Khan became minister of war, no organized

¹⁰Amin Banani, The Modernization of Iran, 1921-1941 (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1961), p. 45.

army existed; therefore, his first reform was to establish a unified national Army.

This was not the first attempt of an Iranian leader to modernize the army. As mentioned earlier, the first attempt at reforming the army was undertaken by Prince Abbas Mirza in the early nineteenth century. Abbas Mirza's attempts encountered opposition from the ulama and some elements in the court. Other Iranian reformers, such as Amir Kabir in the 1850s, tried in vain to build a strong modernized army by building military schools and hiring foreign advisors.

The first modern Army unit in Iran, the Cossacks, was built by the Russians at the request of Nasir ud-Din Shah in 1878. At the beginning the Cossacks were trained and commanded by Russian officers. Their main duty was to guard the monarch.¹¹ Gradually most of the positions of the Cossack Brigade were filled by Persians, and when Reza Khan attempted his coup in 1921 he was the commander of the Cossack Brigade which numbered about three thousand.¹² At the time of Reza Khan's coup, two other western-trained armed forces existed in Iran besides the Cossack Brigade. One was the gendarmerie, which was an internal security force created with the help of Swedish advisors and commanders after the victory of the Constitutional Revolution.¹³ The other was the South Persian Rifles,

¹¹Joseph M. Upton, The History of Modern Iran An Interpretation (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), pp. 48-49.

¹²Ervand Abrahamian, Iran Between Two Revolutions, p. 117.

¹³Amin Banani, The Modernization of Iran, 1921-1941, p. 53.

a military force which was created and headed by the British to protect their interests in southern Iran.

Thus, at the time of the 1921 coup, no strong modern centralized government army existed in Iran. As a result, many small and large tribal and non-tribal armed groups challenged the central government's authority. To establish his position and his idea of nationalism and to expand the authority of the central government by defeating and disarming the private armies, Reza Khan undertook to build a unified national army. To do so, he first disbanded the South Persian Rifles and used officers and non-commissioned officers from the ranks of the gendarmerie to organize a new army.¹⁴ It was primarily a merger of Cossacks and gendarmes and totaled 40,000 men.¹⁵ From 1921 to 1925, Reza Khan was able to increase his power and defeat virtually all major armed resistance against the central government by increasing the numbers and training of the new army. Consequently, by the year 1925, a relatively stable and strong central government was in place in Tehran which, for the first time in many decades, could exercise its authority throughout Iran.¹⁶

At the same time, a number of foreign officers and advisors were hired by Reza Khan to train the personnel of the new army. At the request of the minister of war, on June 10, 1922, "the majlis appropriated 671,600 French francs. . . to allow sixty candidates to

¹⁴Ibid, p. 55.

¹⁵Ervand Abrahamian, Iran Between Two Revolutions, p. 126.

¹⁶Ibid, p. 120, and Banani, The Modernization of Iran, 1921-1941, p. 56.

be sent to French military academies."¹⁷ After training officers and non-commissioned officers, Reza Khan proposed a universal military training program in which "every male citizen should be drafted at the age of 21 for twenty-five years of military service. This period includes: two years in active duty. . . four years in the active reserve; six years in the primary reserve . . ."¹⁸ This compulsory military conscription was passed by the majlis on June 6, 1925.¹⁹

As Reza Shah stayed in power, he further expanded the army forces. During the 1920s and early 1930s, a number of aircraft was purchased for military purposes and a group of Iranians was sent to Russia and France for pilot training. A modern Iranian navy was also created and a number of destroyers and gunboats were purchased from Italy.²⁰ "As the result of Reza Shah's efforts, a westernized army of nearly 400,000 men could be mobilized by 1941."²¹

During the first five years after Reza Khan's coup of 1921, he served as war minister and then as Prime Minister. Finally after establishing a strong army and defeating all the armed groups and overpowering other politicians and opponents, in December 1925 Reza Khan convened a Constitutional Assembly to remove the Qajar dynasty

¹⁷Amin Banani, The Modernization of Iran, 1921-1941, p. 55.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid., p. 57.

²¹Ibid.

and officially declare himself the new monarch of Iran.²² Reza Khan became Reza Shah Pahlavi, the founder of the Pahlavi dynasty.

Prior to Reza Shah's coming into power, no proper administrative institutions and organization existed. The administrators lacked any formal training and consisted primarily of the sons and relatives of the shah and his ministers. As a result, "Arbitrary and entirely free from any legal restrictions, the government was nevertheless powerless in the discharge even of its normal functions."²³

In order to end the chaos and bureaucratic inefficiency of the existing government administration and to turn the administrative system into a tool for building a strong central government under his control and to expand the authority of the government throughout the country, Reza Shah introduced a series of measures to reform the civil service. The first move was made in December 1922 when the majlis passed the first law regulating civil service in Iran. "Based on western models, this law established age, nationality, education, and character qualifications for prospective civil servants."²⁴ The new reform law, for example, required entrance examinations, outlined a table of ranks, and set penalties for corruption.²⁵

Another feature of Reza Shah's administrative reform was geographic and administrative division of the country. Traditionally,

²²Donald Wilber, Reza Shah Pahlavi: The Resurrection and Reconstruction of Iran, p. 107.

²³Amin Banani, The Modernization of Iran 1921-1941, p. 58.

²⁴Ibid., p. 59.

²⁵Ibid.

Iran was divided into several large provinces and "innumerable small districts." Reza Shah abolished this arrangement. By the successive laws of November 1937 and January 1938 Iran was divided into eleven provinces (ostans), forty-nine counties (shahrestors), numerous municipalities (bakhshs), and rural districts (dehestans) under the jurisdiction of the interior ministry.²⁶ The laws also defined the duties of the various local officials. The government had hired foreign advisors as early as October 1922 to help with the implementation of westernization programs.²⁷ As a result of Reza Shah's administrative reforms, "for the first time in the modern era, the hand of the state reached out from the capital into the provincial towns, counties, and even some large villages."²⁸

Although Reza Shah did not have any formal political education and "never formulated a systematic blueprint for modernization," it is evident that he was working in part "for an Iran which, on the one hand would be free of clerical influence, foreign intrigue, nomadic uprisings and ethnic differences and on the other hand, would contain European-styled educational institutions . . . (and) . . . westernized women active outside the home. . . his long-range goal was to rebuild Iran in the image of the west--or, at any rate, in his own image of the west."²⁹ His way of achieving his objectives was

²⁶Ervand Abrahamian, Iran, Between Two Revolutions, p. 136.

²⁷Amin Banani, The Modernization of Iran 1921-1941, p. 60.

²⁸Ervand Abrahamian, Iran, Between Two Revolutions, p. 137.

²⁹Ibid., p. 140.

primarily through secularism and nationalism. This is evident in the literature published during the period when he ruled Iran.

One example of such literature was the articles which appeared in the influential Journal of Iranshahr (country of Iran) which was published in Berlin from 1922 until 1927. The nationalistic, secular, and anti-religious attitude of the publishers of the journal is evident in many articles including the article on "Religion and Nationality" which states that "the problem of communalism is so serious that whenever an Iranian traveling abroad is asked his nationality he will give his locality. . . . We must eliminate local sects, local dialects, local clothes, local customs, and local sentiments." Another article argued that Iran could not make any progress as long as it was dominated by the "shackles" of the "superstitious" and "reactionary" ulama.³⁰

In another paper, Farangistan (Europe), which was published from 1924 to 1926, articles with similar contents appeared. One article, for example, stated that "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."³¹ It is worth mentioning that both papers were published in Europe but had wide circulation among the intelligentsia in Iran.

³⁰Ibid., p. 123.

³¹Ibid., p. 124.

In building a strong nation based on the principles of nationalism and secularism, Reza Shah, who confronted opposition from the ulama, tribal leaders, and other local armed groups, had to wait to consolidate his power before implementing his secularist reforms. Young states that "one of the most significant features of this revolutionary nationalism was the acceptance of the principle of secularization. This trend did not clearly emerge, however, until after the coronation of Reza in 1926 and the consolidation of his power."³² After reforming the armed forces he was able to use army as his power base. He further strengthened his position by adding administrative reforms which enabled him to implement his policies and expand his authority throughout Iran. It was at this stage that he felt powerful enough to show his true intention of building a secularist state free of religion and free of the influence of the ulama. To do this, he introduced new reforms and laws in three areas of government which were traditionally dominated by the ulama and by religious laws. The first area was the legal and judicial system. In the first chapter we discussed the doctrinal bases of the ulama's power regarding legal and judicial matters. By relying on various sources from the Qran and hadith, Shii jurisprudence considers the ulama and religious authorities to be the dominant element in the judicial system in the Shii community. One such source is a hadith from the sixth Shii Imam, Jafar al-Sadig, in which he says that "There is no permission for a plaintiff and a defendant to seek

³²T. Cogler Young, "The Problem of Westernization in Modern Iran," The Middle East Journal, January 1948, p. 53.

judgment from a secular ruler or judge because they are off the right path (tagut). Even if one receives back his own property through their judgments, he should not be allowed to use it. God has ordered his servants to rebel against these judges."³³ Therefore, throughout Shii history the religious laws and the ulama have been an inseparable part of the legal and judicial process of Shii communities. During the Qajar dynasty and before Reza Shah came into power, a judicial system dominated by the ulama existed in Iran. It was divided into two parts: "urf or customary law administered by the civil authorities and the shar or religious law administered by the ulama."³⁴ Algar summarizes this division of the Iranian judicial system as the following:

. . . duality of the judicial system was inherited from the Safavid and was not amended until the introduction of the first civil code in 1911. The courts presided over by the ulama were known as shar courts, with the law dispensed being that evolved by Shii Islam; the system of law controlled by the State was called urf. Urf has been called common law or law of precedent, but since no records of proceedings were kept, and since the verdicts delivered were not necessarily committed to writing, it is difficult to see what basis of precedent could have been referred to. . . . Although there was no precise demarcation of the respective jurisdictions of urf and shar, it is possible to ascertain a certain division: the former dealt primarily with offenses directed against the state or public security, such as rebellion, embezzlement, forgery of coins, in thief . . . and drunkenness; the shar courts were concerned more with disputes and litigations of a personal or commercial nature. Theft and drunkenness might, however, come within the jurisdiction of a shar court."³⁵

³³Abdul-Hadi Hairi, Shiism and Constitutionalism in Iran, p. 59.

³⁴Guity Nashat, The Origins of Modern Reforms in Iran 1870-80, p. 43.

³⁵Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906, pp. 12-13.

During the rule of the Qajar dynasty (1785-1925), there were many attempts by the court to limit and control the judicial power of the shar courts. Such reforms were introduced, for example, by Nasir ud-Din Shah's ministers, including Amir Kabir and Mirza Husayn Khan Sipahsalar. In the year 1872 Sipahsalar, as minister of justice, introduced some measures which included the appointment of mujtahids to shar courts to exert his control over the ulama's judicial influence; he also forbade some forms of penalties imposed by shar courts and thus weakened their power. "We see here, moreover, one of the earliest examples of legislation directly contrary to the shariat. . . now the state sought to extend its powers even at the cost of implicitly abandoning pretensions to religious sanctions."³⁶ Because of the tremendous influence of the ulama and the weakness of the government, most of these efforts ended in failure. The first major attempt to create a secular legal system was the fundamental law of 1906 and its supplement of 1907. But the fundamental law and its supplement were opposed by intense pressure from the popular ulama and religious leaders. After long sessions of debates the nationalists reluctantly recognized the power and influence of religion and the ulama in the legal and judicial system. This is, in part, evident in the first two articles of the supplementary Fundamental Law of 1907 which states in article one that:

The official religion of Persia is Islam, according to the orthodox jafari doctrine of Ithn Ashariyya, which henceforth the shah of Persia must profess and promote. Art. 2. At no time must any legal enactment of the sacred National Consultive Assembly [i.e., majlis] . . . be at

³⁶Ibid., p. 170.

variance with the sacred rules of Islam or the laws established by His Holiness the Best of Mankind [i.e., the Prophet]. It is hereby declared that it is for the learned doctors of theology [i.e., ulama] . . . to determine whether such laws as may be proposed are or are not conformable to the rules of Islam. . . .³⁷

By 1926 Reza Shah had created a national army and a more effective administrative system, but the ulama's power was still great. No major reforms had been made in the judicial system which was still dominated by religion and the ulama. In that year Reza Shah undertook several major and fundamental measures to secularize the judicial system. As mentioned earlier, article two of the supplementary Fundamental Law of 1907 "clearly had stipulated the illegitimacy of laws passed by the Parliament that contravened the sharia (Islamic law)." Therefore, at the beginning of his judicial reforms Reza Shah acted cautiously in order not to antagonize the ulama and labeled the early reforms (such as the 1926 introduction of a new civil code by the minister of justice, Davor) "temporary" and "provisional."³⁸ Then in early 1927 Reza Shah dissolved the old ministry of justice, and in April of the same year the clerical officials of the old ministry lost their jobs to the mostly western-educated personnel of the new ministry of justice.³⁹ On May 8, 1928, the civil code was ratified by the parliament. It was "in

³⁷Richard H. Pfaff, "Disengagement from Traditionalism in Turkey and Iran," Western Political Quarterly 16(1), 1963, p. 84.

³⁸Shahrough Akhavi, Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran: Clergy-State Relations in the Pahlavi Period (Albany: State University of New York Press, 198_), p. 39.

³⁹Amin Banani, The Modernization of Iran 1921-1941, p. 70.

effect . . . a secularization of the shariah."⁴⁰ In the years following, further legislation was passed by the majlis restricting the ulama's power even more. For example, in November 1931, a law was passed which provided that "only the state courts and the office of the Attorney General" could approve referral of any case to the shar courts and any religious tribunal.⁴¹ As a result, with few exceptions, such as matters related to marriage and divorce, cases should first be reviewed by the state courts and the Office of the Attorney General, and then with their approval the cases could be passed to the religious courts. Thus, in effect, the "shar courts came under the supervision of the Attorney General."⁴²

Final blows to the judicial position of the ulama came in the 1930s. First there was the enactment of a law by the majlis in March 1932 "concerning the registration of documents and property."⁴³ This law took away certain powers exercised by the shar courts including the registration of legal documents such as affidavits, the power of attorney and power over property titles.⁴⁴ As a result, the shar courts and, consequently, the ulama were stripped of a great deal of legal power. Moreover, some of the ulama lost a major source of revenue. In fact, it is reported this caused some members of the

⁴⁰Shahrough Akhavi, Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran, p. 39.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 39.

⁴²Ibid., pp. 39-40.

⁴³Amin Banani, The Modernization of Iran 1921-1941, p. 72.

⁴⁴Ibid.

ulama to abandon "the robe and seek secular employment."⁴⁵ Second, legislation which completed the "permanent secularization and westernization" of the Iranian judicial system was passed by the majlis on December 27, 1936. This law eliminated a large number of the ulama from judicial positions by setting the following qualifications for judges:

1. [judges must hold] a degree from the Tehran faculty of law or a foreign university, attesting to three years or more of legal study.

2. Former judges of the ministry of justice who do not possess such a degree must pass special examinations in Iranian and foreign law in order to remain in the employ of the ministry, and at any rate may not rise above the rank of six on a promotion scale of eleven ranks.⁴⁶

By the late 1930s the growing body of legislation aimed at secularizing the judicial system had drastically reduced the power of the ulama in legal matters, and they had been deprived of one of the main sources of the power which they had held in Iranian society throughout the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century. As Banani indicates, Reza Shah was motivated to introduce legislation such as that of 1936 by a desire to separate religion and state and to decrease the influence of the ulama "and not by a consideration of the needs of the new system and the effects that such legislation would have."⁴⁷

The educational system in Iran was another area which, prior to Reza Shah's period, was dominated by the ulama. Before the

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 73.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid.

Constitutional Revolution in Iran, modern schools were almost non-existent, and the ulama were in control of all educational matters from selection of material to teaching. "The school in its institutional sense did not exist. Elementary education was confined to the maktab, a single classroom, with one akhund (clergyman) as a teacher. He was totally free of any governmental or even professional control. He did not have to meet any professional requirements and was not supervised by a professional hierarchy. In the cities and towns the akhund often simply opened a maktab where the neighborhood needed and could support one."⁴⁸ The students consisted of children between the ages of seven and twelve and the subjects included Persian, Arabic, Quran, and sometimes arithmetic.⁴⁹ For higher education, those who had talents and could afford it would join the madresas (the religious schools) which were also totally under the control and guidance of the ulama. The subjects primarily consisted of Islamic jurisprudence, philosophy, ethics, and so forth. Thus, the educational system, independent from the state, was completely under the control of the religious hierarchy.

The first major attempt to introduce a modern educational system was undertaken by Amir Kabir in 1851 when he founded Dar ul-Funun, a school which was modeled after the French polytechnic school.⁵⁰ Other Nasir ud-Din Shah's ministers, like Mirza Huseyn Khan, also

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 86.

⁴⁹Guity Nashat, The Origins of Modern Reform in Iran 1870-1880, p. 146.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 147.

opened a few modern schools.⁵¹ But the first systematic attempt by the government to create an organized and unified educational structure came in 1898 "when the council for national schools was founded."⁵² By the turn of the century, many new modern schools had started to flourish in Tehran and several other major cities. Some of the leading ulama like "Hasan Ashtiani . . . opposed the new type of school, declaring that it would bring about a weakening of religious faith."⁵³

While some politicians and western-educated intellectuals advocated reform of the Iranian educational system and the establishment of modern schools and some reform measures were passed by the majlis during the first and second decades of twentieth century, no fundamental reforms of the sort necessary to create a modern educational system were undertaken prior to Reza Shah's period. Reza Shah realized from the beginning that in order to pursue his policy of nationalism and secularism, he needed an educational system free of the ulama's influence. Therefore, the reform of the educational system became a major goal. In 1921 he created the high council of education for the purpose of establishing a modern system of education in line with the systems found in Europe.⁵⁴ Two of the duties of the high council of education, as set forth in its charter, were "[to give] serious consideration to the

⁵¹Ibid., p. 148.

⁵²Amin Banani, The Modernization of Iran 1921-1941, p. 89.

⁵³Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran 1785-1905, p. 224.

⁵⁴Amin Banani, The Modernization of Iran 1921-1941, p. 92.

curriculum of schools in Europe" and "to prepare a curriculum for teacher training colleges for men and women." Other tasks of this council were to "discipline, reform, and supervise the teaching in maktabas."⁵⁵ From the beginning, Reza Shah's aim was to create a uniform national system of education under the control of the central government to regulate the content of the texts and to set qualifications and criteria for teachers which would eliminate the ulama from the educational system. The government's reform program included: (1) introducing structured primary, secondary, and higher education systems; (2) introducing new subjects such as history, literature, foreign languages, astronomy, psychology, anatomy, geometry, zoology, economics, natural sciences and so on; (3) hiring foreign instructors; (4) sending students abroad; (5) preparing and publishing textbooks; and (6) creating teacher's colleges for training instructors. Reza Shah's educational reform also included the formation of technical colleges and the first modern university in Iran.⁵⁶

To further decrease the ulama's power, Reza Shah's government passed laws to regulate and bring under the control of the government the madrasas, the schools of religious learning that were totally independent of the state. The government, by introducing laws and regulations in 1928 and 1929, set up new criteria, standards, and examinations for determining who would be accepted by the state as students and teachers of religious sciences (tullab). For example,

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid., pp. 92-103.

article 14 of an administrative decree circulated in January 1929 stated that:

The religious students mentioned in paragraph 6 of Article 2 of the [uniformity of DRESS] Law are considered those who have been continually studying fig and usul [jurisprudence and the principles of jurisprudence] and to whom the Ministry of Education shall, by special administrative decree, have given a diploma attesting to their status as students of the religious science [tullab].

According to article 15:

Teachers of fig and usul and hikmat-i-ilahi [theology] as mentioned in Paragraph seven of Article 2 of the law are considered those who have been given the diploma of instruction from one of the marji-uitaglid or by the Ministry of Education; and who have been continually teaching."⁵⁷

Thus, by introducing new regulations, the education ministry tightened its control over the "matriculation and graduation of students." By requiring certification of teachers the government attempted to control the educational procedures of the ulama themselves. By the 1930s such regulations enabled the state to oversee and supervise some of the administrative processes related to ulama's education. Eventually these government regulations resulted in a decrease in the number of madresas and the number of students and teachers in the religious schools.⁵⁸

The overall result of Reza Shah's reforms was the establishment of a uniform, modern, western educational system in Iran under the direct control of the ministry of education. By the end of the 1930s, there was a drastic increase in the number of modern schools

⁵⁷Shahrugh Akhari, Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran, pp. 43-44.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 45.

and students at the expense of the religious schools and maktabas. For example, "in 1925, there had been no more than 55,960 children enrolled in 648 modern primary schools administered by state officials, private boards, religious communities, or foreign missionaries. By 1941, there were more than 287,245 children in 2336 modern primary schools, almost all administered by the Ministry of Education."⁵⁹ A like increase was recorded in the secondary schools. On the other hand, during the same period, while the number of maktabas recorded a slight increase, "the number of theology students in the traditional *madresas* declined sharply, from 5984 to 785."⁶⁰

Thus, as a result of Reza Shah's educational reform, the education system which was once under the total control of the *ulama* became a unified system under the control of the central government. The *ulama* were deprived of another major source of their power and influence in Iranian political life.

Reza Shah also tried to weaken the *ulama's* financial position. As we mentioned earlier, one of the main reason for the Shii *ulama's* power and their independence from the state was their financial situation. Support was primarily contributed by the people, and thus the *ulama* were financially independent of the state. The main part of their contributions went to *vaqf* (or inalienable endowment).

Vaqf property was in the form of farms, gardens, houses, *madresas*, shops, lands which were attached to shrines and mosques, and also "the various grants of an individual and of a voluntary

⁵⁹Ervand Abrahamian, Iran, Between Two Revolutions, pp. 144-145.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*

nature which were given to"⁶¹ the ulama. This form of contribution which was practiced by Shii muslims throughout their history resulted in an accumulation of vast amounts of vaqf property throughout Iranian villages, towns, and cities. One such vaqf property, for example, was the land and other forms of property attached to the Shrine of the Imam Riza, the eighth Shii Imam, in Mashhad. According to Lord Curzon's estimates during his visit to Iran in 1890, the income derived from just property vaqfs attached to the Shrine of Imam Reza totaled "at 60,000 tomans, and the total ratinve connected with the buildings of the Shrine at 2000."⁶²

During the Qajar dynasty, the ulama were able to restore the vaqf institutions which had been badly hurt as a result of the Afghan invasion of Iran in the eighteenth century and to consolidate their control over the administration of vaqf property. Because the people contributed the land and other vaqf properties for religious purposes and the ulama were powerful during the Qajar period, the government did not challenge the ulama's authority over the issue of vaqf and no major dispute between the state and the ulama existed.⁶³

To deprive the ulama of their financial independence and to cut off a major source of their income and thus reduce their number and power, Reza Shah's government introduced measures which increased the government's involvement in and control over the administrative process of vaqf. Several laws were enacted, including those of 1928,

⁶¹Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906, p. 14.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Ibid., pp. 14-15.

1934, and 1935, which broadened the jurisdiction of the Department of Endowments at the expense of auqaf (the plural of vaqf). The administrative control of the government over auqaf increased, and rules were made concerning what property should be considered vaqf. Articles 41-45 of the 1935 law dealt with cases "where the proceeds . . . (of endowment properties) . . . could no longer be used for the purpose originally stipulated in the deed . . .; and where properties were endowed for purely charitable purposes. . . ."64 The new law stated that revenues of this sort should be used for:

1. Construction of debistans (secular primary schools	40%
2. Purchase of school supplies and clothes for needy students	10%
3. Aide for public welfare, the common good, the Red Lion and Sun City Society	20%
4. Public education	10%
5. Publication of "useful" books	10%
6. Unanticipated expenses	10%65

Thus, by introducing new regulations the government was able to restrict the control of the vaqf properties by the ulama and to divert the revenues from vaqf properties to secular purposes. These regulations reduced the role of the ulama in the administrative process of auqaf and deprived them of a major source of income.

The Response of the Ulama to Reza Shah's Reforms

So far we have discussed areas where Reza Shah was able to reduce the ulama's power greatly by introducing reforms. These included the army, the administrative system, the judicial system,

⁶⁴Shahrugh Akhavi, Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran, pp. 56-57.

⁶⁵Ibid., pp. 57-58.

the educational system, and financial institutions. What was the ulama's reaction to Reza Shah's policies? Did the ulama actively resist Reza Shah's plans which weakened the ulama and eventually put them on the defensive?

From the time of Reza Shah's military coup, there was opposition to his policies. After his intentions became clear, the opposition increased and on many occasions, the ulama tried to prevent the implementations of his policies. Usually the ulama's opposition was violently crushed by Reza Shah; but, in the early part of Reza Khan's reign, sometimes the ulama's opposition was successful. One example was his campaign in 1924 for republicanism in Iran.

As we mentioned earlier, after Reza Shah came to power in 1921 he was able to consolidate his position and gradually move to higher positions in the government. In 1923, he became the prime minister. The idea of republicanism in Iran became a political issue, and in 1924 a concerted campaign was waged in favor of republicanism by the Iranian media and in public meetings. "Early in March Reza Khan took direct initiative, calling to his residence several of the deputies, whom he asked to work in favor of a republic, saying that he would supply sixty thousand tomans for their expenses."⁶⁶ With the moral and material support of Reza Shah, public meetings and demonstrations in support of republicanism in Iran were staged in Tehran. Furthermore, pressure was brought on the members of the majlis to produce legislation in favor of an Iranian republic.

⁶⁶Donal Wilber, Reza Shah Pahlavi, p. 76.

The ulama were familiar with the republican experience in Turkey in which the Turkish republic abolished the caliphate and secular policies were implemented by Ataturk. Thus, the opposition headed by the ulama, "some of whom associated a republic with the secularist and relatively radical policies of Ataturk in Turkey,"⁶⁷ staged a vigorous fight against republicanism.

The anti-republic campaign was headed by the ulama under the leadership of Hasan Mudarres, an able and powerful mujtahid who was also a member of the parliament.

Reza Shah tried to exert pressure on members of the parliament to vote for a bill establishing a republic. A minority group under the leadership of Mudarres resisted the move and staged a fight to prevent such action. During one of the heated debates in the parliament regarding republicanism, one of the pro-Reza Shah deputies, Husyan Bahromi, slapped Mudarres's face.⁶⁸ This action, which was an insult to the ulama and the religious people, resulted in many anti-republican demonstrations.⁶⁹ The guild elders organized a general strike in the Tehran bazaar and a large group of people gathered in the central mosque shouting one main slogan: "We want to keep the religion of our fathers, we don't want a republic. We are the people of the Koran, we don't want a republic."⁷⁰ On the other

⁶⁷Nikki Keddie, Roots of Revolution, p. 91.

⁶⁸Husayn Makki, Mudarres. Ghahraman-i Azadi (Tehran: Nashr-i Katab, 1979), p. 276.

⁶⁹Ibid, p. 277.

⁷⁰Ervand Abrahamian, Iran, Between Two Revolutions, p. 134.

hand, a small group of republican supporters who numbered a few hundred and were mostly government workers staged their own demonstrations. "Observing the imbalance between the two demonstrations and the danger of public disturbance, Reza Khan promptly compromised."⁷¹

To quiet the opposition to his government and to control the disturbances that resulted from his republican campaign, Reza Khan went to the holy city of Gum and had an audience with the leading ulama, Ayatullahs Hairi, Isfahani, and Naini. After the meeting, the following telegram by these ulama was sent to the ulama of Tehran:

There have been expressed certain ideas concerning a republican form of government which are not to the satisfaction of the masses and inappropriate to the needs of the country. Thus when His Excellency, the Prime Minister . . . came to Qumin . . . to say goodbye [to the exiled mujtahids], we requested the elimination of this rubric [of republicanism]. The abolition of the above-mentioned expressed ideas and the proclamation of this to the whole country. He has accepted this⁷²

After the meeting, Reza Shah issued a statement stressing his devotion to Islam and declared that his "only personal aim and method from the beginning has been and is to preserve and guard the majesty of Islam and the independence of Iran." In another part of the statement, Reza Khan said, ". . . I and all the people in the army have, from the very beginning, regarded the preservation and protection of the dignity of Islam to be one of the greatest duties and kept before us the idea that Islam always progress and be exalted

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Shahrough Akhavi, Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran, p. 29.

and that respect for the standing of the religious institution be fully observed and preserved. . . ."73

Thus, the ulama were victorious in their first major confrontation with Reza Khan. They were able to force Reza Khan to abandon the idea of republicanism. Not only did Reza Khan abandon republicanism in order to calm the rising public opinion against him but also he tactfully met with the leading ulama and proclaimed himself a religious person whose main goal was the preservation of Islam.

This show of power by the ulama made Reza Shah more cautious in his subsequent actions, but not for long. In 1925 after Reza Khan had declared himself the new shah of Iran and had gradually consolidated his position, his anti-religion policies became more evident. Homa Katouzian summarized his attitude toward religion as follows:

Reza Shah's religious persecutions had two real aims, and none other: to destroy Iranian Shiism, and its practices as shameful evidence for the backwardness of his great Argen country; and to remove any independent social institution, and all autonomous channels of public association and communication. The customary public processions during the first ten days of the Islamic month of Muharram, in which the Shiite faithful mourn the martyrdom of Imam Musian, were outlawed. Furthermore, all religious gatherings where the preacher relates the life and works of Muhammad and the Shiite martyrs (especially Imam Hu Sain and his father, Imam Ali) were banned, both in mosques and in private houses, all the year round. Indeed, if a preacher was seen running during the Muharram Peak Period, he was in danger of arrest and suspicion that he was bound for a secretly held gathering of this sort (commonly called rawzeh khani). At times, houses in which people were mourning their newly dead relatives were raided on the presumption that they were holding a rawzeh-khani "session." Every Muharram many people would end up in police stations on true or false charges of holding such a session in their own homes. So

⁷³Ibid., pp. 29-30.

successful was pseudo-modernization in Iran that members of the gendarmerie could loot and rape the peasants with impunity by day; and people were arrested for holding religious meetings in their own homes at night!⁷⁴

As a result of Reza Shah's anti-religious policies, there were occasional protests and demonstrations against his rule which resulted in violence. One example is the protest against the uniformity of dress law. In line with other anti-religious and pro-western policies, Reza Shah introduced the Uniformity of Dress Law of December 1928 which provided for "the mandatory abandonment of traditional garb for western dress for men, and the removal of the veil for women."⁷⁵ Not only were the provisions of the dress law contrary to Shii beliefs and supportive of western values, but also the law was intended to put pressure on the ulama to abandon their traditional dress. As a result of the Uniformity of Dress Law, the abuse and harassment of students of the madrasah by government officials were legitimated. This "official harassments on a wide scale" resulted in many incidents of arrest and bloodshed. "Part of the harassment entailed the surrounding of the town's major madrasah, the Fayziyah, and preventing student egress from its precincts. It also involved roughing up the tullab on city streets and stripping them of their traditional clothes."⁷⁶ This government policy and the resulting violent behavior forced the cautious Ayatollah Hairi, the

⁷⁴Homa Katouzian, The Political Economy of Modern Iran, p. 128.

⁷⁵Shahrugh Akhavi, Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran, p. 42.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 44.

leading mujtahid of Qum, to protest against the Reza Shah's actions.

He sent a telegram to Reza Shah which states in part:

Although I have up to now not interfered in any [political] matter, I hear that steps are being taken that are openly contradictory to the jafari path and the law of Islam [in the face of which] it is difficult for me to restrain myself and remain tolerant.⁷⁷

Reza Shah ignored Hairi's warning and pursued his policy of forcefully changing the traditional dress of men and eventually forcefully unveiling women. Of course, people resisted these policies, and in some instances there were violent protests. The major one happened on July 12, 1935, on the anniversary of the shelling of Imam Reza's shrine by the Russians in 1911. A large group of people gathered within the courts of the shrine. One of the ulama, Shaykh Bohlul, used the occasion "to make strong attack on the innovations of Reza Shah, including the European hat and the movement for the unveiling of women."⁷⁸ The crowd responded enthusiastically. The local police refused to disperse the demonstrators, and the governor general sent a wire to Tehran explaining the situation. Finally, on July 14, when the shrine courts were still full of people about two thousand soldiers moved into positions surrounding the courts and opened fire with machine guns "and between four hundred and five hundred people were killed," hundreds of arrests were made, and a number of ulama were banished from Mashhad,⁷⁹ thus violently crushing the opposition.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Donald Wilber, Reza Shah Pahlavi, p. 166.

⁷⁹Ibid, p. 167.

There were also other confrontations between the ulama and Reza Shah's government including the ulama's opposition to Reza Shah's reform of the Army. After the passage of the compulsory conscription law, "a number of the ulama including mudarres in separate fatvas declared that, ". . . military service endangered the principles of Shiism and the fundamentals of Islam."⁸⁰ Later on during 1926-1927, a number of ulama from Tehran took sanctuary in Qum and the guilds also organized strikes in many cities including Tehran, Qum, Qazvin, and Isfahan. The government retreated, promising to change the conscription law. But as usual, when the government felt secure it broke its promise. ". . . The promise to limit conscription was broken within six years."⁸¹

Therefore, as can be seen, there were occasions when the ulama and the people rose against government policies. At the beginning when Reza Shah had not completely consolidated his power, the ulama were able to force him to change his policies in the case of the republican campaign. While at times the ulama were able to bring about temporary changes in government decisions, most of the time Reza Shah by the use of force savagely crushed public protests against his policies, as in the incident of Imam Reza's shrine.

The Status of the Religious Hierarchy

The status of the religious hierarchy also contributed to the fall of the ulama's power during the period of Reza Shah. As

⁸⁰Ervand Abrahamian, Iran, Between Two Revolutions, p. 131.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 152.

mentioned earlier, during the Tobacco Protests the unity of the ulama's leadership and the existence of the undisputed and charismatic leadership of Mirza Hasan Shiraz greatly increased the ulama's power to force changes in state policy. During the first part of the Constitutional Revolution, though a sole marja taqlid did not exist and one mujtahid could not claim the leadership of the ulama and the Shii community in Iran, the majority of the ulama in Iran and the shrine cities of Iraq were united in their actions against the government and their demand for a constitutional form of government. It was the unity of action of the leading ulama of Tehran, Fadlullah Nuri, Tabatabai, and Behbahani and the support of the leading ulama of the shrine cities of Iraq, Khurasani, Tehrani, and Mazandarani which resulted in victory of the Constitutional Revolution and triumph of the ulama.

But during the period of Reza Shah, the situation was different. The majority of those ulama who participated in the Constitutional Revolution and its aftermath were dead. Most of the leading ulama either choose to cooperate with the government or separate themselves from political activities and concern themselves with research and teaching.

In 1920 a mujtahid, Shaykh Abd-al Karim Hairi Yazdi (d. 1937), moved from Arak (a town about 170 miles southwest of Tehran) to the holy city of Qum⁸² and eventually became the leading Ayatollah in

⁸²Shahrourgh Akhari, Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran, p. 27.

Iran and assumed the leadership of the Shii community in Iran.⁸³

As we mentioned earlier, Hairi separated himself from political issues and rarely confronted the authorities. The two other leading ulama who resided in the shrine cities of Iran and had a status similar to Ayatollah Hairi were Ayatollah's Mirza Mohammad Husayn Naini (d. 1936) and Sayyid Abu al-Hasan Isfahani (d. 1945). Naini and Isfahani not only did not confront Reza Shah but, on many occasions, supported him especially at the beginning of his rule when Reza Shah pretended to be a religious person. This support by Isfahani and Naini is evident on several occasions including when Naini promised Reza Khan ". . . to summon Mudarris to Kum with the object of trying to persuade him to lessen his opposition to Reza Khan on the subject of the republic."⁸⁴ On another occasion, Naini sent a letter of thanks to Reza Khan for his help in assisting Naini's return to Iran from exile in 1924. The letter also contained a portrait of Imam Ali as a gift for Reza Shah, which resulted in a negative reaction on the part of the ulama of Tehran.⁸⁵ According to Abdul-Hadi Hairi, "By writing this supporting letter and sending the 'blessed' portrait Naini contributed a great deal to the Sardor Sipah's (Reza Khan) power." Hairi furthermore states that "enjoying

⁸³Abdul-Hadi Hairi, Shiism and Constitutionalism in Iran, pp. 63-65.

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 144.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 145.

the support and cooperation of Naini and perhaps Isfahani, the Sardar Sipah took serious actions to depose the Qajar shah."⁸⁶

Thus, it is evident that during the period of Reza Shah, the leading ulama either did not concern themselves with political matters or if they chose to do so, on occasions they supported the government as Naini did. And the few prominent ulama, like Mudarris, who fought Reza Shah's policies vigorously, were isolated and unable to assemble support among other leading ulama. As a result of his outspoken opposition to Reza Shah and a lack of active support from the other leading ulama, Mudarris was arrested and imprisoned by Reza Shah in 1929 and murdered nine years later ". . . in cold blood, on the direct orders of Reza Shah himself."⁸⁷ Thus, the lack of unity and charismatic leadership with political commitment during the period of Reza Shah also contributed to the fall of the ulama's influence in Iranian political life.

Thus, we can conclude that during the period of Reza Shah (1921-1941) the ulama's influence and participation in political activities continued the gradual decline which had started after the Constitutional Revolution of 1906, well before the period of Reza Shah. As Akhavi says:

The ulama's capacity for active protest against Riza Shah's efforts was confined to the behavior of Ayatollah Hasan Mudarris in the Majlis. But even he was silenced when he was arrested in the fall of 1928 and exiled to eastern Iran. Indicative of the entropy of the religious institution in its relationship to the state was the

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 146.

⁸⁷Homa Katouzian, The Political Economy of Modern Iran, p. 123.

devastating decline in majlis deputies with clergy background:

'Whereas the ulama constituted forty percent of the deputies in the sixth majlis [1926-1928] and around thirty percent in the seventh [1930-1932], the eleventh majlis which met in 1937 did not include even a single well-known and important figure from the ulama.'⁸⁸

The factors which contributed to the decline of the ulama's power during the period of Reza Shah included foreign influence and the ruler's behavior. During this period foreign influence in Iran was for the most part cultural. It resulted in the creation of a new breed of leaders and politicians with nationalist and secularist ideologies. By using foreign methods and advisors Reza Shah was able to create a strong army and make significant administrative reforms. He was also able to establish a strong central government, eliminate his enemies, and emerge as a powerful leader.

Later on Reza Shah, by taking advantage of the power which flowed from the strong army and security force, implemented reform policies which were borrowed from the west. As we have already indicated, his reform programs were in areas where the ulama had enjoyed a great amount of influence. These included the judicial system, the education system, and the administrative process of auqaf. As a result of these reforms the ulama lost a great deal of power, and since the government was strong it was able to implement its policies and violently crush any opposition from the ulama.

As already indicated, the attitudes of the shah and his advisors were anti-religion and anti-ulama, but since at the beginning of his

⁸⁸Shahrough Akhavi, Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran, p. 59.

reign the ulama were still powerful and he had not consolidated his position yet, he pretended that he was a religious person. When the shah strengthened his position and the ulama's influence decreased, the government adopted more visible anti-religion policies, such as the unveiling of women and the prevention of religious gatherings. Eventually by his reform policies he prevented the involvement of the ulama and religion in political matters. This resulted in a decrease of the ulama's political activities and power.

Finally, the lack of strong politically oriented ulama in the religion hierarchy contributed to the decrease of the ulama's power. The most influential Shi'i ulama either, like Hairi, separated themselves from political matters or, like Naini, on occasion gave their support to Reza Shah. Thus, the lack of a charismatic leader with political aspirations among the leadership of the ulama contributed to a substantial decrease in the ulama's influence and power during the period of Reza Shah.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

The study of the role of the ulama during the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century in Iran indicates that the ulama and religious hierarchy were an inseparable part of the political, social, and economic process of Iran and played a significant role in influencing and shaping politics in Iran during this period.

The ulama, who in accordance with Shii belief have a significant role in the political affairs of Shii Muslim communities, received a major boost when Shah Ismail, the founder of the Safavid dynasty, proclaimed "Ithna Asheri" Shii the official religion of the Safavid state in the sixteenth century. After consolidating its power during the Safavid era by building a network of mosques and madrasas and becoming financially independent from the state, the religious hierarchy became such a powerful force in Iranian society that no one could ignore it. It was during the nineteenth century, the Qajar era, that the ulama not only influenced the government's decisions and policies, but also became the de facto leaders of Iran on many occasions.

In studying the three periods of Iranian history (the nineteenth century up to the end of the Tobacco Protest of 1890-1892, the era of the Constitutional Revolution of 1905, and the era of Reza Shah from 1920-1941), we can see that several factors contributed to the rise or fall of the ulama's power. These include foreign influence and

interference, the behavior of the kings and their advisors, and the status of religious hierarchy in Iran.

During the first period, these factors contributed to the rise of the ulama's power in Iran. As was indicated in the first two chapters, the main external factors in the first part of the nineteenth century were the direct and indirect Russian and British military actions against Iran (such as the second Russo-Persian War) which served as an impetus for the ulama's participation in the war effort. The ulama stirred up the religious feelings of the people against infidel Russia for the purpose of protecting Islamic Iran. During the second half of the nineteenth century, foreign interference in Iranian affairs was more in the form of exporting western products and culture, and particularly concession hunting as in the case of the Tobacco Concession. Such interference again increased the ulama's power.

The status of the Qajar rulers also contributed to the rise of the ulama's power during this period. Since the Qajar Dynasty was unpopular and weak, any attempt it made to confront the popular ulama with mass support resulted in failure as in the case of Nasir ud-Din Shah's action during the Tobacco Protest which greatly enhanced the ulama's power. Mainly because of their weaknesses, the Qajar rulers for the most part tried to show respect for the ulama and establish themselves as religious persons. They accepted the views of the ulama and avoided any confrontation with them. Naturally, this also resulted in more involvement by the ulama in state affairs and Iranian politics.

Finally during this period, the existence of unity and effective leadership in the religious establishment contributed to the rise of the ulama's power. This was evident during the Tobacco Protest in which the leadership of Mirza Hasan Shirazi was accepted by the ulama and he was able to influence the course of events with ease. Unity and the leadership of Mirza Hasan Shirazi and other ulama were crucial to the victory of the people against the Tobacco Concession.

During the Persian Constitutional Revolution the same factors (foreign interference, the monarch's behavior, and at first the unity of the ulama) contributed to an increase in the ulama's power. This increase in the ulama's power made it possible for them to force Muzaffar ud-Din Shah to sign the declaration of a constitutional regime at the end of the summer of 1906.

On the other hand, the victory of the constitutionalists under the leadership of the ulama in 1906 marked the beginning of the decline of the ulama's power and influence in Iranian political life. This decline continued to the end of Reza Shah's reign in 1941.

The reasons for the decline of the ulama's power after the victory of the Constitutional Revolution were (1) disunity among the leadership of the ulama, particularly with respect to support of a constitutional regime, and (2) the emergence of new leaders and a new power base for the government--the nationalists and secularists--as a result of foreign influence.

During the period of Reza Shah the decline of the ulama's power continued mainly because of foreign influence and a strong government. This time foreign influence took the form of cultural

and intellectual penetration which produced a new class of secularists and nationalists and a demand for political, social, and economic reforms.

Reza Shah, by taking advantage of developments in the west and by using foreign methods and advisers, first instituted reforms in the army and administration. These reforms enabled him to establish a strong central government and eliminate his enemies. This increased his power and enabled him to implement further reform measures borrowed from the west with respect to education, the judicial system, and vaghf. As a result of these reforms and other anti-religion policies of Reza Shah, the ulama lost a great deal of power. Since contrary to the pattern of the Qajar period the central government was now strong, Reza Shah was able to implement his policies and savagely crush any opposition from the ulama.

Finally the lack of any charismatic and strong politically-minded ulama among the leadership of the religious hierarchy also contributed to the decline of the ulama's power during this period.

In 1941, after the Anglo-Russian invasion of Iran, Reza Shah was forced into exile in South Africa and his 22-year-old son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, replaced him. From 1941 to 1953, when the shah was returned to the throne from a brief exile with the help of the United States and Britain, the young shah did not have complete control over political events in Iran. During this thirteen years, because of the weakness of the government, the ulama were able to reorganize and regain some of the powers they had lost during the period of Reza Shah.

The weakness of the monarch combined with unity among the ulama in their fight against the growing influence of foreign culture, communism and economic interests resulted in an increase in the ulama's active involvement in Iranian politics. While at this time apolitical Ayatollah Mohammad Husayn Borujirdi emerged as the sole and powerful marji taghlid of the Shii, Sayyid Ayatollah Abualal-Qasim Kashanil (d. 1962) emerged as the leading political activist among the ulama. "Thus by 1951, the mujtahids again were intervening in politics in a major way and issuing fatvas decreeing the nationalization of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC). There may be no doubt that this development marked the highest point of politicization of the clergy's role in society since the constitutional revolution."¹

Furthermore, among other things the ulama were able to force the government to change the governor of Khurason Province, whom the ulama held responsible for killing many people during the 1935 Moshhad incident. The ulama also were able to force the government to lift some of Reza Shah's bans on religious practices such as his ban on the pilgrimage to Mecca.

After Mohammad Reza Shah was returned to Iran from exile in 1953 he started to modernize the army and build a strong secret police, SAVAK. Gradually, but effectively, the shah used the buildup of his army and secret police to suppress his opponents and curb their political activities and to establish himself as the powerful dictator of Iran.

¹Shahrugh Akhaci, Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran: Clergy-State Relations in the Pahlavi Period, p. 60.

At first the shah moved cautiously against the ulama's power and religious institutions and values. However, when the powerful Shii leader, Ayatollah Borojirdi, died in 1961 the shah became more aggressive and started to unveil reform programs which undermined the role of religion and the ulama in Iranian society.

Since none of the ulama living in Iran and the shrine cities of Iraq could immediately replace Ayatollah Burujirdi as the sole marja taghlid of the Shii, the shah, who by now felt powerful, took advantage of the weakness of the religious establishment and introduced new policies and programs, such as the white revolution, and forcefully tried to suppress the ulama's opposition to his plans.

The ulama, under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini, started to oppose the policies of the shah by arguing that the shah was a tool of foreign powers, primarily the United States, and was trying to destroy the Islamic faith in Iran. The shah responded by attacking the ulama in madrasas using paratroopers as SAVAK agents. In the process large numbers of ulama were either killed, injured, or arrested.

Ayatollah Khomeini continued his attacks against government repression and always portraying the shah as a servant of the foreigners. In his final speech before he was arrested and sent to exile in November 1964 Ayatollah Khomeini, among other things, attacked the shah for the granting of capitulatory rights to the United States and his collaboration with Israel and other foreign powers in plotting against Islam. The speeches and declarations of Ayatollah Khomeini and other leading ulama during the 1960s and 1970s

indicate clearly that the ulama were concerned about foreign interference in Iranian affairs, and such interference was a major impetus for their involvement in Iranian politics.

Following Ayatollah Khomeini's arrest in June 1963:

Massive riots erupted all over the country. The shah withdrew to the Saad-Abad Palace in the northern suburb of Tehran, and, as Daily Telegraph's headline triumphantly put it, ordered his troops to 'shoot to kill.' The massacre continued for three days, until the people decided that they had offered enough sacrifice for the round. There exists no proper estimate of the number of those killed and wounded, if only because--dead or alive--they were quickly cleaned off the streets, buried in hastily dug mass graves, or dumped, from the air into the inaccessible salt lake of Flawz-l Sultan, between Tehran and Qum. The official estimates put the number of casualties below ninety(!) - as against unofficial estimates of 5000-6000. For the country as the whole, the figure must have been at least a couple of thousand.²

During the following years (up to January 1978 when the first wave of protest by the ulama marked the beginning of the end of Mohammad Reza Shah's regime in Iran) repression of government opponents was at its highest.

After the shah's government sent Ayatollah Khomeini into exile in Turkey and later Iraq, a crackdown on the opposition started. Many leading ulama like Ayatollah Taliqani and Ayatollah Muntaziri were either put in jail or sent into exile. Many others, like Ayatollah Ghaffari and Ayatollah Saidi, were tortured to death in prison. Virtually any visible opposition by the ulama was violently silenced.

²Homa Katouzian, The Political Economy of Modern Iran. Despotism and Pseudo-Modernism (1926-1979), pp. 227-228.

With the help of a strong military force and a brutal secret police, the shah was able to bring the ulama's opposition largely under control at least on the surface. When he felt that no formidable opposition to his government existed, the shah in January 1978 gave the green light for the printing of an article insulting Ayatollah Khomeini in the daily newspaper Ettelast. This produced a wave of bloody demonstrations which were initiated in the holy city of Qum by the ulama and then spread to the rest of the country. They continued until the triumphant return of Ayatollah Khomeini to Iran and the subsequent establishment of an Islamic government in Iran under his leadership on February 11, 1979. In the days that followed, the political power of the ulama became even more pervasive until they came clearly to dominate the political scene.

It is clear that long before the 1979 Islamic Revolution the ulama were playing a significant role in Iranian political life. It is also clear that there were periods, such as the period of the Tobacco Protests and the Constitutional Revolution, when the ulama enjoyed a tremendous amount of power and influence while, during other periods, their power declined as during the reign of Reza Shah. At the present time the ulama have more power than ever before in Iranian history. The question is how long will they remain dominant? Will their power last for years to come or will it gradually decline as it did during the years following the Constitutional Revolution?

It is my view that the ulama and religious influence in Iranian politics are going to remain strong for the following reasons.

When the ulama actively participated in anti-government protests in the past it was for a limited objective as in the case of the Tobacco Protest. Their demands forced the shah to cancel the Tobacco Concession but they stopped just short of overthrowing the monarchy because they did not have any defined plan for replacing it. At the time, the majority of the ulama did not oppose the monarchy; they opposed the injustices which were committed by the monarch. In this case, they were able to correct the injustices by forcing the monarch to cancel the Tobacco Concession and they didn't see any reason to continue their opposition. Nasir ud-Din Shah promised the leadership of the ulama that he would never again grant concessions and would consult them on all important matters. As a result, the ulama's political activities and their power declined when the Tobacco Protests ended.

The ulama tended to assume leadership when general discontentment existed among the people and/or the ulama felt a foreign threat to Islamic Iran. During the Constitutional Revolution foreign interference in Iranian political affairs was characterized by the intense Anglo-Russian rivalry, and injustice on the part of the government was clearly visible. The ulama placed themselves on the side of the oppressed people hoping to save Islam and Iran from foreign infidels by participating in the constitutional movement. Only after their victory did the ulama realize what the "secular" and "radical" reformers had in mind. They gradually stopped supporting the constitutional regime and in time started actively opposing it. At the same time, the "secularists" and "nationalists" did their best

to keep the ulama out of government business. Therefore, by the end of 1910, there was a decline in the ulama's political activity and, consequently, their power. This continued through Reza Shah's reign.

Contrary to these past experiences, prior to the Islamic Revolution of 1979, the ulama (particularly the followers of Ayatollah Khomeini) had a clear goal and a vision for the future. They foresaw the establishment of an Islamic government.

During 1969 and 1970 Ayatollah Khomeini delivered a series of lessons on jurisprudence in Islam to the students of theology in Najaf, Iraq, under the title of "Governance of Jurisprudent." He outlined the major principles and characteristics of an Islamic government. In other speeches and declarations which were echoed by the majority of the ulama, Ayatollah Khomeini explained the nature of an Islamic government and urged his followers to continue their fight against the shah until the establishment of an Islamic Republic in Iran. In his first speech after he returned from exile on Feb. 2, 1979, he declared:

I ask God Almighty that he grant success to all of you, and I proclaim to all of you that it is our duty to continue this movement until all elements of the shah's regime have been eliminated and we have established a constituent assembly based on the votes of the people and the first permanent government of Islamic Republic.³

Following the Constitutional Revolution in Iran the nationalists and secularists strongly opposed those who advocated a constitutional government based on Islamic laws (sharia) and were able to secure the adoption of a western style constitution and stifle the opposition of

³Hamid Algar, Islam and Revolution. Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1981), p. 259.

the ulama. The story was very different in 1979. From the first day following the victory of the Revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini ruled out any compromises in his attempt to establish an Islamic government. In the face of opposition from the nationalists, leftists, and other secularists, he quickly ordered the preparation of a referendum on the form of government which the people desired. By March 30, 1979, less than two months after the victory of the Islamic Revolution, Iranian voters overwhelmingly approved the formation of an Islamic Republic in a national referendum.

Following the referendum, Ayatollah Khomeini advised his followers against deviation from Islamic principles and called for the establishment of a state independent of western and eastern influence. In his congratulatory message, he stated:

I ask the government that, fearing neither east or west and cultivating an independent outlook and will it purge all remnants of the tyrannical regime, which left deep traces upon all the affairs of our country. It should transform our educational and judicial systems, as well as all the ministries and government offices that are now run on western lines or in slavish imitation of western models, and make them compatible to Islam, thus demonstrating to the world true social justice and true cultural, economic, and political Independence.⁴

This stand was far different from stands taken on previous occasions when the ulama had a chance but fell short of establishing a government based on Islamic law. During the Islamic Revolution, the ulama knew what they wanted and vigorously fought any deviation from their plans for the establishment of an Islamic Republic.

⁴Ibid., p. 267.

After the establishment of the Islamic Republic, the ulama were able to draft a constitution based on Islamic law and, over the past nine years, to institutionalize an Islamic political system based on a constitution which gave extensive power to them and to the religious hierarchy.

The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which was drafted by the council of Islamic Revolution and published in June 1979, was debated in an elected Assembly of Experts starting in August 1979. The final draft of the Constitution was approved in a national referendum on December 2-3 of the same year.

According to the Constitution of the Islamic Republic, the ulama and religious authority have a great deal of power because all principles of the constitution are based on Shii jurisprudence. In order to make sure that all laws and practices are in accordance with Islamic Law many important positions were established. Among them is the Council of Guardians that oversees the law making of the legislative body (The Parliament) and has a veto power over any bills which are passed by the Parliament if they are contrary to Islamic law. "The head of the Supreme Court and prosecutor general must both be mujtahids well versed in judicial matters."⁵ The most important power of all is based on the principle of vilayat-i faqih and given to the ulama under the principles of the Constitution which reads as follows:

During the occulation of the Lord of the Age (may God hasten his renewed manifestation!) the governance and

⁵Hamid Algar, Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1980), p. 86.

leadership of the nation depend upon the just and pious faqih who is acquainted with the circumstances of his age; courageous, resourceful, and possessed of administrative ability; and recognized and accepted as leader by the majority of the people. In the event that the faqih should be so recognized by the majority, the leader or the leadership council, composed of fugaha possessing the aforementioned qualifications, will assume these responsibilities in accordance with Article 107.⁶

This position, which is held by Ayatollah Khomeini at the present time, is the highest position in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Thus it can be seen that the ulama were able to draft a constitution based on Islamic law which gave them, the religious authorities, enormous power.

Most important of all, in the face of many internal and external threats and obstacles, they have been able to institutionalize an Islamic state based on an Islamic Constitution.

Gary Sick, an expert on Iran, summarizes some of the threats and obstacles to the Islamic government during the past nine years which might have brought down any weaker regime:

The Iranian Revolution is now more than eight years old. During those years, the new theocratic regime has experienced a major confrontation with a superpower, six-and-a-half years of a brutal and devastating war with Iraq, a prolonged and ugly conflict with Kurdish tribes in the northwest, several attempted coups, an open rebellion led by the Mujahedeen-al-Khalq in 1981, attempted subversion by the pro-Soviet Tudeh party and a steady succession of bombings, assassinations, hijackings, and other terrorist attacks. (In addition it has faced) international sanctions and attacks on its oil production, refinery, and export facilities. . . .

At the same time, Iran has effected a near total overhaul of its political, economic, and social institutions, from the national constitution down to the lowliest neighborhood committee. It has completely

⁶Ibid., pp. 29-31.

restructured the educational, judicial, and social welfare systems.⁷

Even with these and many more obstacles, the Islamic government has not only survived and institutionalized its system but also become stronger and more formidable as time has passed.

The success of the Iranian Islamic government can be attributed to (1) the charismatic and effective leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini who has been instrumental in neutralizing many of these threats to its existence; (2) the presence of a grass-roots ideology, Islam with mass appeal, and its effective use by the clerical leadership; (3) the use of an already-existing state structure by the ulama and the addition of new features to it such as the Revolutionary Guards. This military force is made up of about 200,000 devout Muslims who are devout followers of the ulama's leadership and of the Islamic government. The Revolutionary Guards have played an important role in crushing the armed opposition of the terrorist organizations such as the Mujahedin Khalgh and the Iraqi invasion of Iran. Finally, external interference and pressure have been important factors. The Iraq invasion of Iran and the superpowers' overt and covert help to Iraq and her allies against Iran (such as the Soviet Arms sales to Iraq, American intelligence help to Iraq, and the presence of U.S. naval ships in the Persian Gulf and their attacks on Iranian ships and oil facilities) have helped to unite the people around the Islamic Republic.

⁷Gary Sick, "Iran's Quest for Superpower Status," Foreign Affairs, Spring 1987, pp. 699-700.

The future of the Islamic Republic depends in part on two factors: (1) unity among the ulama and (2) the status of the opposition to the Islamic state.

In regard to the internal politics of Iran, two main schools of thought exist. Economic policies, the role of state, and the extent of government involvement in economic policies and issues are the core of disagreement and conflict among these two groups. The main issues, which are the center of controversy, include those of foreign trade, cooperatives, and land reform. Fahmy Howaidi, a writer for an Arabia magazine, explains the nature of this conflict as follows:

There are those who advocate total state control of foreign trade. The substituting of cooperatives for the private sector in internal trade, the restriction of land ownership, and redistribution of extra land to small farmers. The other trend is firmly opposed to state monopoly of foreign trade and restricting the economic freedom of individuals. It, however, agrees to state intervention in exceptional circumstances Adherents of this view believe the state monopoly should never become the rule. This trend uses the same reasoning to defend freedom of internal trade. As to restrictions over land ownership this trend believes that Islam imposes certain restrictions, but on quality, not quantity. They believe that land owned by an individual illegally, by inflicting injustice or with illegitimate money, may be confiscated by the state . . . otherwise the state will have no Shariah (Islamic law) justification to take it from him in whole or in part.⁸

Some have argued that these two factions will eventually resort to violence to settle their differences and that will be the start of a civil war and the end of the Islamic Republic. Past experience has shown that even though these two schools of thought differ on some economic and foreign policy issues, when it comes to the survival of

⁸Fahmy Howaidi, "Four Issues Facing Iran as Revolution Enters Year Six," Arabia, February 1985, p. 8.

the Islamic state, they put aside their differences. Any country with a degree of freedom of political activity is going to contain diverse groups and parties with different views on issues. As Hojatolislam Hashimi Rafsanjani, the speaker of the Parliament, stated in a recent speech:

There are at present two relatively powerful factions in our country with differences of views on how the country should be run and on the role of the government and that of the private sector in affairs. These two tendencies also exist in the majlis, in the government, within the clergy, within the universities, and across society as a whole. They may in fact be regarded as two positions without names.⁹

Based on the experience of the past nine years, there is no reason to believe that violent confrontation which will endanger the survival of the Islamic Republic in the near future, is likely to emerge between these two schools of thought.

No opposition groups have enough grass-root support among the people to make them a real threat to the Islamic government of Iran. Elaine Sciolino summarizes the status of the opposition groups by saying that none of them have:

the organization and popular base necessary to come to power. The Fedayeen is hopelessly splintered, the Tudeh all but illegal (at the present time the Tudeh Party is illegal). The Mujahedeen was stripped of much of its important leadership in raids of its hideouts. Its leader-in-exile, Massoud Rajavi, lost much of his credibility when he fled to Paris (now resides in Iraq) with Bani-Sadr, and further tarnished his image by meeting Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz. . . . Opposition exile groups have been unable to muster much popular support.¹⁰

⁹Gary Sick, "Iran's Quest for Superpower Status," Foreign Affairs, p. 704.

¹⁰Elaine Sciolino, "Iran's Durable Revolution," Foreign Affairs, Spring 1983, pp. 915-918.

Overall, we can conclude that there is no immediate threat to the existence and survival of the Islamic Republic of Iran from internal conflict among the ulama, opponents of the Islamic state inside or outside Iran, or from any internal and external economic and military pressures. The evidence indicates that the Islamic state will grow stronger in the foreseeable future and will survive in the era beyond Ayatollah Khomeini.

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