

Farsinameh – draft copy of the abridged English version

1. Introduction

Farsinameh – Summary of the Iranians chronicle from Persepolis to Jamaran. For a reviewer's advance draft copy (in Farsi), please email Arash-Monzavi-Kia@hotmail.com.

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2. Ancient Iran

Today's intelligent humans (homo-sapiens) emerged around 200,000 years ago in North East Africa. Fifty thousand years back, a group of those humans moved into Asia and Europe. When the last ice-age ended at 10,000 years ago, a group of those migrants created the first civilization in today's Iraq (Sumer).



Figure 1: Out of Africa

Soon, the Sumerian civilization was flooded by waves of Semitic immigrants (forefathers of today's Jews and Arabs), and at about 5,000 years ago, morphed into the Akkadian civilization. The Akkadians in turn were defeated and absorbed into the Assyrian and Babylonian states.



Figure 2: Sumerian Chariots

The first Iran-based civilization was created by the people of today's Khuzestan (Elamites), at 3,000 BC and around the main city of Susa (near today's Shush-e-Daniel). Elamites were neither Semite nor Indo-European, but (like the Sumerians) indigenous and unique. Influenced by their neighbours militancy for 2,000 years, Elamites waged wars against their Mesopotamian rivals, but were finally defeated and decimated by the Assyrians in 640 BC.



Figure 3: Elamite Zigurat in Chogazanbil

The population vacuum left by the annihilation of Elamites was quickly filled by two Indo-European (Arian) migrant tribes of Medes and Persians. Those nomadic tribes had moved into the Iranian plateau since 1,500 BC, but were relentlessly haunted by the Assyrian warlords. Finally, the Medes grew strong enough to establish a central power near today's Hamadan (Ecbatana), and defeated the great Assyrian empire at their own game (610 BC). Consequently, the Persians who had moved into the Elamite lands in today's Fars, became vassals to the Mede kings.



Figure 4: Mede nobility

Persians and Medes went to war in 550 BC, which resulted in a spectacular victory by Cyrus II (the great) who captured Ecbatana and sent the Mede king (his maternal grandfather) to exile. Cyrus's victory had a lot to do with his brilliant diplomatic skills, which could attract most of the Mede nobles and generals to his cause and against the cruel old king. For the next twenty years, Cyrus continued with a string of incredible military expansions and established the fabled Persian Empire.



Figure 5: Cyrus the great

3. Achaemenids

In 545 BC, Cyrus defeated the Greek city-states of Asia Minor (Lydia), and captured the legendary treasures of their king. That defeat effectively crippled the Greek civilization in today's Turkey, and led to the looting and destruction of a number of their cities and monuments.



Figure 6: Depiction of Artemis Temple in Lydia (a destroyed world wonder)

Next in 540 BC, Cyrus's army (greatly assisted by local sympathizers) easily defeated the despised Babylonian king and took over the Mesopotamia. Unlike their previous rulers, Cyrus freed the varied Mesopotamian minorities to practice their cultures and religions, which also included the release of Jews and assistance for their return to Zion (today's Israel).



Figure 7: Babylon Lion Relief

Cyrus then focused his attention to expanding the Eastern frontiers of the empire, but was killed during a fierce battle with the nomadic Scythians (530 BC). Cambyses II succeeded his father, and conquered the ancient civilization of Egypt, in a brutal campaign. However, unlike his father, the cruel Cambyses was unable to gain the respect of his new subjects or the loyalty of his generals. He was assassinated during the eighth year of his bloody reign, and the multinational Persian Empire faced numerous rebellions by its subjugated peoples. Another of Cyrus's sons (Bardia) came to power, but was challenged by a group of Persian princes led by Darius, who successfully overthrew and killed him. This coup brought a new dynasty to power, who claimed a common ancestry (Achaemenid) with Cyrus.



Figure 8: Darius the great

Unlike Cyrus, who was more interested in conquering new realms and then leaving each nation's organization to the subdued local nobility; Darius created a truly centralized government. He first forcefully crushed all the rebellions in the subject nations and vanquished a dozen of their leaders. Darius then turned each nation into a Satrapy (province), strictly governed by his Persian appointees, who directly reported to the Shahanshah.



Figure 9: The Persian Empire at its peak

To govern this vast empire, which included Greek, Egyptian, Babylonian, Mede, Phoenician, Armenian, Sogdian and Scythian nations; Darius built a network of roads, postal service, common currency, regular army and navy. Although Cyrus is credited with starting the Persian domination, Darius was the king who built it into a functioning empire!



Figure 10: Persian soldiers

Among the rebellious subject nations during Darius's reign, were the Greek cities of Asia Minor (today's Turkey). However, Darius's army suppressed that uprising, and then shipped an expeditionary attack force (~20,000 strong) to punish the mainland Greek city-states who had helped their Asian kindred. This ignited the legendary Persian-Greek wars of the antiquity that is most famously remembered by the Marathon defeat of the Darius's army.



Figure 11: Reconstruction of the beached Persian ships near Marathon

After 35 years of Darius as ShahanShah, his son Xerxes (Khashayar) became emperor and tried to finish what his father had started' i.e. take over the mainland Greece. Xerxes summoned the largest army in the near East history (some 200,000); complete with a contingent of the subjugated Egyptian navy. However, despite initial victories and even the capture of Athens, the Greek city-states who had united since the battle of Marathon, sank the Xerxes navy and decimated the stranded Persian army in 480 BC. Subsequently, the discredited and cruel Xerxes was assassinated in an internal Persian court's conspiracy.



Figure 12: Ruins of ancient Athens

For the next 140 years, the Persian Empire continued a fierce rivalry against the Greek city-states, until the latter were captured or united under the domineering Macedonian king, Phillip. After the suspicious assassination of Philip, his son Alexander accused the Persian Shah (Darius III) of the murder, and summoned a formidable Balkan force to take revenge, liberate the Asian Greek cities and pillage the riches of Persia. Unfortunately, the Achaemenid dynasty had severely deteriorated under the absolute corruption of the absolute rule; continuously falling into brutal royal murders, court intrigues and state blunders. Hence, Alexander the great defeated Darius and conquered Egypt, Mesopotamia and Persia.



Figure 13: Persepolis in ruins

4. Parthians

Alexander's empire lasted but ten short years; and after his death, it was broken into many small kingdoms under his feuding generals (the Seleucids). Seleucids controlled most of Iran for the next 100 years, but their power declined with civil wars and uprisings.



Figure 14: Seleucid gold coin from Eastern Iran

An Eastern Iranian tribe (the Parthians) prevailed upon the Seleucids, from 240 BC on; and created the Arsacid dynasty. Finally the Arsacid king Mithridates struck the final blow to the Mesopotamian Seleucids, capturing their prosperous cities and establishing Ctesiphon as his winter capital.



Figure 15: Largest extend of the Parthian Empire

At the same time, the Roman Empire was inflicting mortal wounds on the weakened Greco-Seleucid kingdoms and by capturing the whole of Greece and Asia Minor, became neighbors with the Parthians. Rome with 500 years of glorious civilization and militancy, considered the Arsacids as barbarians that had to be brutally suppressed, in order to annex the Mesopotamia to the Roman realm. However, the Parthians established both a formidable cavalry and a strategic alliance with the Greek populace that was fleeing the Roman subjugation.



Figure 16: Depiction of ancient Rome

The most famous Roman-Parthian war occurred in 53 BC, when the mighty Roman Council Crassus led an invasion of Mesopotamia. The Roman army's most formidable force was their infantry (Legion), while the most versatile Parthian contingent was the horse archers with their fabled Parting Shots. At the Battle of Carrhae, Crassus was defeated by the Parthians under their general Surena. Crassus and his son were killed and most of his forces were massacre or captured as slaves. This battle was the worst Roman defeat since Hannibal had decimated their armies, 160 years before.



Figure 17: Parthian horse archer versus Roman legionary

Unfortunately, the Parthian nobility were in constant rivalry with one another; and for example their great general Surena was killed by the suspicious king, soon after the Carrhae victory. The unrelenting battle against the Romans also weakened the Arsacids dynasty, preparing Iran for the take over by the second Persian dynasty of Sassanians.



Figure 18: Sculpture of a Parthian prince (possibly Surena)

5. Sassanians

After 100 years of the Macedonian (Seleucid) rule and 400 years of the Parthian (Arsacid) dynasties, the Sassanians revived the Achaemenid Persian Empire and traditions. Sassanians despised the Greek-loving Arsacids and their feudal and decentralized kingdoms. Ardashir Babakan, the ambitious Persian governor of Fars rebelled against the weakened Parthian king (Ardavan) and defeated him in 224 CE, capturing Ctesiphon in 226 and crowning himself as the new Shahanshah.



Figure 19: Zoroastrian fire temple in Yazd

Ardashir's son (Shahpor) who came to power in the year 240; even excelled his glorious father in statesmanship and military prowess. He defeated the by then corrupt Rome, and quite incredibly killed or captured three Roman Emperors! Ardashir's victories revived the legendary Persian rule from Asia Minor to India and from Arabia to Armenia.



Figure 20: Shahpor capturing the Roman emperor

Like Cyrus the great, Shahpor was considerate towards his new subjects and the Roman captives, who were settled in different parts of the empire and were encouraged to build new cities and buildings, based on the more advanced Roman techniques. Shahpor's religious toleration even led to the proliferation of Christianity and Manichaeism in Iran. Unfortunately, after Shahpor's death, there was a bloody power struggle among his sons. In 274, the victorious son (Bahram) who had won with the backing of the chief Zoroastrian priest (Kartir), executed many Christians and the Persian prophet of peace (Mani).



Figure 21: Manichean priests

Over the next half century, the preponderance of Zoroastrian priests and the privileged nobility, created a very wealthy upper class (caste) and a very disadvantaged populace. Moreover, the institute of monarchy was often shaken through the wars of succession and numerous priestly conspiracies. Ultimately, in the year 310, there was no male successor (son, brother or cousin) to the dying Sassanian king. Hence, an unborn royal child was crowned in the womb, with his mother as the viceroy. Good fortune was that the child (Shahpor II) was of great aptitude and revived the Persian rule through his long kingship (to 379). Shahpor II defeated the Arab tribes who had captured the Western half of the empire and its capital (Ctesiphon); and was nicknamed Zol-a-Ketaf (binder of arms), by his Arab captives.



Figure 22: Shahpor II

The great boost provided by Shahpor II lasted for about 100 years, but by then the major foreign threat had moved from West (Romans and Arabs) to East (Mongols and Turks). The Mongol raids broke the Sassanian army and treasury, and reduced the Persian kings to weak vassals. The loss of manpower and cash caused a decline in agriculture and several years of chronic famines. The destitute masses turned to the radicalized poor priests, who lead by Mazdak, advocated the confiscation of land and properties from the rich priests and the nobility. The ensuing revolutionary riots caused the king (Ghobad) to relinquish his riches and even free his slaves and concubines. For forty years, the Persian king lived like a hostage to his external (Mongol) and internal (Mazdak) challengers. Ghobad, openly showed obedience to his captors, but his son (Khosrau) began to scheme against them!



Figure 23: The formidable Sassanian heavy cavalry

In 531, Khosrau (Noshirvan) came to power and started with a brutal suppression of Mazdak and his followers. However, despite eliminating thousands of the Mazdak socialists, Khosrau did not return the confiscated lands and riches to the defunct nobility. Instead, he instituted a new class (Dehghan) of the numerous landowners who now each had a small property. Khosrau then made peace with the Turks and jointly invaded and captured the Mongol territories. During the 40 years of his reign, Noshirvan behaved like a typical ‘benevolent-dictator’; both brutish and constructive.



Figure 24: Khosrau in a hunting scene

Sadly, like so many other dictators, Khosrau could not escape the corrupting influence of absolute power, and near the end, turned neurotic and suspicious. He abolished his grand vizier and trusted deputies, and left the succession in the incapable hands of a murderous son. The ensuing decade of mayhem and unrest, led to a major uprising by the prominent Parthian tribes of Khorasan. Their leader (Bahram Chobin) toppled the Sassanian prince (Khosrau II), and for a short time re-established the Arsacid dynasty.



Figure 25: Khosrau II gold coin

Khosrau II (Parviz) fled to the Byzantine court, which had inherited the Eastern Roman empire, after the collapse of the mainland Rome (today's Italy) at the hands of the barbaric Anglo-Germanic tribes. Apparently, he even converted to Christianity and married one of the Byzantine princes, to prove his allegiance to the Western way of life. In return the Roman emperor Maurice supported him with army and funds, which enabled Khosrau Parviz to successfully fight the Parthians and revive his kingship, in 591. This led to a decade of Roman-Persian friendship and religious toleration that, unfortunately, ended with an internal Roman conspiracy that toppled Maurice and killed him and his entire family.



Figure 26: Eastern Roman Empire, circa 500 CE

Khosrau Parviz saw a great opportunity during the ensuing power struggle in Byzantine, and attacked and pillaged their Asia Minor, Mesopotamian, Eastern Mediterranean and even Egyptian territories! In reply, the Romans united behind their new emperor (Heracles) who had revenged Maurice's death; and attacked the Persian capital of Ctesiphon, through their ally's (Armenian) territory. The direct attack on the capital caused a great deal of mayhem, and the rebellious Sassanian court conspired and assassinated the king, in 628 CE. The new king signed a hastily and humiliating truce with the Romans, while relinquishing all the territorial gains and paying an exorbitant amount of land and gold in damages!



Figure 27: Khosrau II defeated by Heracles

The half century of murderous court conspiracies, civil wars and foreign wars, drained both the Sassanian dynasty of blood, and the country of men and resources. Between 628 and 632, five different kings and two queens came to power. The short reigns of those two queens were due to the relentless royal bloodletting (brother against brother, father against son), which again had emptied the court of all the male Sassanians!



Figure 28: Queen Puran ruled Persia for two years.

At the same time in Arabia, a new prophet (Mohammad) had emerged, and soon the expanding Muslim army filled the power vacuum that was left by the battling and bleeding Roman and Persian empires. The new universal faith of Islam drew upon the strongest Jewish and Christian traditions, to build a spiritually vibrant and fanatically militant powerbase. In 636 CE, the Arab forces broke the resistance of the Sassanian army at Qadessieh, which led to the capture and pillaging of Ctesiphon; and subsequently the collapse of the Persian Empire.



Figure 29: Ruins of Ctesiphon (Khosrau's palace)

6. Arab conquest to Safavids

The Arab Islamic conquests of the seventh century were of the same magnitude as the Persian conquests of 500 BC, Macedonian's of 300 BC, Rome's in 100 BC and Sassanians of 200 CE. For the first and last time in recorded history, the nomadic tribes of Arabia were able to take over an entire empire, stretching from Morocco to India. The Arabic language grew from a limited Semitic tongue to dominate the Middle East; and Islam reshaped the Eastern cultural and religious outlook.



Figure 30: Historical copy of the holy Koran

Western Iran was decimated by the Arab invasion, but the Persian culture survived in the Eastern provinces (especially Khorasan), where there was less resistance from the general populace and the Parthian minded nobility. Khorasan soon became the cradle of a new version of Persian identity and language (Farsi), as well as an independent military and political power. The vicious internal Arab power struggles, which quickly assassinated 3 of the 4 original Muslim caliphs (Rashedin) and created the Sunni-Shia schism, enabled the independent minded Iranians to rapidly play a determining role in the Islamic Empire.

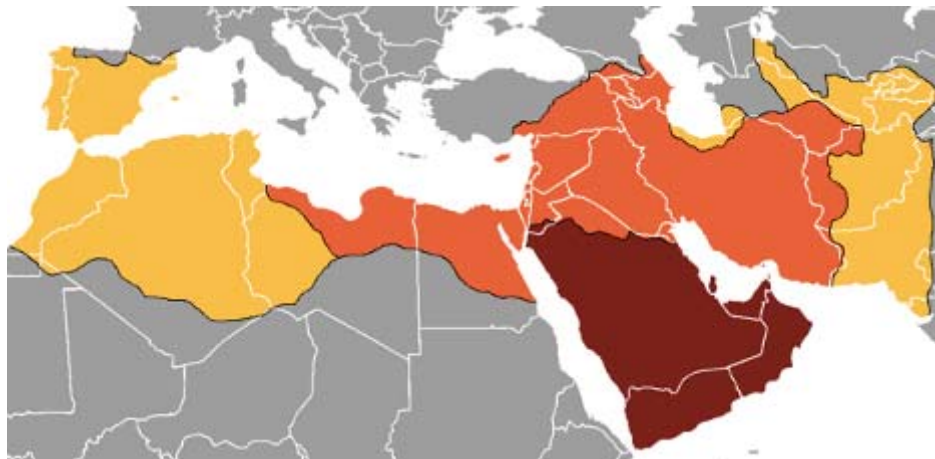


Figure 31: Islamic empire from Prophet Mohammad (632) and Rashedins (661) to Umayyad (750)

In 750 CE, the Khorasan garrison rioted and led by Abomuslim Khorasani, defeated the Umayyad caliph in Baghdad and brought their rivals (the Abbasids) to power. This victory initiated the dominance of Farsi governments in Khorasan, including the Taheri, the Safari, the Bueyeh and finally the Samanians. The Taheri rule (810 CE) was a governorship well under the Caliph of Baghdad, but the Bueyeh actually conquered Baghdad and turned the Caliph into their puppet (year 945).



Figure 32: Cultured Abbasid Caliph, Harun-al-Rashid, receives European delegate

The Samanians built a completely independent nation in Khorasan, where the Farsi language and culture flourished, and provided the bedrock for a distinct Iranian identity that has survived to this day. The Samanian kings were avid supporters of the Farsi identity, and supported such Iranian poets as Rudaki and Daghighi. However, the Samanian kings as well as the Abbasid caliphs soon became inundated with a massive migration of the Turkish tribes from Central Asia, who first enrolled their armies in the services of the Farsi and Arab kings, but subsequently took over the entire Middle East.



Figure 33: Samanian shrine in Bukhara

Influenced by the Samanian Farsi society, the new Turk rulers surprisingly maintained an avid support for the Farsi culture and their method of government (Viziers and Dabirs). The Ghaznavi Turks overthrew the Samanians in 1,005 CE and established a powerful empire in central Asia. They quickly converted to Sunni Islam, adopted Farsi as their court language, and provided a magnificent support to such Iranian luminaries as Beeroni, Farrokhi, Manuchehri and Ferdowsi.

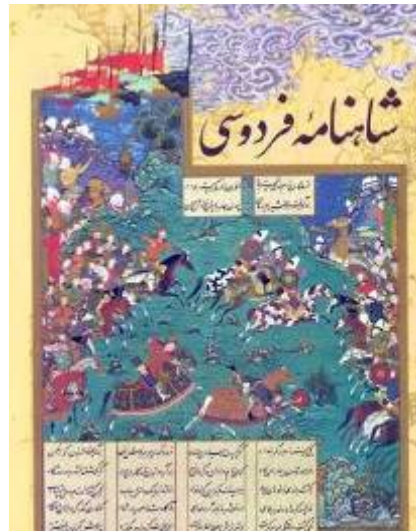


Figure 34: Literary works like Shahnameh preserved the Farsi language and the Iranian pride

The Turkish waves of invasion did not cease. The Seljuk Turks took over Khorasan and Iran, and then even captured Baghdad in 1,055 CE. They too became Sunni Muslim and very Farsi oriented, with most of their bureaucrats and Viziers chosen among the Iranians. Amazingly, the Seljuk even exceeded the Ghaznavi in support of the Farsi culture, and cultivated such luminaries as Anvari and Khayyam. Their legendary vizier (Nezam-al-molk) created the first Iranian universities (Nezamieh). The Seljuk kings soon dominated the Muslim world with an empire stretching from central Asia to Arabia, and later became the forefathers to the Ottoman Empire's birth in Asia Minor.



Figure 35: Seljuk fortifications in Alanya (Turkey)

The main challenge to the Seljuk rule came from the Shia Arab rulers of Egypt (the Fatimid), who opposed both the Sunni Caliphs of Baghdad and the domineering Turks of Iran. The Fatimid established a network of supporters in Iran, the Esmaeli, who soon developed a viciously militant tactic and became famous as the Assassins. This Shia-Sunni rivalry decimated the Seljuk government, as the Esmaeli established themselves in several defensible castles and spread fear and terror throughout Iran. Their biggest achievement was the assassination of the Iranian vizier (Nezam-al-molk) in 1092 CE, which escalated into a series of instabilities and wars of succession among the Seljuk.



Figure 36: Fatimid Shia dynasty established the first Islamic university (al-Azhar) in Cairo

The destabilized Seljuk princes fought one another and the Esmali for decades, causing widespread destruction of the cities and populace. Finally, another warlike Turkish tribe from central Asia (the Khwarizmi) exploited the Seljuk/Esmali conflict and fought their bloody way into the Iranian plateau. The Khwarizm Shah briefly (1210 to 1220) ruled over a decimated country with weakened resources and scarce manpower. A great misfortune was that the widespread Iranian and even Muslim discord and internal bleed-shedding; coincided with an unprecedented Mongol unification and revival.



Figure 37: Depiction of Mongol warriors

The new Khan of the united Mongol tribes (Genghis) was rapidly expanding eastward into the Chinese territories. Apparently, he was considering Iran more as a potential trade partner towards Europe, than an immediate target. Therefore, Genghis was astonished when a caravan of 200 Mongol traders was confiscated by the border guards of Iran and all executed. He sent another group of emissaries, directly to Khwarizm Shah's court, but they too were killed. The angered Mongol chief sent a massive army of 200,000 into Iran and decimated the whole country.



Figure 38: Ruins of Mongol destruction in Khorasan

7. The Safavids

The first wave of Mongol invasion (1220 to 1224) destroyed most of the Khorasan cities, killing millions and enslaving millions more. All Eastern centers of Iranian culture and Farsi language were irrevocably destroyed or devastated. Genghis wanted such a bloody revenge on the Eastern Iranians that the rest of the country would collapse in fear. The second wave of carnage (1260 to 1275) was unleashed by Hulegu the grandson of Genghis, who invaded central Iran to Baghdad and Syria. He even killed the Muslim Caliph and destroyed all the Isma'ili castles. The third wave (1365 to 1405) was carried out by another Mongol descendent (Tamerlane), who this time under the banner of Islamic Jihad, ravaged Turkestan, Iran, Turkey, Syria and even India.



Figure 39: Tamerlane's realm of blood and terror

The total Mongol carnage is estimated to have killed about 50 million people in the Middle East! This barbaric blow destroyed most of the Arab and Farsi urban centers, and blocked the development of Islamic civilization for 200 years. At the same time, the European countries were waking up from their middle-age slumber and entering the Renaissance period.



Figure 40: The school of Athens – Renaissance painting by Raphael

After Tamerlane, Iran was again divided among feuding Mongol and Turkic tribes, who established several small khanates. Their fighting and consolidation took another 100 years, before a confederation of Turkic tribes (Ghezelbash) united around a spiritually mesmerizing Sufi family (the Safavids). The Safavids were a powerful Shia-Sufi cult, who had started in Ardabil and expanded into the rest of Azerbaijan and Gilan. Tamerlane who was also Shia, had granted them some land and thousands of Turkic slaves, whom he had captured during his Asia Minor campaigns.

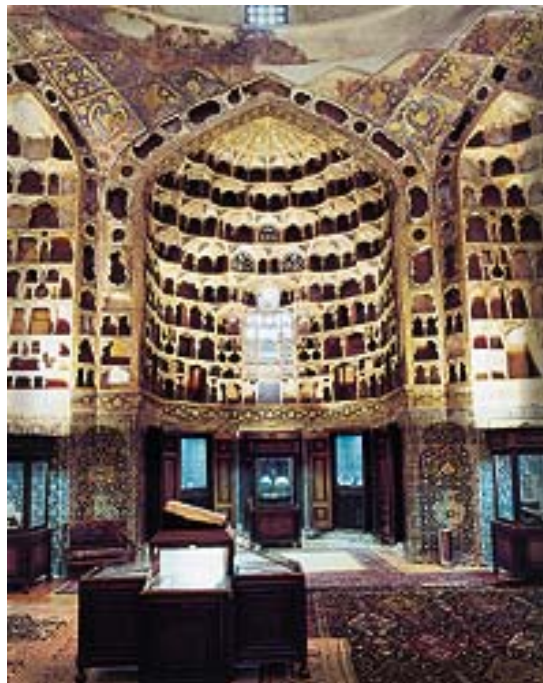


Figure 41: Safavid shrine in Ardabil

It took the Safavids fifty years and three generations of warriors to gain the control of North Western Iran. Finally, their young leader (Esmael) crushed the resistance of rival Turkic tribes and was crowned as the Shah, in 1501 at Tabriz. The fifteen year old Esmael was so inspiring, courageous and heroic that many of his followers believed him to be the Shia messiah (Mahdi). In ten short years, Shah Esmael captured all the traditional land of Iran and became neighbours with the Ottomans in West and Uzbeks in East, both Sunni Muslims. Unfortunately, instead of building trade, cultural and military alliances with the neighbouring Muslim nations, the fanatic Safavids attacked first the Uzbeks and then the Ottomans. This started 350 years of animosity that bleed all three nations' strength like an infectious chronic injury. But at the beginning, the Ghezelbash were jubilant that their invincible leader would soon take over the world! Indeed, Esmael really looked invincible too, until the more modern Ottoman army equipped with rifles and artillery, defeated him in 1514, at the battle of Chalderon.



Figure 42: Shah Esmael in Battle

After the defeat of Chalderon and the collapse of Tabriz, the Safavids had to move their capital to Ghazvin and then Isfahan. The frustrated Ghezelbash took revenge on the indigenous Sunni population of Iran (approximately 75% of nation) and forcefully converted most of them to Shia and killed or harassed the rest. After Esmael, Shah Tahmausp came to power, who imported many Shia clerics from Lebanon, in order to strengthen the Safavids ideological hold on the Iranian society. Those clerics soon proliferated in the central Iran and especially Isfahan, and established such a priestly caste that was unprecedented since the time of the Zoroastrian Moubads.



Figure 43: Safavids propagate the Shia mullahs in Iran

After the half-century reign of Tahmausp ended in 1579, the country descended in fierce fighting among his many sons and successors. Finally, after eight bloody years, the young and energetic Abbas came to power, who built the fledging kingdom into a powerful empire. Shah Abbas (the great) revived the Iranian

army through close ties with the emerging European powers, especially the British. He also curtailed the wanton hold of the Ghezelbash throughout the country and established a sense of normalcy and security. With those improvements, the nation prospered and the Safavid's military might grew. Abbas defeated both Uzbeks and Ottomans, obtaining more favourable border arrangements in Khorasan and Khuzestan.



Figure 44: Shah Abbas the zenith of Safavid dynasty

Sadly, like so many other dictators, Abbas could not escape the corrupting influence of absolute power, and near the end, turned neurotic and suspicious. He killed and blinded so many of his sons and other Safavids that after his death, finding a successor became a difficult challenge. His suspicion and bloody suppression of the Ghezelbash also alienated most of them from playing an active role in the kingdom. Hence, despite his many constructive contributions to Iran and especially Isfahan, the Safavids rule started a steady decline after Abbas's passing in 1629.



Figure 45: Shah Solomon's court in Isfahan, with local and foreign dignitaries

The final blow to the Safavids dynasty came from the disgruntled Sunni people of Afghanistan. In 1720, a rebellious Afghan army toppled the weak Safavid king (Shah Sultan Hussein) and pillaged Isfahan. Their uprising was a direct result of Sunni suppression in the Kandahar province, and their success was due to

the steady weakening of the army and Ghezelbash, and the deteriorating court spirit under the mind-numbing influence of Shia mullahs.



Figure 46: Isfahan is ravaged by the invading Afghans

8. Afshar, Zand and Qajars

To fight the Afghan take-over, the Safavids united around a young successor to the murdered king, and designated Nader Khan as the army chief. Nader was a minor Afshar (a Ghezelbash tribe) warlord, but a military genius and extremely courageous. Nader's army defeated the Afghans in 1729, and he subsequently removed the incapable Safavid heir, and crowned himself as Nader Shah, in 1736. Nader's reign started like a fairytale and ended like a nightmare. At the beginning, Nader was regularly consulting the Ghezelbash chiefs and the learned nobility; tried to reconcile the Shia-Sunni animosity; managed to obtain a respectable peace treaty with both the Uzbeks and the Ottomans; and lowered the tax burden on the general populace.



Figure 47: Statue of Nader in Khorasan

Unfortunately, the huge army that Nader had gathered during the war years encouraged him to march in the militaristic path of the likes of Genghis and Tamerlane. Besides, with each bloody campaign of pillage and terror, Nader descended deeper and deeper into the abyss of paranoia and rage. Nader's most infamous military aggression was the invasion of India, to plunder their riches. India had never had any war with Iran, and since antiquity was linked to us, through cultural, linguistic and religious ties. Nader's brutal invasion of that country and the merciless looting, raping and pillaging of Delhi, not only is a shameful example of inhuman brutality, but also weakened the Indian Muslim state to be subsequently colonized by the British Empire.



Figure 48: Small portion of Nader's loot from India

Nader's greed for treasures did not abate after the plundering of most Indian jewels, such as the Peacock throne and the diamonds of Kohinoor and Daryinoor. He concealed much of those loots in the remote Khorasan mountains (Kalat Naderi), and then increased the taxes to pay for the maintenance of his huge army (Urdu), which by this time had even developed its own hybrid language. Nader's final years are filled with suspicion and conspiracy, as he embarked on killing and blinding all the potential rivals, including his own sons. Finally, a group of his trusted generals, lead by a nephew, attacked his grand tent at night and killed him in 1747. In 20 short years, Nader had saved Iran from servitude and mayhem, raised it to the level of a respectable regional power and then plunged it again in blood and anarchy!

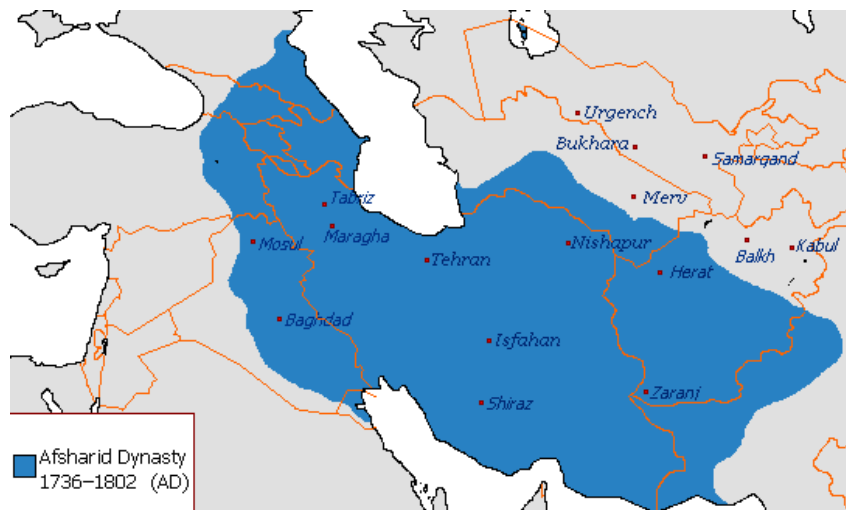


Figure 49: Territory of the Afshar dynasty

Immediately after Nader's assassination, his army broke up along several ethnic and tribal lines, each trying to find and fetch as much of the cursed Kalat loot as possible. The Afghans went east to establish the independent Afghanistan state, lead by the Dorani's, who continued to raid India for the next fifty years. The Qajars (another Ghezelbash tribe) converged in Mazandaran and began fighting against Nader's murderous nephew in Khorasan and the Zands (Bakhtiari tribe) based in Isfahan and Shiraz. Finally, after many more years of fighting filled with torture and madness, a more benevolent Khan of Zands (Karim Khan), could re-asertain a measure of Iranian sovereignty and peace. Unfortunately, those fifty years of murder and mayhem not only ruined most of the Safavids cultural and social achievements, but also instilled a sick psyche of brutality and madness in the Iranian subconscious. Karim Khan

maintained a relatively generous and caring government from his new capital in Shiraz, but could not establish a lasting and durable system to outlive his passing in 1779.



Figure 50: Zand fortification in Shiraz

After Karim Khan, the various khans of Zands fought for his succession, for ten bloody years; till another fine example of Persian nobility (Lotfali Khan) could prevail over his cruel cousins. Unfortunately, by that time the Qajars had regained military power in the North and united around their castrated but brutally determined Khan (Agha Mohammad). Agha Mohammad conducted a merciless campaign of terror against Lotfali, who had to take refuge in Kerman. When Kerman fell, Agha Mohammad tortured and massacred the captured Zands, blinded all the men of Kerman and enslaved the women and children.



Figure 51: Agha Mohammad Khan of Qajar

Agha Mohammad Khan then continued along the lines of Nader's tradition of fighting and looting, and invaded the caucuses in 1795. He successfully defeated the Christian king of Georgia; looted the city of Tbilisi; made a minaret from the severed heads of thousands of their men; and enslaved their wives and daughters. This created such a steer in the Christian Russia that the Tsar accepted the full future protection of Georgia, leading to a generation of Persian-Russian wars. In 1797, while again campaigning

in the caucuses, Agha Mohammad Shah was assassinated by two of his servants. The servants were apparently under suspicion of having eaten a melon from the Shah's kitchen, and were jailed to be executed upon the royal's final decision.



Figure 52: Princess of Georgia, a weak nation victimized by the Qajars

After Agha Mohammad fell, his army disintegrated and several months of infighting followed among the Qajar princes. Finally, his nephew was crowned as Fatah-Ali Shah in 1798, whose only Fatah (victory) was over several hundred wives and concubines. The 35 years of Fatah-Ali Shah's reign witnessed a gradual decline of Qajar dynasty, who started the nineteenth century like blood-thirsty wolves, but finished it like frail rats. The crippling blow came in the form of Persian-Russian wars. In 1800, incapable of protecting his people against the Qajar invasions, the king of Georgia simply relinquished his crown to the Tsar of Russia! This initiated 14 years of war that coincided with the Napoleonic wars in Europe.

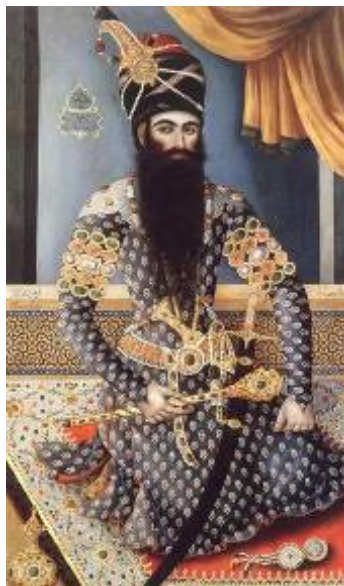


Figure 53: Fatah-Ali Shah Qajar

As Napoleon invaded Russia and even captured Moscow, the tide of war temporarily turned in favour of the Iranians (lead by the crown prince Abbas Mirza). However, the Russian people united against the invading French army, and aided by their severe winter conditions, defeated Napoleon and achieved supremacy in Eastern Europe. The Russian morale and troop surge reached the Persian front in 1814 and severely defeated the Qajars, forcing them to accept an undignified peace treaty (Golestan), relinquishing all claims against Georgia and most of the caucuses. A similar defeat following in 1826, as the Qajar

crown prince again fought with the Russians, leading to the even more ignominious treaty of Turkmenchi, which annexed all of the Armenia and the Caspian Sea, and half of the Azerbaijan to Russia.



Figure 54: Napoleon troops retreating from Russia

In 1834, after Fatah-Ali Shah's passing, Abbas Mirza's son was crowned as Mohammad Shah. The new Shah soon fought with both his vizier (Ghaem Maugham) and his mentors (the British). He tortured and killed the learned vizier and invaded the British allies in Afghanistan, which both were shameful and unnecessary bloodletting. After Mohammad Shah's passing in 1848, his young crown prince became Nasser-al-din Shah, whose reign lasted for just short of 50 years. The new shah started with dramatic reforms and improvements, led by his energetic and popular vizier (Amir Kabir). Unfortunately, the corrupt Qajar court led by the Shah's mother were hurt by the reforms and vigorously conspired against Amir Kabir, and finally toppled him after two years of relentless scheming.



Figure 55: Amir Kabir

At the same time, there was a religious uprising in most Persian cities, which threatened to curtail the power of mullahs and the brutal Qajar princes. After an unsuccessful coup attempt though, the Baha'i

uprising was brutally suppressed by the Shia masses and the Qajar forces, resulting in the torturous death of most leaders and the exile of the rest. The Baha'i faith maintained a subversive underground existence in Iran, but was unable to convince the Shia of their founder's incredible claim to have been the promised Mahdi or one of his reincarnations (a Baub or gateway).



Figure 56: Mirza Hussein-Ali (Bahau'llah) a founding leader of the Baha'i faith

After ten years of religious struggles and remorse over the unjust execution of Amir Kabir, Nasser-al-din Shah agreed to another attempt at reforming the backward state of Persia, this time under a new vizier (Moshir-al-doleh). Like Amir Kabir, the new vizier had learned the basics of European style reforms, while serving as emissary in Moscow and Baghdad. Influenced by the British supported reforms in the Ottomans land, he enlisted the help of many Western minded intellectuals to move the country's affairs away from backwardness and ignorance. However, to avoid Amir Kabir's macabre faith, Moshir-al-doleh followed a much more conservative path. He both tried to enlighten the Shah by taking him to a European tour of the advanced countries, and pursued foreign investments through granting industrial concessions.



Figure 57: Nasser-al-din Shah in front of the Peacock Throne

Unfortunately, both of the Moshir-al-doleh initiatives (although started with honest intentions) resulted in detrimental consequences. Firstly, Shah loved the worldly pleasures of Europe so much that he became addicted to more glamorous trips. Secondly, the corrupt Qajar court discovered the delicious art of peddling various concessions for the foreign nationals, and receiving their sweetener. Therefore, in 1874 the reformer vizier was replaced with a more “amusing” character, who instead of tiring industrial tours, could arrange a lot more attractive programs in Paris!



Figure 58: Queen Victoria receiving Nasser-al-din Shah

The deluge of foreign concessions caused an added economic hardship for the general populace of Persia, who now had to pay for the added taxes and tariffs associated with those activities. This resulted in a number of riots and uprisings, most notably the so called tobacco obstruction. The popular movement against unfair tobacco levies, united the few modernist intellectuals with the more numerous reform-minded clergies, whose alliance successfully engaged the Shah and forced him to cancel the very unpopular tobacco concession, in 1891. After nearly 50 years of Nasser-al-din Shah's reign, the Iranians were probably better off than before. But they were much more discontent; as many could now read in the sprouting newspapers about the amazing advances in Europe (both technologically and democratically) and even some Asian nations (like Japan). But Shah was unreceptive towards further reforms and afraid of the few young school graduates and the enlightened clergy. Hence, instead of cheering up for his bicentennial, a disgruntled intellectual shot the Shah to death, while on a religious pilgrimage!



Figure 59: Seyyed Jamal Asadabadi whose follower assassinated the Shah

In 1896, the Qajar crown prince replaced his martyred father and was crowned as Mozafar-al-din Shah. The new king was old and sickly, but still craved similar glamorous visits to Paris. Hence, he too granted many wide ranging concessions to finance his lavish sojourns. One of them was for the exploration and production of petroleum in Southern Iran (for 60 years) that went to a British citizen, for the payment of 40,000 pounds and 16% of the profit. When the unlucky entrepreneur ran out of funds before striking oil, the British government bought his concession cheaply, and soon built a most lucrative industry out of that dark and smelly fluid!



Figure 60: Digging for oil in South Iran

9. Constitutional revolution

The Iranian constitutional revolution was lead by a few intellectuals who were inspired by the Western ideals of liberty and equality. The English had one in the seventeenth century, which ultimately turned their king into a figurehead and the country as lead by an elected parliament. Both the French and the Americans went even further in the eighteenth century, abolishing the royalty and instituting Roman-inspired republics. There were two triggers to the constitutional uprising in Persia; firstly, the exorbitantly higher costs of the consumer goods due to the increased tariffs and levies. Secondly, the news of Japan's unbelievable victory over the Tsar's navy, which also triggered a bloody uprising in Russia.



Figure 61: 1905 demonstrations in Russia

After a year of struggles, in 1906, Mozafar-al-din Shah agreed to the establishment of a parliament, where people's representatives could assemble and pass laws for a democratic Persia. The first act of Majles was a European style constitution that was approved by the compromising Mozafar-al-din Shah, days before his passing. However, the new king (Mohammad-Ali) was strongly opposed to any liberal restrictions over his absolute power, and conspired to use the religious Shia sentiments against the new parliament. Shah's strongest ally was a lead cleric (Norrie) who despised the free-thinking constitutionalists. Clergies like Norrie believed that the laypeople of Persia were not even capable of properly washing their hands, without specific instructions from a master mullah (Marjah), let alone passing laws!



Figure 62: First Majles a mix of nobility, intellectuals and clergy

In the summer of 1908, Shah's Cossack brigade invaded the parliament, jailed all the deputies and murdered the liberal leaders. Similar attacks decimated the ranks of libertarians all over Iran, except for Tabriz where a small-scale armed resistance grew into a full fledged uprising. The Tabriz uprising was aided by the armed revolutionaries from the neighbouring Russian territories (Baku and Armenia), and ignited similar rebellions in Rasht and Isfahan. The ensuing civil war ended when in the spring of 1909, the revolutionary forces captured Tehran, sent the Shah to exile and unleashed revenge on the reactionaries like Norrie.



Figure 63: Mirza Jahangir Sur-e-Esrafil, a young martyr of Shah's suppression

However, the victorious constitutionalists inherited a bankrupt country that was not only one of the poorest in the world, but also was highly indebted to Russia and Britain. All through the nineteenth century, those two superpowers were engaged in a fierce competition (the Great Game) over dominance in Asia. The Great Game had allowed the feeble Qajars to survive, as each side vied for their allegiance. However, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the Anglo-Russian animosity was replaced by a common fear of the newly rising powers of Europe (Germany) and Asia (Japan). In 1907, the two superpowers of England and Russia had concluded an all-encompassing friendship pact, which also had unceremoniously divided Persia into two separate spheres of influence. Russia was granted a de-facto control over all economical activities in the North, and Britain in the South. The newborn constitutional government in Tehran could not do much against that arrangement, because most of the country's riches were lost through concessions, and the Qajars had borrowed heavily from both superpowers.



Figure 64: Victorious constitutionalists in Gilan

The new government's bankruptcy also created animosity and fierce fighting among the once allied constitutionalists. The leftists (Democrats) who were inspired by the Russian socialists, wanted to radicalize the movement and confiscate land and riches from the princes, landlords and mullahs. The moderates were aiming at achieving modernization and improvement, but without any money in the coffers, could not affect any positive outcome.

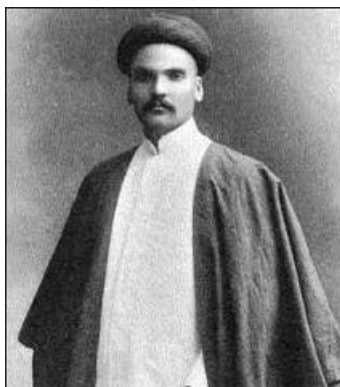


Figure 65: Seyyed Hassan Taghizadeh leader of the leftist faction in Majles

The superpowers' dominance in Iran was followed by outright occupation during the First World War. In effect, Persia became a protectorate of Russia and England, from 1912 to 1921. The level of misery and hardship during that decade is mindboggling and appalling. It is estimated that 20% of the total population (10 million) perished in civil wars (among Armenians, Kurds, Turks, Bakhtiari, Ghashghai, pro-Germans, pro-British, Arabs, Baluchi, etc.); fighting between the rival Ottomans and Russians (who used Northern Iran as their battle ground and source of supplies); and widespread famines and plagues that wiped-out entire towns and villages.



Figure 66: British doctor in South Iran

WWI killed tens of millions of people in Europe, and caused the collapse of both the Russian and German empires. Russia soon turned into a communist country and Germany adopted fascism. Britain emerged victor from the war, but so wounded and weak that London could not afford to maintain the Persian occupation all by herself. Iran was descending into chaos! The Great Game (rivalry) between the two superpowers also restarted with the Russian communists (Reds) becoming openly hostile to Britain and their counter-revolutionary allies (Whites). In 1921, the final collapse of the Whites culminated in a new power balance in the Persian arena.



Figure 67: Widespread destruction in Europe during WWI

10. Reza Shah Pahlavi

Britain agreed to withdraw her troops from Iran, as the Soviets promised to withhold their support of the secessionist movements in Azerbaijan (Democrat party), Gilan (Mirza Kochak) and Khorasan (colonel Pesian). Apparently, an implicit accord was also struck to support a new reformist government in Tehran. The British had tried to maintain their de-facto protectorate in Persia, but failed with their aborted 1919 treaty, which created a groundswell of nationalist emotions. However, the ineffective government of the Qajar nobility in Tehran was also helpless in even establishing a modicum of national sovereignty and security. Hence as the deadline of spring 1921 approached for the promised British withdrawal from Persia, a dramatic action was required.



Figure 68: Colonel Pesian with his German medal of honor (the Iron Cross)

The 1921 coup-d'état by Seyyed Zia (reformist journalist) and Reza Khan (commander of Cossack brigade) commenced with the promise of removing the chokehold of Qajar nobility from the government; establishing Persian sovereignty throughout Iran; and providing security for the suffering masses. The coup masters forcefully obtained premiership for the Seyyed and the war ministry for Reza, from the bewildered Ahmad Shah who was fully aware of the British role in the whole affair. As a show of force and promise, Seyyed quickly ordered the arrest of some hundred Qajar nobilities on grounds of treason and embezzlement, threatening to execute them if they did not return their dubiously acquired riches. He also engaged the renegade rebellion leaders of the North to interest them in supporting his government. Both moves aggravated the rich and powerful of Tehran, who in turn approached Reza Khan with all sorts of promises and gifts; if he would just remove the 'dark' Seyyed.



Figure 69: Reza Khan with the last Qajar king (Ahmad Shah)

Reza Khan was a forceful but illiterate military man, who as a poor orphan had to fend for himself since the tender age of 12. The brutish army life had made him both resourceful and ruthless. He accepted the nobility's lavish gifts and within 3 months, toppled this co-conspirator (Zia) to exile. A scion of Qajar politics (Qavam-al-sultana) became prime minister, Reza Khan maintained the war portfolio, and the Majles was reopened after six years. Shortly after the 1921 coup, the Soviets recognized the new government, and even signed a far reaching friendship treaty with the new cabinet. This spelled trouble for the Northern democratic and secessionist movements, who were one-by-one suppressed, by the rejuvenated army of Reza Khan. Reza then focused his attention on establishing sovereignty in the oil-rich South, and toppled the powerful and well armed governance of Sheikh Khazal in Khuzestan (then called Arabestan).



Figure 70: The young Mosaddeg-al-sultana, one of the few Majles delegates to oppose Reza Khan

Reza Khan's glorious victories, which had finally reunited Persia after ten miserable years, endeared him to most ranks of nobility, intellectuals and the general populace. His avid supporters (like Teymourtash) even started a campaign to abolish the monarchy, and like the Turkish republic of Kamal Ataturk, install Reza Khan as the president. However, the conservative right and the liberal left, who were both wary of Reza's dictatorial intentions, united around the notion of republic being against Islam and organized mass

religious demonstrations against the idea. Unfazed by the opposition's populist tactics, Reza Khan's camp reshaped their campaign and made a case for the outright removal of the corrupt 'Turkic' Qajar dynasty (wholly blamed for all Iran's ills), and the installation of a powerful 'Persian' ruler, without resorting to the 'un-Islamic republic'! At the conclusion of this bizarre horse-trading, Iran was denied the more modern republic system, and Majles installed Reza as the first Shah of the Pahlavi dynasty, in 1926.



Figure 71: Reza Shah Pahlavi

When Reza Shah came to power, Iran (then called Persia) was one of the poorest Asian countries! During the first six years of his reign, Reza Shah made a constructive pact with his intellectual backers (lead by Teymourtash); to let them run the country, while Shah built and lead the army. With that active encouragement, the government intellectuals rapidly weaved a number of social, legal, financial, cultural and industrial innovations into the ancient country's fabric. Western style (non-religious) schools were built for both boys and girls. Civilian rights were instituted based on the European codes. Tehran University was founded as the new backbone for training doctors, engineers and other professionals. Roads, railways and industrial facilities were constructed, to facilitate agricultural trade and modern manufacturing. The peace and security provided by Reza Shah's new army, as well as the increased oil income, made all those improvements possible.



Figure 72: New face of Tehran after Reza Shah's reforms

Reza Shah truly instigated the wide ranging modernization of Iran, from a filthy, backward and lawless shell-of-a-state, to a functioning and advancing society. With the new roads and trucks, the all too

frequent famines of the earlier twentieth century disappeared. Under the new army's watchful eyes, the bandits and tribes could no longer rob the caravans or invade towns and villages. The new schools and colleges gave hope and purpose to many youths for a better future and the flourishing of their talents. Emancipation of women encouraged that half of the population to play a more active role in public life. Municipal modernizations, public health initiatives and vaccinations, lowered the infant and youth mortality rates and provided a brighter outlook for young families.



Figure 73: A women's emancipation gathering

Unfortunately, Reza Shah was fundamentally an illiterate bully who soon became intoxicated with power! As the power corrupts, Reza became more and more callous, suspicious and brutal in the treatment of first the opposition, and then even his own allies and friends. The opposing members of parliament (e.g. Modarres, and Mosaddeg) were banished and exiled. All the political parties were pushed out, and the Majles elections became a process of backroom nominations followed by routine vote rigging by the army and police chiefs. The government intellectuals (like Teymourtash) were initially complacent in this sordid departure from the constitutional monarchy principles, until they too became victims of the dictator's unrelenting greed and paranoia. One by one, the same team of luminaries who had elevated Reza Khan from a cassock to the war minister, the prime minister and finally the Shah; became targets of the secret police investigations; ended up in jail on trumped up charges; and were poisoned or tortured to death by Reza Shah's notorious gang of henchmen.



Figure 74: Teymourtash (left) with Mussolini in Italy

By the mid 1930's, Reza Shah had complete control of the country and was treating it like his own property, and the populace like helpless servers. Thirty years after the constitutional revolution, the country had again fully digressed from liberty to tyranny. Shah was not only after the absolute power, but also absolute wealth; as he forced most landowners to relinquish their properties or face persecution and death. It is estimated that by the end of his reign, Reza Shah had unlawfully obtained titles to 40% of the best agricultural lands in Iran! He also extended his reach to the oil contract with the British (Anglo-Persian Oil Company), tore it up and secretly set up a new arrangement to siphon a sizable share of that income into his own foreign bank accounts.



Figure 75: Reza Shah on horseback

At the same time in central Europe, Nazi (Germany) and Fascist (Italy) sentiments brought racist maniacs like Hitler and Mussolini into power. Reza Shah was mesmerized by the powerful image of those super thugs and soon expelled most of the English and French advisors and replaced them with the Nazi

Germany personnel. He was so intoxicated by the Aryan hallucinations of Hitler, that even changed the name of the country; tried to remove all Arab insignia (camels, turbans and beard); and engaged in secret pacts regarding the future power struggles in Europe. During the first two years of the Second World War, the Axis (Germany, Italy and Japan) forces were extremely successful. Hitler was able to pacify the Russians by signing a friendship treaty with Stalin, and avoided direct action against the neutral Americans. German troops successfully blitzed Poland, France, Denmark, Belgium, Holland and Greece; and many other nations (e.g. Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria) joined the Axis. All of Europe was falling under the bleak reign of fascist terror! In East Asia too, the Japanese captured Korea, Taiwan, Philippines, Singapore and most of China. England itself looked alone and miserable, under the constant German aerial bombardments and submarine attacks.



Figure 76: London devastated by Nazi bombings

Reza Shah's position of apparent neutrality combined with implicit collaboration with the Nazi's, was at the beginning quite tenable, because Iran's northern neighbour (Russia) also had a friendship treaty with Germany. Therefore, the beleaguered British who were based in both Iraq (English protectorate since 1918) and today's Pakistan (then part of India), could only hope and try to appease Reza Shah in order to avoid any threat on their Khuzestan oil fields. But the treacherous surprise German attack on the Russians in the summer of 1941 changed that entire balance. All of a sudden, Iran was surrounded by anti-German forces in north, east and west. The allies desperately needed to send aid and supplies to the besieged Russians, who were being mercilessly massacred by the advancing Nazi forces. Britain and Russia gave formal ultimatums to Reza Shah, requesting the expulsion of thousands of German advisors and personnel from Iran, and the opening of the South-North railway for aid transport to Russia. When Reza Shah foolishly declined, the Allied forces easily occupied Iran from north and south; the army collapsed within two days; and Reza had to abdicate, relinquish most of his wealth and leave for exile.

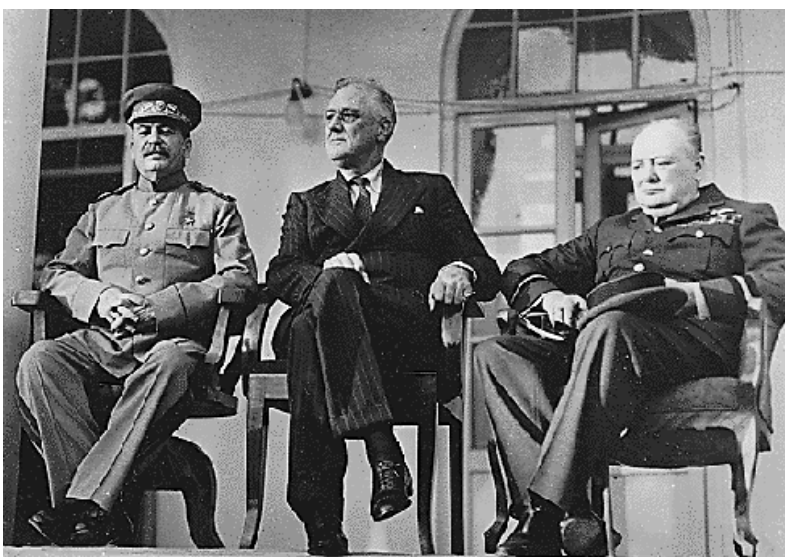


Figure 77: WWII allies (Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill) in Tehran

11. 2nd world war and Mosaddeg

After the forceful abdication of Reza Shah, the angry British government, who saw Reza as a former ally turned into a treacherous enemy, seriously considered the restoration of the Qajar dynasty. However, the lead Iranian intellectuals (like Foroughi) could foresee a major political upheaval with the return of arrogant Qajars. Although Foroughi was persecuted during Reza Shah, he reasoned that the country had truly democratic laws (constitution) and if the current crown prince was ready to respect them, there was no reason for a regime change. This way, Mohammad Reza Shah came to be the new constitutional monarch of Iran, who for nearly a decade respected the democratic institutions of the country.



Figure 78: Foroughi and the new Shah

With the fall of Reza Shah, his surviving political victims were freed from the prison, and started various political parties, secessionist movements and tribal revivals. Most significantly, the freed communists founded the Tudeh party, and the Azerbaijan leftists restarted the Democrat party's bid for separation. Tudeh party soon grew to become the most well-organized political entity in Iran, and the Democrat party's collaboration with the Russian occupation granted them the de-facto governance of Azerbaijan

and Kurdistan. In Tehran, many powerless prime ministers came and went, with the real power in the hands of the three foreign embassies (Russian, British and American) whose military forces were occupying Iran. The young Shah's main contributions were to revive the collapsed Iranian army, and to win the formal agreement of all three powers to evacuate Iran, within six months after the end of WWII.

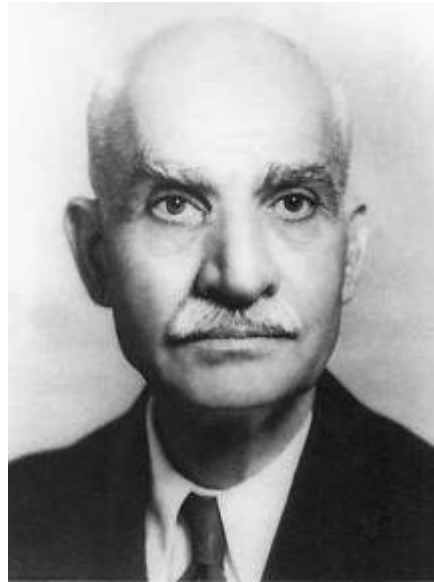


Figure 79: Reza Shah dies in exile

The war ended in summer of 1945, with Germany and Japan devastated and turned into occupied territories; Britain and France wounded and demoted to second rate powers; and the United States and the Soviet Russia rising to the level of new super-powers. Sadly, the repressive communist regime of Stalin could not cooperate with the capitalist block, and the second half of the twentieth century turned into an all encompassing East-West power struggle (the Cold War). As both super-powers quickly acquired vast nuclear arsenals, their struggle became “Cold” and indirect, with almost all the hot and bloody fighting occurring in the third-world countries of Africa, South America and Asia.



Figure 80: Atom bombing of Hiroshima, Japan in 1945

In Iran, the struggles started immediately after the end of WWII. As the British and American forces prepared to leave by the six month deadline, but the Russians decided to stay and protect their puppet governments of the Democrat Party in Azerbaijan and Kurdistan. To deal with this treat, Shah and his western allies resorted to a stick-and-carrot policy. US firmly pressed Stalin on the issue, with a threat of retaliatory action; while the reinstated veteran prime minister in Tehran (Qavam) awarded three cabinet positions to the Tudeh party and promised a concession of the North oil resources to Russia. Stalin bit the bait and his Red Army evacuated the Northern provinces in the autumn of 1946. Swiftly, the Shah's resurrected army moved into Azerbaijan and Kurdistan, and finished the secessionist movements, with minimum resistance and bloodshed. This victory established the Shah as a national hero, whereas the Tudeh party leftists were tainted with the stigma of being Russian-puppets.



Figure 81: Churchill supported the young Shah against the Russian occupation

The Tudeh-Shah struggles came to a climax when in early 1949 an Islamic newspaper reporter, who was apparently an undercover Tudeh agent, tried to assassinate the Shah during a ceremony in the Tehran University. Miraculously, the five bullets fired by the assassin from close range, only bruised Shah's face and body! The government declared the Tudeh party illegal; their offices were promptly closed, some of their leaders were arrested; but most of the organization quickly went underground. A group of Islamists (Fedayan Islam) were also banned and their suspected clerical leader (Ayatollah Kashani) was briefly jailed. Recovery from such a callous terror attempt further increased Shah's esteem among the general populace, but at the same time made him more paranoid and suspicious of all opposition.



Figure 82: Dr. Yazdi a Tudeh leader and former health minister arrested in Tehran

Suspicious of all opposition political parties, Shah fixed the 1949 Majles elections through direct influence peddling and vote rigging by the court minister (Hajir) and the various local police and army chiefs. This was done in such an obvious and blatant fashion that some of the opposition candidates did not win a single vote in their own home riding! The moderate opposition leaders were completely outraged by that fiasco and joined in a newly organized union (the National Front) to confront and shame the government into cancelling the rigged vote. The underground Islamists again take to terror and assassinated the court minister (Hajir) in cold blood. The combination of liberal protests and Islamic terror forced the Shah to cancel the elections. The new vote still maintained the rightwing monarchists' majority, but brought a vibrant nationalist minority to the parliament.



Figure 83: Political parties compete for power in the Majles

Next year (in 1950), a hardworking and highly decorated military man (general Razmara) became prime minister. Razmara was a first-class France-educated general with many years of honest and dedicated service to the country. Unfortunately, all those qualifications put him at odds with almost every player in the wretched Persian politics! He was too honest and too direct for the taste of the corrupt Pahlavi court; too Western minded for the leftists and Islamists; and too strong willed for the liberals who still trembled at the memories of another forceful general (Reza Khan). Therefore, the liberal National Front joined with the Kashani Islamists to condemn the new prime minister, from day one. The sentimental nationalist leader Mosaddeq screamed during Razmara's presentation and fainted in the Majles, while the Islamists leader Kashani led demonstrations outside the parliament. Politically, the opposition used the issue of oil contract renewal with the British company (AIOC), as the Achilles heel of the new government. Razmara was hard at work to obtain more favourable terms from AIOC, perhaps in line with the new American contracts in Saudi Arabia (50/50 profit sharing). But the opposition proposed an outright nationalization of the oil industry, in order to steer the general populace and throw the government into an impossible impasse. During heated debates in the parliament, Mosaddeq and Kashani tried to portray Razmara as a weak and unpatriotic prime minister, who was too scared to nationalize the 'god-given' oil treasure. Attempts by Razmara to sway the public opinion based on the factual inability of the government to run the sophisticated oil industry, played into the opposition's hand to portray him as a non-believer in the incredible Persian capability! All debates ended with the terror of prime minister by another Islamist murderer in spring 1951.



Figure 84: Nawab Safavi of the Fedaiyan Islam terrorists

Utterly exuberant by the news of Razmara's assassination, Mosaddeg intimidated the conservative Majles deputies into accepting the populist mantra of oil nationalization, or expecting a similar fate as Razmara! Hence, the oil industry nationalization bill was passed by the Majles and the Shah, even though none of them believed in it or even knew how to implement it. Ludicrously enough, based on the most pervasive Persian political dogma that "everything is controlled by the English", it appears that at the beginning even Shah perceived Mosaddeg as a British super-agent, who had to be feared and accommodated! Therefore, when everyone refused to accept the responsibility of implementing the oil nationalization bill, the frail Mosaddeg who only had a 10% voting block in the Majles, came to power as the new prime minister, when the prime ministers had an average shelf life of less than one year. Most conservative royalists who voted for Mosaddeg's new cabinet figured that the 'old man' was a neurotic populist, whose government would quickly disintegrate.



Figure 85: Anglo-Iranian Oil Company's refinery in Abadan

The impossible task of nationalizing the Iranian oil industry (with no technicians, engineers, tankers or customers) not only created a world-class crisis for the new Mosaddeg government, but also shook the

confidence of the Labour prime minister in London. The left-leaning Attlee government who was nationalizing many bankrupt British industries in the wake of the WWII damages and the wave of colonial independence (especially India), could not afford to lose the lucrative AIOC, but could not force a military solution either. Therefore, for two years the largest oil refinery of the world in Abadan was stopped; all the crude oil exports were terminated; and Iran was placed under a virtual trade embargo. UK asked the Democrat US president (Truman) who was on good terms with Mosaddeg, to intervene in the oil crisis; and at the same time took Iran to the international court of justice in Holland.



Figure 86: President Truman and Dr. Mosaddeg in Washington

The first year of Mosaddeg's premiership was successfully spent in wild battles at three fronts (oil, Majles and Shah), where glorious victories elevated him from a former Qajar aristocrat and eccentric liberal politician, to the coveted position of the new national hero and strongman of Iran. Mosaddeg sent the troops to take over the oil installations in Khuzestan and effectively forced the British personnel into evacuation, after 50 years of domination over the Iranian petroleum industry. In the new parliament elections (then every two years), his supporters and allies won a slim majority in Tehran and other major cities, and pre-emptively invalidated the unfavourable and dubious results coming from the small towns and villages, where Shah's conservatives had the upper hand. Finally, he asked Shah for the control of army (nomination of war minister) and upon his refusal, resigned in such a dramatic fashion that plunged the country in a week of tumultuous demonstrations. Fearing a full-scale revolution by the hardliners and the Tudeh party (who were behind the most violent riots), Shah had to reinstate the 'old man', with the promise that Mosaddeg would not topple the Pahlavi dynasty, and in return, Shah would desist from undue interference with the political affairs. Next day, the ruling from the international court in Holland came in favour of Mosaddeg, which led to unprecedented jubilations in Tehran. It seemed that an old but stubborn Persian nobleman had defeated the loathed Anglos!



Figure 87: Mosaddeq defends the oil nationalization at the United Nations

Unfortunately, Mosaddeq's second year in the office unravelled all the gains of his first year! He proved to be much better as the speaker for opposition than the leader of government, and much more resourceful in weakness than tactful in power. His emotional and authoritative style (my way or no way) soon upset and aggravated most of the nationalist and Islamist allies, who gradually turned into sworn enemies. He lost most credibility in the Majles and undemocratically dissolved it, in order to prevent the parliament from voting him out of the office! He stubbornly refused any negotiation with the British over the oil industry, on any terms but the full nationalization. In UK and US, this changed his image from a peculiar but respectable nationalist to a dangerous adventurer, or even worse a possible communist sympathizer. Mosaddeq's unrealistic, sentimental and stubborn style of government gradually united all his old and new enemies around the single goal of his dismissal. By summer of 1953, his only remaining allies were a minority in the National Front and a fraction in the still illegal Tudeh party; even though he still enjoyed a personal popularity among many emotionally charged Iranians.



Figure 88: Kermit Roosevelt, the American spy master in Tehran

By summer of 1953 Mosaddeq had dissolved the Majles (through a controversial referendum) and was ruling by decree. He had gained a near complete control over the government and the security forces, but at the cost of aggravating some very powerful political players inside and outside Iran! To the Shah, conservatives, Islamists and even the moderate nationalists, he was an out-of-control autocrat. For the newly installed rightwing governments in Washington (Eisenhower) and London (Churchill), he was a communist sympathizer. That is how an improbable coalition of the likes of Kashani, Bagha'i, Shaaban Jafari, general Zahedi and Shah became united around a US/UK sponsored coup-d'état that toppled

Mosaddeg in (28 Mordad) 1953. A small segment of the security forces fought for the premier, but after half-a-day of street battles and some 300 casualties, the coalition of the street thugs, religious zealots and the royalist army prevailed. The Tudeh party leadership was divided and stayed on the sidelines, and Moscow was too confused during the bloody power struggles following Stalin's death.



Figure 89: Mosaddeg's house devastated during the army's raid

12. Mohammad Reza Shah

After the 1953 coup, Shah's reign as an autocratic monarch started. Similar to his father's rule, soon the parliament became a rubberstamp of the royal decrees, and the political rights were in effect suspended. However, it still took the Shah another decade before he could gain the absolute power over his court, the army and the Persian nobility. Meanwhile, he had to contend with his family, who were forcing him into divorces and remarriages; the power-hungry generals of his army, who were planning coups behind his back; and the older and wiser nobility, who were trying to teach and mentor him! Besides, the country was dirt poor and most people were illiterate and living in abject poverty.



Figure 90: South Tehran in 1953, which like most of the country was dirt poor.

Shah's oppression of Mosaddeg's allies was moderate, with only one of them (Dr. Fatimi) executed. However, his secret police (Savak) soon found its real target among the underground Tudeh party and its clandestine military branch. Several hundred were arrested and many tortured and executed. Astonishingly, later on the Savak itself became a threat to the Shah, as its first notorious chief (general Bakhtiar) planned a coup-d'état, apparently in discussion with the American CIA! In the 1950's, Shah became so disenchanted with his wretched monarchy, that he collapsed in a state of deep despair and depression, and even seriously contemplated abdication and 'retirement'!



Figure 91: Dr. Fatimi was captured in a Tudeh safe-house, by general Bakhtiar (sitting) forces.

Two events saved Shah's morale from depression and desperation, a happier marriage and a royal revolution! When Shah's only full-brother died in an airplane crash in 1954, he was left with no heir-apparent. His beautiful wife seemed sterile and in 1958, the royal family forced him into his second divorce. This time, instead of wedding a prominent princess or pampered nobility, the 40 year old Shah turned towards a young middle-class university student, who was both intelligent and energetic. The young bride soon blessed him with two sons and two daughters, as well as some degree of hope and happiness.



Figure 92: Shah's coronation happens 13 years after the coup

The royal (White) revolution of 1961 was instigated by the American-inspired new reformist prime minister, Dr. Ali Amini, who had also served in Mosaddeg's cabinet. Amini and his agriculture minister designed a revolutionary land-reform program that overnight, disposed of the feudal system in Iran. To that program, they also added clauses for women's suffrage, compulsory secular education, and provincial councils. The new Democrat US president (Kennedy) believed that such social reforms were the best remedy for modernizing the 3rd world countries, without losing them to the communist block.



Figure 93: Shah handing out the land reform deeds

Not everyone was happy with the “White” revolution. However, the large landowners were appeased by some moderating measures, and the conservative clergies were calmed regarding the compulsory secular schools and the women vote. Unfortunately, a militant ayatollah (Khomeini), who had a history of aggressive anti-secular views as well as collaboration with the radical Fedaiyan Islam, rose in fierce disagreement against the Shah’s reforms. Rather than attacking the core and popular items such as the land reform, Khomeini concentrated his attacks against the peripheral issue of provincial councils, where non-Muslims could be elected with no distinction from the Muslims. He condemned that clause as a clear violation of the constitution, which officialised the Shia Islam. He also tied the reformist efforts to the increasing Jewish and Baha’i influence over the Shah’s government. The ensuing religious uprisings of 1963 (15 Khordad) were viciously suppressed by the riot police and the army, resulting in hundreds of casualties. This caused a major disenchantment among the militant religious groups who had helped bring the Shah to power in 1953, but now felt completely betrayed and brutalized.



Figure 94: Khomeini appealing to a crowd during the 1963 riots

Following the 1963 crack down, ayatollah Khomeini was arrested and even psychologically abused in prison. Even so, next year, a new conciliatory prime minister (Mansur) arranged for his release and safe return to Qom. Sadly, the much westernized Mansur soon became the target of even more vicious attacks from Khomeini, who declared him an American puppet and initiated some more rioting. This time, Shah forced Khomeini into exile (first to Turkey and then Iraq), to uproot the leadership of religious discontent. Nevertheless, the Islamic militancy continued and Mansur was murdered by the Fedaiyan Islam terrorists in the spring of 1965.



Figure 95: Mansur, short-lived prime minister

Prime Minister Mansur's assassination heralded a new era of terrorist attacks and guerrilla warfare against the Shah's government. Although the fundamentalist Fedaiyan Islam group was soon decimated, two new and actively armed resistance groups (Peoples Fedaiyan and Peoples Mujahidin) emerged from the tormented ashes of the Tudeh Party and the National Front. Both groups were radicalized by the Savak suppression of any political dissent, and evolved into Cuban-style militant guerrillas. Also, both of them received significant support, training and arms from the Palestinian resistance fighters, who saw the Shah as a staunch Israeli supporter. In response, Shah packed the leadership of his secret police (Savak) with the most notoriously vicious characters (like general Nasiri), who truly enjoyed the persecution, torture and murder of hundreds of idealistic intellectuals and university students.



Figure 96: The notorious Evin prison north of Tehran

In the mid 1960's, Shah decided to take an active role in the affairs of government, which gradually turned into an omnipotent supervision and even direction of all the political, military and social affairs of Iran. In his thirty seven years of reign, Shah steadily turned from a constitutional monarch (1941 to 1953) to a meddling king (53 to 63), a benevolent dictator (63 to 75) and finally a deranged tyrant. However, the forceful reform decade starting in the mid 1960's was the zenith of his dictatorial reign, which elevated Iran from the lowly ranks of a backward country to a respectable and thriving state. Shah was unusually energized by the achievements of his 'White' revolution, and the forceful struggle against what he saw as the communist (red) and the religious (black) reactionaries. For more than a decade, he took the helms of the country, all the time believing that he was taking Iran from the dark ages into the modern era of a grand civilization. To that effect, Shah even assumed the prime ministerial functions, and used a tame figure head (Hoveida) to rubber stamp all his wishes and directions.



Figure 97: Hoveida served the longest term as prime minister

After the royal land and social reforms, Iran quickly progressed in all aspects of material and social achievements, but politically remained a brutally repressive police-state. During the 1961-1977 period, the urban and industrial growth transformed Tehran and the other major cities from the dark ages, when people did not have clean drinking water, sanitation or electricity, to modern metropolitans with all the basic amenities, schools, hospitals, factories and universities. However, the rural situation did not improve significantly, as most of the newly freed Raieyat (serfs) did not have the required financial capability to make an efficient use of their small land plots. Moreover, the improved medical conditions in the rural areas created a population boom among the village families, who were used to having 5 or 6 children (with only 2 or 3 surviving) and were religiously averse to any birth control. The totally uneven urban/rural development created a massive migration of destitute village youths, who could not find any meaningful employment in their backward environment, and sought a new chance in the sprawling city construction sites.



Figure 98: The modernized Tehran

As Shah was educated both in a Switzerland private school and in Tehran's military school, he had two firm traits: western mindedness and militaristic ambitions. He could never quite grasp, let alone appreciate the subtleties of dealing with the colourful Persian and Islamic characters, and was always comparing 'his' country to the western standards. That created a feeling of discontent and even constant shame in his proud psyche, which sought recognition and approval from the western media and leaders. Furthermore, Shah's military background made him unappreciative and suspicious of politicians and all

democratic discourse. He simply wanted to make ‘his’ army as strong and well equipped as possible, in order to prevail over all internal and external adversaries. Shah’s burning desire for hasty modernization of Iran and expensive upgrades for the army, created a number of economical and social dislocations in the country. His modernization projects, which were too hastily and too artificially fuelled by the soaring oil prices, played havoc with the fledgling Iranian economy and infrastructure; creating cyclic booms and busts, deficiencies and speculations, inflation and hoarding.



Figure 99: Modern Iran's air force jets

During the great oil boom of the 1970's, the irrational exuberance of the Iranian upper classes and the unquenchable greed of the royalty played havoc with the domestic economy. Concurrently, Shah's pride aged into egomania and his anxiety escalated to paranoia. He now wanted to establish a truly Persian empire worthy of the Cyrus and the Darius; forcefully enlist all the populace in his grandiose schemes; and even torment the aloof western countries that apparently were not paying him enough respect! Despite the desperate appeals of his American allies, Shah's aggressive stands in the OPEC effectively lead the oil surge following the 1973 Arab embargo, into a price explosion. That propelled the Iranian crude oil income from \$800 million in 1970 to \$18 billion (22 times higher) in 1975! Sadly, instead of creating a thoughtful long-term plan for all that windfall fortune, Shah channelled a third of it into massive military purchases and the rest into poorly planned grandiose projects, which could not be accommodated within the weak Iranian infrastructure. Soon, the soaring and unaccounted for demands on electricity, housing and transportation exploded into chronic blackouts, rent and real-estate explosions and serious port and delivery bottlenecks, leading to frequent shortages.



Figure 100: Arab-Israel war of 1973 led to an oil embargo and price increase

The resilient Iranian people could have probably weathered the economical upheavals of the mid 1970's, but they certainly did not tolerate the egomaniacally foolish royal decrees and manoeuvres. Intoxicated by the oil windfall and dreaming that he was the greatest king since Cyrus; Shah embarked on a range of idiotic measures that were almost designed to enrage the populace. His grandiose 'imperial' make over of Iran, started with a \$200 million dollar imperial gala to celebrate 2,500 years of monarchy in Iran. He then changed the Islamic calendar to a peculiar imperial one, which was never used before anywhere in the world. Finally in 1975, during a surprise televised speech, Shah ordered all the Iranians to either join his new imperial party (Rastakheez) or get their passports and leave 'his' country! At the same time, his secret police kept its torturous chokehold on the Iranian intellectuals, which led to the arrest, torture and early demise of many scholars and authors, including Dr. Shariati, a very popular Islamic free-thinker.

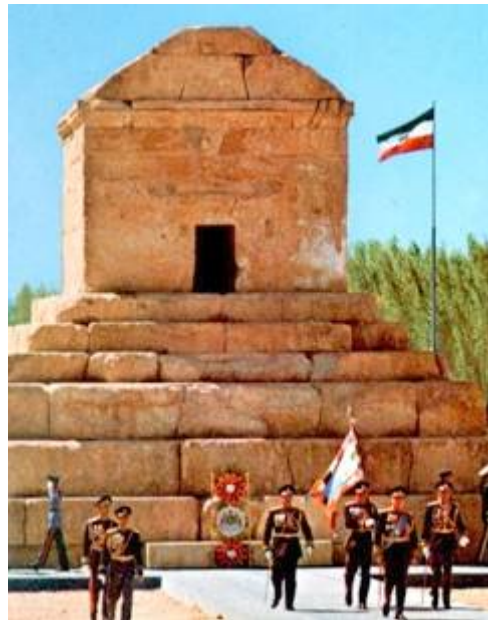


Figure 101: Extravagant celebration of 2,500 years of Iranian Imperial monarchy, but with everything (even the food) imported from Europe!

On the cultural side, Shah's government had set aside all pretences regarding any respect towards the religious and ethical sensitivities of the 95% Muslim population. The state-run television, the government-censured cinemas and the Pahlavi-sponsored Shiraz 'art festival' would routinely broadcast such explicit sexual content, which was insulting and demeaning to the general populace. In reaction, the bulk of religious masses turned to their traditional congregations and mosques for spiritual support and guidance. This was particularly true in case of the migrant rural families who could not adjust to the fast, uncaring and alien pace of life in the sprawling but characterless Tehran. The secular intellectuals were not any happier either, as their leaders were routinely jailed and tortured, and the slightest sign of dissent would ignite a brutal police and Savak suppression. A sad consequence was that the modernized universities turned into effective breeding grounds for the underground guerrilla movements, as well as frequent demonstrations and strikes. Even most overseas students became mired in anti-Shah organizations (Confederations) instead of education. In the mid 1970's, to most secular, liberal or religious intellectuals; Iran felt like a prosperous country, but under the militaristic occupation of a cruel and alien royalty!



Figure 102: Dr. Ali Shariati formulated a new approach to Islamic activism

A striking instance of the Shah/people alienation, came to fore in an outrageously insulting article, written under direct royal command, against ayatollah Khomeini. Shah's deranged mental condition may have contributed to the ordering of such a carelessly vulgar public denunciation of a leading Shia Marjah. In autumn of 1977, Khomeini's son had died under suspicious circumstances, while under exile in Iraq. Iran's secret police, that had previously assassinated general Bakhtiar (first head of Savak) and even some Baath officials, was suspected of the deed. The religious community in Iran was upset enough to hold several mourning congregations in the major cities, with a few of them leading to small-scale demonstrations. Shah apparently was so infuriated with those allegations and demonstrations that he directly ordered the preparation and publication of the inflammatory article, in a major national newspaper (Ettelaat). In the Ettelaat article, Khomeini was insulted and abused as an English spy from India, who was both a drug addict and a child molester, plotting to ruin His Majesty's grand designs for Iran! That final folly triggered an endless cycle of religious and political riots that resulted in the demise of Pahlavi dynasty.



Figure 103: Violent demonstrations in Tehran University

The 1978 demonstrations quickly united the Iranian opposition around a simple set of declarations and demands: that Shah was a demonic traitor who was ordering the brutal suppression of the people, and that he should relinquish the government for it to achieve 'freedom and independence'. Not much thought was given to a replacement government, but an Islamic Republic was frequently mentioned and implicitly accepted, where the ideals of religion and democracy would rule together. Toppling of the much feared

Shah's regime seemed such a remote possibility that the opposition could not readily perceive a future system. The silly general sentiment among the resentful intellectuals was that 'anything would be better than the Shah'! The first half of 1978 was filled with sporadic violent riots in major Iranian cities, which were often brutally suppressed, resulting in several hundred casualties. However, most observers still believed that the regime could weather the disturbances, and that the Shah's carrot and stick policy would save the day. The Shah's regime provided several incentives, including the cancellation of 'imperial' calendar; the dissolution of Rastakheez party; and dismissal of the notorious chief of Savak (Nasiri) and a handful of other villainous characters. Indeed during the summer, the rioting abated, until a disastrous calamity in Abadan reignited the powder keg. The Cinema Rex torching, which has since been blamed on different groups, was squarely attributed to the Shah's Savak. Overnight, there was a tenfold increase in widespread demonstrations. In response, Shah ordered a brutal crack down of the Tehran's protests on the Black Friday, which effectively removed any hope for a peaceful compromise.



Figure 104: Burnt salon and chairs of Cinema Rex, where 400 died

In the autumn of 1978, everything started to fall apart. The rebellion spread to universities, then schools and finally into factories, offices and even the oil industry. Widespread strikes paralyzed most government functions and large-scale desertions weakened the armed forces. In secret, Shah was terminally ill, but would not relinquish any real power to his hand picked governments or even the army generals. During the past 15 years of his despotic reign, every decision and action was so directly dictated by him, that the whole country fell into a state of paralysis, as he was being debilitated by an incurable cancer and an implacable enemy. Khomeini's resolve was unrelenting, even as his moderate aides were recommending a compromise to save the country from collapse. His single minded utterance set the target: 'Shah must go'! In early 1979, after Shah left the country for an extended 'vacation', neither his secular new prime minister (Shahpor Bakhtiar) who had also served under Mosaddeq; nor his army generals who were being coached by the Americans, could withstand Khomeini's return and the tsunami wave of popular uprising.



Figure 105: Khomeini and militant mullah's return from exile

13. Islamic Republic in Iran

With the collapse of Shah's regime, like in the other major revolutions, a frenzied rush to fill out the power vacuum started. Ayatollah Khomeini's clerical alliance (the so called Hezbollah) quickly gained momentum and established itself both in the political arena (through the Islamic Republic Party) and the military front (through the Revolutionary Guards). However, the first provisional government was assigned to the liberal Muslims (led by Bazaargan) and the secular nationalists, who both had decades of anti-Shah resistance credentials, as well as technical and organizational experience. The numerous revolutionary leftist groups (most notably the Peoples Fedaiyan and Mujahidin) were not trusted with any role in the new government, and were even denounced as infidels and apostates, by the Hezbollah. The Hezbollah organizations also started a systematic persecution of the previous regime's leaders and notables. Several hundred were executed, with thousands more jailed and tortured, and tens of thousands losing all their family wealth and properties. The savage behaviour of Hezbollah rapidly antagonized most of the educated middle class and the secular intellectuals, but invigorated the lower classes who enjoyed a measure of revenge, as well as material benefit from the confiscations and lootings.



Figure 106: There was little pity for Hoveida and the other captives.

Most leftist groups considered the liberal-clergy alliance as a transitional phase, before the radicalization of the revolution would ultimately give them a chance to take over and turn the tide, as in the Russian October revolution of 1917. Therefore, they started a frantic recruiting drive among the students, workers and the ethnic and religious minorities, who were more susceptible to leftist propaganda. Their efforts quickly paid off in the Sunni Kurdistan region, where many police stations and army garrisons were

ransacked, and an autonomous district was established. The ensuing savage civil war between the Hezbollah and the Kurdistan leftists antagonized the clerical leadership of Khomeini who issued an all out war edict against the ‘infidels’. However, the newly formed Revolutionary Guards were still too feeble to defeat the Kurdish resistance.



Figure 107: Executions in Kurdistan proceeded with no trial or mercy

Seven months after the 1979 (Bahman) victory, the Hezbollah was determined to take over the entire government apparatus; expel the liberal technocrats from the ministries; crush the Kurdistan uprising; and reinvigorate the populace around their banner. However, their repressive tactics had so far alienated most political activists, and their lack-lustre and fundamentalist slogans could not attract the vibrant young population. Since his arrival, ayatollah Khomeini had not helped their cause either, as his lectures were normally tedious and erratic. The Hezbollah ‘ideologues’ decided that a new wave of political radicalism was required to rescue the mantle of ‘anti-imperialist’ struggle from the leftist groups; topple the insufferably liberal government of Bazaargan; and establish their religious hegemony (Velayat Faghieh) within the new constitution. Shah’s trip to US for emergency medical surgery, gave them a unique opportunity to attack the American embassy in Tehran and create what ayatollah Khomeini later called, ‘a second revolution greater than the first’.



Figure 108: Taking the embassy hostage has since severed all ties with the US.

The ‘first’ revolution of 1978 had dropped Iran from the ranks of internationally respected countries, but considering the critical importance of our oil fields, both the Americans and the Russians soon tried to normalize their relationship with the haphazard and unfriendly government of Tehran. However, the hostage taking of the American embassy rapidly dropped Iran from the ranks of the civilized nations, down to the level of a pariah state. At a tremendous cost to the country, the Hezbollah goals were mostly achieved, as the liberal government of Bazaargan soon resigned; the fundamentalist students prevailed in the universities and even closed them for three years of purging and ‘cultural revolution’; and Khomeini

was brought back from the isolation in Qom, to rule as the new absolute leader over the coronet of a defaced Tehran (Jamaran)!



Figure 109: The graffiti covered grand church of Tehran

Hezbollah's 'victory' would have been complete if it was not for a technicality (country of birth) that disqualified their candidate for the presidential elections. Inevitably, a liberal technocrat (Banisadr) who had western education but Islamic inspirations became the first Iranian president. However, Banisadr was soon confronted with the massive Hezbollah efforts that blocked his every move in the new Islamic Majles and violently attacked his staff and followers in the streets. Hezbollah also hindered any development on the American hostage issues, in order to further weaken the new president and isolate Iran from any western influence. Meanwhile, after several months of humiliating torment, the American public and politicians were slowly gaining hope that, as promised by Khomeini, the new Majles would ratify a deal over the hostage matter, when suddenly a new maniac threw another wrench into the wicked Iranian politics.



Figure 110: Banisadr was initially confirmed by Khomeini

Saddam Hussein had always hated the arrogant Persians! Shah's regime was a close ally of the deposed Iraqi monarchy and a constant source of harassment to the new Iraqi Baath party, which was almost toppled by a Savak coup d'état in 1971. For years, Shah's army had activity provided arms, logistical support and even artillery coverage to the Iraqi Kurdish uprising that was controlling the northern quarter of that country. Until 1975, when Saddam bowed to Shah's demands regarding the border disputes and a truce was signed in Algeria. However, after the revolution, the religious zealots in Tehran started an active recruiting campaign of the massive Shia population in Southern Iraq, in order to create another Islamic Republic in Baghdad. That of course did not sit well with the megalomaniac leader of Iraq, who

had ambitions of his own to ‘liberate’ the Arabic-speaking Khuzestan and teach another Qadessieh-type lesson to the Persians! Iraq’s surprise attack on the Western Iranian plains in the autumn of 1980 stunned an unprepared nation and a disheartened army.



Figure 111: The Baathist thugs attacked Iran in mid 1980.

Since revolution, the Iranian army had been hurt by several waves of bloody purges. Nevertheless, the army was still not trusted by the governing clergy, as they were well aware of the anti-mullah sentiments among the rank-and-file. However, the newly formed Revolutionary Guards were also unprepared to take on the well-equipped Iraqi army. Hence, two competing approaches emerged among the Iranian leadership, with president Bani Sadr advocating a systematic technical upgrade of the army, and the Hezbollah pushing for massive lightly-armed volunteer (Basij) forces to push back the Iraqis. A similar dispute raged through all aspects of government, with the president supporting the technocratic core (Motehassesin) to lead the ministries and industries. But the Hezbollah was pushing for a widespread purging of all the ‘non-believers’ and substituting them with a massive infusion of the real Muslims (Motehahedin). At the core of that dispute was the utter disdain of the Shia clergy and the ‘true believers’ for anyone that was not conforming to their version of Islam.



Figure 112: Abadan refinery is destroyed by Iraqi bombardment

The dominant Shia clergy still believes that without their absolute oversight, the laypeople are incapable of even washing their hands in the proper Islamic manner, let alone running an office, a factory or an army. In their view, leadership is a god-given privilege of the twelve Shia Imams, which now is

temporarily trusted to their loyal deputies, the mullahs! This dogma is the cornerstone of governance in Islamic Iran, which originated as a religious tenet from Khomeini's musings and writings. Hence, the first Europe-educated president of Iran faced a losing battle against the militant Hezbollah, who soon learnt to win their battles through forceful numerical advantage, utilizing massive waves of the brute illiterate 'believers'. The Banisadr versus Hezbollah fight came to a bloody climax in the summer of 1981. Most Muslim groups were forced to take sides with either the liberal-technocrat front (Banisadr and Peoples Mujahidin) or the repressive puritans of Hezbollah (the Islamic Republic Party and the Revolutionary Guards). The ensuing battle devolved into a bloody civil war, with the Hezbollah and Khomeini finally emerging as the undisputed victors by 1982. By that time, the prisons were filled with tens of thousands of the opposition activists, leftists and liberals, who were routinely tortured and murdered in a fashion that made the Shah's Savak look innocent!



Figure 113: Tormented Mujahidin flee to Iraq and join forces with Saddam

After winning a bloody civil war, fought in all major Iranian cities, the Hezbollah turned its attention towards recapturing the Kurdistan province from the rebels, and defeating the Iraqi army. For several months in 1980, the Iraqi invasion had united most Iranians of all creeds and beliefs, who selflessly volunteered to stop Saddam's aggression. Even the Kurdistan fighting had subsided and the leftists were actively assisting the army. However, with the 1981/82 civil war, Iran's Kurdistan soon became a bloody killing field that destroyed tens of thousands lives and ruined entire towns and villages! After that victory, wave after wave of naïve religious youth were thrown at the Iraqi fronts in the captured Iranian territories, with no regard to casualties. That 'human wave' tactic which was reminiscent of the North Korean methods against the better armed Americans in the 1950's, could expel the Saddam army from almost all Iranian territories, by the end of 1982.



Figure 114: Lightly equipped volunteers are thrown against the Iraqi army.

By 1983, ayatollah Khomeini and his gang of clergies had gained the absolute power over all the Iranian political, financial, judicial, parliamentary, military and cultural affairs. All the governmental offices of presidency, premiership and ministries were occupied by the mullahs and the Hezbollah. All the lucrative industries, banks and major companies had been nationalized and controlled by the clerical instruments (Bonyads). All the secular judges and attorneys had been expelled from the judiciary system, or had been reduced to the level of executive assistants to the incoming mullahs. All the candidates for the Majles were routinely investigated and disqualified, if they dared to show the slightest disinterest to the clerical rule (Velayat Faghih). The Iranian military was made subjugated to the constant oversight and scrutiny of the Revolutionary Guards and the newly formed ‘political-ideological’ corps. All the school teachers were investigated and purged based on their active obedience of the Shia Islam and adherence to Khomeini’s edicts. Entire universities had been closed for up to three years, in order to purge the secular professors and ‘unbelieving’ students. All the school and university curriculum were re-written to include and emphasize the Islamic traditions and the Shia theology. All the radio and television programs were reorganized and scripted to constantly instill the revolutionary slogans, repetitive religious citations and tedious sermons into every hour of every day. In short, a dark cloud of fundamentalist Islam had descended over Iran, much like the overbearing and inhuman dictatorships of the Soviet Russia, Maoist China and Communist North Korea!



Figure 115: Communist North Korea is an ally of the Islamic Republic

With absolute power in their hands, the Khomeini Hezbollah set their aim at the messianic goal of defeating the enemies of Islam, one by one from Iraq to Israel and America, in order to prepare the world for the return of the Shia messiah, Mahdi the Imam of Time! For the next six years, the whole country became a helpless source of material and human resources for Hezbollah’s incredibly ambitious and fanatically idealistic world-domination experiment. But even the first step of toppling the Baath regime in Iraq proved an insurmountable task for them. All despite the fact that as early as in 1983, the rich Arab countries of the Persian gulf had agreed to provide a \$70 billion reconstruction fund to Iran, if Khomeini were to accept the United Nations truce resolution! When Khomeini refused, similar funds and more were instead made available to the Iraqi regime to pay for modern jets, tanks and chemical weapons, to stop the tsunami wave of the Iranian zealots. Finally, Khomeini was forced by an Arab-American coalition to give up on his 12th Imam hallucinations and drink the ‘poison of peace’ in 1988. But he only relented after overseeing the mass annihilation of about one million Iranians and Iraqi’s and \$400 billion damage to the economy of both countries!



Figure 116: Saddam used chemical weapons to defeat the Iranian offensive.

The cruel treatment of political prisoners and Hezbollah's inhuman regime of torture and terror angered many clergies too. But upon protest, even a high ranking Shia Marjah (ayatollah Shariatmadari) was condemned and perished under house-arrest. Similarly ayatollah Montazeri who was for years Khomeini's heir-apparent, was tormented and banished, when he compared Khomeini's Savak to that of the Shah and even worse. Khomeini's answers to all that criticism with regards to tortures and blatant human rights violations was that, 'the nameless soldiers of the 12th Imam' were doing god's work in the prisons, and moreover, those criminals were not human to have any rights! Therefore, after the humiliating defeat in toppling the Baath regime in Iraq and before succumbing to cancer, Khomeini ordered the mass execution of thousands of political prisoners across the country. That demonic action is estimated to have killed about 5,000 decedent Iranians in a week, which was more than the total number that had perished during the 37 years of Shah's regime!



Figure 117: Hezbollah's madness during the burial of the 13th Imam

With ayatollah Montazeri removed from the successor position and all the other senior Marjah clergies either against or unsympathetic towards the Islamic Republic's policies, Khomeini did not have a Marjah successor. Therefore, it became necessary for the governing clerical establishment to not only change Khomeini's political will and testament, but also change the whole constitution in a hurry! Essentially, the emphasis on the religious requirements for the lead mullah (Velayat Faghieh) was removed from the constitution, so that a lesser clergy (Khamenei) could occupy the top position. However, to placate the other strong-man of the state (Rafsanjani), the office of prime minister was dissolved and almost all the executive power was transferred to the president Rafsanjani (1989-1997).

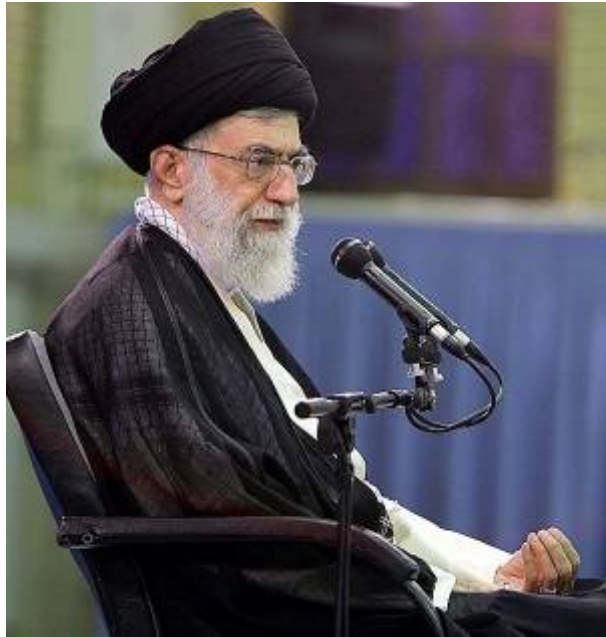


Figure 118: A political, but non-Marjah clergy replaces Khomeini.

The Khamenei-Rafsanjani diumvirate ruled over an exceedingly corrupt government, whose key players after Khomeini's decade of war and blood, now concentrated on looting and pillaging the country's wealth and resources. On the foreign policy stage, during the 1980's and 1990's the Islamic Republic actively pursued a doctrine of 'exporting the revolution' and hunting their overseas dissidents. That 'export' translated into supporting fundamentalist terrorist groups in the Middle East; and that 'hunt' resulted in the brutal murder of many prominent Iranians overseas, most notably the last pre-Islamic Prime Minister (Dr. Shahpor Bakhtiar). In their execution of Dr. Bakhtiar and others in Europe, Hezbollah not only used their typical brute-force tactics, but also abused their victims in such a horrific manner (multiple stabbings and mutilations) to send a message to all the other opposition overseas. Of course, that method was completely in line with Khomeini's teachings, who as early as in the 1940's had advocated the 'cutting of tongues and heads' of the 'apostates and infidels' who would dare talk or write against Islam! Consequently, that savage behaviour completely isolated Iran in the world arena, despite desperate efforts by some moderate officials.



Figure 119: Lebanon, where the ‘exporting of revolution’ has been the most successful.

The culmination of 20 years of murder and mayhem in Iran resulted in a surprise vote during the presidential elections of 1997. A junior liberal-minded clergy (Khatami) won the election with 70% of the vote, over a senior ayatollah (Nategh-Nouri) who was the Majles leader! In response, the concerned Hezbollah unleashed their death-squads in Iran, and started a massive campaign of vicious assassinations, in order to nullify any opposition attempt at utilizing Khatami’s victory. That resulted in a ‘chain of murders’ which created a power struggle between Khatami’s protesting supporters and the hardliners, who soon solidified around the absolute leader (Khamenei). When the struggle came to a head following a vicious Hezbollah attack on students’ dormitory in Tehran, Khatami was forced to back-off and turn into a powerless figure-head for the rest of his presidency.



Figure 120: President Khatami pursued an unsuccessful dialogue of civilizations, which failed in the face of brutish action by Hezbollah inside and outside Iran.

Unfortunately, Khatami’s capitulation only strengthened Hezbollah’s resolve to regain all aspects of the ‘elected’ political power in Iran, including the city councils, the Majles and finally the presidency; all through shameless purging of the candidate lists and blatant vote rigging. The unelected (assigned) half of the government (judiciary, armed forces and supreme councils) as always are ruled by the leader’s

henchmen. Consequently in early 2008, all levels of government in Iran are completely dominated by the fanatical Hezbollah, who are preparing for their next battle with the ‘infidel’ world. Incredibly, the new president is often caught day-dreaming about their genocidal hallucinations of the return of Mahdi; who is called upon to re-emerge and exterminate most of the earth’s population!



Figure 121: Ahmadinejad prays for the speedy reincarnation of Mahdi, in the United Nations.

14. Final notes

Please refer to the full-text of Farsinameh for detailed discussions and arguments. This chronicled summary has been prepared to help the new generation of Iranians to wisely choose their next form of government, and not to fall into the historical traps that have plagued our past. This brief account also aims to point out the following sad facts and bitter truths, for the betterment of our future:

1. Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely! Even the ‘good’ Persian kings and the ‘saintly’ clergies have not been exempt and immune from that predicament. Young, optimistic and progressive kings and idealists who have gained the absolute power, have routinely turned into bitter, forceful and brutal tyrants. Passage of years and the accumulation of pride and perversions; make it impossible for an all powerful man or group to avoid corruption and degeneration.
2. Democracy is an awful form of government, until you compare it with the rest! Only a government that is regularly elected by the free vote of the free people has historically been able to come close to representing the will of people, releasing their energies and postponing degeneration and decay. All the ‘closed’ forms of government need to forcefully hold power within an elite group of leadership, which degenerates with time and detaches from the will and interest of people, and even the reality of the outside world.
3. Freedom is the most elusive social form; as by definition it is individualistic, divisive and competitive! Only the most advanced forms of civilization have been able to maintain a free society, without falling into anarchy and then dictatorship. Freedom has only survived when the

free have cooperated and competed at the same time; struggling to win and lead, but accepting when defeated and led.

4. Most people are capable of doing the worst and the best! Demonic and angelic behaviour has not been in the monopoly of any one nation. As humanity is a mixture of affectionate and destructive instincts, which are both needed for our survival, so are all the civilizations, nations and races on this Earth. Mutual understanding, seeing through other peoples eyes, and interracial empathy have historically reduced misunderstanding, hatred and war.
5. Self-centered views and ideologies (racial, national or religious) build walls and wars. Domineering and forceful attitude towards other people, has historically been justified by distinguishing others as the 'lesser' race, the 'satanic' nation or the 'filthy' religion. Once initiated, those walls and wars become self-perpetuating and self-amplifying.

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