



July 15-16, 2005, Fifth IQSA Conference:

War and Peace in Qajar Persia: Implications Past and Present

Co-sponsored by The Cambridge Security Programme
Centre of International Studies
McCrum Theatre, Corpus Christi College,
Cambridge, United Kingdom

Keynote Address:

Peter Avery, Cambridge University.

Keynote Address: Reflections on Qajar Historiography

Hafez Farmayan, The Center for Middle Eastern Studies, University of Texas at Austin.

Conference programme:

Friday 15 July 2005

9.00 Registration, tea, coffee and book tables.

10.00 Introduction.

10.30 Panel One – Frontiers (Afghanistan, Ottoman, Russian).

12.30 Canteen lunch in the hall at Corpus Christi (optional at an extra charge).

14.00 Panel Two – Treaties, Alliances and Diplomacy.

16.00 Tea & Coffee.

16.30 Discussion – Keynote: *Professor Hafez Farmayan*, Center for Middle Eastern Studies, University of Texas, Austin.

17.30 Close.

Saturday 16 July 2005

9.00 Registration, tea, coffee and book tables.

10.15 Introduction.

10.30 Panel Three – Conflicts over Resources.

12.30 Buffet lunch in the hall at Corpus Christi (optional at an extra charge).

14.00 Panel Four – Costs and Consequences.

16.00 Tea & Coffee.

16.30 Closing Presentation: *Antony Wynn*, Sir Percy Sykes in Persia.

17.30 Close of Conference.

Some abstracts

Military Reform in Qajar Iran: A Reassessment

Stephanie Cronin, Iran Heritage Foundation Fellow, University College, Northampton

This paper looked at the efforts made by successive governments in the Qajar period to establish modern military forces, focusing in particular on the role of European military missions. Since the early nineteenth century, wherever in the Middle East indigenous governments have weakened significantly or fallen under European tutelage, Western powers have imposed military missions. This may be seen most notably up to the present day in Iraq and Afghanistan. Throughout the Qajar period military modernization was a constant preoccupation both of the government and of reformers in general and the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are peppered with attempts to set up a standing army on the European model with the help of missions of foreign officers.

In all nineteenth century Iran saw three French military missions, two British, two Austrian and one Russian, this with the Cossack Brigade, and one Swedish, with the Government Gendarmerie. In the twentieth century the decades of Mohammad Reza Shah's rule

saw US military advisers play a highly significant role in both bolstering the regime and in aggravating the resentment of the opposition. In fact, of all the rulers of Iran since the early nineteenth century down to the Islamic revolution, only Reza Shah resisted the temptation to allow foreigners control of the army. This paper took a fresh look at the role of foreign military missions and poses a number of questions. What were the objectives of the European military missions which came so regularly to Qajar Iran? Who in Iran was in favour of them and why? Similarly, who was opposed to them, and why?

Between Scylla and Charybdis: Policy-making Under Conditions of Constraint in Early Qajar Persia

Manoutchehr M. Eskandari-Qajar, Department of Political Science, SBCC; Middle Eastern Studies Program, SBCC

There is a common assumption that the international players of the Great Game were rational utility-maximizers, but that their Qajar counterparts were bereft of such capacities and acted only on emotion, instinct and very narrowly defined short term personal interest, thus failing in their encounters with their antagonists, Russia and later England. There is also the further assumption that policy options were plentiful and that negative outcomes for the Persian side were the result of wrong choices and narrow vision rather than lack of alternatives. The aim of this paper is to probe the validity of these assumptions by looking at the policy decisions of various Qajar rulers from Agha Mohammad Khan to Nasser ed-Din Shah through the lens of certain political and economic theories, among them rational decision-making. The hope is that by looking at consistency rather than idiosyncrasy we will be able to uncover a coherent thread underlying early Qajar policy-making, that, though not always victorious over vastly superior rivals, led to survival and continuity during what was perhaps one of the most difficult periods in modern Persian history.

Security and Insecurity Sociopolitical Conditions of Iran, 1870-1924

Mansoureh Etehadieh (Nezam-Mafi), Editor, Nashr-e Tarikh-e Iran

The social history of Iran has generally been neglected in favor of political and diplomatic history, despite the fact that analysis of the fabric and dynamics of society are essential to an understanding of many political events. Iranian society was always beset by insecurity, which is particularly well documented from mid nineteenth century on. There were widespread insurrections, rebellions and lawlessness, which encompassed the whole of society at all levels and in all localities, with perhaps the exception of Tehran. These ranged from plunder of whole villages to massacres, petty thefts and larceny. Such anarchy was due to numerous causes such as famine and poverty, extortions by local governors, rapacity of local chiefs, weakness of the central government, inadequacy of the law and a multitude of other causes. The government on the whole had few options how to react, and often resorted to counter actions in a manner which was not so different from the acts of the criminals themselves.

It is impossible to examine at once the wide variety of problems and their causes in such a large country over a long period of time, therefore the aim of this paper was limited to the analysis of a- the extent of insecurity, b- the geographical dispersion of crime, c- the policy and reaction of the central government based on two intelligence reports prepared by the British agents in Fars and Astarabad, and published in Iran, namely *Vaqay-e Etefaqiyeh* 1875-1903 and *Mokhaberat-e Astarabad* 1908-1924 and a number of newspapers such as *Iran* and *Habl al-Matin*. Although the scope of this research, which is at a preliminary stage, is limited, there is no doubt that many of the causes and the result of such insecurity and the government's failure to enforce security was relevant for the whole country. It is therefore hoped that by initiating conversation on this topic and by continuing our research we shall be in a position to better understand the underlying causes of many occurrences which would otherwise remain incomprehensible.

Frontiers: Persian, Afghan, Russian and Ottoman

Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, University of Pennsylvania

The significance of frontiers in the history of nation formation became a focus of Lord Curzon's writings in 1907. Curzon, a diplomat who had participated in numerous boundary commissions, acknowledged the dearth of information on the subject. As he remarked, "There is yet no work or treatise in any language which, so far as I know, affects to treat of the subject as a whole." Yet despite the meager historiography on frontiers, boundary negotiations have emerged as a central focus of international diplomacy, warfare, and nationalism. Curzon's reflections are germane to the modern history of Iran (and its neighbors, Iraq, Turkey, and Afghanistan), whose very geographic configuration was determined through a series of wars and boundary negotiations dating back to the nineteenth century. By drawing on Persian sources, as well as archival documents from the Ottoman and British archives, this paper discussed the centrality of frontiers in Iran's international diplomacy.

Abbas Mirza and Alexandre Bagrationi of Georgia: Russian-Iranian wars and the last efforts of Georgians to revive the Royal dynasty at the beginning of the 19th c. (From the History of the relationships between the Prince Alexandre Bagrationi and Crown prince Abbas Mirza)

Irina Koshoridze

1. The Russian Empire became very active in the political arena of the 18th century in Asia Minor and the Caucasus. Russia, after having strengthened its positions in the Caucasus, started to intervene in the political life of the Mediterranean, the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea countries, which led to serious concerns by the traditionally dominant countries of these territories, namely the Turkish and Iranian Empires. Strengthening of Russia was unacceptable for Europe as well. The leading European countries, for their part, tried to balance the Russian factor by making alliances with Turkey and Iran in the East and Middle East political arenas.
2. The Caucasus and mostly Georgia were the main arenas of Russia-Iranian war campaigns (1804-1813 and 1826-28). Iran considered many Muslim Khanates and also the Kartle-Kakheti (Eastern Georgia) Christian Kingdom as its traditional domain and did not want to accept the Russian Empire to replace Iran. These war campaigns were accompanied with severe battles, hopes, striving of people for freedom and many dramatic episodes of the Caucasian people.
3. One of the heroes of these bloody battles and wars was the Prince of the Georgian Royal Dynasty Alexandre Bagrationi, who devoted his life to the fight against the Russian Empire, who was one of the most reliable persons for the Qajars in the fight against Russia, and

whose life amid battles was full of surprising heroism, romantic adventures, ups and downs, devotion and treason, creation of ideals and their crashing, wealth and poverty, who had been forgotten by generations and again has been remembered and idealized.

4. Aleksandre Bagrationi (1770-1844 Teheran) - Fourth son of Kartle-Kakheti Kingdom's King Erekle II and Queen Darejan, was brought up under the patronage of Catholic missionaries. He accompanied his father during battles against numerous enemies from age 17-18. Aleksandre Batonishvili was against Georgia joining Russia and when Russia abolished the Georgian Kingdom and sent in exile the whole Royal family, Aleksandre Batonishvili fled to Iran together with his few friends, came to Fath Ali Shah and promised to help him in the fight against Russia. During these years he lived in Tabriz at Abbas Mirza's court together with his only nephew Teimuraz Bagrationi. They took active part in all anti-Russian war campaigns carried out by Iran. Aleksandre was on friendly terms with Abbas Mirza. A lot of private letters, archive materials and historical reviews clearly reveal that the Qajar Prince paid great attention to and cared about the Georgian Prince and provided him with financial support. He sent money to Aleksandre who was stuck in the Caucasus to return him back to Iran. He supported Aleksandre in his marriage, financed this marriage and granted him manors in Iran.

All war campaigns carried out in the beginning of XIX c. in the Caucasus ended dramatically for Iran. According to the Golestan and Turkmenchai Treaties Iran finally gave up Caucasus in favor of the Russian Empire. In 1833 the friend and supporter of Aleksandre, Abbas Mirza, suddenly died. For the heir of Fath Ali Shah - Mohammed Shah Georgia and Caucasus were not actual political themes. Iran at last accepted the fact that this region was lost for Iran and provision of support to the rebel Prince was not a priority for the kingdom anymore. Co-fighters left Batonishvili as they could not see the reason for fighting any more. The only person who was still full of obstinacy was Aleksandre himself. Abandoned by everyone, left without family and homeland the last hope of Bagrationi dynasty died in extreme poverty. According to records he was buried near the fence of an Armenian church in Tehran. Unfortunately today his tombstone is lost.

Social Networks and Border Conflicts: the First Herat War

Vanessa Martin

This paper explored the question of the ways in which social networks can influence border conflicts through the study of the case of the First Herat War 1838 to 1841. It did so within the regional framework of the rivalry of Britain and Russia in Iran, with special reference to the southern and eastern borders of the country. The problems created by social networks both for the central government and the hostile power, in this case Britain, are explored. The paper looked firstly at the south and the local response to the British occupation of Kharg Island, and the way in which social networks around Bushehr interacted with the centre. The paper then turned to the east and examines the reaction of local society to the conflict in that area. Next, it considered some of the implications for the war within Iran itself. Particularly, it looked at the way McNeill sought to use social networks in his letter to Mohammad Baqer Shafti, and assesses the implications for the Shah of the breakdown of social order in Isfahan in 1839. Finally, with this evidence in mind the paper summed up on the question of how far both central government and a potentially hostile power can afford to ignore social reaction in a border conflict.

Napoleon's Policy in Persia in the Context of the Indian Expedition and Georgia

Irine Natchkebia, G. Tsereteli Institute of Oriental Studies Academy of Sciences of Georgia, Tbilisi

At the turn of the 19th century in order to include Persia in the plan of the Indian expedition Napoleon inserted the issue of Eastern Georgia which was annexed by Russia in 1801. With the object of clarification of this topic this paper introduced some documents preserved in the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the material published in the press. Among the Archive material especially important is the project of Franco-Persian Treaty of Warsaw, April of 1807, which preceded the Treaty concluded between France and Persia in Finkenstein on May 4, 1807. Formulation of the issue of Georgia given in the articles 3 and 4 of the of Warsaw Treaty project differs from the corresponding articles of the Finkenstein Alliance Treaty. Moreover, worthy to note are minutes of negotiations between French Ambassador and first Vizier of Shah - Mirza Shafi, held on February 20, 1808 where the question of Georgia was discussed. As for the press, in the context of Napoleon's oriental policy it was not accidental that information about Georgia published by Malte-Brun in March and April of 1807 in the Journal de l'Empire preceded concluding of Finkenstein Treaty. The question of Georgia was of particular importance for Persia and to this fact testify negotiations of Ambassador Gardane with the Teheran Court especially in 1808. In 1809 Ambassador of England Sir Hartford Jones used towards the Teheran Court the original policy of France - disengagement of Georgia from Russia in favour of Persia - in order to implement the policy of his own state. In the context of Napoleon's oriental policy the letters of Georgian princes to French Emperor are also analyzed. Princes, Alexandre and Teimuraz emigrated to Persia and sent their letters through general Gardanne. Franco-Persian Alliance Treaty, which in fact was the first military and political agreement between European State and Persia at the beginning of the 19th century, attached to Georgia international importance. After concluding Treaty of Tilsit Georgia which was already included in the geopolitical space of the Russian Empire lost its importance for France. Unlike France Georgia still was important for Persia. While signing Treaty with Persia in Finkenstein, Napoleon did not take into consideration that on the one hand Russia in the Caucasus and Caspian Coast and on the other hand England in India would never give up their positions. It turned out that in Tilsit Napoleon's political goals no longer coincided with Fath Ali Shah's plan.

The Reassertion of Tehran's control over the northern Persian Gulf littoral in the 19th century

Lawrence Potter, Columbia University, New York

Although Iran exercised control over the northern shore of the Persian Gulf intermittently throughout history, notably under Nader Shah in the mid-18th century, by the early 19th century the situation had changed. The Qajar dynasty, preoccupied by threats from Russia in the northwest and later the Shah's attempt to regain control of Herat, was not in position and perhaps lacked the interest to assert control over its Persian Gulf littoral. Policy toward the Persian Gulf was often left to the governor of Fars. Nasser ed-Din Shah was not able to defend his coastline and in 1885 even requested naval assistance from Britain. Although there was no question that the northern coast of the Gulf was Persian, a number of semi-independent Arab shaikhs exercised control over many important port cities. In the second half of the century, the Tehran government regained the initiative and, by around 1900, had reclaimed control over its coastline and neighboring islands. The Arab shakhdom of Bushire fell to Persian control in 1850; in 1868 Iran canceled the lease of Bander

Abbas by Muscat, and in 1887 the (Arab) Qasimi ruler of Lingeh was replaced by an Iranian. Further east, Persian influence increased in the Makran, and with the completion of the telegraph line from Karachi to Gwader in 1863 Tehran claimed Gwadar and Chahbahar. The boundary with India was subsequently delimited and Chahbahar recognized as Persian in 1872. In all of these affairs, the influence and interference of the British government played a key role. The final event was the subjection of Shaikh Khazal of Mohammara in 1924 and the full control of Khuzestan by the Tehran government. This paper, by examining British diplomatic records and local Persian histories and documents, seeks to present an overview of the process by which the Iranian government was able to reclaim control of its Persian Gulf coastline. If at the start of the century the limits of Persian sovereignty were vague, by century's end Tehran was in full control of its littoral. The paper focussed particularly on the expulsion of the Omanis and the Qasimis and the repercussions this had for security in the Persian Gulf.

Narrowing the frontier: nineteenth-century efforts to delimit, map and demarcate the Perso-Ottoman boundary

Richard Schofield, Department of Geography at King's College, University of London

A change in status to one or more of the state territories separated by an international boundary can demonstrably affect the perceived function of the territorial divide itself. It is largely in the context of border management, as opposed to the vagaries of territorial definition, that Iraq's boundaries have arisen as issues since the American-led invasion in 2003. Amidst the general insecurity prevailing in Iraq since that time, the porosity of state limits has been much more of an issue than their precise delimitation. This is true to a large extent of the Iran-Iraq boundary, regulated by international treaty of one form or another for the best part of four hundred years. Yet there remain one or two ambiguities relating squarely to territorial definition along the Iran-Iraq borderlands. The series of treaties concluded in 1975 to definitively fix this delimitation - generally welcomed as sophisticated legal instruments by any international standards - have not disposed of confusion as to the precise location of seven fixed land boundary points. Similarly, the arrangements introduced to periodically adjust the position of the mid-channel boundary along the Shatt al-Arab in light of physical change within the river have not been followed up upon because of the troubled interstate relationship since that time. The origins of recent confusion as to the precise delimitation of the borderlands in the vicinity of the massive Azadegan-Majnoon trans-boundary oil bearing structure seem unclear but may have more to do with the newly-transformed value of the border landscape than any residual definitional confusion. It had been back in the mid-nineteenth century that the first real efforts were made to cement a more precise Perso-Ottoman territorial definition within what was a very long-established border march. The assumption during the 1840s by Britain and Russia of mediating powers in the territorial dispute soon paved the way for delimitation (through the 1847 Erzurum treaty) and, supposedly, demarcation of the boundary. Yet the latter task soon had to be abandoned in favour of identifying and mapping a borderland zone, somewhere within which the boundary probably lay. Even this convoluted process, undertaken pretty much wholly by the imperial powers, would be beset by bad luck and carelessness and met with supreme indifference by the regional powers themselves. No wonder that it was referred to later as "a phenomenon of procrastination unparalleled even in the chronicles of Oriental diplomacy" (G.E. Hubbard [1916]). This paper therefore reviewed the efforts of the quadripartite Turco-Persian Boundary Demarcation Commission to lay the boundary down in stone during the 1850-1852 period and subsequent Anglo-Russian efforts to produce detailed mapping of the borderlands in the following quarter-century. The lack of success on both counts was due in no small part to the loss of most of the survey material collected during 1850-52 to the Thames near Gravesend, as the ship carrying the returning British delegation made it safely home to British territorial waters but no further. Emphasis was given in this analysis to reviewing how territorial definition was originally effected in those areas of the borderlands which remain the subject of possible dispute in the early twenty-first century.

The Making of the Treaty of Paris and the futility of the War between Great Britain and Persia 1856-1857

Joachim Waibel, Adjunct Curator of Naval & Military History at the Vancouver Maritime Museum

The East India Company, in the name of the British Government, declared war on Persia November 1, 1856. This was the third time since 1838, that the interests of the British and the Persians had clashed over the Persian desire to control the City of Herat. Britain viewed Herat as the all-important strategic and logistic gateway to the old Silk Route to India. Persia claimed ancient territorial rights as well as the need to protect the Shia majority population of Herat from its Sunni oppressors. With Britain engaged in the Crimean War against Russia, and Afghan internal politics affecting the governance of Herat coupled with the departure of the British Ambassador to Tehran over a foolish diplomatic quarrel, Persia saw an opportune moment to revive its aspirations for Herat. Persian representatives were sent to negotiate with the British consul in Constantinople in April, 1856. British conditions put forward during the discussions were based on conditions agreed upon in an accord of January 1853, signed only by the Persian Prime Minister and the British minister to Persia, Sir Justin Sheil, but not ratified by the British Government of the day. During the negotiations Herat fell to the Persian Army in October of 1856 after a short siege. Persia claimed the right of invasion due to rather vague conditions spelled out in the 1841 Agreement, giving either Persia or Britain the right of interference in Afghanistan. In order to deter the Persian Government from retaining control over Western Afghanistan, it was decided to send an Expeditionary Force of Naval and Land Forces to the "Soft Underbelly" of Persia via the Persian Gulf. The British Government felt that these punitive measures were necessary to expedite the negotiations. When war was declared in November 1856, the Persian Government had already agreed to the British conditions in principle, except the demand for the dismissal of the Persian Prime Minister. Unfortunately, mutual distrust and posturing of personalities on both sides, proved to be the recipe for unnecessary armed conflict. A four-month campaign from December 1856 to April 1857 routed the Persian Army of the South. British technological, as well as organizational advantages, overwhelmed the Persian military leadership on the battlefield. Finally the negotiations were moved to Paris, and speedily concluded by Lord Cowley, the British ambassador to France, and Nasser ed-Din Shah's ambassador Farrokh Khan, on March 4, 1857, later ratified at Baghdad, May 2, 1857. The Treaty of Paris was to become the foundation of Anglo-Persian relations for the next fifty years. Sixteen years later Nasir Ed-Din Shah would be welcomed as a personal guest of Queen Victoria at Buckingham Palace. Due to the relatively minor loss of life during the conflict, and the re-establishment of the status quo in Herat, the Anglo-Persian War has always been regarded as a minor skirmish in the annals of the "Great Game."

The Turko-Persian War 1821-23: 'Winning the War but Losing the Peace'

Graham Williamson

According to the agreement of Zohab (May 1639), following the end of a period of conflict between the Ottoman and Persian Empires, the frontier between them was not a line but a broad zone running through Armenia, Azerbaijan, the Western Zagros Mountains and as far south as Basra and the Persian Gulf. Isolated from distant capitals and inhabited by hostile Arab and Kurdish tribes jockeying for patronage from the rival Empires, these border areas were extremely unsettled. Both Empires fought over the revenues of the local tribes and repeatedly raided each other across the border. It was upon this volatile and unsatisfactory backdrop that a cooling of relations between the two Empires at the end of the Napoleonic Wars provoked a bloody and damaging conflict that ultimately settled nothing.

Provocations

Traditionally the Ottomans sought approval from Persian Governors for new appointments in their border provinces but this courtesy began to disappear at the beginning of the 19th century which increased tension and suspicion. The then Persian Heir-Apparent, Abbas Mirza, and Governor of the strategic province of Azerbaijan had secured the support of the Pasha of Van in his fight against the Russians but his sudden removal had hardened positions. The usurping of the ageing Sulieyman Pasha of Baghdad (1809) and later appointment of the more aggressive Davoud Pasha (1813) had the same effect in the south. There was also an increase in tribal or 'political' refugees on both sides of the border, in particular Turkish dissidents who hoped to use Persia as a base for intrigue and insurrection. In fact it was the kidnapping and beheading of a high ranking Turkish official who had taken refuge in Persia that served as the catalyst for an Iranian offensive. In the south, Kurdish sympathy for Persia, in part due to Muhammad Ali Mirza's enlightened policy towards minorities, often led to conflict and more than once did Persia invade in order to restore deposed Beys. Furthermore the presence of Shiite holy ground within the Baghdad Pashilik (province) was a constant cause of conflict. The security of Persian pilgrims en-route to the holy town of Kerbala or even Mecca and corpses taken for burial around the Holy Tombs of Hussein or Muhammad, was frequently violated by Turkish officials or Wahabbi zealots (Islamic fundamentalist dissidents). The taking of Baghdad and its environs would, some intemperate Persian voices argued, remove this source of irritation. Indeed the two powers were bedeviled by the growing Sunni-Shiite rivalry which had thwarted any serious co-operation in the Napoleonic period. All attempts at coordinated action against their mutual Russian enemy were frustrated by suspicion and betrayal.

Stirring the pot

In fact the loss of territory to the Russians over this period encouraged both parties to covet their rival's territory as compensation. Furthermore recent research has also revealed that the Russian Military commander in the Caucasus, General Yermolov was encouraging Abbas Mirza to act against Turkish provocation whilst the Tsar's Representative in Persia, Griboyedov, even provided much needed funds for Abbas Mirza's campaign. The resultant war revealed both the Ottoman's weakness and strength vis-a-vis Persia. Internal dissent was greater and resulted in more bloody conflicts in the Ottoman Empire. Consequently much of their standing Army was engaged in suppressing revolts and, whatever the Janissaries faults, it was less than those of their Provincial and secondary forces. It was to these forces that the defense of the frontier fell and they were little match for an aggressive commander, such as Mohammad Ali Mirza, or Regular i.e. European trained units under Abbas Mirza. The Ottoman command and control was also more decentralized (often the result of political jealousy) and on the battlefield this was disastrous. On the other hand the Provincial Commanders, usually the Governors, were quite resilient in raising or recalling men to their banner even after a heavy defeat. Ironically it was the same strength the Russians had previously ascribed to the Persians. They also had a numerical advantage, which though usually of little consequence on the battlefield, did provide a constant supply of fresh recruits. At this time the Ottoman and Persian populations were thought to be 23m and 6m respectively. Ultimately we shall never know that if the bulk of the Ottoman's Standing Army or Sultan Mahmud II's fledgling Nizam's (similar to Abbas Mirza's regular 'Sarbaz') had been available whether they would have nullified Persian tactical superiority? Despite Persian victories and strategic opportunities the war was concluded by the Peace Treaty of Erzerum in 1823. This maintained the territorial status quo and was a poor reward for the heavy expenditure of Persian lives and money and was the high watermark of any ambitions they may have harboured on this frontier.

This presentation looked at why Persia failed to take full advantage of the Ottoman's vulnerability, how they might have done so, and the wider implications to one of histories geographical/political 'fault' lines.

Sir Percy Sykes: British Consul in Kerman, Sistan and Mashhad, founder of the South Persia Rifles

Antony Wynn

This illustrated lecture took a light-hearted look at a part of Iranian history from 1893 to the end of the Great War as seen through Sykes's eyes. Lieut. Percy Sykes was sent to explore Kerman and Baluchistan provinces and later, as part of Curzon's forward policy, to establish a British presence there to discourage Russian encroachment southwards towards India. He arrived as a brash and thrusting Indian cavalry officer but was soon drawn into Persian culture and, while always a servant of Empire, nevertheless came to hold much sympathy for Iranian nationalist sentiment. He was greatly helped by Abdol Hossein Mirza Farman Farma, whom he met by chance while travelling in the desert. The friendship formed between these two men became an important element of British policy towards Iran for many years. Sykes's detailed diaries written during the Constitutional period in Mashhad show how Russian activity on the ground went contrary to their treaty agreements made in the chanceries of Europe. The experiment of the South Persia Rifles, founded in 1916 to counter German influence in southern Iran, has many parallels with the experiences of the coalition forces in Iraq today.