The British role within Qajar dynastic succession

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Abstract
During the 19th century Britain and Russia entered into a fierce competition for mastery in Asia. The Great Game, as it became known, was replete with features reminiscent of the recent Cold War; containment policy, fear of domino effect, economic aid packages, diplomatic espionage, military assistance and wars by proxy. Qajar Iran would experience each and every one of these tactics as she found herself betwixt the Bear and the Lion for over a century. The aim of this study is to gain a better understanding of but one facet of the Great Game played within the Iranian arena; that of Qajar succession and Britain’s involvement therewith.

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That no portion of work referred to in the dissertation has been submitted in support of an application for another degree, or qualification of this or any other university or institute of learning.
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Acknowledgements & impediments

Before proceeding I include a personal note expressing appreciation for historians such as Edward Ingram who have written so extensively on British imperialism in the Near East. Long must he have laboured in the British Library, the Public Record Office (P.R.O) and beyond, analysing reams of decrepit documentation often written in florid and indecipherable script. Here I must also congratulate any historians who delve into Anglo-Iranian history prior to the age of the telegraph,¹ presented as they are with such individualised and stylistic handwritings.² For Ingram to have rendered coherent all that which he observed is a magnificent feat and in doing so he fulfils that task he declares fundamental to history; writing a story of events.³ I draw inspiration from his philosophy and his labours, and in poring over but a fraction of those aged documents he encountered I hope to have recreated a story of Persia, Britain and Russia in the context of Qajar dynastic succession and the Great Game in Asia. And yet, even my appreciation for this historian falls short of my thanks to those immediate tutors who have facilitated my efforts to approximate the divine practitioners of my discipline.

I also feel much in common with Ingram’s calling to history; his inability to pursue a career in the service of the British Empire which died in his youth, consigning him to write mere “tales of Englishmen in the near east.”⁴ Ingram is enraptured with these soldiers and statesmen whose handwriting also evokes in me, such intense curiosity and affiliation, feeding off that fickle ideology of nationalism. This inevitably impacts upon my scholarship in that such jingoism gifts my prose with enthusiasm, whilst paradoxically bringing my objectivity into potential disrepute. Avoidance is achieved through the modernist methodology of history and more importantly the comprehension of that most ironic hypocrisy in Anglo-Iranian relations; constant British protestation of desire for Persian independence in the face of diametric Russian sentiment belies the fact that

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¹ Introduced into Persia from 1858 (Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 92)
² A most troublesome problem encountered during this study was that in many cases ‘S’, ‘F’ and ‘P’ were almost identical.
Britain championed Persian independence only as a means of defending her imperial acquisitions in India which she jealously maintained until after the Second World War.

**Introduction**

In around 1794 Agha Muhammad Khan, the ferocious founder of the Qajar dynasty asked his six year old great nephew Muhammad Ali Mirza what he would do if he became Shah, to which the boy tenaciously replied: “to have you strangled!” Agha reacted by ordering the boys immediate execution, an act stopped only at the intercession of Fath Ali Shah’s mother.\(^5\) Contemplation of such wanton cruelty was no doubt fuelled by Agha’s tragic childhood which had inured him to bloodshed - at a similarly tender age he was castrated on the orders of Adil Shah of the Afsharid dynasty in a typical display of painful Persian political protocol.\(^6\) Moreover Muhammad was deemed ineligible for the throne and thus expendable. This retrospectively amusing family altercation is an indication of the vicious familial rivalry which served to threaten the Qajar dynasty’s very existence during the late 18\(^{th}\) and early 19\(^{th}\) centuries. The horrible maiming of Agha demonstrates that such viciousness permeated other royal dynasties in Persia. J. C Hurewitz concurs, arguing that dynastic succession within the entire Islamic polity during the 15\(^{th}\) – 18\(^{th}\) centuries had no fixed rules or recognition of primogeniture meaning every male relative of the existing ruler could make a claim to the


throne, inviting incessant fratricidal warfare. Within this violent Qajar system of succession Britain and Russia locked horns in what became known as the Great Game in Asia – the response to imperial Russia in the wake of *le petit caporal’s* collapse in 1815 and the treaties of Adrianople and Turkmanchay in 1828-29.

**Research questions**

This dissertation is a study of Britain’s interests, aims, involvement and relations to Russia within the context of Qajar dynastic succession, observed through the lens of the Great Game. The *first* question therefore, is to determine whether or not Britain expressed an interest in the succession of Qajar monarchs. This simplistic question gauges interest on frequency of reference, measuring perplexity or apathy, thereby serving to lay foundations for more intuitive questions. The *second* question determines what prompted Britain’s interest in Qajar succession and what were her aims and objectives. The *third* question assesses the extent of actual involvement in Qajar succession and whether or not this was successful. The *fourth* explores Anglo-Russian relations before the final section which analyses potential trends and reassesses Rose L. Greaves and her enticingly simple periodisation of Anglo-Iranian relations.

**Methodology**

To answer these research questions primary British sources have been analysed and categorised into sections corresponding to each question. The resultant text is a marriage of intense analytical analysis and rich detailed narration about Britain’s role within Qajar succession. Research covers a period of just over century, from 1789 to 1896, analysing Abbas Mirza, Muhammad, Nasir ed-Din and finally Muzaffar ed-Din Shah in chapters wherein each of the first four research questions are applied. There is also one anomalous chapter on the much maligned Sir John Campbell. Prior to analysis, small context sections are provided on the Qajar dynasty, and the mechanics of British foreign policy.

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8 Ingram, *Great Game*, p. 17
It may seem inconsistent to have devoted a section to Abbas Mirza who was denied the throne due to premature death almost exactly a year before his father Fath Ali Shah. Abbas was however the first prospective Qajar monarch Britain showed interest in. His father’s succession had taken place in June 1787 after the unsurprisingly murderous end of his vicious vasectomised uncle, long before Britain’s first major diplomatic mission to the Qajars in 1798. As such British interest in Abbas Mirza bares intriguing marks of immaturity and indecision. The main foci of this dissertation are the actual succession crises, thus only the years 1830-35 (Abbas and Muhammad Mirza), 1847-48 (Nasir ed-Din) and 1895-96 (Muzaffar ed-Din) are thoroughly researched. Primary sources have been obtained almost exclusively from the P.R.O in which the diplomatic correspondence of British officials and officers are contained. Of course British interest in the succession of Qajar monarchs was not confined to those years in close proximity to their accession thus valuable contributions from other historians has been utilised to supplement. Ingram is most notable in this capacity, providing crucial insight into the opinions of the Government of India (G.O.I), the East India Company (E.I.C) and the Board of Control (B.O.C). Of further use is work from Dennis Wright and Abbas Amanat.

**State of Research/Literature Review**

Praise has already been given to Ingram who bears similarity to Ellie Kedouie in his exhaustive attention to detail. His publications are exceptional: *The Persian Connection* is invaluable for providing early context on Anglo-Iranian relations and Abbas Mirza. Meanwhile its sequel, *The Beginning of the Great Game in Asia* contains an essential chapter on the succession of Muhammad Shah. A further article approaches the interrelated subject of British family and faction in Anglo-Iranian diplomacy. Malcolm Yapp is also crucial here with his study on ‘Control of the Persian mission 1822-36.’ Ingram does escape reproof. His approach is so detailed it becomes convoluted; his effortless familiarity with hundreds of British diplomats, soldiers and explorers leaving one bewildered. Furthermore as a historian of British imperialism one is left feeling rather

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detached from Persians in his publications. As such biographical sections are provided in the appendices of this study, so as to humanise the Persian protagonists. Lastly despite expressing sympathy for Ingram’s obvious patriotism his praising of the Empire as “something noble and great”\textsuperscript{12} completely negates the tragic consequences of British imperialism in his own beloved India where for instance, thirty million starved to death from 1860 to 1908.\textsuperscript{13}

Providing an alternative piece far more Persian in persuasion is Amanat’s \textit{Pivot of the Universe}, which gives an excellent account of Qajar succession and the life of Nasir ed-Din Shah. A more detailed account of the \textit{actual} succession crisis is lacking however, ensuring this study is augmentative. For context both \textit{The Cambridge History of Iran} (C.H.I.) and Wright’s \textit{The English Amongst the Persians} are indispensible. Wright undertakes a quirky investigation of every Briton who set foot in Qajar Iran, acting as a glossary much like Ingram, albeit with shabbier referencing and degradation of detail. Meanwhile Greave’s provides an excellent chapter in the C.H.I on Anglo-Iranian relations. Of further import within this voluminous text are superb contributions from Gavin Hambly, Nikki Keddie, and F. Kazemzadeh. Of exceptional use for general themes of Middle Eastern dynastic succession is Hurewitz’s article previously alluded to. His book \textit{Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East} also provides a history of treaties in the region, the collation of which is incredibly convenient.

\textbf{Introduction to British sources}

As noted, documentation employed herein is from the P.R.O. in which F.O and a smattering of G.O.I records are located. Problems occur therefore, when considering Abbas and Muhammad Mirza. At this juncture Britain’s diplomatic mission in Persia shifted from the authority of the G.O.I, the B.O.C, and the F.O.\textsuperscript{14} Archives of all but the latter are held outside of the P.R.O, thus the secondary source supplementation. Nonetheless key G.O.I figures in the case of Abbas and Muhammad still conversed with

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{12} Ingram, \textit{Persian Connection}, p. xiii
\textsuperscript{14} Ingram, \textit{Persian Connection}, p. 13-14
\end{flushright}
the F.O and in many cases duplicate documents are held within the P.R.O owing to the mechanics of British foreign policy.

Principal figures involved were Britain’s diplomats in Persia. These included Captain John Malcolm (later Sir and Major-General), E.I.C envoy to Persia (1800-1801, 1808 & 1810) who was then followed by Sir Harford Brydges-Jones (1807-1811), Sir Gore Ouseley (1811-14) and Captain Henry Willock, (1815-26).\(^{15}\) Henry Ellis, a civilian official of the E.I.C with a colourful career advising British Near Eastern policy was also notable.\(^{16}\) In a less official capacity James Bailie Fraser featured, a traveller come F.O agent who had much to say about Persia, and the actions of Sir John Campbell (1830-35) whose essay-length and oft excitible reports are also referred to in great frequency.\(^{17}\) Campbell’s subordinates John McNeil and Lt. Colonels Passmore and Sir Henry Lindsay-Bethune also played a part. Progressing onto Nasir ed-Din Shah, key figures were Lt. Colonel Justin Sheil, (1842-53) and his assistant Lt. Colonel Farrant. Mr Richard Stevens also transmitted communications from his residency at Tabriz, as did Mr Keith Abbot at Tehran.\(^{18}\) Finally with Muzaffar ed-Din Shah, most prominent was Sir Mortimer Durand (1894-1900) and his subordinate in Tabriz, Mr Wood. These diplomats communicated with their seniors at the B.O.C, the E.I.C, the G.O.I, the F.O, and briefly at the India Office (I.O), the most important figures being foreign secretaries Viscount Palmerston, the Marquis of Salisbury and Charles Grant, President of the B.O.C. Many more officials crop up with smaller contributions, including for instance a solitary memorandum from George Nathaniel Curzon, some three years before his becoming Viceroy of India, evincing his usual energy and enthusiasm for all things Persian.\(^{19}\)

**The mechanics of British foreign policy in Persia**

During the mid to late 18th century the E.I.C expanded from an institute of commerce into one of (bad) governance, provoking the India Bill in 1784, which inaugurated the B.O.C. and the G.O.I. The former was to oversee E.I.C foreign policy and the latter to

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\(^{15}\) Wright has conveniently compiled a table of British representatives in Persia, (Wright, *The English*, p. 188)

\(^{16}\) Ingram, *Persian Connection*, p. 142

\(^{17}\) Wright, *The English*, p. 15 & 188

\(^{18}\) Wright, *The English*, p. 79

\(^{19}\) Memorandum on Persian affairs Confidential 6765, George Nathaniel Curzon, 12 April 1896, FO60/581

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provide stable Indian government.\textsuperscript{20} Britain was now a Euro-Asiatic power with two foreign policies; one determined by her needs in Europe, and the other in Asia. This caused difficulties after 1798 when the European and Asian states systems began to collide with the advent of Napoleonic and later Tsarist expansionism.\textsuperscript{21} Persia was to play a major role in British attempts to keep these systems apart; however the nature of her role would fluctuate considerably owing to the duality of British administration.\textsuperscript{22} Indian foreign policy was predicated on a vulnerable land frontier which merited interference in neighbouring states and the need to erect a defensive line as far from the northwest frontier as possible. Meanwhile the British government's foreign policy, defended by the English Channel, had always to consider the ramifications of policy in East, on the European balance of power.\textsuperscript{23} It was for these reasons that the Persian mission so frequently experienced administrative change during the early 19\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{24}

**The Qajars and dynastic succession**

The Qajars were a Turkic tribe who moved westward from the steppe into Persia in the 11\textsuperscript{th} century, later establishing themselves as an arm of the Qizilbash which buttressed the Safavid dynasty. To stunt tribal power Safavids forcibly split the Qajars into subgroups; the Yukhari-bash and the Ashaqa-bash and amongst these the Qoyunlu and Develu clans. With the downfall of the Safavids in 1722, these two clans backed differing contenders to the Persian throne, a result of which was Agha’s horrific mutilation. The eunuch later fought his way to the pinnacle of Persian power, becoming de facto Shah around 1787. On his bloody road to rule Agha had temporarily reconciled the warring Qoyunlu (his clan) and Develu clans and on his death in 1797 his nephew Fath Ali Shah was tasked with permanently uniting the clans.\textsuperscript{25} Agha had been keen to end years of Qajar infighting by ensuring the succession of his nephew Abbas Mirza who was of dual Qoyunlu-Develu heritage. Meanwhile the reign of Fath Ali Shah saw the transformation of a tribal dynasty into an organised and ostentatious monarchy with a bureaucracy, and a system of

\textsuperscript{21} Ingram, *Great Game*, p. 13
\textsuperscript{22} Ingram, *Persian Connection*, p. 6
\textsuperscript{23} Ingram, *Great Game*, p. 12 & 332
\textsuperscript{24} Ingram, *Persian Connection*, p. 14
kingship based on pre-Islamic traditions melded with Shiite and even western concepts. The dynasty was never strong however, surviving on divide and rule, reward and punish and the facade of strength.\textsuperscript{26} One of its weakest points was dynastic succession, which like other Islamic polities, did not recognise primogeniture. It was also exacerbated by the clan feud and had but one prescription; that a shah must be pure of Qajar parentage.

On the wishes of his uncle, Fath Ali Shah attempted to certify a line of succession uniting the Qoyunlu and Develu clans. He also emphasised the position of \textit{Vali 'abd} or Heir-Apparent and \textit{na'il al-Saltana} the Vice-Regent who would invariably govern Azerbaijan, Iran’s most prosperous province. Other ceremonial insignia were used including the \textit{Kayanid} ornamental robe and dagger, a prelude to the \textit{Kayanid} crown and the Sword of the 12\textsuperscript{th} Imam bestowed upon Qajar shahs on their coronation. Such regalia would loosely designate that prince who was first among equals and destined to take the throne. A paradox existed however in that other ‘princes of the blood’ were needed to perpetuate Qajar control of Persia. Fath Ali Shah embraced this patrimonial system in which his feuding progeny were handed provincial governorships so as to dilute familial power, yet simultaneously maintain the Qajar dynasty’s grip on the state.\textsuperscript{27} Such actualities ensured that Qajar succession had a perpetual handicap in that civil war was always a possibility.

\textbf{Abbas Mirza: did the British express interest?} (see Appendices)

The British certainly expressed interest in the succession of Abbas Mirza, yet this was only slight at first, before increasing to maximum intensity shortly before his death. Harford-Jones paid considerable attention to the prince’s \textit{person} in 1809, calling him a “handsome, graceful” and “dignified” young man.\textsuperscript{28} Malcolm, who joined Harford-Jones in Persia during a foreign policy kafuffle in 1810, followed suit, calling Abbas “handsome in person and gifted with quickness and discernment.”\textsuperscript{29} As to his succession little interest was evinced until the arrival Harford-Jones’s successor Ouseley.\textsuperscript{30}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[27] Ingram, \textit{Persian Connection}, p. 79 & Hambly, ‘Fath Ali Shah and Muhammad Shah’, p. 149
\item[28] Sir Harford Brydges-Jones, \textit{An Account of the transactions of His Majesty’s mission to the court of Persia in the years 1807-11}, (London: 1834), p. 250-51
\item[30] Ingram, \textit{Persian Connection}, p. 166-67
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Heightened interest then continued under successive British agents in Persia including Willock, and his replacement Colonel John McDonald.\textsuperscript{31} Interest was also evinced by foreign secretaries Viscount Castlereagh and George Canning, the presidents of B.O.C and chairmen of the E.I.C.\textsuperscript{32} In the 1830’s F.O records heavily feature correspondence pertaining to Abbas and Qajar succession; in 1832 Willock and Ellis produced comprehensive memos on British Near Eastern policy with reference to the subject.\textsuperscript{33} Campbell was even more vocal. All such correspondence was subsequently forwarded to Palmerston, whose interest led him to despatch a mission of enquiry to Persia.\textsuperscript{34} Lastly British interest permeated even higher, evidenced by a letter from King William IV to the Shah in 1833 expressing his admiration for that “illustrious Prince, the Heir-Apparent”.\textsuperscript{35}

**What prompted Britain’s interest and what were her aims and objectives?**

A variety of factors prompted British interest in Persia during the early 19\textsuperscript{th} century which in turn precipitated interest in Abbas Mirza. Initially it was the imperialist pipedreams of Lord Richard Wellesley governor-general of India. In 1801 Wellesley despatched Malcolm to Persia with the ostensible aim of enlisting the help of the Shah in combating a prospective (and unlikely) invasion of northern India by the Afghans or the French who had invaded Egypt in 1798. This saw the conclusion of an Anglo-Persian defensive treaty of alliance.\textsuperscript{36} Ingram asserts such developments were merely a mask for Wellesley’s dream of a vast empire stretching to Azerbaijan by tying Persia to British India in a subsidiary alliance; one designed to control the Qajar dynasty much as Britain controlled her Indian ‘allies’.\textsuperscript{37} Although this meant little with respect to eleven year old Abbas, it did set the scene for heightened British involvement in Persia and consequent embroilment in Qajar succession. In 1810, Wellesley now at the F.O, made another attempt to realise his dreams of empire, despatching Ouseley to transform Persia into a subsidiary ally, this time using the Crown-Prince. Wellesley wanted to utilise the Anglo-Persian treaty

\textsuperscript{31} Ingram, *Persian Connection*, p. 281
\textsuperscript{32} Ingram, *Persian Connection*, p. 190-191& p. 243
\textsuperscript{33} Report on British Dealings With Persia, Henry Willock, 7 March 1832, FO60/32 & Memo No 2. Respecting Persia Affairs, Henry Ellis n.d. FO60/33
\textsuperscript{34} Sketch of Instructions to Mr Fraser, 4 Dec. 1833, FO60/33
\textsuperscript{35} Letter from King William IV to Shah, Brighton, 14 Jan. 1833, FO60/33
\textsuperscript{36} J. C. Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East, A Documentary Record: 1535-1914*, (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Company Inc, 1956), p. 68
\textsuperscript{37} Ingram, *Persian Connection*, p23-35
concluded in 1809 by Harford-Jones, which itself was a revamped version Malcolm’s treaty of 1801. The terms offered in 1809 were to train a force of 16,000 infantrymen, pay £100,000 in subsidy when Persia was invaded by any European power, and to provide military and mediating assistance.³⁸ Wellesley had no intention of using this modernised Persian army to fight Europeans who could be acquiesced with diplomacy, instead Persia was to be placed in his pocket using a doubled subsidy to provide arms, ammunition and European training for the army of Azerbaijan which would serve as a paramilitary propelling Abbas to the throne as a British dependent.³⁹

Wellesley’s colleagues largely disagreed with such empire-building, however many perceived threats from other European powers as anything but illusory. The entry of France and Russia into the personal space of British India during the Napoleonic War in the early 19th century exacerbated British anxiety about Qajar succession. In 1808 General Gardane arrived in Persia at the head of a military mission to train the Persian army as part of the 1807 Franco-Persian treaty of Finkenstein,⁴⁰ the conclusion of which stemmed from Britain’s refusal to aid Persia in her war with Russia in 1804, pushing the Persians towards France as a potential ally.⁴¹ Finkenstein was subsequently compounded by the Franco-Russian detente at Tilsit in July 1807, which potentially pitted Russia, France and Persia against Britain. It was for this reason that Harford-Jones was despatched to oust the French in September of the same year, a task which he achieved in March 1809, by redrafting the treaty of 1801.⁴² Although Harford-Jones noted the important need to establish himself “in the Prince’s [Abbas] good confidence”, he ultimately preferred Abbas’s brother Muhammad Ali Mirza and his fearsome irregular cavalry as a restraint to Russia in the war effort Britain were then supporting.⁴³ Despite this, Harford-Jones persuaded Malcolm on his departure in 1810, to leave a few officers of his suite behind to train the army of Azerbaijan.⁴⁴ This was logical since Azerbaijani troops had been trained by the French and were best geographically situated to repel the Russians. It seems

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³⁸ Ingram, *Persian Connection*, p. 119 & p. 115-119
⁴⁰ Hurewitz, *Diplomacy*, p. 77
⁴¹ Wright, *The English*, p. 5
⁴² Ingram, *Persian Connection*, p. 93
⁴⁴ Wright, *The English*, p. 9
therefore that this strategy was not pursued as a means of strengthening Abbas Mirza’s claim to the throne per se.45

Harford-Jones’s mission was however an expression of greater British anxiety over Persia, spurred on by the intrusion of her European competitors, especially Russia. This intensified as a result of the Russo-Persian war of 1804-13 in which Abbas commanded Qajar forces.46 Persia was defeated and the resultant treaty of Gulistan gifted Russia capitulations and possession of several Qajar khanates north of the River Aras and one, Talish, to the south.47 In 1815 Ellis warned that Russia would build upon Gulistan and spread inexorably southwards until she destroyed Qajar independence, a goal which must be stopped by asserting the right of British influence in the country.48 Importantly Article IV of Gulistan stipulated that the Russians would support Abbas Mirza in his succession bid.49 This new dimension of Russian behaviour prompted Ellis to raise concerns that Russia would offer to aid Abbas against his brothers, thus becoming his master. To counter he suggested good British offices to negotiate the return of Talish and good British officers to render the Crown-Prince’s forces strong enough to ensure smooth succession without Russian assistance.50

Evoking further distress was the Russo-Persian war of 1826-28, which saw the temporary occupation of Tabriz in the autumn of 1827, paving the way for the damaging treaty of Turkmanchay five months later.51 The Russians seized the remaining Qajar khanates beyond the Aras, obtained further capitulatory privileges and imposed a hefty indemnity of 20,000,000 roubles.52 Russia was now Britain’s biggest threat, seemingly advancing inexorably southwards toward the Mediterranean, the Persian Gulf and the northwest frontier. She was also presenting a major challenge to Britain’s Great Power status.53 In

46 Ingram, *Persian Connection*, p. 77-79 & Busse, ‘Abbas’
48 Ingram, *Persian Connection*, p. 195 – p. 197
49 Hurewitz, *Diplomacy*, p. 85
50 Ingram, *Persian Connection*, p. 195 – p. 197
51 Busse, ‘Abbas’
53 Ingram, *Persian Connection*, p. 299
Prime Minister Wellington moved to riposte by declaring that “we have a real interest in the preservation of the independence and integrity of the Persian monarchy”, which must be respected by Russia. This would be an uphill struggle considering Russia’s announcement in 1829, of a five year remission on the indemnity meaning the debt would probably pass to Abbas, roping him to Russia with financial blackmail. Wellington and Lord Ellenborough at the B.O.C aimed to combat this with an increased diplomatic presence as well as arms shipments and military training to prevent Russian interference in a war of succession.

With the fall of Ellenborough in 1830, the government again lost interest in Persia before experts again began scribbling memoranda on Russian malice in 1832. Willock was one such expert, writing in March about the lamentable the spread of Russian influence in Asia from the 18th century. More importantly he expressed concern about the cosy relationship between Russia’s Persian agent Prince Dolgorouki and Abbas. Such behaviour was another consistent motivation for anxiety over the Crown-Prince; his reciprocity to Russian overtures emanating from acute weakness in the wake of Turkmanchai. Willock elaborated:

…the Prince Royal is always ready to court Russia in the hope of her assistance in obtaining succession to the throne, and won by the prospect of getting over the remainder of the war indemnity…it may be questioned whether Abbas Mirza is not too far compromised…yet should we not make an appeal to his good sense, before he seals the fate of his country…by exposing the north eastern frontier of the empire to the encroachments, intrigues and influences of Russia.

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54 Ingram, *Persian Connection*, p. 295
55 Ingram, *Great Game*, p. 184
56 Ingram, *Great Game*, p. 182-184 & Ingram, *Persian Connection*, p. 300-303
Willock was also concerned at the possibly of Russia compensating Qajar losses at Turkmanchaj by encouraging conquest of Khiva or Herat.\footnote{Report on British Dealings With Persia, Henry Willock, 7 March 1832, FO60/32} The former secured the mouth of the Oxus and was an arrow piercing the Hindu Kush, India’s geographical defensive bastion. The latter was the more important “key to India” which bypassed this bastion.\footnote{G. J., Alder, ‘The Key to India?: Britain and the Herat problem 1830-1863 – part I’ Middle Eastern Studies, 10 (1974) pp. 186-209}

In September 1832 Campbell expressed similar pessimism, fearing that the “imbecility” of Abbas would lead to his gifting the province of Azerbaijan to Russia as the price for assistance in his succession. If Russian troops moved on Tehran with the ostensible aim of supporting the new monarch it would spell curtains for Persia whilst also making Russia a “most troublesome and powerful neighbour.” Despite this, he argued that Abbas was not beyond redemption.\footnote{Campbell to the Chairman and Members of the Committee of the Court of the East India Company, Tehran 4 Sept. 1832, FO60/33} Ellis agreed, declaring that Abbas knew Russian help to be a poisoned chalice likely to induce enslavement. He just needed encouragement in the form of a crown controlled mission and a British officered Persian army, managing his succession in much the “same manner that the Praetorian guards did in the Roman Empire”.\footnote{Memorandum No 2. Respecting Persia Affairs, Henry Ellis n.d. FO60/33} Of course the Persians would not be led by purple plumed paragons, but by a handful of sweating red faced and frocked officers and sergeants of the British army.

Of course the interlocking motivation for interest in the succession alongside Russian advances was the need to improve British influence in Persia which had suffered as a consequence of such advances. Improvements would buttress imperial defence by keeping the Qajars as a barrier betwixt the Bear and the Lion. Ellis summarised:

...there can be no doubt that the establishment of our influence in Persia has immediate reference to the British Empire in India...it is the interest of England that he [Abbas] should succeed.\footnote{Memorandum No 2. Respecting Persia Affairs, Henry Ellis n.d. FO60/33}
Interests, and consequent aims and objectives fluctuated just as much however through British vacillation. This was due to the contrasting opinions expressed by the F.O, the B.O.C, and the G.O.I, on how to restrain Russia in the Near East without jeopardising Anglo-Russian relations in Europe.\textsuperscript{63} This was to impact heavily upon Persia and the Crown-Prince. For instance despite worrying developments after Gulistan, Castlereagh and Canning (1812-1827) subjugated British policy in Persia for interests in Europe.\textsuperscript{64} Britain distanced herself by reducing the mediatory and military clauses of the Anglo-Persian treaty of 1814, undermining potential assistance for Abbas.\textsuperscript{65} After Turkanchai Canning abandoned the Qajars further still, instructing McDonald to bribe them with £200,000 to gut the alliance.\textsuperscript{66} Attitudes reversed under Ellenborough who aimed to support Abbas more overtly, but within two years change was in the offing again when Grant and Ellis desired Abbas’s demotion to mere deputy of the Shah.\textsuperscript{67} Campbell lamented such “vacillating policy” and called for clarity,\textsuperscript{68} yet ironically he did much to excite British vacillation through his erratic reports during 1832-33.\textsuperscript{69}

Campbell’s treatment of Willock was a further cause of irresolution. During the early 19\textsuperscript{th} century two schools of Indian defence formulated; the Bombay and the Ludhiana. The former was founded by Malcolm and predicted the Russian line of attack on India through Tehran and Herat, warranting greater interest in Persia. The latter, including Harford-Jones, saw the Oxus as Russia’s road to India, thus they favoured closer relations to Afghanistan. Willock, who had commanded Harford-Jones’s escort, advocated the Ludhiana strategy. In 1832 he argued that “we must attach less value to our alliance with the Shah and seek to raise in Afghanistan...a new barrier of resistance”.\textsuperscript{70} Campbell meanwhile was firmly of a Bombay disposition.\textsuperscript{71} The difference of opinion was not only strategic, it was also factional. Malcolm had resented the intrusion of Harford-Jones when

\textsuperscript{63} Ingram, \textit{Great Game}, p. 215
\textsuperscript{64} Ingram, \textit{Persian Connection}, p. 189
\textsuperscript{65} Ingram, \textit{Persian Connection}, p. 190-192
\textsuperscript{66} Ingram, \textit{Persian Connection}, p. 289 & Hurewitz, \textit{Diplomacy}, p. 86-87
\textsuperscript{67} Ingram, \textit{Great Game} p. 192-193
\textsuperscript{68} Campbell to the Chairman E.I.C, Tehran 4 Sept. 1832, FO60/33
\textsuperscript{69} Ingram, \textit{Great Game}, p. 204
\textsuperscript{70} Report on British Dealings With Persia, Henry Willock, 7 March 1832, FO60/32 & Memo No 2. Respecting Persia Affairs, Henry Ellis n.d. FO60/33
\textsuperscript{71} Ingram, \textit{Family}, p. 303 & Ingram, \textit{Great Game}, p. 209
both clashed in Persia in 1810, the former under the G.O.I and the latter under the F.O. Malcolm used his cronies and relatives including McDonald, McNeil and Campbell to lobby for G.O.I control of the Persian mission, leading to an embarrassing spat after Turkmanchay between the ‘Malcolmites’ and Willock, the last of the ‘Harfordians’. This contributed to the latter’s dismissal and replacement. Only in early 1833 did British interests, aims and objectives finally coalesce, in no small part due to the efforts of King William IV who insisted upon decisiveness. Abbas was to be put on the throne by knighting Campbell and granting him authority to provide a 100,000 tomans to Abbas who would also benefit from British arms and officers.

Serving to overarch Russian expansionism and result British contingencies was of course the state of Persia and its succession process. Although Abbas was made Vali ‘abd in 1799 his succession was always in question. Of the lascivious Shah’s many sons, four vied for the throne through aggressive “forward policies”; Abbas, and Ali Mirzas Muhammad, Husain and Hasan. The Vali ‘abd’s two wars with Russia were examples of such forward policies; however the results left his title bid complicated. He had been humiliated and despite the death of his chief rival Muhammad Ali in 1821, he still faced Husain in Fars and his brother Hasan in Kerman. Both these princes fermented unrest during the 1820’s and early 1830’s, resulting in near civil war. To compound matters Husain had been trying to obtain British officers from Bombay to train his forces at Shiraz. Britain was reluctant to get too deeply involved in such disputes, thus Ellis and Grant desired Abbas’s demotion to deputy. Later, in 1832 Abbas added Khorasan to his responsibilities, travelling there in the spring and campaigning to bolster his chances of succession. In the autumn of 1833 Campbell expressed his alarm at such developments which had

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72 Report on British Dealings With Persia, Henry Willock, 7 March 1832, FO60/32 & Memo No 2. Respecting Persia Affairs, Henry Ellis n.d. FO60/33
73 Ingram, Persian Connection, p. 270 & Ingram, Family, p. 297
74 Ingram, Great Game, p. 207
75 Letter B.O.C to Governor General in Council at Fort William, 14 Jan. 1833, FO60/33
76 Hambly, ‘Fath Ali Shah and Muhammad Shah’, p. 163-64
77 Ingram, Persian Connection, p. 79-80
78 Busse, ‘Abbas’
80 Ingram, Great Game, p. 191
81 Ingram, Great Game, p. 192-193
82 Busse, ‘Abbas’
rendered Azerbaijani forces unfit for the “anarchy and bloodshed which we may...look for in the death of the Shah” whose “advanced age and feeble constitution” was provoking Persian panic.83 Such problems compelled Palmerston to despatch Fraser to investigate the situation. Was the Shah settled upon his eldest son whom he had gifted with high authority, or would his older system of intra-offspring rivalry prevail?84 Ultimately Britain hoped Abbas’s new authority would bode well for his succession.85

In summary then, motivations were as follows: Wellesley’s empire-building, general fears of French and Russian expansionism, fear of Russian overtures to the reciprocal Heir-Apparent, and the desire for resurgent British influence so as to restrain Russia. These were overarched by the fragility of the Qajar state and its system of succession. British objectives were determined by these motivations yet also fluctuated owing to departmental/factional vacillation until final concurrence in 1833.

To what extent was Britain involved?
Abbas’s death in Meshed on the 25th October 1833 prevented British involvement in his succession, however during his term as Vali ‘abd, Britain did attempt to prepare for it.86 In early 1812 Majors D’Arcy and Stone arrived at Tabriz with two NCO’s and ten privates, as part of Ouseley’s military mission to convert Abbas into a dependent. They joined Captain Christie and Lieutenant Henry Lindsay who had stayed behind in 1810. Willock was also there with his brother and in late 1812 a further twenty-five officers and men arrived from India, bringing the contingent at Tabriz up to fifty. Arms and supplies were furnished, an arsenal constructed and Persian troops drilled and dressed accordingly.87 By 1812 Abbas had 12,000 European trained infantrymen,88 who subsequently went into battle with the Russians on the Caucasus front with several British officers and NCO’s amidst their ranks.89 Politically speaking Ouseley managed to get Wellesley his revamped

83 Campbell to the Chairman E.I.C, Tehran 4 Sept. 1832, FO60/33 & Campbell to Mr Grant, Tehran 1 Oct. 1833, FO60/35
84 Sketch of Instructions to Mr Fraser, 4 Dec. 1833, FO60/33
85 Sketch of Instructions to Mr Fraser, 4 Dec. 1833, & FO60/33 & Campbell to the Chairman E.I.C, Tehran 4 Sept. 1832, FO60/33
86 Busse, ‘Abbas’
87 Wright, The English, p. 52
88 Ingram, Persian Connection, p. 168
89 Wright, The English, p. 52-53
treaty and a subsidy of £150,000,\textsuperscript{90} which was paid to Abbas during the war.\textsuperscript{91} In March 1812 however Wellesley left office, just before Napoleon invaded Russia. Consequent Anglo-Russian reconciliation rendered the mission an acute embarrassment.\textsuperscript{92} Officers were promptly recalled from the frontline as voices of discontent were raised by Castlereagh and the E.I.C. In 1814 Castlereagh despatched Ellis to gut Ouseley’s treaty, cancel the subsidy and remove the military mission – by 1815 most had left.\textsuperscript{93}

When Ellis departed, Willock took over responsibilities for Anglo-Iranian diplomacy as a lowly Charge d’Affaires.\textsuperscript{94} After an undesirable breach with the Shah in 1822 diplomatic relations broke off and Canning foisted the mission on the G.O.I with instructions to limit Anglo-Persian relations.\textsuperscript{95} Worse followed for Abbas in April 1829 when McDonald reluctantly pushed through Britain’s bribe to break the alliance. In 1830 Canning’s policy was finally reversed by Wellington and Ellenborough who put the mission under B.O.C authority and arranged for the revival of its military aspect with arms and officers: except this never happened, Ellenborough fell from office in 1830.\textsuperscript{96} Meanwhile disruption to British involvement was also caused by the factional infighting at the mission which became overstretched after Willock’s dismissal at the hands Campbell and co.\textsuperscript{97} The envoy realised his mistake and called for a return to supporting Abbas with “unqualified ascendancy over his brothers” using increased diplomatic and military support.\textsuperscript{98} This was ensured in January of 1833 when Grant intimated as much to the G.O.I (see Appendices).\textsuperscript{99} As a final statement of intent William IV wrote to the Shah conferring Campbell a knighthood, “as proof of the estimation in which I [William] hold the alliance between Great Britain and Persia.”\textsuperscript{100} Eight months later Abbas was dead and no officers or arms had arrived, a failure he castigated in his will, in which he declared that William

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{90} Ingram, \textit{Persian Connection}, p. 154
\item \textsuperscript{91} Ingram, \textit{Persian Connection}, p. 166 & p. 178
\item \textsuperscript{92} Wright, \textit{The English}, p. 15
\item \textsuperscript{93} Wright, \textit{The English}, p. 55 & Ingram, \textit{Persian Connection}, p. 192
\item \textsuperscript{94} Ingram, \textit{Persian Connection}, p. 192-195 & Wright, \textit{The English}, p. 15
\item \textsuperscript{95} Ingram, \textit{Persian Connection}, p. 215
\item \textsuperscript{96} Ingram, \textit{Great Game}, p. 216 Ingram, \textit{Persian Connection}, p. 303-304 & Yapp, ‘Persian Mission’, p. 172-173
\item \textsuperscript{97} Report on British Dealings \textit{With Persia}, Henry Willock, 7 March 1832, FO60/32 & Memo No 2. Respecting Persia Affairs, Henry Ellis n.d. FO60/33 & Ingram, \textit{Family}, p. 299-302
\item \textsuperscript{98} Campbell to the Chairman E.I.C, Tehran 4 Sept. 1832, FO60/33
\item \textsuperscript{99} Letter B.O.C to Governor General in Council at Fort William, 14 \textit{Jan.} 1833, FO60/33
\item \textsuperscript{100} Letter from King William IV to Shah, Brighton, 14 \textit{Jan.} 1833, FO60/33
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
IV “still owes me ten thousand rifles”. Britain would be in need of such hardware as she became embroiled in a very real succession crisis in 1834.

What was Britain’s relationship with Russia?

Britain’s relationship with Russia in Persia during the 19th century was one first of suspicion before progressing into an intense competitive rivalry. This was especially so after Turkmanchay which illuminated Russia’s desire to grasp “with avidity, every opportunity to increase her territory and connexions in Asia”. Although Anglo-Russian rivalry had commercial and political elements Ingram insists it was mainly symbolic; of primary concern was maintaining Britain’s Great Power status by exerting the right to influence in Iran as a Euro-Asiatic power, just as Russia did. In this, Britain was at a constant disadvantage. The Russians maintained a consistently exploitative policy in Persia, advanced by their powerful armed forces, geographical proximity and use of impressive high-ranking diplomats such as Dolgorourki and later Count Simonitch a former office of Napoleon and a staunch Anglophobe. By contrast Persia was thousands of miles from Britain, whose most prized peers baulked at the distance. More importantly Britain suffered from acute interdepartmental rivalry which corroded consensus. Her diplomatic mission was tossed about between administrative bodies, affecting its size, duties and the rank of its chief agent. Such problems were exacerbated by the E.I.C’s annoyance at regularly having to foot the bill for the mission.

All this proved a hindrance in Persia where the populace attached “so much importance to outward show and to whose eyes one must speak rather than to their senses”. Indeed it even caused offense to the Shah who resented representatives of the E.I.C and G.O.I as inferior mercantile sorts. Britain’s considerable handicap was only tempered by Persia’s instinctive contempt of Russia. Britain for instance largely failed to shield

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102 Report on British Dealings With Persia, Henry Willock, 7 March, 1832, FO60/32 & Memo No 2. Respecting Persia Affairs, Henry Ellis n.d. FO60/33
104 Ingram, *Great Game*, p. 211-213
105 Ingram, *Persian Connection*, p. 191 & p. 301
106 Campbell to the Chairman E.I.C, Tehran 4 Sept. 1832, FO60/33
107 Yapp, ‘Persian Mission’, p. 167
108 Sketch of Instructions to Mr Fraser, 4 Dec. 1833, FO60/33

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Persia from Gulistan and Turkmanchai, and attempts to assert the right of interference by Castlereagh\(^{109}\) and Canning\(^{110}\) were largely rejected. This however, was also due to Britain’s preoccupation with Anglo-Russian relations in Europe which meant all attempts to assert influence in Persia had to be expressed in such a way as to maintain Continental amicability.\(^{111}\)

Similar weaknesses permeated Britain’s relationship to Abbas Mirza. Russia aimed to enact expansion through the use of Abbas as her “stalking horse.”\(^{112}\) Britain was at a decided disadvantage in preventing this for the same reasons she struggled generally in Persia. More specifically Russia could offer Abbas the stick and the carrot, beating his armies bloody, before offering to aid in his succession and to compensate his northern defeats by encouraging attacks upon Khiva, Herat, or the Ottoman Empire, areas Britain were loathed to see destabilised.\(^{113}\) Meanwhile British support of Abbas was hamstrung by European commitments; for instance during Ellenboroughs’s short tenure excessively overt support was discounted for fear of antagonising Russia.\(^{114}\) Ultimately resistance was effective only because Abbas shared in his compatriot’s contempt of Russia. Lastly with regards Anglo-Russian cooperation during the prospective succession there appears to have been next to nothing, both on the ground in Persia and in London and St Petersburg.

Muhammad Shah: did the British express interest (see Appendices)

The British were in a state of absolute consternation about the succession of Muhammad Shah. F.O files from late 1833 to early 1835 are swamped with reference to the impending succession. Although Muhammad was seemingly plucked from obscurity in the autumn of 1833 when Palmerston asked Fraser to assess his character,\(^{115}\) subsequent interest was constant. Campbell scrawled countless reports regarding the succession. Fraser in turn offered his critical view, as did Ellis. Palmerston

\(^{109}\) Ingram, Persian Connection, p. 202
\(^{110}\) Ingram, Persian Connection, p. 278
\(^{111}\) Ingram, Persian Connection, p. 318
\(^{112}\) Ingram, Persian Connection, p. 200
\(^{113}\) F., Kazemzadeh, ‘Iranian Relations’, p. 340 & Ingram, Persian Connection, p. 181
\(^{114}\) Ingram, Persian Connection, p. 301
\(^{115}\) Sketch of Instructions to Mr Fraser, 4 Dec. 1833, FO60/33
too, was prolific. Major contributions were also made by Campbell’s military minions on the ground, Passmore and Bethune and from a variety of other British soldiers and diplomats including Ambassador Bligh at St Petersburg.

**What prompted Britain’s interest and what were her aims and objectives?**

Interests, aims and objectives in the succession of Muhammad Mirza showed logical continuity from his father’s lifetime, although major alterations occurred as a consequence of altered circumstances. The biggest headache was Abbas’s premature death which provoked Persian instability and British indecision, destroying the consensus reached in 1833. This made Campbell very uneasy, precipitating three panicky reports to the E.I.C on the *same* day in the winter of 1833. He thought there was “much reason to fear that the loss of his favourite son will have a serious effect upon the health of the Shah”, who had centred his political aspirations upon Abbas alone. Although Muhammad was vested with his late father’s offices he was not named Heir-Apparent, increasing the likelihood of bloody civil war. To exacerbate matters instability was rife and the sordid state of Azerbaijan’s soldiery had not improved since the Khorasan campaigns.

Campbell called for a speedy transferral of support from Abbas to his son, whom he thought the Shah favoured. British assistance using officers, arms and instruction (as authorised for Abbas) would convince the Shah to finally nominate Muhammad who in turn would have the means to convince family rivals that resistance was futile. Campbell was confident such measures would provide “as strong a hold” over Muhammad “as we could desire”. These remarks are intriguing and allude to British duplicity in Persia. Campbell was enthusiastic about Persian independence, yet ultimately this ‘independence’ could only be secured through rigid control of dynastic affairs. Conversely although Campbell approved of Muhammad Mirza that “most worthy of the Princes”, the ultimate choice of a successor was left to the Shah; if another was made

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116 Campbell to Chairman E.I.C, II Tehran, 18 Nov. 1833 FO60/35
117 Fraser to Grant, 12 Feb. 1834 in Memorandum William Cabell, 18 Dec. 1834, FO60/35, Bethune to Backhouse, 20 Sept. 1834, FO60/34 & Campbell to Palmerston, Tabriz, 23 Sept. 1834, FO60/34
118 Campbell to Chairman E.I.C III, 18 Nov. 1833, FO60/35
119 Campbell to Chairman E.I.C, 1 Oct. 1833, FO60/35

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Campbell thought it prudent to acquiesce, however if the old Shah died prematurely, Britain should throw her weight behind Muhammad.\textsuperscript{120}

The E.I.C and B.O.C disagreed with the latter point, and in doing so provided an astute assessment of the Qajar system of succession. Writing to the G.O.I in February 1834 it was stated that:

\[\ldots\text{as far as a fundamental law can be said to exist in a country like Persia, the reigning Shah is invested with the right to name his successor; this right however...has been held to be limited...as to give a preference to a Prince born of a mother of the Kajar tribe.}\]

No successor having been named, the B.O.C argued that there was “no one of the Princes, in favour whom we could authorise the advance of the money, which we had contemplated in regard to HRH Abbas Mirza.”\textsuperscript{121} Willock meanwhile shared the opinion of Campbell, writing in July of 1834 that he feared the “work of years has been rendered fruitless” by the death of Abbas Mirza. Unlike Campbell, Willock showed a neat grasp of Persian politics, assessing potential rivals to the throne including Abbas’s brother, Ali Shah Zill es-Sultan governor of Tehran, an incompetent fop despised by his troops yet gifted with close proximity to the royal treasury. Of further import were those meddlesome brothers Husain and Hasan Ali Mirza.\textsuperscript{122} Willock suggested that Britain should espouse either Hasan, the most militarily gifted, or his nephew Muhammad, but with greater emphasis on the latter. He and also Fraser saw strength in the prince’s industrious minister Mirza Abdul Qasim Qaim Maqam.\textsuperscript{123} More importantly although Willock thought Muhammad was “not endowed with the talents of his father”, he foresaw severe repercussions if he was spurned in that he would throw himself upon Russia.\textsuperscript{124} As with Abbas then, Russian expansionism combined with problems of the

\textsuperscript{120} Campbell to Chairman E.I.C I, Tehran, 18 Nov. 1833, FO60/35
\textsuperscript{121} Secret Committee E.I.C to Governor General, 8 Feb. 1834 FO60/35
\textsuperscript{122} Willock to Palmerston, 15 May 1834, FO60/35
\textsuperscript{123} Fraser to Grant, 16 March, 3 April, 9 April, 1834 in Memorandum William Cabell, 18 Dec. 1834, FO60/35, Willock to Palmerston, 15 May 1834, FO60/35
\textsuperscript{124} Willock to Palmerston, 15 May 1834, FO60/35
Qajar system of succession, serving to form an inextricably interlinked motivation for British anxiety. Willock’s point alludes to the interesting dilemma faced over Qajar succession; Britain was locked in a perpetual competition with Russia which obligated participation lest the Russians take advantage from her absence, and all the while the Persians pulled the strings. Fraser said as much in the spring of 1834, writing that the Qaim Maqam was astutely playing both powers off against one another.\(^\text{125}\)

Campbell also expressed acute discomfort about Russian expansionism, fearing an attempt to realise the most “cherished idol of their ambition” – the invasion of India. Campbell felt the death of Abbas heralded a resurgence of Russia’s “insidious designs” on Persia in that she would blackmail the country with the remaining £250,000 of the indemnity, perhaps even seizing the province in Gilan in lieu of payment. She might also entice Muhammad by offering to secure his succession with troops.\(^\text{126}\) The envoy again suggested officers and subsidy to facilitate training of Muhammad’s forces to ensure smooth succession without Russian assistance.\(^\text{127}\) In the autumn of 1834 Campbell ventured slightly more ambitious proposals, writing to Palmerston that Persia could not stand alone without British assistance which merited “indefinite” financial subsidisation of Azerbaijani forces. He also suggested a loan to pay the outstanding indemnity.\(^\text{128}\) Ingram feels these plans were unnecessarily ambitious owing to Campbell’s state of mesmerised hysteria.\(^\text{129}\) This may hold true in that Campbell did seem obsessed with the Russians, often issuing poetical portents of doom engineered by Tsar Nicholas, “the autocrat”.\(^\text{130}\) According to Ingram such jingoism frequently emanated from self-aggrandising British diplomats who exaggerated threat and subsequent self-effort in defence of the realm.\(^\text{131}\)

\(^\text{125}\) Fraser to Grant, 16 March, 3 April, 9 April, 1834 in Memorandum William Cabell, 18 Dec. 1834, FO60/35
\(^\text{126}\) Campbell to Chairman E.I.C, II Tehran, 18 Nov. 1833, FO60/35, Campbell to Chairman E.I.C I, Tehran, 18 Nov. 1833, FO60/35 & Campbell to Palmerston No. 1, Tehran, 9 April 1834, FO60/34
\(^\text{127}\) Campbell to Chairman E.I.C, II Tehran, 18 Nov. 1833, FO60/35
\(^\text{128}\) Campbell to Palmerston, Tabriz, 23 Sept. 1834, FO60/34
\(^\text{129}\) Ingram, Great Game, p. 318
\(^\text{130}\) Campbell to Chairman E.I.C, II Tehran, 18 Nov. 1833, FO60/35
\(^\text{131}\) Ingram, Great Game, p. 185
Perhaps unfairly Campbell receives most criticism in this respect, negating similar behaviour from Fraser and McNeil. Indeed McNeil proffered a far more aggressive foil to the Russians. In January of 1834 he wanted the £100,000 meant for Abbas to train two battalions before the Shah died, to secure the citadel and the treasury in readiness for the Vali abd’s march on the capital. This would provide:

...a check upon the heir himself, superior even to that which the power of Russia gives her, and you would in fact hold the power to dispose of the Crown of Persia...and in the event of a war with Russia, you could at least take care that the Shah’s treasure, should not be available to the purposes of the autocrat.

Fraser agreed, whilst also echoing Campbell with respect to paying Persia’s indemnity. Campbell and McNeil also backed the Shah’s desire to despatch a diplomatic mission to Britain which would enable the latter to broker a new treaty to prevent Persian pursuit of indemnity deductions. Campbell, McNeil and Fraser all contravened clear B.O.C instructions given in February 1834 (see Fig. 3).

Much like the prospective succession of Abbas Mirza, Britain’s interest was also sparked by the need to maintain imperial defence and Great Power status. Campbell remarked that the “peace and tranquillity of the richest dependencies of the British empire in the East” required the renewal of closer Anglo-Iranian relations through support of Muhammad Mirza. True to form,

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132 Ingram, Great Game, p. 190 & Ingram, ‘Family’, p. 302
133 McNeil to Wilson, 24 Jan. 1834, FO60/35
134 Fraser to Grant, 16 March 1834 in Memorandum William Cabell, 18 Dec. 1834, FO60/35
135 McNeil to Wilson, 24 Jan. 1834, FO60/35 Campbell to Chairman E.I.C, Tehran, 4 Sept. 1832, FO60/33
136 Secret Committee E.I.C to Governor General, 8 Feb. 1834 FO60/35
137 Campbell to Chairman E.I.C, II Tehran, 18 Nov. 1833, FO60/35
vacillation also permeated British aims and objectives. Ingram’s hero Ellis agreed with Campbell in that involvement was justified in the “interests of our Indian Empire”, to which Russia had “no right to object”,\(^{138}\) yet he differed sharply in all other aspects. Ellis poured a torrent of cold water on Campbell, McNeil and Fraser in two customarily comprehensive memos in May and June of 1834. No decision could be taken on the subject of deploying troops in the capital as the Shah could still nominate Zill es-Sultan who, along with other princes seemed to be gearing up for a war of succession. This meant British officered troops would implicitly support Zill es-Sultan’s claim to the throne, immediately prompting Russian support of Muhammad:

> ...will the Russian ambassador look on calmly and see the capital and the treasures of the Shah in the possession of a force substantially British and may not...such an act of prospective interference in the succession be used as a pretext for correspondent interference on the part of Russia.

Furthermore he thought Russia had every right to coerce the Persians over Gilan since Abbas owed them money. Under no circumstances should Britain pay the indemnity; the avaricious old oligarch could do it himself.\(^{139}\) Moreover the Shah was only stalling over nomination in an effort to extort money from Britain or gain a reduction on the indemnity. Similar reasons were behind his desire to despatch an embassy to London and St Petersburg.\(^{140}\) The most expedient cause of action was to convince the Shah to nominate Muhammad, whilst deploying a detachment of Azerbijani forces near Tehran in a state of readiness. Ellis was also displeased at Campbell’s reluctance to negotiate a new political and commercial treaty with Persia, as he had been instructed to do in despatches accompanying Fraser.\(^{141}\) So damning was he that Ellis called for Campbell’s replacement with a “special” crown mission. Both the treaty and the new mission would

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\(^{138}\) Additional memo on Persia, Ellis in Grant to Palmerston, 6 June, 1834, FO60/35

\(^{139}\) Memo on Persia, Ellis, May 1834, FO60/35

\(^{140}\) Additional memo on Persia, Ellis in Grant to Palmerston, 6 June, 1834, FO60/35 & Memo on Persia, Ellis, May 1834, FO60/35

\(^{141}\) Ingram, *Great Game*, p. 301, Memo on Persia, Ellis, May 1834, FO60/35 & Additional memo on Persia, Ellis in Grant to Palmerston, 6 June, 1834, FO60/35
demonstrate British intent whilst also encouraging decisive action from the Shah. If he died, the mission would be one of congratulation to his successor.\textsuperscript{142}

In his June memo Ellis then suggested a more unorthodox course of action:

...the question of the succession to the Persian throne...must be discussed between the cabinet of London and St Petersburg. Non-intervention by Russia as well as England would be the simplest principle, but the joint acknowledgement of the prince selected by the Shah is the course most applicable.\textsuperscript{143}

Ingram declares such a marked departure from previous British tactics was the culmination of Ellis’s defection from the Bombay to the Ludhiana School. Ellis had originally been a ‘Malcolmite’ accompanying the Scot to Persia in 1808, thus favouring closer connections and Anglo-Russian competition for paramount influence under G.O.I auspices. Ellis reversed his decision after Turkmanchai which gave Russia the edge in her competition with Britain.\textsuperscript{144} Palmerston agreed; Russia would be checked via consultation under the auspices of the F.O. Subsequently Anglo-Russian cooperation was embraced after the latter showed surprising restraint by agreeing to postpone the indemnity until 1836.\textsuperscript{145} Palmerston had acquiesced to Russian overtures in order to avoid civil war, yet there was still a risk; the indemnity had only been postponed and Russia could always encourage the new Shah by dangling Herat before him.

Now it remained for the Shah to nominate his nephew. Such was Britain’s consternation at his delay that King William wrote an impassioned letter to the Shah, his “brother” in July in which he expressed his “most sincere sorrow” at the Crown-Prince’s death. He ventured to suggest that the Shah “may be pleased to name someone of the Princes of the Royal family to take the place of” of Abbas. That someone was hopefully

\textsuperscript{142} Memo on Persia, Ellis, May 1834, FO60/35 & Additional memo on Persia, Ellis in Grant to Palmerston, 6 June, 1834, FO60/35
\textsuperscript{143} Additional memo on Persia, Ellis in Grant to Palmerston, 6 June, 1834, FO60/35
\textsuperscript{144} Ingram, \textit{Persian Connection} p. 305
\textsuperscript{145} Ingram, \textit{Great Game}, p. 314 & Grant to Palmerston, 24 Sept, 1834, FO60/35
Muhammad. The Shah pre-empted his fellow monarch in June, finally nominating his grandson, thereby actuating the B.O.C’s first instruction to the envoy in February.

In summary motivations were as follows; the death of Abbas Mirza, which prompted Persian instability, and multiple British contingency plans. Another interlocking motivation was Russian expansionism and compulsory competition as part of the Great Game, engendering aggressive British strategies which blurred the lines between Persian independence and protectorate status. This in turn was connected to maintenance of imperial defence and Great Power status. Residual signs of fierce interdepartmental rivalry were also apparent in the defection of Ellis whose confident advice gained the support of the F.O. which agreed to a Modus Vivendi with the Russians to propel Muhammad to the throne.

To what extent was Britain involved?

Britain played a very active role in the succession of Muhammad Shah. Even as debates raged regarding the most expedient cause of action, the mission originally intended for Abbas was slowly on route to Persia, finally arriving in Bushire in January of 1834. This comprised of eight officers and fourteen sergeants commanded by Lt Colonel Passmore and including Captain Sheil and Lieutenant Farrant. After marching to Tehran the mission was ordered by the Shah to follow the Heir-Apparent to Tabriz who had already left with the British diplomatic mission on the 25th of June, some nine days after his ceremony of investiture. Campbell was not optimistic about the mission’s success owing to the princes “empty treasury… an army greatly in arrears of pay” and suffering from exhaustion after long campaigns in Khorasan. Persia itself was also in a state of panic and confusion. Fortunately the few officers who had remained behind after 1815 had kept the residual fires of European military training alive. Major Hart had commanded the infantry and was commended by Campbell for his exploits in

146 Letter King William IV to Shah, 31 July 1834, FO248/72
147 Grant to Palmerston, 24 Sept, 1834, FO60/35
148 McNeil to Wilson, 24 Jan. 1834, FO60/35 & Campbell to NeNaughten, 21 June 1834, FO60/35
149 Campbell to NeNaughten, 21 June 1834, FO60/35 & Campbell to NeNaughten, 31 July 1834, FO60/35
munitions. Meanwhile Lindsay-Bethune had retained charge of the horse artillery, receiving the Order of the Lion and the Sun in 1816 and leaving Persia a hero in 1821.

Sensing the need for extra punch Palmerston decided to despatch a Spartan general to Persia in the form of a six and a half foot Scot; the very same Lindsay-Bethune. He was to be paid £1400 per annum, given a Lt Colonelcy, and made Chief-of-Staff to the Heir-Apparent. To avoid a conflict of authority his commission was to be of an anterior date to Passmore’s. In February 1834 the Scot arranged for a shipment of arms to Persia including muskets, shrapnel shells, grapeshot, and howitzers. His thunder was stolen however when the government insisted he reduce the shipment. Worse, most of the arms were still sat onboard the merchantman Lord Charles Spencer in London docks in December, some nine months after discussions first took place. The arms did not crop up again until May of 1835 when the vice-consul at Trebizond reported their arrival. They had still not been despatched to Persia four months later. On a diplomatic front Campbell reported the arrival of Fraser in April, carrying instructions to negotiate a new commercial and political treaty with the Shah. He wrote to Palmerston that entering such negotiations was inappropriate owing to the chaos in Persia, a decision which angered Ellis. Furthermore he and Palmerston agreed that Campbell’s forward policies were inconsistent with Britain’s desire to check as opposed to compete with Russia. The envoy was also criticised by the B.O.C and the G.O.I who argued his reports were incoherent. Worse still, Fraser stated that the envoy had given considerable offence to the Shah and his senior ministers. Furthermore whilst in Tabriz he had also failed to make any impression upon the Heir-Apparent who favoured the Russian legation.

Meanwhile military matters were even more precarious. Bethune’s arrival at Tabriz in June caused a fracas with Passmore who failed to understand his colleague’s position.
If he was supposedly a subordinate why had he not reported his departure to Azerbaijan? All Passmore wanted was clarity which was why he put the matter to the G.O.I in August.\footnote{Passmore to Taylor, 18 Aug. 1834, FO248/73} This enraged Campbell – what right had Passmore to insinuate his dereliction of duty when he had introduced the two officers in Tehran, clearly stating that Bethune was to channel orders from the \textit{Vali 'abd} to the detachment.\footnote{Minute of a conversation between Campbell and Rawlinson, No 1., 9 Aug. 1834, FO248/73 & Comments on Campbell, Aug. 1834 in William Cabell, 18 Dec. 1834, FO60/35} Passmore was far from innocent in the matter, indeed when in Tabriz he vindictively deprived Bethune of financial support that the Persians had authorised for him!\footnote{Comments on Campbell, Aug. 1834 in William Cabell, 18 Dec. 1834, FO60/35} At this Bethune tendered his resignation. Passmore however deceitfully informed the G.O.I that the decision was nothing to do with him.\footnote{Passmore to Taylor, 18 Aug. 1834, FO248/73} The officer subsequently apologised for his actions and continued in his duties whilst Bethune took command the artillery and the arsenal.\footnote{Minute of a conversation between Campbell and Rawlinson, No. 3., 13 Aug. 1834, FO248/73} As such Passmore and some of the detachment joined Azerbijani forces at Khuy on the Turkish border, to “drill and discipline” the troops. The Russians resented this, entreating Muhammad to employ their own officers instead.\footnote{Campbell to McNaughten, No. 79., 30 Sept. 1834, FO249/30} Passmore however, was ultimately being shelved owing to his “unreasonable and intemperate” attitude toward his Persian superior the Amir Nezam,\footnote{Campbell to McNaughten, No. 79., 30 Sept. 1834, FO249/30} which had forced Campbell, to reprimand him and other British officers on the frontier for their “spirit of discontent” in October.\footnote{Passmore to Campbell, 10 Nov. 1834, FO248/73} Despite this, progress was being made, Passmore reporting that a “good deal has been effected” in terms of troop training.\footnote{Campbell to Passmore, No. 95 Tabriz, Oct 1834, FO249/30 & Weekly Diary, Campbell, 29 Sept. 1834, FO249/30} His fate was however, already sealed. In late October he wrote to Campbell enquiring about the position of Bethune at Tabriz, he was informed that his colleague had naturally been made second in command, but in reality Bethune was now leading the Muhammad’s prospective war effort.\footnote{Campbell to Passmore, No. 95 Tabriz, Oct 1834, FO249/30 & Weekly Diary, Campbell, 29 Sept. 1834, FO249/30}

Meanwhile news of the Shah’s demise in Isfahan on the 20\textsuperscript{th} of October reached Tabriz. Campbell wrote to the E.I.C stating that His Majesty was said have “lain down in a state of exhaustion...and to have fallen into a sort of trance or slumber which shortly
terminated in death.”

Having received a despatch from Palmerston providing crown credentials to entreat with Count Simonitch as an equal, Campbell and the Russian minister waited upon Muhammad Mirza and:

...conjointly and separately saluted the HRH on the part of our two governments with the title of Majesty and offered our congratulations to him.

Preparations for Muhammad’s march were instilled with new energy. Bethune attended the artillery whilst Farrant saw to the cavalry. Troops were drilled “morning and evening”, and horses and cattle were assembled to support the baggage train. No-one knew what Passmore was doing as the colonel had failed to report since his de facto demotion, however after being ordered to move “with all speed” to concentrate outside Tabriz the slighted colonel joined the main force on the 14th November. Bethune was to command the 24,000 troops assembled. All that remained was to march on the capital; however the woeful state of the Shah’s finances threatened to unhinge the entire operation. Campbell recommended rapidity, and in the end forwarded £30,000 to get the troops moving. Edward Burgess, an English merchant in Persia gave an account of the march to Tehran which was then in the hands of the pretender Zill es-Sultan who had seized the treasury. He despatched 5,000 men to block Bethune who commanded the advanced guard. On seeing the Scot’s superior force the opposition melted away, quickly precipitating Zill es-Sultan’s surrender. Several other princes and notables then flocked to the Shah’s banner.

Campbell was content; the march had taken twenty-six days, quick for Asiatic standards. A few princes still however remained “inimical” to the new Shah, namely the governor of Fars Husein Ali Mirza Farmanfarma and his brother Hasan at Kerman. Bethune was

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170 Campbell to Chairman E.I.C, 7 Nov. 1834, FO249/30
171 Palmerston to Campbell, 1 Sept. 1834, FO60/34
172 Campbell to Chairman E.I.C, 7 Nov. 1834, FO249/30
173 Weekly Diary, Campbell, 20 Oct. 1834, FO249/30
174 Campbell to Passmore, No. 96., Tabriz, Nov. 1834, FO249/30
175 Campbell to Chairman E.I.C, No. 103., 14 Nov. 1834, FO249/30
176 Campbell to Chairman E.I.C, No. 105., Tabriz, 22 Nov. 1834, FO249/40
177 Extract of a letter from Mr Burgess, Tabriz, 22 Dec.1834, FO60/37

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chosen to bring them to heal.\textsuperscript{179} Passmore protested to Campbell who told him that the decision had been that of the Shah and the Qaim Maqam.\textsuperscript{180} One sympathises, the commander had suffered constant humiliation. In Tehran Campbell reported that all was well having attended a public ceremony of coronation for the Shah on the 31\textsuperscript{st} of January which both the British and Russian legations attended. The efforts of the Qaim Maqam and the Shah’s loyal brother Bahman Mirza had rendered all but the south subjugated.\textsuperscript{181} Here in late February Bethune engaged Hasan. Using counter battery fire he utterly vanquished the prince, heralding the collapse of the rebellion. Shiraz was captured and both brothers imprisoned and sent to Tehran.\textsuperscript{182} The country was almost totally secured by April 1835 when judgement was passed on the meddlesome Ali Mirzas; the “imbecile” Farmanfarma was spared punishment whilst his unfortunate brother was blinded, or as Campbell so eloquently put it: he was “deprived of his eyes.” Duty done Bethune requested leave, a decision the Shah granted with regret.\textsuperscript{183}

Britain’s success seemed complete; she had propelled Muhammad to the throne through the exertions of her soldiers and diplomats, and all with the acquiescence of Russia. She had also earned the eternal gratitude of the Shah who awarded Bethune and several officers (excluding Passmore) the Order of the Lion and the Sun in April.\textsuperscript{184} He also wrote to the King and to Palmerston in March of 1835:

\textit{...we are expressly indebted to the British government, while the people of this country have...been led to entertain an unbounded confidence in the increased relations of amity between the two kingdoms.}\textsuperscript{185}

Furthermore in May the Shah appointed his three year old son Nasir ed-Din Mirza as Heir-Apparent. Campbell was exuberant (see Fig. 4).\textsuperscript{186} In November of 1835 Ellis

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\textsuperscript{179} Campbell to Bethune, 20 Jan 1835, FO249/30
\textsuperscript{180} Campbell to Passmore, No. 8., Tehran, 21 Jan 1835, FO249/30
\textsuperscript{181} Campbell to Governor General India, No. 1., Tehran, 20 Feb. 1834, FO249/30
\textsuperscript{182} Bethune to Campbell, Kermanshah, 20 Feb. 1834, FO259/30, Hasan-e Fasa’i, \textit{History}, p233-240 & Campbell to Governor General India, No. 12., Tehran, 6 March 1835, FO259/30
\textsuperscript{183} Campbell to Bethune, No. 28., Tehran, 29 April 1835, FO259/30
\textsuperscript{184} Campbell to McNaughten, No. 29., Tehran, 30 April 1835, FO259/30
\textsuperscript{185} Translation: letter addressed by His Majesty the Shah to Palmerston, FO60/38
\textsuperscript{186} Campbell to McNaughten, No. 42., Tehran, 17 May 1835, FO259/30
\end{flushright}
arrived, commanding the congratulatory mission he himself had lobbied for. Ellis was to convince the Shah that he must look to maintain peaceable relations with his neighbours and under no circumstances allow himself to be made a “tool” of Russia by allowing himself to “to be pushed on to make war with Afghanistan.”\textsuperscript{187} Despite cooperation during the succession crisis, Anglo-Russian competition was thus still very evident. Nor had the Russian been bamboozled. Even as the new Shah settled on the throne, it was becoming clear that Britain’s exertions counted for little. Campbell reported in January that the Shah was of the opinion that Britain valued him too much to ever coerce him for infraction. Russia meanwhile always carried a big stick.\textsuperscript{188} Ellis subsequently expressed anxiety at the Shah’s designs upon Herat which he wished to conquer with an army of 100,000 men, a ludicrously sized army he couldn’t afford.\textsuperscript{189} He, like Campbell also failed to obtain a modified treaty which had been a subsidiary objective of his errand.\textsuperscript{190} The mission struggled on in Persia under McNeil, receiving Bethune’s arms and a few new officers. In 1838 disaster struck however, when the Shah marched on Herat, prompting Britain to remove its mission, and to despatch a force to occupy the island of Kharg until the Shah lifted the siege.\textsuperscript{191}

\textbf{The curious case of Sir John Campbell}

It doesn’t do to ‘set the record straight’ merely in pursuit of originality; however in the case of Campbell, unanimously derided in secondary sources, there seems to be room for reputational resuscitation.\textsuperscript{192} Admittedly the envoy had many faults as already specified. Perhaps the most damning critic was Fraser who issued a withering condemnation for Campbell having insulted the Persian foreign minister in public!\textsuperscript{193} Campbell made further unforgivable breaches of protocol which the Persian foreign minister declared would

\textsuperscript{187} Palmerston to Ellis, 25 July 1835, FO60/38
\textsuperscript{188} Campbell to Palmerston, Tehran, 2 Jan. 1835, FO60/38
\textsuperscript{189} Ellis to Palmerston, No. 14., Tehran, 13 Nov. 1835, FO60/37
\textsuperscript{190} Palmerston to Ellis, 25 July 1835, FO60/38
\textsuperscript{191} Wright, \textit{The English}, p. 57-59
\textsuperscript{193} Fraser to Grant, 31 July 1834, FO60/35 & Ingram, \textit{Great Game}, p. 316
have merited his immediate expulsion from Persia had not the Shah fostered such a “peculiar regard” for Britain.194 Furthermore although Passmore’s malfeasance has been made plain, Campbell riposted with collective punishment by spitefully banning the military mission from using the chapel of the ambassadorial residency.195

The succession crisis was however the redemption of Campbell.196 Despite his superior’s lack of faith the envoy did his duty. Burgess, Bethune and others all agreed that his relentless efforts to instil rapidity in the Persians, facilitated by the advance of £30,000 had been crucial to the succession.197 Even more praise was given by the Persians themselves. In early 1835 Muhammad gifted the envoy a sword of Fath Ali Shah and despatched letters to Palmerston and the King expressing his wish that William should show Campbell a “mark of consideration and exaltation” for his efforts as envoy – indeed he was even against Campbell’s dismissal.198 Perhaps then, history ought not be so unkind to Sir John.

**What was Britain’s relationship to Russia?**

Anglo-Russian competition showed remarkable restraint during the succession of Muhammad Shah. As early as January of 1834 there were hints of Anglo-Russian harmony when Bligh intimated to Palmerston that Russia was anxious to come to an arrangement regarding the succession.199 Grant was dubious, if the Russian foreign minister Count Nesselrode was serious why had he not made an official intimation? Ultimately however Grant did eye an opportunity that should be taken:

> ...we cannot, in my opinion too strongly or too soon express our willingness to concur in a united representation from the minister of the two powers at the court of Tehran.

194 Letter from Mirza Abdul Hasan Khan Minisister of Foreign Affairs of the Shah to Palmerston, 15 Nov 1834, FO60/34
195 Minute of a conversation between Campbell and Rawlinson, No 1., 9 Aug. 1834, FO248/73
196 Extract of a letter from Mr Burgess, Tabriz, 22 Dec.1834, FO60/37
197 Bethune to Campbell, 24 April 1835, FO60/35 & Extract of a letter from Mr Burgess, Tabriz, 22 Dec.1834, FO60/37
198 Copy No. 3 Translation of a Firman addressed by his Majesty Mohammed Shah to William IV translated, 12 March 1835, FO60/37 & Translation of a letter addressed by His Majesty Muhammad Shah to Palmerston, FO60/38
199 Ingram, Great Game, p. 305
Such a move would stamp out all rivals to Muhammad Mirza. It would also put Anglo-Russian relations on a better footing in the East. Palmerston acted in June, shortly after Ellis’s memo. In conjunction with an olive branch Britain would issue a veiled threat. Prince Lieven, the Russian ambassador, was informed that cooperation was desirable for the purposes of “internal tranquillity” in Persia, however if Gilan were seized “it could not be a matter of indifference to Great Britain”. Palmerston also expressed discontent that the indemnity had been levied in the first place.

Bligh reported back in July that Nesselrode was satisfied with Britain’s desire for unanimity; however he was dismayed at Palmerston’s veiled threat. Nesselrode declared the indemnity was justified owing to Persian aggression; however in an act of clemency payment had been postponed for two years. Under no circumstances would they annex Gilan. Palmerston wrote to Nesselrode to express satisfaction and then informed Grant, who in turn informed the G.O.I in August, asking that the envoy be made aware that he was now:

...to cooperate zealously and effectually with the Russian diplomatic agent in Persia, in every measure calculated to avert the threatened evils of a disputed succession and to secure the integrity and independence of Persia.

What followed was a rather cagey relationship in which the Russian’s still sniped for influence, whispering to Muhammad that he should use Russian military advisers. During the crisis Campbell became relaxed however, declaring that Simonitch had given him “cordial support”. By the summer of 1835 relations were returning to normality: Ellis was warned by Palmerston to be wary of Russia, whose interests were “totally opposite to those of Great Britain”. Subsequently Russia’s potency in Persia was made

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200 Grant to Palmerston, 18 Feb. 1834, FO60/35
201 Extract of letter Palmerston to Bligh, 6 June 1834, FO 248/72
202 Bligh to Palmerston, No. 70., St Petersburg, 2 July 1834, FO 248/72
203 Grant to Palmerston, 5 Aug 1834, FO 248/72
204 Grant to Governor General India, 30 Aug. 1834, FO60/35
205 Campbell to McNaughten, No. 79., 30 Sept 1834, FO249/30
206 Extract of a letter from Surgeon Reach in Bethune to Robert Campbell, Tehran, 12 Jan. 1835, FO60/35
207 Grant to Chairman E.I.C, No. 107., Tehran n.d. est. Jan 1835, FO249/30
208 Campbell to McNaughten, No. 79., 30 Sept 1834, FO249/30
209 Grant to Governor General India, 30 Aug. 1834, FO60/35
210 Extract of a letter from Surgeon Reach in Bethune to Robert Campbell, Tehran, 12 Jan. 1835, FO60/35
211 Grant to Palmerston, 25 July 1835, FO60/38
plain to Ellis during a comical incident at a feast in the winter of 1835 whereat the Persians toasted the Tsar before the King, clearing indicating who demanded more respect. Next came Herat.208

Nasir ed-Din Shah: did the British express interest? (see Appendices)
Undoubtedly from the accession of Nasir’s father in 1834 unto his own in 1848, Britain expressed interest much as they had done with previous Crown-Princes. McNeil, Sheil, Farrant, Stevens, Abbot and Palmerston all corresponded regularly on the matter. In comparison to 1834 Britain was however not nearly so panicked, indeed Sheil had time in spring 1847 to respond to a request from Palmerston to provide a report of vines and wines from Shiraz (Nasir ed-Din’s favourite tipple).209 Farrant indulged his foreign secretary with the report in December, Sheil having thought the situation calm enough to go on leave in October.210 This was despite considerable internal problems plaguing the country. Even during the succession crisis itself British diplomats evinced considerable calmness and even indifference.

What prompted Britain’s interest and what were her aims and objectives?
British interests once again showed logical continuity from previous experiences. The first motivation was the fragility of Persia and its system of succession. In October 1835 the Shah selected his brother prince Qahraman Mirza as Nasir ed-Din’s regent in Azerbaijan, before then banishing the boy to Tehran four years later. Interestingly the British were not worried by this development; on the contrary they looked favourably upon the regency as the Vali ‘abd’s young age and “delicate constitution” warranted his governmental seclusion. When Qahraman died in 1839, McNeil suggested Bahman Mirza the last full brother of the Shah, should become governor of Azerbaijan and regent. McNeil’s replacement Sheil agreed yet wanted concurrent emphasis on the Heir-Apparent’s legitimacy. Hopefully the Shah would survive until Nasir ed-Din reached political maturity. In the meantime he should desist from excessive political activity.211

208 Ellis to Palmerston, 9 Dec. 1835, FO60/36
210 Farrant to Palmerston, 15 Dec. 1847, FO60/132, Sheil to Addington, Tehran, 21 April 1847, FO60/130 & Sheil to Palmerston, No. 106., Tehran, 21 Oct. 1847, FO60/132
211 Amanat, Pivot, p. 47-50
Sheil also worried for the safety of the Crown-Prince and his mother, isolated from all major power groups, scorned by Muhammad’s powerful minister Haji Mirza Aqasi, yet also accused of being his puppet by the Develu party headed by Bahman Mirza and Asaf al-Dawla governor of Khorasan.212 Ultimately however Sheil still felt that Bahman, the most able of Persia’s princely politicians, should retain the regency. Controversially Sheil even ventured to suggest that Nasir ed-Din’s immaturity might merit the promotion of Bahman to Heir-Apparent in order to maintain tranquillity.213 As Amanat rightly points out, had this plan attained credence it would have been a death sentence. Ironically Muhammad’s refusal to succumb to several illnesses including gout and erysipelas saved his son’s life. Subsequently Sheil changed his mind, hoping that because Nasir clearly showed willingness to take the throne, the ailing Shah would bring him into public life, perhaps as governor of Tehran.214

In the following years the political situation changed; the Shah’s condition continued to deteriorate whilst Aqasi took the reins of power. Assailed from all sides Aqasi allied with the cast-off Crown-Prince who had hitherto been ignored by his estranged father. Sheil was pleased with the subsequent improvement of the prince’s standing, which had benefited from his connection to Aqasi whose magnetic character enraptured the Shah. One of those adversaries Aqasi trounced was however Asaf al-Dawla and it was his voluntary exile that provoked a spirited Khorasani uprising led by his son Muhammad Khan Salar.215 In March 1847 Sheil was concerned lest the Shah might attempt to quell the Khorasanis by marching to the province himself, an unwise decision owing to his “decrepit state”. Such a move would also be risky owing to the destitute condition of Persia’s armed forces which had lost all semblance of British training; arms and training. Performance was impaired and pay was heavily in arrears, fermenting constant mutiny.216

Sheil was also worried about the Vali ‘abd’s application to govern his former province in April, owing to his continuing inexperience which meant only Tehran was a suitable

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212 Amanat, Pivot, p. 41
213 Amanat, Pivot, p. 51
214 Amanat, Pivot, p. 52
215 Amanat, Pivot, p. 52-55
216 Sheil to Palmerston, No. 73, Camp near Tehran, n.d., FO248/127 & Sheil to Palmerston, No, 79., Camp near Tehran, 15 Aug. 1847, FO60/131
testing ground. Even greater perplexity was precipitated by Aqasi’s acquiescence to the prince’s decision which afforded him an opportunity to oust Bahman whom he disliked intensely. With the furore caused by the power-hungry Aqasi, Sheil ventured to suggest that the disorganisation “creeping” over Persia by the summer of 1847 might never abate unless the minister was removed. Meanwhile in fear of his life, Bahman pre-empted his brother’s wrath and left Tabriz to plea innocence at court. He had been charged with making a claim to the throne, evidenced by a pamphlet in which he was entitled Vali ‘abd. In October 1847, after a cold reception with his brother, Bahman resigned. Sheil was perplexed; the Shah’s brother had maintained tranquillity along the Russian frontier. At this point Sheil left Persia on leave though Farrant echoed and indeed amplified his superior during November when the Shah suffered “a severe attack of gout brought on indulging himself too freely with water melons”. The situation in Azerbaijan was resolved in late January 1848. Despite insinuating the return of Bahman, Aqasi arranged for the Crown-Prince to steal away to Tabriz whilst on a hunting expedition. Farrant reiterated his fears to Palmerston that such a development was undesirable; the prince was “totally unfit to govern...and further that it did not appear prudent to separate HRH so far from the Shah”.

In early March Nasir ed-Din arrived in Tabriz where Stevens agreed with his superior. By the summer the new princely governor had pressing domestic issues in the form of sectarian violence between the Armenian and Muslim communities of the province. His handling of the matter did not induce Stevens to endorse the prince who merely provided “undeniable evidence of his total incapacity as a ruler”. This situation prevailed until the 4th of September when the Shah was struck down by a terrible bout of vomiting, prompting fears of imminent mortality. Britain reacted with finality; if the Shah died,

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217 Sheil to Palmerston, 31 March 1847, FO60/129 & Sheil to Palmerston, No. 49., Tehran, 24 April 1847, FO248/127
218 Sheil to Palmerston, No. 49., Tehran, 24 April 1847, FO248/127, Palmerston to Sheil, No. 29., 29 June 1847, FO60/128
219 Sheil to Palmerston, No. 76., Camp Near Tehran, 31 July 1847, FO248/127
220 Sheil to Stevens, No. 380., 7 May 1847, FO248/127 & Stevens to Sheil, 4 Oct. 1847, FO248/127
221 Sheil to Palmerston, No. 100., Tehran, 11 Oct 1847, FO60/132 & Sheil to Palmerston, No. 105., Tehran, 20 Oct 1847, FO60/132
222 Farrant to Palmerston, No. 15., Tehran, 27 Nov. 1847, FO60/132 & Farrant to Palmerston, No. 22., 27 Dec. 1847, FO60/132
223 Farrant to Palmerston, No. 10., Tehran, 26 Jan. 1848, FO248/128
224 Stevens to Palmerston, No. 6., 10 March 1848, FO 60/140
225 Stevens to Palmerston, No. 20., 20 June 1848, FO 60/140

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Stevens was to propel the Nasir ed-Din to the capital as his successor. In all this Britain wanted complete cooperation with Russia.\textsuperscript{226}

This neatly moves us onto Britain’s other enduring motivation; Russian expansionism. In this however, there was to be far less ambiguity than before; Russia was to be cooperated with in cordiality; however the Persians were to be warned of her propensity to machinate. Ironically it was the British response to Herat which compelled Aqasi and the Shah to closer relations with Russia, organising an audience between the seven year old Crown-Prince and Tsar Nichols I in 1838, to gain support for both Muhammad’s Afghan adventure and his choice of successor. Russia however did not support the Heir-Apparent wholeheartedly, on the contrary she backed Qahraman, giving vague promises of his being made Heir-Apparent. Mirza Taqi Khan (later Amir Kabir) warned Britain of the danger of these developments, yet she was not interested, the regency of Qahraman was desirous.\textsuperscript{227}

In 1842 Sheil thought slightly differently, Russia had outmanoeuvred them with her use of Qahraman and subsequently Bahman. Consequently Nasir ed-Din would be forced to request support for succession from the Russians, perhaps even precipitating military intervention.\textsuperscript{228} Despite this British aims vis-à-vis Bahman remained mostly supportive, though not without some doubt. For instance in May of 1847 Dolgorouki remonstrated with Aqasi over Bahman, by making “recourse to his habitual system of intimidation and violence”. This drew Sheil’s disapproval in that as much as he agreed with backing Bahman, he disagreed if it meant “the independent rule of the Persian government” was “to be the forfeit.”\textsuperscript{229} Subsequently in early 1848 Russia gave Bahman sanctuary in Georgia. Farrant was worried by the mood of the Russians; Dolgorouki was “deeply mortified” and the Emperor dismayed at the Shah’s unnecessary family feud.\textsuperscript{230} Such was Dolgorouki’s chagrin that Farrant thought he might take the “opportunity of creating confusion” in Azerbaijan if the Heir-Apparent proved intransigent. If not the stick Russia

\textsuperscript{226} Farrant to Palmerston, No. 77., 4 Sept. 1848, FO258/128
\textsuperscript{227} Amanat, \textit{Pivot}, p. 39
\textsuperscript{228} Amanat, \textit{Pivot}, p. 47
\textsuperscript{229} Sheil to Palmerston, Tehran, 26 May 1847, FO248/127
\textsuperscript{230} Farrant to Palmerston, No. 10., Tehran, 26 Jan. 1848, FO248/128, Farrant to Palmerston, No. 241., 24 Jan 1848, FO248/128, Farrant to Palmerston, No. 10., Tehran, 26 Jan 1848, FO248/128, Farrant to Palmerston, No. 40., Tehran, 26 April, FO248/128
would employ the carrot, making Nasir ed-Din their “devoted dependent” by supporting his succession bid. Bahman meanwhile would be kept in reserve close to the border, perhaps to seize Azerbaijan and run it as a proxy. As the Shah’s death edged closer, Sheil and Palmerston expressed interest in a divergence with Russia by backing joint regency with Bahman Mirza and the exiled Asaf al-Dowlah, the later being viewed as more pro-British. Russian power and proximity being as potent as it was, the foreign secretary advised Farrant to retreat if Russia expressed discontent.

Generally speaking however, Palmerston offered little direction to his subordinates, giving them his complete confidence. This was a marked difference from the interdepartmental wrangling of the preceding years. Furthermore little mention was made of actively undermining Russian influence. At times the British did instruct Aqasi to resist Russia, such as in December of 1847 when a request was made to build a fortified hospital at Astrabad. Previously however Britain had advised Aqasi to acquiesce to the Russian navy’s demand to use Persian Caspian ports. Furthermore discussion of the succession process never broached the topic of exerting influence upon Nasir ed-Din as a means of improving Britain’s waning influence in Persia. As Palmerston succinctly put it, Britain:

...has of late years for good and substantial reasons, gradually withdrawn herself from that active and prominent protection of Persia which at former periods she was more disposed to afford.

With regard to imperial defence Britain did warn Aqasi in January of 1848 that any attempt to divert the purported Khorasani expedition to Herat would “compel the government of England to have recourse to measures which would interrupt...friendly relations”. This intimation was however, in no way connected to Nasir’s succession.

231 Farrant to Palmerston, No. 10., Tehran, 26 Jan. 1848, FO248/128
232 Stevens to Palmerston, No. 13., Tabriz, 3 May 1848, FO 60/140
233 Farrant to Palmerston, No. 44., 24 Oct. 1848, FO248/134
234 Palmerston to Sheil, No. 62., 6 Dec. 1847, FO60/128
235 Sheil to Palmerston, No. 10., Tehran, 1 Feb. 1847, FO60/129
236 Palmerston to Farrant, No. 44., 24 Oct. 1848, FO248/134
237 Sheil to Palmerston, No. 8., Tehran, 31 Jan. 1848, FO60/129
Aside from a change in British policy and an admittance of Russian supremacy, such apathy was motivated by British military successes in the First Opium War and more importantly in the Punjab, which rendered equal the “relative greatness of the two empires”. It also prompted Nesselrode to curb his enthusiasm for prompting Persian exploits in Afghanistan where Britain could now easily deploy troops.238

In summary then, British interest was primarily motivated by the persistently precarious nature of the succession system. Britain favoured a regency of Bahman Mirza whilst ultimately supporting the succession claim of the Vāli ‘ābd. There was a contradictory paradox here; Nasir ed-Din was to take the throne, yet not before his inexperience was remedied. Governorship of Tehran was suggested, however this would never have been granted because Aqasi thought it beneath the prince’s status.239 Enduring Russian expansionism also sparked interest, however Britain was more inclined to cooperate as opposed to compete. The succession was not tied desire for increased influence or imperial defence owing to Britain’s voluntary climb-down in Persia and the recognition of Russian power, tempered by newfound confidence resultant of military victory in the Punjab.

To what extent was Britain involved?

Britain’s involvement in the succession of Nasir ed-Din Shah was relatively insignificant in comparison to the role she played during the succession Muhammad Shah, however she still had an interesting input. Firstly in 1835 Ellis and the Russian minister sanctioned the Heir-Apparency of the young prince on receipt of Qahraman’s appointment as regent.240 In February 1842 the British and the Russians then actuated the regency of Bahman. As the tectonic plates of Qajar infighting shifted ominously close to crushing young Nasir in the mid 1840’s, his mother contacted the Sheil asking for protection from the British government. Sheil agreed yet could not push the prince’s claims further owing to the regency agreement.241 In his desire maintain the regency Sheil conversed regularly with Dolgorouki, orchestrating separate implorations to Aqasi to desist in his plan to

238 Sheil to Palmerston, Copy of a letter from Nesselrode to Dologourki, No. 880., Tehran, 23 Sept. 1847, FO248/127 & Sheil to Palmerston, No. 6., Tehran, 24 Jan. 1847, FO60/129
239 Amanat, Pivot, p. 41
240 Amanat, Pivot, p. 33-35
241 Amanat, Pivot, p. 46-51
despatch the *Vali 'abd* to Azerbaijan. Stevens however, crossed the line May 1847, earning a rebuke. The consul had been too public in his defence of Bahman during the pamphlet controversy. Sheil wrote to him that:

...one of the most important duties of British agents in this country is to encourage in the Persian government’s feelings of independence and self respect.

Open criticism of the Persian government’s spat with Bahman mauled the efficacy of such a policy. With Bahman’s arrival in Tehran in October Sheil again appealed to Aqasi to return the Shah’s brother to his post. Farrant changed tack in the winter, merely warning Aqasi of the danger of leaving Azerbaijan without a governor. As to the prince, Stevens had private audiences with him in Tabriz, where he showed some degree of political promise.

Back in Tehran Farrant and Dolgorouki waited on the Shah after his particularly savage bout of vomiting in September 1848. If the Shah died, Farrant informed Palmerston that he and Dolgorouki had agreed to “send a gentleman from this mission to bring the Heir Apparent to Tehran with utmost expedition”. He knew not what the repercussions of that Shah’s death would be, but he and Dolgorouki would use “every endeavour to maintain order” until Nasir’s arrival. Thereafter at the nine o’clock in the evening on the fourth of September the Shah “expired very tranquilly”. Abbot had already been despatched to fetch the Crown-Prince. During that same evening the acting envoy was petitioned by a multitude of the Shah’s old servants, asking for his support to govern without the chief minister whom they despised. He stated that such behaviour was beyond his remit, as did Dolgorouki. Both diplomats instead asked Aqasi to “refrain from interfering with the affairs of government until the arrival of the Shah”, to which he

242 Sheil to Palmerston, No. 49., 24 April 1847, FO248/127, Palmerston to Sheil No. 29., June 1857, FO60/128 & Shell to Palmerston, No. 105., 20 Oct. 1847, FO60/132
243 Sheil to Stevens, No. 380., Tehran, 7 May 1847, FO248/127
244 Sheil to Palmerston, No. 105., 20 Oct. 1847, FO60/132
245 Farrant to Palmerston, No. 15., Tehran, 27 Nov. 1847, FO60/132
246 Stevens to Palmerston, No. 17., Tabriz, 17 June 1848, FO60/140
247 Farrant to Palmerston, No. 77., Camp Near Tehran, 4 Sept. 1848, FO248/128
248 Farrant to Palmerston, Camp Near Tehran, 5 Sept. 1848, FO248/128

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reluctantly agreed. Meanwhile in the capital “disorder prevailed”, prompting Farrant and Dolgorouki to address a “joint note” to the Friday Imam asking him to restore order.249

On September 14th several members of the royal family requested protection from the acting British minister fearing reprisals on the part of the Shah’s mother. Farrant assured protection and informed the new Queen Mother (mabdi 'ulja) that he trusted she would not entertain notions of reprisal.250 Farrant also busied himself with declarations of support for the new Shah’s government and “visits of condolence” to the Harem. In a rare display of desire for greater relations Farrant also advised the Shah’s mother to impress upon her son the “necessity of always attending the counsels of England and to renew their ancient ties of friendship”. She in turn asked for advice about governing the capital in which she had formed a “sort of republic” to keep the situation stable whilst the Shah was absent. Aware of political fragility Farrant and Dolgorouki requested that the Develu contingent of the family be included in temporary governance, to which the mabdi 'ulja agreed. As to princely rivalry, it seems but one son of Muhammad Shah, Zill es-Sultan attempted a revolt which rapidly fizzled out. Farrant was elated (see Fig. 5).

With respect to Dolgorouki, Farrant had the “great pleasure in reporting” that he and the Russian nobleman “acted cordially together, having but one aim, to establish and support...the authority of Nasir ed-Din Shah”.251 Whilst all progressed well in the capital the new Shah prepared to leave for Tehran accompanied by both the Russian and British agents at Tabriz.252 At the Azerbaijani capital Stevens played a lesser Campbell, working with the Russian envoy to scrape together 10,000 tomans so the Shah could depart. For this the Shah expressed gratitude. He also issued a firman leaving Stevens in charge of

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249 Farrant to Palmerston, No. 79., Tehran, 6 Sept 1848, FO248/128
250 Farrant to Palmerston, No. 81., Tehran, 9 Sept. 1848, FO248/128
251 Farrant to Palmerston, No. 81., Tehran, 9 Sept. 1848, FO248/128
252 Stevens to Palmerston, No. 35., Tabriz, 13 Sept. 1848, FO60/140
Islamo-Armenian relations in the province. On the 21st of October the Shah made his public entry into the capital where the British and Russian diplomatic corps were invited to offer their congratulations. Interestingly the French had been snubbed by the Shah before his departure from Tabriz; France’s political agent Monsieur de Sartiges (a former cook of Bethune) was told that unlike Britain and Russia, his country had not been privy to agreements regarding Qajar succession.

Success was seemingly total, yet by December the Russians were again angling for the return of Bahman and were currying favour with Mirza Masoud the Persian foreign minister. Worse followed four years later when Persia temporarily annexed Herat. In 1856 Nasir ed-Din attacked again, precipitating a war in which a five thousand strong British expeditionary force rampaged along the Persian Gulf. The issue of Herat was thence resolved more permanently. Strictly speaking the failure to prevent these developments cannot be attributed to Britain’s failure during the succession, as prevention wasn’t specified as an explicit objective.

**What was Britain’s relationship to Russia?**

During the succession of Nasir ed-Din Shah Anglo-Russians were so intimately woven into the fabric of British aims and consequent involvement that only a recap is necessary. Despite misgivings Britain agreed with Russia over the regency and acted in near total harmony before and during the succession. Russia was however given slight precedence in latitude, for instance being allowed to bully Persia over the use of Caspian ports.

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253 Stevens to Palmerston, No. 40., Tabriz, 26 Sept. 1848, FO60/140
254 Farrant to Rawlinson, Tehran, 21 Oct. 1848, FO248/128
255 Stevens to Palmerston, No. 42., Tabriz, 26 Sept. 1848, FO60/140
256 Farrant to Palmerston, No. 114., Tehran, 23 Dec. 1848, FO248/128
257 Wright, *The English*, p. 59-61
258 Palmerston to Sheil No 2., 76 Jan 1847, FO60/128
Muzaffar ed-Din Shah: did the British express interest? (see Appendices)

With the extension of diplomatic consulates resultant of the Anglo-Persian peace of 1857, agents in all corners of Persia had more to say about issues of trade, commerce and miscellanea than Muzaffar ed-Din (see Fig. 6). For instance a comic correspondence ensued between Durand and Salisbury’s assistant Sanderson only a month before the Shah’s assassination regarding the elopement of Miss Frances Blackman with General Abdullah Husain Khan of the Persian Legation in London. After absconding from London to Persia and finding out she would have to share her new husband the whole affair became somewhat of a tragedy. Durand lamented the incident, calling for the prevention of: “any similar proceeding in the future on the part of...senile consul-generals to the defilement of foolish English girls.” As to be expected the Tobacco Protest was reasonably high on the agenda of British diplomats, featuring prominently in a very detailed memo on Persian affairs from 1891-1893 by Sir Frank Lascelles, Durand’s predecessor. Incidentally Lascelles failed to mention either Qajar succession or the Heir-Apparent. As to 1896, much of Britain’s correspondence dealt with how to celebrate the Shah’s jubilee, including congratulatory letters from Queen Victoria, and the Prince of Wales, as well a badge of the garter and some jewellery. Intermittently however the Heir-Apparency was referred to far more detail as Britain never allowed herself to become fully unconscious of Qajar succession. As in the case of Nasir ed-Din, British diplomats largely kept their cool with concise and calm correspondence. A major reason such apathy must be found in the suddenness of the Shah’s death at the hands of an assassin.

259 Amanat, Pivot, p. 306 & Wright, The English p. 77-93
260 Durand to Sanderson, 14 July 96, FO60/578
261 Memo on Persian affairs Nov. 1891 – Dec. 1893, Lascelles, FO60/565
262 Durand to Salisbury, No. 22, 18 March 1896, FO60/578, Durand to Salisbury No. 18, 3 April 1896, FO60/578, Durand to Salisbury, No. 19, Tehran, 14 April 1896, FO60/578, Sanderson to Durand, No. 3, 18 April 1896, FO248/62, Sanderson to Durand, No. 4, 21 April 1896, FO248/62 & Letter of congratulations from the Queen enclosed in Salisbury to Durand, No. 16, 29 April 1896,
What prompted Britain’s interest and what were her aims and objectives?

As previously, ignition of British worry stemmed from the incessantly inefficient system of succession conjoined with Persia’s inability to maintain stable central government. Durand gave a particularly grim assessment in September of 1895; finance was in disorder owing to a suffusion of cheap copper currency, the civil service was useless and the army a “worthless rabble”. He berated the Shah for timidity and his premier Amin al-Sultan for failing to delegate as he struggled to handle government alone. As to the Shah’s Heir-Apparent he was a “man of weak character”, allowing misrule in his province. The same was true of the Shah’s other sons, Masud Mirza Zill es-Sultan at Fars and the na’ib al-Saltaneh Kamran Mirza in Tehran. Furthermore he and Amin were, like every Persian notable “shameless liars and thieves”, obsessed with their purse and devoid of patriotism. Although the aged Shah still showed considerable life, Durand was concerned that Britain had no clear contingency plan in the event of his death. Curzon who remarked on the memo in April of 1896 was in agreement. Persia was “rotten” and her Shah decrepit, which left questions as to why British diplomats had no instruction in the event of his death? Furthermore he addressed a matter Durand had overlooked:

...if the valiiahd dies, as is very likely, before his father (he has Bright’s disease), who is to be the heir? The Zill es-Sultan is treacherous and brutal, though crafty and resolute. The Naib-es-Sultaneh is cowardly and incompetent.

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263 Memo on the situation in Persia Durand, 28 Sept. 1895, FO60/566
Curzon referred to the Vali ‘abdu’d’s eldest son, whom he heard was reasonably astute, surely entertaining notions of his Heir-Apparency would he thought, only bear similarly to that of Abbas Mirza.264

Wood had in actual fact broached Curzon’s query fully two years previous. With the Shah “no longer the man he was”, the Heir-Apparent suffering from Bright’s disease (kidney related), and in turn his son the E’tezad es-Sultaneh (future Muhammad Ali Shah) suffering haemorrhaging the consul suggested cultivation of Muzaffar’s younger son Sho’a al-Sultaneh “an intelligent bright land and the only good life among them”. That is not to say Wood discounted the Vali ‘abdu’d, on the contrary he was of the opinion that Britain should pay a lot more attention to the prince who felt “convinced that we have but little consideration for him or his future”. What was needed was “some official assurance of sympathy or support” to boost his self-esteem and intimate British interest in Persia. The problem was that Wood had not the means to do so effectively owing to his dilapidated residency.265 A period of two years elapsed before Wood addressed this point in detail however when he sent a report to the Salisbury listing the necessary repairs and extensions.266 In his September memo Durand did however suggest similar improvements. His expression of support was for Muzaffar to receive the Order of Bath.267

As to other British motivations, of course Russia was ever present. Indeed in comparison to the succession of Nasir ed-Din, there seemed more confusion vis-à-vis Russian threat and British reaction. In his report in 1894 Wood attributed Britain’s failure to influence Muzaffar ed-Din to a combination of neglect and the potency of Russia. In Tabriz the prince was susceptible to Russian intrigue as they had compromised his entire court and had the funds needed to propel him to the capital when his father died. Wood suggested employment of “indirect pressure” on the Crown-Prince’s government. Despite recognising Russian dominance the vice-consul was however buoyed by the arrival of

264 Memorandum on Persian affairs Confidential 6765, George Nathaniel Curzon, 12 April 1896, FO60/581
265 Wood to Coningham Green, 29 April 1894 enclosed in No. 33 Wood to Durand, 27 June 1895, FO248/615
266 Durand to Salisbury, No. 5., 13 Jan. 1896, FO60/578, Durand to Salisbury, No. 3., 6 March 1896, FO60/579
Report regarding reports, Wood to Salisbury, No. 10., Tabriz, 28 March 1896, FO248/633
267 Memo on the situation in Persia Durand, 28 Sept. 1895, FO60/566
Durand who had recently muzzled “the Great Bear” by demarcating the Russo-Afghan border.\textsuperscript{268}

Durand too was reasonably optimistic. Despite his dire prognosis of Persia’s internal situation he was encouraged by her developing telegraph network and her abundance in natural resources. Furthermore Durand did not believe Russia strove for the ruin of Persia. He was concerned that Russia evoked more fear and respect than Britain, however she would surely act with restraint owing to the precariousness of her hold in Central Asia. In this exhaustive memo Durand even curiously toyed with the idea of scrapping Anglo-Russian rivalry in favour of cooperative philanthropic modernisation of Persia, before quickly deciding Russia would never give her consent. What was needed was the intrusion of other European powers, yet as the French minister so perfectly put it: “you and the Russians play the game, the rest of us look on and mark the points.”

With respect to the succession Durand suggested that:

...it would be desirable to arrange with the Russians a scheme of action to be adopted by us both in case the Shah should die in the Vali Ahd’s lifetime.

Hamilton, secretary of state for India, agreed suggesting that the ambassador in St Petersburg might discuss the matter.\textsuperscript{269} Curzon ventured a more pugnacious approach. It wouldn’t do to have Russian soldiers escorting the new Shah to Tehran like British troops had done in 1834 (note the irony). At least Curzon argued, Britain’s envoy at Tabriz should accompany the march to the capital. Furthermore Russia should be warned that any attempt to seize north Persia or Khorasan would precipitate British displeasure.\textsuperscript{270} Quite how Curzon hoped enforce such desires is unclear. By 1884 Russia had seized Khiva, Bukhara, Khokand and Merv.\textsuperscript{271} The Russo-Persian border was on the River

\textsuperscript{268} Wood to Conyingham Green, 29 April 1894 enclosed in No. 33 Wood to Durand, 27 June 1895, FO248/615
\textsuperscript{269} Comments on Durand’s Memo, Hamilton, 2 March 1896, FO60/581
\textsuperscript{270} Memorandum on Persian affairs Confidential 6765, George Nathaniel Curzon, 12 April 1896, FO60/581
Atrak, dangerously close to Meshed and Herat. These gains precipitated the Panjdeh crisis in 1885, leading to Durand’s border demarcation. More importantly the British military attaché in Persia, Lt. Colonel Picot reported that the only effective military formation in the country was the Russian officered Cossack Brigade, inaugurated after Nasir ed-Din’s trip to Russia in 1878.

In summary motivations were as follows; enduring problems in Persia and the succession system in conjunction with equally enduring yet diminished Russian machinations. The British still aimed to cooperate with the Russians yet since the succession of Nasir ed-Din Shah a degree of uncertainty had entered their thinking. Consequently British aims were not fully concretised when the succession crisis erupted in May 1896.

**To what extent was Britain involved?**

British involvement in the succession of Muzaffar ed-Din Shah was by far their most limited contribution to the perpetuation of the Qajar dynasty. In some respects however Britain’s insignificant input is the most interesting of the succession owing to Durand’s reports which serve to demonstrate a touching tinge of Anglo-Persian humanity. With regards the early Heir-Apparency of Muzaffar Rawlinson encouraged the nomination of Muzaffar ed-Din in 1862. Beyond this date there is a lamentable gap in research until 1894 when Wood reported his failure to exert influence over the Shah. There was another two year lull in activity until on the afternoon of the 1st of May Nasir ed-Din Shah was shot dead at close range in the shrine of Shah Abd al-Azim by Mirza Reza Kirmani, an impoverished merchant in the sway of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani. Durand described how Amin al-Sultan (Sadr Azam) moved his body to the royal carriage and returned to the capital six

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272 Greaves, ‘Iranian Relations’, p. 397
274 Amanat, *Pivot*, p. 401
275 Wood to Conyingham Green, 29 April 1894 enclosed in No. 33 Wood to Durand, 27 June 1895, FO248/615
276 Amanat, *Pivot*, p. 440 & Durand to Salisbury, No. 26., Tehran, 1 May 1896, FO60/578

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miles away with the Shah still in his arms. When the Sadr Azam requested that Durand inform the Vali ‘abd, the British envoy showed some hesitation; this might compel “Her Majesty’s Government to a course they would have wished to avoid”. Durand consulted the F.O who in turn consulted India, all before the 2nd of May. Without a rapid enough response Durand decided to “throw all the weight of this Legation at once upon the Vali’ahd’s side” as he was the rightful heir. Furthermore any delay would have caused recrimination on the part of the Shah, inviting Russian influence. Durand asked Wood to propel Muzaffar ed-Din south, before visiting Nasir ed-Din’s third son Kamran Mirza, the na’ib al-Saltana to implore him to announce loyalty to his brother. Fearing for his life Kamran requested British protection. Durand refused and insisted Kamran throw himself upon the mercy of his brother. The Sadr approved of the envoy’s efforts, whilst he had busied himself in securing the capital using Persian and Cossack troops who manned pickets every fifty yards. Durand praised the Russian colonel in command after seeing his handiwork on the way to the palace where he joined the Russian Charge d’Affaires to contact the Vali ‘abd with the Sadr in the telegraph room. Here the Persian minister hid “his face against the wall, sobbing wildly” before recovering and displaying “remarkable promptitude and ability” in liaising with Muzaffar amount matters of state (see Fig. 7). In the evening another of the former Shah’s sons Masud Mirza the Zill es-Sultan also petitioned for British protection but was persuaded by Durand to swear loyalty to the Shah.

Meanwhile in Tabriz Wood reported he had seen the Vali ‘abd on the 1st of May, encouraging a rapid move to the capital. The next day he attended the Shah’s coronation in the Azerbaijani capital. On the 14th of May Wood reported the Shah’s new government ministers had made many visits to his residency asking for advice; however he had failed to make Muzaffar understand the necessity of an early march on Tehran.” The Shah had at least already started thinking about his own future successor, asking for advice from the powers to decide upon E’tezad or Sho’a al-Sultaneh. The latter had better lineage but Wood and his Russian colleague refrained from expressing opinion; it was for

277 Durand to Salisbury, No. 35., Tehran, 14 May 1896, FO248/628
278 Palmerston to Durand No. 17., 1 May 1896, FO60/578
279 Durand to Salisbury, No. 35., Tehran, 14 May 1896, FO248/628
280 Wood to Durand, No. 21., 7 May 1896, FO248/633

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the Shah to decide. Muzaffar ed-Din finally set off for the capital on the 18th after being bankrolled by the Imperial Bank of Persia, a move which the F.O approved of as it would bring political leverage. Wood marched with the royal convoy, reaching Tehran on the 7th of June, having performed no perceptible duties other than congratulating the Shah on his accurate shooting of game.

In the capital the envoy had visited the amphitheatre where the Shah’s body lay in state. Declaring that it was customary in Europe to lay a wreath and flowers, the former Shah’s family graciously accepted as much from Durand, a gesture which pleased the Queen who also sent a personal note of condolence. On June the 8th Durand and the other foreign diplomats were received by the Shah. Four days later Mohammad Ali Mirza (E’tezad) was pronounced Heir-Apparent, a decision Durand praised in a private audience with the Shah on the 18th, in which the sovereign told Britain’s representative that “he laid great stress on the friendship of Great Britain”. British aims and objectives had thus been achieved, though such objectives had never been expansive, with only scant mention of the need for increased influence and imperial defence.

**What was Britain’s relationship to Russia?**

Neither had there been excessive amounts of anxiety over Russia, other than the usual talk of wrist slapping which in any case proved unnecessary owing to active Russian support of Muzaffar ed-Din Shah. Indeed during the succession Russia had played sizeable role in ensuring his swift and smooth accession to the throne. Much as in the case of Nasir ed-Din this had been in an environment of Anglo-Russian cooperation however it seems Russia took a lead role in the partnership, despite what Curzon may have wanted.

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281 Durand to Salisbury, No. 35., Tehran, 14 May 1896, FO248/628
282 Durand to Salisbury, No. 43., Tehran, 18 May 1896, FO60/578, Wood to Durand, No. 23., Tabriz, 14 May 1896, FO248/633, Durand to Salisbury, No. 40., 11 May 1896, FO248/629 & Durand to Salisbury, No. 22., 5 May 1896, FO60/578
283 Wood to Durand, Tehran, 10 June 1896, FO248/633
284 Durand to Salisbury, No. 35., Tehran, 14 May 1896, FO248/628
285 Wood to Durand, No. 21., 7 May 1896, FO248/633 & Queen Victoria to Durand, Balmoral Castle, 7 June 1896, FO60/578
286 Durand to Salisbury, No. 51., Tehran, 8 June 1896, FO60/578
287 Durand to Salisbury, No. 63., 18 July 1896, FO60/578

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Trends & conclusion

An incredibly gifted historian once told me that sections within essays must be of a similar size. In this instance however, the disparity is the most obvious evidence of how British correspondence pertaining to succession fluctuated in frequency from Abbas and Muhammad to Nasir and Muzaffar ed-Din. Moreover this was an expression of a shift in Britain’s attitude toward Persia, and Qajar succession, resultant of changing strategies in imperial defence and refinements in the application of such strategies. From 1801 to 1835 policy was punctuated by interdepartmental rivalry as British statesmen in India and London puzzled over how to position Persia in the states systems. Wellesley had put the country in the Indian system, forming a strong connection with Persia spearheaded by defensive treaties. This was perpetuated by adherents of the Bombay School who argued that Persia would provide a viable line of Indian defence to actively combat Russian influence and expansion. Conversely Harford-Jones of the Ludhiana School, wanted a diminished role, asserting that Persia must have concretised borders precipitating the revocation of her desire for expansion in Herat, Khorasan and the Ottoman Empire. Once Britain and Russia agreed on such frontiers the only necessary involvement was maintaining uncontested Qajar succession. Ellis reiterated this view two decades later arguing that Turkmanchai had given Persia de facto borders whilst at the same time demonstrating the fallibility of Bombay strategy. What was needed in Persia was maintenance of stability, without excessive intrusion in internal affairs. This would be realised by cooperation with Russia in the smooth succession of Qajar monarchs. If the Tsar proved intransigent he was to be warned at St Petersburg. As such a useless ally would become a buffer between the European and Asian states systems.

It took from 1801 to the succession of Muhammad Shah to iron out interdepartmental rivalry which left a very messy paper trail as the E.I.C, the F.O and the G.O.I all

288 Ingram, Persian Connection, p. 310
289 Ingram, Great Game, p. 331
290 Ingram, Persian Connection, p. 217
291 Ingram, Great Game, p. 216
proffered their different views through the B.O.C post-office. Ellis’s plans were however realised during the succession; excessively forward policies were aired, but ultimately avoided in practice, whilst Russia was both cautioned and cosseted, in a stunningly successful British led operation. In the aftermath, the Ludhiana School gained final ascendancy as in 1835 Ellis broke the Persian connection, handing authority over the F.O and placing Persia in the periphery of the European states system. Ellis however did not manage to territorialise the Persian state which made a swipe for Herat just three years after Bethune propelled Muhammad Shah to the throne. Soon after in 1839, Britain was disastrously orchestrating her drive for greater influence in Afghanistan.

As a direct consequence of the Ludhiana victory, interdepartmental rivalry and indeed even differences of opinion were totally eradicated during the succession of Nasir ed-Din Shah. Only a handful of diplomats on the ground conversed with Palmerston who largely agreed with his subordinates. Even amidst this small cadre, reports were concise and calm; unlike Campbell, Ellis and Willock, who shared a propensity to write mammoth memoranda. As a result F.O archives from the mission were impeccably organised, even benefiting from an accurate contents page. In addition much of the correspondence pertained to issues other than succession. Moreover during the crisis, forward policies were completely discounted whilst Britain coordinated all efforts with Russia who unsurprisingly still caused some lingering anxiety. British aims were also very limited; Herat was not even discussed in the context of succession, an absence motivated by military successes in the Punjab. Connectedly Britain’s failure to territorialise Persia in the succession of Muhammad Shah rendered her unable to take a more active role in the succession of Nasir ed-Din Shah even had she wished so because Britain had removed her military mission in protest in 1838. Not that this ruffled Palmerston’s feathers for he celebrated the diminution of Anglo-Persian relations.

One can also see similar trends in the succession of Muzaffar ed-Din Shah. Russia was still Britain’s Great Game counterpart, thus trust was never complete. Indeed as a caveat Britain had not been able to ignore Russia since the days of Abbas Mirza, as they had

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293 Ingram, ‘Family’, p. 306 Ingram, Great Game, p. 325 & Palmerston to Ellis, No. 1., Tehran, 8 Nov. 1835, FO60/37
become involved in a game over Qajar succession which could never be fully abandoned. Nonetheless British diplomats seldom entertained notions of competing with Russia, indeed their respective representatives acted in complete harmony. Furthermore another Ludhiana tenet was evidenced in the limited nature of British goals and consequential involvement. This was not however singularly caused by voluntary British inactivity; it was also prompted by the imposition of ascendant Russian influence in Persia. Muzaffar ed-Din Shah had been propelled to the throne in an operation similar to that of Muhammad Shah, except in reverse, his primacy secured by the Cossack Brigade. Again bearing similarity to the previous succession of Nasir ed-Din most reports evinced collectedness and were oft about alternative aspects of Anglo-Iranian relations.

It would be a fault however, to transpose Ingram’s assessments of British policy in Persia too far since his perceptive eye does not reach beyond 1840. Here one must turn to Greaves who posits four stages in Anglo-Iranian relations. Three of these encompass the succession of Qajar monarchs:

1. Alliance with Persia against France and briefly Russia, 1798-1828.
2. Enemies of Persia, as a result of the Herat Crises and Russian influence from 1828-1863
3. Strengthening Persia as a buffer state 1870’s – 1907.294

Taken at face value these simple periodisations are far too generalising. It took six years from Turkmanchai for the British to decide that Persia was an unsuitable arm of imperial defence and even then they made considerable preparations to put Abbas on the throne before Bethune bulldozed all opposition to Muhammad Shah. Furthermore during the succession of Nasir ed-Din Britain hardly treated Persia as a contemptible enemy, never seriously entertaining thoughts of dynastic change. Greaves can however shed light on why Britain had such limited aims during the succession of Muzaffar ed-Din, especially in respect of imperial defence. In the period 1848-1896, the British, especially Salisbury toyed with the idea of more active support for Persia. Efforts met with failure owing to

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Britain’s adherence to the tactic of “masterly inactivity” – or minimum involvement in the frontier. With a Liberal government in Britain subscribing to this philosophy from 1892 until Salisbury’s return to the F.O in 1895, Britain had not the time to conceive of a clear or active policy toward Persia at the time of Muzaffar’s succession. Furthermore the inception of the I.O in the wake of the Indian Mutiny meant more varied opinions entered the debate about the prospective reaction to the death of Nasir ed-Din.

On looking at Britain’s overall role in the succession of Qajar monarchs one can perceive a trend of failure, especially with respect to Herat and the infernal system of Qajar succession which Britain attempted to Europeanise without huge success. Britain however achieved her definitive goal in Persia during the 19th century; stability and maintenance of independence. Alder alludes to the paradox in Anglo-Iranian relations in that Britain failed to compel Persia to respect Herat, leading to perennial conflict, yet ultimately there was no desire to destabilise the Qajar monarchy. Instead Britain buttressed the existing system of interfamily rivalry which was an expression of the traditional Qajar maxim of divide and rule. Furthermore it is clear throughout, that Persia exercised considerable independence during the succession of her monarchs, evidenced by the ultimate nomination of Heir-Apparent by the Shah and the efforts of the Qaim Maqam and Aqasi in playing Britain and Russia off against one another. Ingram goes so far as to riposte Edward Said by declaring that the Persians were not merely the colonised, but had the ability to shape their own destinies despite the power of the Anglo-Russian colonisers. Mohammed Taghi Nezam Mafi is in agreement, discussing the necessity of British diplomats to ‘Persianise’ in their prosecution of British foreign policy. Such a necessity demonstrates the frailties of power/discourse theory in that British diplomats were compelled to theatrics in Persia because they were weak, not dominant as the discourse asserts. This is evidenced in Britain’s adherence to

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296 Greaves, ‘Themes’, p. 44
299 Sample Thesis Mohammad Taghi Nezam-Mafi ‘Persian Recreations: Theatricality in Anglo-Persian Diplomatic History, 1599-1828, Boston University, 1986 (pp. - 1-269), p. 139
300 Nezam, ‘Persian Recreations’, p. 20
succession laws and the respect rendered to Qajar royal etiquette. For instance, in 1835 Ellis sent a most formal and complimentary message to the Shah in which he declared himself a “most faithful subject and servant” of the Persian monarch\(^{302}\) (see Appendices). Moreover although it took British diplomats some time to become aware of the clan intricacies of Qajar rule, and only managed to use terms like *Vāli ‘abd* and *na‘īb al-Saltana* from Nasir ed-Din onwards, the British clearly improved in their understanding of the dynamics of Qajar succession.

Finally, another clear trend within Britain’s role was the sense of genuine human interaction which belies the notion of incessant Western arrogance towards ‘Orientals.’ The personal messages of condolence and congratulations sent by King William, Queen Victoria and the future King Edward the VII testify to this as does Durand’s gesture of condolence to Nasir ed-Din. Even more telling was his general assessment of Persians; that ultimately there “was something curiously simple and emotional in the character of the Persians” which merited respect.\(^{303}\) Of course one must not fall into the trap of viewing the British as political paragons. Greaves asserts that British actions in the Near East saved Afghanistan and Persia from Russian subjugation.\(^{304}\) Keddie and Kazemzadeh disagree; both Britain and Russia were a force of regression in Persia whose global squabble turned the country into a politically and economically impotent semi-colony.\(^{305}\) Lastly one cannot avoid the irony alluded to at the very start of this text; that Britain’s undeniable defence of Persian integrity was always tempered by the need to tighten her grip of India.

\(^{302}\) No. 5., Copy of letter Ellis to Shah FO60/37
\(^{303}\) Durand to Salisbury, No. 35., Tehran, 14 May 1896, FO248/628
\(^{304}\) Greaves, *Themes*, p. 43
\(^{305}\) Niki Keddie, *Iran Under the late Qajars*, p. 181 & F., Kazemzadeh, *Iranian Relations*, p. 342
Appendices

Appendix 1: Abbas Mirza

Born on the 16th of August 1789, Abbas Mirza was the issue of a union between Fath Ali Khan and Aisya Kanom, the daughter of Fath Ali Khan Develu, a rival of the Quyunlu clan which Agha and the Abbas’s father belonged to. As such the marriage was an attempt to unify the clans and ensure smooth future dynastic succession. It was supposedly the last will and testament of Agha that led to his being promoted Crown-Prince and governor of Azerbaijan in 1799. His marriage to the daughter of Amir Muhammad Khan Qajar Develu in 1802 was also a wish of old Agha. With multiple male siblings such grooming mattered little; Abbas had to fight to gain his crown from brutal brothers like the selfsame bastard born brat who mused about strangling his great uncle. Neither had Muhammad Ali Mirza’s phlegmatic attitude to violence abated with maturity, Harford-Jones writing that he tested the accuracy of a pair of rifled pistols gifted by Gardane on the outstretched hand of his hapless secretary. As to Abbas himself he was above average height, with “dark and expressive” eyes, a full beard, neat black eyebrows and a modest dress sense. He was seen as the very “personification of royalty”, evincing typical aristocratic qualities; skill with the horse, the hunt and the rifle. Despite such robustness Abbas suffered from a severe liver condition which contributed to his death, a premature end for a man acclaimed for his intelligence and desire for progress. During his career he liaised with many Westerners to aid in his periodic attempts to reform Azerbaijani education, government and especially defence.

306 Busse, ‘Abbas’
307 Hambly, ‘Agha Muhammad Khan’, p. 142
308 Hasan-e Fasa’s, History, p. 89&104
309 Sir Harford Brydges-Jones, An Account, p. 249
310 Busse, ‘Abbas’
311 Sir Harford Brydges-Jones, An Account, p. 250
312 Busse, ‘Abbas’
Appendix 2: Muhammad Shah

Born in January of 1808 Muhammad Mirza was the issue of Abbas Mirza’s political Develu union. Muhammad was to continue Agha’s dynastic desiderata, this time with a Qoyunlu union, precipitating clan dominance. This was achieved in September of 1819 when the prince, aged just eleven, married Malek Jahan Kanom, daughter of Amir Qasem Khan Qoyunlu.313 The marriage was neither happy nor sexually fruitful yet ultimately it achieved Agha’s dream with the birth of the future Shah Nasir ed-Din.314 Muhammad received a traditional courtly education in Tabriz, before being assigned Haji Mirza Aqasi as his personal tutor in 1824. A powerful statesman with a Sufi disposition, Aqasi exerted a strong influence upon the young prince who became his devoted subject, leading to suggestions of political impressionability.315 Aqasi and other notables including his vizier Mirza Abdul Qasim Qaim Maqam would influence Muhammad’s succession bid in which he faced competition from his uncles. Of his person secondary sources argue that the gout-ridden prince was honest, astute, and semi-Europeanised, in attire, avoidance of ostentation and sexual habits (just three wives).316 Willock disagreed in all but the latter, arguing he was a “dully, heavy young man, much attached to his religion and fearful of pollution in coming too much in contact with Europe.”317

313 Hasan-e Fasa’i, History, p. 122 & p. 160
314 Hasan-e Fasa’i, History, p. 200
315 Willock to Palmerston, 15 May 1834, FO60/35
317 Willock to Palmerston, 15 May 1834, FO60/35
Appendix 3: Nasir ed-Din

Born 17th of July 1831 Nasir was the son of Malek Jahan, a fiercely independent wife of the Shah he despised. Young Nasir suffered from this parental feud. In 1839 the shy adolescent prince was stripped of Azerbaijan, the provincial seat of the Vāli ‘ābd, and brought to the capital. Here he lived in poverty, perceived as a nuisance by his chief minister Aqasi who replaced the strangulated Qaim Maqam in June 1835.318 His doting sovereign imitated Aqasi's contempt, showing more affection for other sons such as Abbas II and III. Indeed both received the title of na‘īb al-Saltana, which had been granted to Abbas I and his son, thereby becoming part of the traditional regalia of the Heir-Apparency. Deprived of title and territory the succession of Nasir ed-Din was in perpetual doubt.319 In terms of personality he was a bewildered young boy, effeminised by his mother with henna and long hair, yet in later life he was a fascinating character. As the first Persian ruler to visit Europe he had an eye for modernisation yet ultimately preferred to have “a good time rather than a good government”. He loved nothing more than hoarding, whoring, horses, hunting and satiating his unhealthy hankering for good food. Indeed his love of food was a plague upon his health and only Fath Ali Shah outshone him in veracious appetite for females. He also had a love of cats, and young boys, especially one Malijak Aziz al-Sultan, a nephew of his favourite wife with whom he was obsessed; making him a Brigadier-General at eight and parading him at court in sumptuous attire.320

318 Hasan-e Fasa’i, History, p. 241
319 Amanat, Pivot, p. 26 -50
320 E., Yarshater, ‘Observations of Nasir al-Din Shah’, p. 8-10

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Appendix 4: Muzaffar ed-Din Shah

Born in 1853 Muzaffar ed-Din was far from the most important of his father’s sons. As Heir-Apparent he was preceded by Sultan Mahmud Mirza (d. 1849), Sultan Mu’in al-Din Mirza who died less than a decade later, and finally Amir Qasim Mirza (d. 1858), the son of Nasir’s much-loved lowborn wife Jayran. Ignorance of Muzaffar whose claim to the throne was strongest owing to Qajar heritage, was a huge breach of protocol. It seems the Shah inadvertently meted out to Muzaffar, the same treatment Muhammad Shah had given to Nasir ed-Din, cosseting Qasim, whilst consigning the prince to obscurity in the Harem. In 1858 however, the Shah became infertile, propelling the sickly scorned son to the Heir-Apparency in 1862. His succession was never certain however. Although made governor of Azerbaijan his father ignored him and meanwhile promoted his capable brother Masud Mirza Zill es-Sultan to governor of Fars. Later, when Ali Asghar Amin al-Sultan took over as Prime Minister, the Shah balanced his power by promoting another son Kamran Mirza, as na’ib al-Saltana, minister of war and governor of Tehran. As to Muzaffar he was a mild ruler, not averse to the need for reform. Constant illness compelled him to draw vast loans from the Russians for trips to Europe to alleviate pain. Such behaviour precipitated the incredible events of the Constitutional Revolution beginning in 1905.

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321 Amanat, Pivot, p. 149
322 Amanat, Pivot, p. 317
323 Amanat, Pivot, p. 335
324 Amanat, Pivot, p. 401
325 Amanat, Pivot, p. 335
326 Amanat, Pivot, p. 402-403
327 Amanat, Pivot, p. 439
328 Niki Keddie, ‘Iran Under the late Qajars’, p. 199-202
Appendix 5: Extract of Instructions to the G.O.I

…it is of the utmost importance that the British offices, as well as the supply of arms, authorised by our former instructions should be placed at the disposal of the envoy and reach their intended destination with the least practical delay. We are indeed surprised and disappointed to find the envoy’s letter that our instructions to that effect have not yet been carried into effect. The circumstances mentioned in the envoy’s letter that Abbas Mirza feels a decided predilection to British officers and would entertain them at his own cost, in preference to Russian officers, free of charge, furnishes an additional reason for guarding against his being driven to the employment of Russian officers in the deficient supply of British ones.

We accordingly leave it to your discretion to appoint such additional British officers beyond the members we have already sanctioned but on the same conditions, as may in your opinion, be requisite for the purpose of excluding Russian influence from the Persian army.

It is further our wish that the envoy should receive a discretionary authority in the event of the Shah’s death, to make an advance to Abbas Mirza of a sum or sums of money to extent on the whole of a 100,000 tomans, in order to enable His Royal Highness to put his troops rapidly in motion in the capital. If orders to that effect from you should not have reached the envoy before that event takes place it is our desire that he should consider himself invested by the terms of the present communication, with authority to advance on his own discretion sums to the extent of 100,000 tomans.\(^{329}\)

\(^{329}\) Letter B.O.C to Governor General in Council at Fort William, 14 Jan. 1833, FO60/33

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Appendix 6: Letter from Henry Ellis to Muhammad Shah

May it please Your Majesty,

It is impossible for me adequately to express the feelings of devotion and gratitude with which I am filled in consequence of the continual marks of kindness and attention with which it has pleased Your Majesty to direct that I should be treated since my arrival in Your Majesty’s dominions. It has been on my part a most pleasing duty to report to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs the flattering marks of attention and respect with which I have hitherto been received. In that reception His Britannick Majesty cannot fail to see a most convincing proof of the gratification with which Your Majesty is disposed to view the complimentary embassy that I have the honour to be charged with. I have more especially to return my humble thanks for the magnificent horse which Your Majesty has deigned to bestow upon me for my conveyance to the capital of Your dominions and which was delivered to me by that exalted nobleman Yahya Khan to whom Your Majesty has been graciously pleased to entrust the duty of conducting me to your royal presence I have the honour to present myself with great devotion and attachment, Your Majesty’s most faithful subject and servant

(Signed) H. Ellis [sic]330

330 Copy No 5., letter Ellis to the Shah, FO60/37
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