

#1322 America as Media-Persia, II – Toward the Iran Hostage Crisis: 1795–1925, The Time of the Kajar Dynasty, when Iran was dominated by Russia and Great Britain

The Kajar Dynasty. The Kajar Dynasty ruled Iran from 1795 to 1925. During this period, Iran was subjected to economic and political domination by the great powers, especially Britain and Russia. Unlike most of its neighbors, Iran never became a colony of any of the imperialist powers, but it underwent a semi-colonial experience.

Russian policy concerning Iran was essentially aggressive, a resumption of the southward movement, aimed at securing a warm water port on the Persian Gulf. Russia's expansion into Central Asia continued steadily, including the annexation of Georgia in the Caucasus in 1801.

British policy was essentially defensive, motivated by the desire to defend India against Russian expansion in the Caucasus.

Below left is a map showing the areas of Russian and British influence in Iran in 1907, and *below right* is a map showing the territory that Iran lost during the time of the Kajar (Qajar, or Quajar) Dynasty, which ended in 1925.



Toward the Pahlavi Dynasty. In July 1909, a nationalist uprising forced the Kajar Shah to abdicate. He fled to Russia, returned to Iran in 1911, but was again forced into exile by the nationalists. Russian troops intervened and by the outbreak of World War I, the Russians had complete control of northern Iran. During World War I, by declaring its neutrality, Iran hoped to

avoid being involved in hostilities. But the struggle between the Ottoman Turks and Russian and British forces ebbed and flowed across Persian territory. By the end of the war, Iran's finances were in a critical state, and the authority of the central government had completely broken down. To remedy the situation, the British foreign secretary negotiated the 1919 Anglo-Iranian Treaty. This treaty provided for the appointment of British military and financial advisers to assist the Iranian government, but it was never ratified by Iran, for it was believed that the treaty would lead to colonial status for Iran in its relationship with Britain. In the meantime, in the summer of 1920, during the course of the Russian Civil War, the Red Army's Bolshevik troops landed in northern Iran, where they destroyed a White Russian force and supported an independent movement in Iran led by Muhammed Khiabani, a former Shiite cleric. The Bolsheviks offered to withdraw from Iran if Iran signed a treaty with them. But the depleted Iranian government announced that no treaty would be signed with the Bolsheviks while their troops occupied Iranian soil.

The Pahlavi Dynasty. At this precarious moment in Persian history – with Iran poised between the two powers of Britain and Russia – arose a ranking officer in Iran that would march into Tehran, overthrow the government – thus ending the Kajar Dynasty – and set Iran on a new course. The ranking officer was Reza Khan. He would establish the Pahlavi Dynasty, ruling from 1925-1941, with his son, Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, replacing him as Shah of Iran from 1941-1979. **The Pahlavi Dynasty would claim to be the reinstatement of the Persian kingship established by Cyrus the Great.**



1920's photo of Shah Reza Pahlavi, who established the Pahlavi Dynasty



Key Understanding: The Pahlavi Dynasty of 1925-1979 in Iran viewed itself as representing the reinstatement of the Persian kingship of the times of Cyrus the Great (above).



Mohammed Reza Pahlavi Shah, the son of Shah Reza Pahlavi

2 Chronicles 36:22-23 (KJV) Now in the first year of CYRUS KING OF PERSIA, that the word of the LORD spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the LORD

stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying,

*23 Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD God of heaven given me; and **he hath charged me to BUILD HIM AN HOUSE IN JERUSALEM, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? THE LORD HIS GOD BE WITH HIM, AND LET HIM GO UP.***

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