

**Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi & the Myth of
Imperial Authority**

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Abstract

The thesis is an investigation into the concept of modern political myth and its relationship to ideology. It argues that political myth can best be understood as the *personalisation* or *familiarisation* of ideology, by which ideological constructions are identified either with an individual, normally a political leader, or are expressed in mythic representations familiar within a given state and drawn from the traditional myths which permeate the political cultures of that state. The thesis argues that the personalisation and possible personification of ideology is one of the most obvious methods of political myth production and notes that the inherent contradictions and tensions resulting from an attempt to identify an individual with a principle almost always results in the construction of political myth. Political myth construction and development remains dynamic and reciprocal in relation to its ideational and material environment.

Iran during the Pahlavi period (1921-79) provides the case-study for the thesis, as a society in the process of profound social and economic change led by a government both enthusiastic and economically able to impose its own particular conception of development and modernity within a nationalistic framework, upon the country. The continued importance of personalities to the political process and their attempts to identify with particular ideologies provided cogent examples of political myth construction and development. With particular emphasis on Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the thesis shows the development of his ideological world-view, the initial reciprocal dynamic of these views, leading towards increasing identification, polarisation and isolation by the end of his reign. The thesis seeks to show how political myth was employed to *naturalise* and *legitimise* the Pahlavi Dynasty within the Iranian state.

In charting the ideological development in the Pahlavi era, from traditional state towards a particular conception of modernity, political myth is seen to be not a uniquely modern phenomenon. However, the emergence of the modern mass media, especially in electronic form has resulted in the *acceleration* of political myth construction and its widespread and rapid dissemination. This technological change helps to differentiate *modern* political myth from its predecessors and given the continuing growth of the mass media, is likely to ensure that the concept of political myth will be increasingly important to political discourse.

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A Note on Transliteration and Dates

A simplified form of Persian transliteration has been used throughout, making allowances for pronunciation. I have omitted diacritical marks, but have retained the *ayn* and *ezafe*. Thus *Shah* rather than *Šāh*; and *Shahanshah-e Iran* rather than *Shahanshah Iran*. Names of individuals are rendered in the way they are most commonly known, or has been reflected in the sources. Thus 'Mosaddeq' throughout as opposed to Musaddiq, and the names *Muhammad* and *Riza* are rendered *Mohammad* and *Reza*, unless the names are quoted from a source in which case the original transliteration is retained.

With respect to dates, three different calendars are used in the sources, the Lunar Hejri, Solar Hejri and Imperial calendars. All dates are provided with their Christian equivalent.

Note on Foreign Office Archival references: those references to FO files which begin FO 371 [...] represent published FO documents located in Bidwell R (ed) British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from Foreign Confidential Print, Part II From the First to the Second World War, Series B, Turkey, Iran, and the Middle East, 1918-39, while the other FO references represent files located at the Public Record Office.

Chapter 1

Theoretical Framework and Structure of Study

Central Thesis

The following thesis is a study of the concept of 'political myth' and its relationship with ideology, looking in particular at the mechanics of its operation within the political culture of a given political entity. The thesis will suggest a number of analytical parameters within which one can situate a concept whose utility as a tool of political analysis remains problematic, and whose very existence may be regarded as 'essentially contested'. However it will concentrate on an examination of two important aspects of mythic production and re-production in contemporary political discourse: the relationship of the cult of the individual leader with myth creation; and, the consequences of the growth of the modern mass media for myth production and dissemination. The phenomenon of political myth is not specific to the modern era, though the communications revolution and the consequent ability of agent to immediately disseminate ideological constructions to increasingly larger audiences within a shorter space of time has altered the framework of operation from pre-modern societies. In contrast, the cultivation of the myth of the leader is a political strategy that pre-dates the modern era but it is precisely in juxtaposing these two distinct developments that the phenomenon of *modern* political myth becomes more apparent.

This thesis argues that political myth can be defined as the personalisation or familiarisation of ideology. As such, political myth is not a distinct concept but on the contrary forms an integral part of ideological construction. The epitome of personalisation and the most characteristic manifestation of political myth is witnessed in the cult of the individual and the process reification of a complex of ideas within the material constraints represented by the individual leader. It is precisely this political strategy of reification in which an ideology is identified with an individual through the existence of an essential tension, that results in the production and emphasis of political myth, reflecting both the definition that personalisation provides as well as a vital ambiguity. Indeed the paradox of myth is that its parameters, or vehicle of expression appear well defined, while meaning and interpretation remain ambiguous. In this sense it marks the summation - an apparent absolute - of one cycle of ideological interpretation while at the same time opening up the vista to others.

Iran during the Pahlavi dynasty provides a useful case study for exploring the concept of political myth and highlighting this central thesis as both Pahlavi monarchs sought to epitomise within their persons and the dynasty they represented, the transformation of Iran from traditional monarchical state to a modern industrial nation state. The process of rapid social and economic change this transformation entailed ensured that the Iranian state in the 20th century possessed an essential tension which provided fertile ground for the production of ideological absolutes or political myth. The growth of the mass media, in particular the emergence of the radio, and critically, the persistent crisis of legitimacy which remained the essential tension of the dynasty itself simply compounded this situation.

This chapter will set out the theoretical framework and structure for the study. It will begin by briefly surveying the literature on political myth and argue the need for further definition. It will then proceed to establish the theoretical basis for the study by discussing the philosophical and epistemological framework. This will be followed by an analysis and discussion of the concept of ideology and political myth, providing working definitions and concluding with an analysis of the methodological and hermeneutical problems inherent in such a study. Following this, the chapter will look specifically at the factors which will be highlighted in the body of the thesis: the relationship between myth and leadership; and the impact of the emergence and growth of the modern mass media. The reasons why Iran during this period is a useful case study will then be detailed followed by a discussion and justification of the sources, concluding with a brief outline of the structure of the study.

The Importance of Political Myth

The concept of myth in political discourse is one which is frequently used but rarely defined. It has become a convenient conceptual receptacle for all that is perceived to be irrational or judged false in political ideas. This view is essentially a product of the 18th century Enlightenment which sought to remove myths through the use of reason and philosophy.

Myth as a concept, nevertheless enjoys a substantial intellectual pedigree compared not always unfavourably with the study of history. Indeed Aristotle rejected history in favour of myth, arguing that while history dealt with the particular and provided no valuable

lessons for mankind, myth in contrast dealt with universal truths which could be applied to the human condition.¹ Myth therefore enjoyed a utility that history did not. The competition between classical 'historians' and poets was such that Polybius conceded that some historians succumbed to the writing of what he termed 'tragic history'. The use of myth as history, and indeed the porous nature of the boundary dividing them was not confined to the Western world as the Persian *Shahnameh* testifies, but while the West developed a discipline of history antagonistic to myth, the close relationship between the two remained in the East.

However even with the emergence of the discipline of history in the 19th century following the rejection of myth by the Enlightenment Philosophers, the concept of myth itself was not disregarded. Indeed the Romantic Philosophers of the early 19th century reacted against their predecessors and re-opened the discussion of the importance of myth to human society.² Nevertheless myth remained for much of the 19th century a social rather than a political term of analysis, while the French Revolution and the works of Marx gave credence to a new term - ideology - which would henceforth define the study of ideas, 'scientifically constructed' to explain and motivate political action. Myth, rejected by the Enlightenment was similarly rejected by the educational establishments which were its offspring. Two exceptions to this general trend were Thomas Carlyle and later George

¹ Aristotle - *Poetics* London, Penguin, 1996, chapter 9, pg 16. Aristotle is discussing epic poetry and his criticism, arguably, is directed towards what Hegel characterised as 'original' history, as opposed to 'reflective' or 'philosophical' history.

² For example, Schelling discusses a philosophy of mythology.

Sorel³. While Carlyle focussed on the historical role of the hero and the myths that surrounded 'great men', Sorel was explicit in his enunciation of myth as a motivator for political action. Mannheim developed this theme, circuitously, and probably inadvertently in that he focussed on the concepts of ideology and utopia. Myth, in his conceptualisation was irrational and essentially conservative in character although he agreed with Sorel in the motivating capacity of such 'irrationality'. Indeed the characterisation of myth as an important if irrational actor in political discourse may be considered one of Mannheim's most significant if problematic contributions to the debate on myth. More useful was his implicit argument that myth was part of ideology.⁴

The study of modern political myth gained in importance in the aftermath of the fall of the Third Reich and Nazism, as social scientists sought to explain the rise to power of the Nazis and their ability to sustain power through the use of images, symbols and discourse which drew heavily on the traditional myths of Germany's romantic perception of her past. Myth as a subject of study gained renewed attention, the concept was explored and expanded, but it was nevertheless regarded as essentially irrational and thus a destructive influence on human development, as could be witnessed in the activities of Nazi Germany.

³ Thomas Carlyle - On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History Lincoln, University of Nebraska, 1966, first published in 1841. The first chapter on *The Hero as Divinity* makes the link between history and myth explicit. George Sorel Reflections on Violence New York, Collier Books, 1961.

⁴ Mannheim's argument is more implicit than emphatic since attention is focussed on the terms 'ideology' and 'utopia' rather than myth. However the concept of myth and its role in ideological development is repeated. See for example, K Mannheim Ideology & Utopia London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960, pp 32, 78, 86 & 122-23. For a wider discussion, see B Halpern Myth and Ideology in modern usage in History & Theory I, 1961, pp 129-149

Cassirer's study on 'The Myth of the State', first published in 1946, encapsulates this development, effectively warning his readers of the dangers of myth which, he argued, is no longer a social activity but a calculated political one, a new phenomenon peculiar to our 'technical age'.⁵

Since Cassirer's study a number of scholars have sought to better define the concept of myth, though almost all were clear about the negative consequences of a society gripped by myth. Myth, like ideology, was a false consciousness which afflicted the other and although some scholars argued that myth had previously been considered superior to 'history', and sought to relate myth and history⁶, by and large studies of myth were initiated to explain the peculiar irrationality of other 'political' cultures. If these works added to our general understanding of the concept of myth and its role in modern political discourse, they tended to be theoretical discussions providing often useful philosophical arguments but lacking any system of practical application, other than in the broadest sense.⁷

Barthes' seminal study, Mythologies published in 1957 shifted the study of myths from the other to the self, with a detailed analysis of French popular culture. Not only did he

⁵ E Cassirer The Myth of the State New Haven, Yale University Press, 1946, pg 282.

⁶ See for example M I Finley Myth, Memory and History in History & Theory IV, 1965, pp 281-302; P Munz History and Myth in The Philosophical Quarterly Vol 6 No 22 January 1956, pp 1-16.

⁷ See for example such useful articles as B Halpern Myth and Ideology in modern usage in History & Theory I, 1961, pp 129-149; and, T H Gaster Myth & Story in Numen, 1954 pp 184-212.

derive a theoretical argument through observation of French society, but he also provided important insights into the structure of mythic discourse, which although for his study was a cultural phenomenon ⁸, can easily be translated to the political sphere. Thus he emphasised that myth was a form of communication, or indeed, interpretation, which had a finite existence. Objects could be mythicised, but then could lose their mythic characteristics. Importantly he emphasised the historical link, “Ancient or not, mythology can only have an historical foundation, for myth is a type of speech chosen by history: it cannot possibly evolve from the ‘nature’ of things.”⁹ Furthermore, Barthes argued, ‘speech’ was not confined to oral discourse but also covered other modes of representation including writing and symbology. The structure of language was important for myth, with ‘articulated’ languages being the most vulnerable to myth making,¹⁰ while Barthes suggested a structure for the relationship between different competing myths arguing for the construction of semiological chains, “...the best weapon against myth is perhaps to mythify it in its turn, and to produce an *artificial myth*...All that is needed is to use it as the departure point for the third semiological chain, to take its signification as the first term of a second myth....It is what could be called an experimental myth, a second order myth.”¹¹

Probably Barthes’ most important contribution to the study of myth was his assertion that myth should be viewed as ‘value-free’; “Myth hides nothing and flaunts nothing: it

⁸ R Barthes Mythologies London, Paladin, 1970, pg 155.

⁹ *Ibid* pg 118

¹⁰ *Ibid* pg 142

¹¹ *Ibid* pg 147.

distorts; myth is neither a lie nor a confession: it is an inflexion.” He adds, “We reach here the very principle of myth: it transforms history into nature.”¹² What Barthes is arguing is that myth is a major tool for the strategy of naturalisation, a concept which is immensely important for political strategy.

Despite the works of Cassirer and Barthes there have been few attempts to combine both approaches to provide a framework for the study of myth as a tool of political strategy. Myth has re-emerged as an important component of the study of ideological constructions, especially in scholarship on nationalism and the distortion of history for nationalist goals, but the precision provided by Barthes appears to have been neglected in favour of Cassirer’s more judgmental and general approach with the result that works are either entirely theoretical or provide an insufficient epistemological framework or explanation for the practical application of the concept.¹³ The ambiguous nature of the concept of myth has been further emphasised by the tendency towards extreme relativism in the social sciences characteristic of post-modernist discourse, resulting in a conceptualisation of myth which fails to bridge the epistemological gap between theory and practice. This problem, it is argued, can be alleviated through the application of critical hermeneutics.

¹² *Ibid* pg 140

¹³ See for example, H Tudor Political Myth London, Macmillan, 1972, this is a useful introductory text providing synopses of the debates in sociology, anthropology and linguistics; L Feuer Ideology and the Ideologists Oxford, Blackwell, 1975; J Girling Myths and Politics in Western Societies London, Transaction Publishers 1993; A D Smith The Ethnic Origins of Nations Oxford, Blackwell 1986, especially pp 174-209; Farhang Rajaei, "Osturesazi va Tarikhnegari; Afsaneh va Vaqe'iyat,"(Myth Making and Historiography; Fiction and Fact) Etela'at Siyassi va Eqteessadi (Political & Economic Etela'at). Nos 53-54 Bahman/Esfand 1370 / Feb-March 1992, pp. 14-23.

Epistemological Framework

Although any thesis which seeks to illuminate the structure and mechanics of ideological operation will draw substantially on the works of 'idealist' philosophers, it should not be concluded that this thesis is as a consequence situated within an idealist philosophical framework. The power of ideas in human interaction is prominent in most fundamental philosophical perspectives¹⁴, and this thesis, in focussing on the influence of political leadership on the structure of ideology and the creation of political myth tends to argue for a reciprocal relationship between the materialistic and idealistic conceptions of ideation.¹⁵

The epistemological framework of this thesis contends that ideological constructions are universal rather than particular. The ideas which permeate a given society are relative and inter-related and as such an approach to their study must *strive* to be value-free. It follows from this position that analysts of ideas are themselves conditioned by the ideological and mythic constructions which permeate their own world-view, and an awareness of this situation is essential to the study of ideology. One cannot study ideas from the outside looking in, but must instead accept and be aware of one's own situation within the ideological complex. Thus Mannheim argues that, "A new type of objectivity in the social

¹⁴ K Marx The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon Peking, Foreign Language Press, 1978, pg 9.

¹⁵ M Weber The Protestant Ethic & the Spirit of Capitalism London, Routledge 1992, pg 183. See also P Ricoeur Myth as the bearer of possible worlds in A Ricoeur Reader: Reflection and Imagination M J Valdes (ed), Toronto, University of Toronto, 1991, pg 483.

sciences is attainable not through the exclusion of evaluations but through the critical awareness and control of them."¹⁶ As Ricoeur argues,

“..it is necessary to understand that all comprehension implies a pre-comprehension; that is to say, a certain affinity with the object and, therefore, also a whole cultural equipment. It is from the depth of a certain culture that I approach a new object of the culture. As a result pre-comprehension and prejudice are necessarily a part of comprehension. There cannot be any self-criticism by a neutral critic. And, inversely, a critic cannot be partisan. So, there is an extremely delicate point of balance, there [sic] between, on the one hand, the conviction that pre-comprehension and prejudgement are a vital part of comprehension and at the same time, the critique of the illusions of the subject which one may make with the aid of either Marxism or psychoanalysis.”¹⁷

The study of ideology is therefore essentially subjective. Indeed Mannheim argues that, "In a realm in which everything is in the process of becoming, the only adequate synthesis would be a dynamic one, which is reformulated from time to time,"¹⁸ adding that we should learn to think dynamically and relationally rather than in immutable ideas and absolutes. Ricoeur pursues this notion arguing that, “..the critique of ideology is a task which must always be begun, but which in principle can never be completed. Knowledge is always in the process of tearing itself away from ideology, but ideology always remains the grid, the code of interpretation, in virtue of which we are not unattached intellectuals

¹⁶ Mannheim Ideology & Utopia pg 5.

¹⁷ P Ricoeur Phenomenology and the theory of literature in A Ricoeur Reader pg 446.

¹⁸ Mannheim *op. cit.* pg 135.

but remain supported by what Hegel called the 'ethical substance', *Sittlichkeit*.¹⁹

It is precisely because as intellectuals we exist *within* the complex of ideas that we are able to begin the process of interpretation and attempt to bridge the epistemological divide between theory and practice and the problems of subjectivity and relativity that this entails must be tackled through the application of dynamic and relational thought as well as critical hermeneutics. The solution is by no means perfect, but, as Ricoeur argues, it is the pursuit of perfection rather than its attainment that is important and as Thompson argues, "There is a great deal of room on the spectrum between incontestable demonstration and arbitrary choice and the interpretation of ideology, like all forms of interpretation, lies in the region in between."²⁰

Ideology & Political Myth

Defining Ideology

It is the contention of this thesis that 'Ideology' may be defined as a systematic collection of ideas which serve to support and sustain a particular conception of relations of domination. Thus as Thompson concisely argues, "...to study ideology is to study the ways in which meaning serves to establish and sustain relations of domination."²¹ Ideology

¹⁹ P Ricoeur *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences* (ed & Trans J Thompson), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981, pp 245-46.

²⁰ J B Thompson *Ideology & Modern Culture* Cambridge, Polity Press 1990 pg 71.

²¹ *Ibid* pg 56.

therefore has a distinctively political purpose.

It is argued that the modern conception of ideology is a direct consequence of the Enlightenment and the rise of modern education although the use of a complex of ideas to justify and sustain power is not a product of the modern era. As Mannheim argues, "The distrust and suspicion which men everywhere evidence towards their adversaries, at all stages of historical development, may be regarded as the immediate precursor of the notion of ideology. But it is only when the distrust of man toward man,...becomes explicit and is methodically recognised, that we may properly speak of an ideological taint in the utterances of others."²² From our present perspective, and particularly with respect to Europe, this distinct methodical or systematic reorganisation of ideas arose after the 'Scientific Revolution' and the advent of 'rationally' centred education. It is no accident that the term was initially coined to denote the 'science of ideas'. This growth of rational education coincided with the period of unprecedented change in European society which created instability and uncertainty to which ideologies, as systematic and organised studies, could provide explanations and solutions.

However it is important to note that the conception of ideology adhered to in this thesis is neither scientific, nor particular, but as the epistemological framework argues is both relative and universal. As such ideology is considered to be neither 'rational' nor necessarily founded on 'reason', nor, as it would later be inverted, is ideology either 'irrational' or representative of a 'false consciousness'. It follows that the construction of

²² Mannheim *op.cit.* pg 54

ideologies is not dependent on the support of a 'rationally' educated class of intellectuals and although ideological development is normally associated with an intellectual group, there is no quantifiable intellectual quorate required for this development.

This thesis argues that modern ideologies are distinguished from their predecessors by the emergence of the modern mass media and new forms of communication. In particular, modern printing techniques which have magnified the importance of textual discourse, in addition to the traditional oral and symbolic techniques. Furthermore the growth of modern mass communications in the form of radio and film have altered the construction and dissemination of ideological constructs.

Ideologies form one part of the continuum of ideas that have shaped human action and behaviour and their social efficacy is maintained through an essential dynamism and flexibility which results in a certain ambiguity of construction. It is this ambiguity which makes the practical distinction of myth from ideology problematic, though as conceived in the next section, arguably, not insoluble.²³ Ideologies draw on the traditional myths which permeate a given political culture, systemise them for the purposes of political action and in the process produce idealistic reductions and schemas at once both absolute yet paradoxically, ambiguous. Modern political myth marks the termination of one meaning yet opens the door of interpretation for others - they represent the process of

²³ P Ricoeur Science & Ideology in Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences pp 222-246. The conception of ideology draws heavily from Ricoeur although the tendency towards simplification and schematism will here be defined as 'myth'.

*rejuvenation.*²⁴

Defining Political Myth

Just as ideological construction remains essentially ambiguous, so too, the distinction between political myth and its ideological parent, is also often difficult to delineate. As the following case study will show the division between ideology and myth can often become blurred. This problem however reflects an essential characteristic of myth and indeed the continuum of ideas, and as argued above should not deter the pursuit of its study. Myth as a concept is possessed of a substantial intellectual pedigree and to dismiss its utility on account of practical difficulties is not satisfactory. This section will propose a conceptual definition for myth in relation to ideology while the following will suggest those manifestations which are considered the most productive for study. Given the close relationship between myth and ideology it follows that the following analysis about the processes and problems of mythic construction applies in similar measure to ideology itself.

Ricoeur is not explicit about a relationship between myth and ideology, however in his discussion about the essential dynamism of ideological construction he argues a position which can be interpreted as suggestive of a possible relationship:

²⁴ Hegel Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction trans Nisbet Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1975, pg 32. See also pg 50, Hegel's metaphor of the 'seed' as "the starting point and the end result."

“...all ideology is simplifying and schematic. It is a grid or code for giving an overall view, not only of the group, but also of history and, ultimately, of the world. The ‘codified’ character of ideology is inherent in its justificatory function; its transformative capacity is preserved only on condition that the ideas which it conveys become opinions, that thought loses rigour in order to enhance its social efficacy, as if ideology alone could mediate not only the memory of founding acts, but systems of thought themselves. Hence anything can become ideology: ethics, religion, philosophy. ‘This mutation of a system of thought into a system of belief’, says Ellul, *is* the ideological phenomenon. The idealisation of the image which a group forms of itself is only a corollary of this schematisation. For it is through an idealised image that a group represents its own existence, and it is this image which, in turn, reinforces the interpretive code.”²⁵

This statement is loaded with a number of suggestions about the relationship between myth and ideology. In the first place, myth is essential to the ideological function despite the fact that the tendency towards myth in ideological thought may result in the loss of ideological rigour in favour of social efficacy. The centrality of myth to ideology is echoed in the writings of a number of writers including Feuer.²⁶ The loss of rigour and flexibility is paralleled by a tendency towards increased definition which myth represents, but as Ricoeur points out, ‘reinforces the interpretive code’. Meaning is open to interpretation, thus myth represents, as argued above, the termination of one meaning while opening the door of interpretation for others. Finally, it suggests the other cyclical function of myth, ‘the mutation of a system of thought into a system of belief’, in other words to paraphrase Barthes, the naturalisation or institutionalisation of a complex of ideas into the social

²⁵ P Ricoeur Science & Ideology pg 226.

²⁶ L Feuer Ideology & the Ideologists Oxford, Blackwell, 1975.

milieu.²⁷ It can be argued therefore that political myth is the vehicle by which ideology seeks to reinvent itself as a fundamental system of belief and embed itself within the political culture and world-view of the group concerned. As such it may be conjectured that, while ideology seeks to sustain a particular conception of relations of domination, the role of political myth is to naturalise that particular conception in the guise of authority. A new interpretative code is established from which the cycle of ideological construction can begin anew.

The tendency for myth to naturalise a set of ideas reinforces the essential difficulty of distinguishing and interpreting ideology and political myth in that as Ricoeur argues, “..the interpretive code of an ideology is something *in which* men live and think, rather than a conception *that* they pose. In other words, an ideology is operative and not thematic. It operates behind our backs, rather than appearing as a theme before our eyes. We think from it rather than about it.”²⁸ In a relatively stable political environment in which a system of thought has become naturalised and is accepted, the problems of identifying ideological constructions and myth, especially if one is thinking ‘from’ it, is multiplied. Thus it is argued that the study of political myth is facilitated by the existence of tension within a political environment. Tension, be it social, economic or political, encourages interpretation, explanation and justification.

²⁷ See above note 12. It can be argued that myth has ‘hegemonic’ tendencies.

²⁸ Ricoeur Science & Ideology pg 227. See also Ricoeur Myth as the Bearer of Possible Worlds in A Ricoeur Reader M J Valdes (ed) pg 484, “For it is only when it is threatened with destruction from without or from within that a society is compelled to return to the very roots of its identity; to that mythical nucleus which ultimately grounds and determines it.”

The greater the tension the greater the likelihood that ideology will tend towards the absolute, or mythic construction. As Ricoeur argues, “..the inertia, the lag, which appears to characterise the ideological phenomenon,” tends to aggravate, “the non-reflective and non-transparent status of ideology.”²⁹ Tension polarises the ideological phenomenon making myth explicit and thus facilitating its study. As tension increases, the ideological status quo is challenged and a dialectical relationship is established as the critique prompts a response. Thus, “Ideology is both an effect of and resistance to attrition.”³⁰ The process by which ideology can polarise into an increasingly narrowly defined political myth is suggested by the following analysis:

“..ideology is both interpretation of the real and obturation of the possible. All interpretation takes place in a limited field; but ideology effects a narrowing of the field in relation to the possibilities of interpretation which characterised the original momentum of the event. In this sense we may speak of ideological closure, indeed ideological blindness. But even when the phenomenon veers towards the pathological, it conserves something of its initial function....Ideology is thus affected by the schematisation which ineluctably accompanies it; and in modifying itself in this way, it undergoes sedimentation....”³¹

Identifying Political Myth

²⁹ Ricoeur *Science & Ideology* pg 227

³⁰ *Ibid* pg 227.

³¹ *Ibid* pp 227-228

Political myth is an integral part of ideology. It represents the supreme refinement of ideological development, the simplification of an idea profoundly expressed. Identifying the 'sedimentation' between ideology and political myth is a problem alleviated by socio-political circumstances and the rigours of hermeneutics, but not solved. In order to better facilitate empirical analysis it is therefore useful to further narrow down the focus of attention to those manifestations and developments that will highlight mythic construction. That is not to say that political myth cannot be interpreted in a myriad of ways but simply that definitions need to be rigorous enough to sustain application.

It is argued that the reduction of ideological thought towards a concise definition in the form of political myth can best be witnessed in the anthropomorphisation of ideology through the reification of ideological complexes within culturally familiar individuals and symbols. Ideology and myth are transmitted in three principal forms: oral, textual and visual. The vehicle that can best express all three forms within a single unit, is the individual. Thus if political myth is the personalisation of ideology, the identification of an individual with a principle may be considered its most powerful manifestation. The following two examples will seek to illustrate this argument.

Political myth can be constructed through the ideologisation of traditional myths: thus a mullah (progenitor) discusses the tale of Yazid and Abbas after the battle of Karbala (680 CE), noting that Yazid (or in this case his representative) refuses Abbas water to take to Hussein and instead cuts off Abbas' hand. By applying a modern ideological construct to this traditional myth known to most Iranians, such as anti-imperialism (or specifically in this case - anti-Americanism) plus a whiff of nationalism - the nation as martyr - the

mullah replaces Yazid with the United States and draws comparisons between Abbas and/or Hussein with Iran, thereby providing a modern political myth with immediate relevance and emotive power to move his audience. In this case the newspapers had written that the United States had refused medical serums/syringes to Iran and this action the mullah argued was comparable to Yazid preventing water being given to Hussein. In this example we see the anthropomorphisation of two countries - the personalisation of ideology.³²

In the case of symbolic representation, given the absence of an intermediate 'interpreter' the propensity exists for more diverse interpretation. In the following example we witness a case of political myth construction without an obvious and immediate relationship to traditional myth. Indeed this case highlights the reciprocal relationship between the different constructions of ideas as well as the nature of political myth as a summation of one ideology whilst retaining an essential ambiguity open to other interpretations.

Thus, for example, in Iran with regard to the Lion and Sun motif, supporters of one particular ideology, that of nationalism, aware of its significance as an icon of identity, appropriate the symbol as the supreme symbol of nationalism. The Lion proudly holds out a sword and blocks out the sun - the precise meaning of this symbolic construction and its positive or negative repercussions are themselves debated by nationalists - representing for nationalists a proud and mighty Iran. The symbol is thus transformed into a tool of political action - modern political myth - through its appropriation by an ideology. This

³² This example is taken from personal experience during a visit to the *Husseiniye* in Arak, Iran, during the month of Muharram in the summer of 1993.

symbol, at once the epitome of the nationalist idea, is nevertheless open to other interpretations.

Thus, while nationalists argue that the lion represents the ancient Iranian deity Mehr (Mithra), or alternatively the concept of 'light', reified in a terrestrial form which is representative of the spirit of Iran, the more religiously inclined view the lion as representing Imam Ali, who was also given the title 'Lion of God'. Given that Iran is predominantly Shi'a, this view is not entirely antithetical to the nationalist view, but it does shift the emphasis of the meaning towards religion. For these people the sword carried by the lion is 'Zulfiqar', the famous sword of Ali, although nationalists would argue that the sword was a later addition to the motif. Others dismiss the symbol altogether as a creation of British colonialism and therefore an insult to the very dignity of Iran - arguably a nationalist position in reverse.³³

Once challenged, nationalists may seek to justify their particular interpretation by providing it with a long pedigree - in other words root it in traditional myth and thus naturalise the interpretation. In this way the development of a meaning ensures the construction of a past and scholars are recruited and sent in search of a past. Since there are no extant representations of this particular symbol from pre-Islamic Iran, scholars have sought to substantiate the Mithraic perspective through circumstantial evidence such as the importance of the concept of light to Zoroastrian Iran and certain obscure references to the fact that the Sassanian royal standard, the *Derafsh-e Kaviyani*, was emblazoned

³³ It should be pointed out that the motif was also symbolic of the monarchy, and in some ways became the quintessential symbol of 'dynastic nationalism'.

with the symbol. The most comprehensive analysis to date was probably conducted by the nationalist historian and ideologue, Ahmad Kasravi, who through a study of documents and numismatics came to the conclusion that the symbol could at best be traced back to the Mongols.³⁴

Retrospective historical construction is common in arguably the highest form of ideological personalisation, that of the cult of the individual. The very difficulty of this problematic construction - the imposition of the ideal (or indeed many different ideals) onto one person, often results in past and present contradictions which can only be resolved through considerable historical revisionism. The re-interpretation, and in some cases re-invention of the past to suit the present arguably seeks to establish the authority which the present relation of domination requires.

Political Myth and Leadership

The particular relationship between ideology, political myth and the individual, or more specifically, political leadership, is central to this thesis. The individual leader provides the ultimate physical manifestation of ideological construction, the summation of an idea within the ultimate vehicle for expression. All the more so, because unlike other discursive or visual representations, the individual is a *living* manifestation of the ideological construct and as such adds a further dimension to the interpretative process. With other symbolic reifications, the vehicle is static while interpretation may vary, with the

³⁴ Ahmad Kasravi *Tarikhche-ye Shir-o Khorsheed* (The History of the Lion and Sun) Tehran, undated.

individual, interpretation and indeed transmission and dissemination, are complicated, by a vehicle which is dynamic. This dynamism represents the essential paradox of this particular manifestation. Political leadership is thus both a transmitter and progenitor of political myth.

As Hegel argues in 'The German Constitution', successful political leadership requires that the individual be identified in the popular consciousness with an idea.

"But they [his enemies] gave way not to Richelieu as a man but to his genius, which linked his person with the necessary principle of the unity of the state and made the public officials dependent on the state. And herein lies political genius, in the identification of an individual with a principle. Given this linkage, the individual must carry off the victory."³⁵

Although Hegel identifies this idea with the realisation of freedom in human consciousness throughout history, for the purposes of this thesis the substance of the Hegelian 'Idea', is less important than the concept itself, and the relationship it suggests exists between political leaders and the ideologies they inherit, transmit and modify. Hegel expands on this relationship in his *Philosophy of World History*, explaining that 'world-historical individuals', "are those who seize upon this higher universal and make it their own end."³⁶

The political leader seeks to identify himself with an idea, to become the reification of an ideology and to redefine that ideology in his own terms. The individual facilitates the

³⁵ Hegel *The German Constitution* 1802, in *Hegel's Political Writings* trans T M Knox, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1964, pg 216.

³⁶ Hegel *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction* pg 82.

reduction, simplification and polarisation of an ideology through its identification with his person. A complex, often ambiguous, sometimes ill-defined, set of ideas becomes apparently clear, manifest and concise through the medium of this identification - people 'know' without necessarily understanding. This personalisation of ideology transforms the ideology into political myth through the inherent contradiction of transposing the ideal into the material and the limitations this imposes on the ideal. The process of identification and its consequences are concisely described by Hegel:

“...in fulfilling their grand designs as necessitated by the universal spirit, such world-historical individuals not only attained personal satisfaction but also acquired new external characteristics in the process. The end they achieved was also their own end, and the hero himself is inseparable from the cause he promoted, for both of these were satisfied.”³⁷

In seeking to consolidate the identification with the ideology a leader is increasingly required to mirror the ideology represented. As such, the past, present, and as a consequence, the future are all modified and adapted to conform with the ideal while at the same time the leader seeks to redefine this ideal in his own image. The essential tension of this relationship facilitates myth construction. In one sense it may be argued that the leader in this situation begins to represent a particular manifestation, or microcosm, of the hermeneutic cycle, the wider relationship between ideological constructions and interpretation.

The essential tension which characterises the relationship between the ideology and the

³⁷ *Ibid* pg 86.

individual, the differing pulls of the ideal and the material, is a vital process for the production of political myth. As such, if political myth is the personalisation of ideology, so too, the personalisation of ideology leads to political myth.

Political myth, in particular its association with political leadership, is not a product of the industrial era. Indeed its existence is testified to by the persistence of symbolic ritual which has accompanied autocratic rule throughout history.³⁸ Rulers and political leaders have sought to identify themselves, and in some cases have succeeded in effectively embodying, particular ideas in order to secure for themselves legitimate authority. The difference in the post-industrial age; the factor which has made political myth 'modern', is the presence of mass media and communications.

The advent of mass communications

As Thompson argues, "The analysis of ideology in modern societies must give a central role to the nature and impact of mass communication", adding that, "The development of mass communication greatly expands the scope for the operation of ideology in modern societies, for it enables symbolic forms to be transmitted to extended and potentially vast audiences which are dispersed in time and space."³⁹

The advent of mass communications, in particular the electronic mass media has not only

³⁸ Cannadine & Price (eds) Rituals of Royalty - Power & Ceremonial in Traditional Societies Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987.

³⁹ J Thompson Ideology & Modern Culture pg 267.

magnified the essential tension which results in political myth construction, it has also multiplied the frequency of ideological dissemination while at the same time increasing the immediacy of transmission. Radio and television, as a medium of transmission tend to favour shorter and more concise expositions of ideological dogma and thus encourage the production of political myth. Furthermore the frequency of transmission not only increases the quantitative level with political myth being imparted into society at a far higher rate than previously possible, the immediacy of the medium means that the tension which exists between the ideal and the material, particularly in political leadership, is heightened by greater public accessibility and scrutiny. The modern mass media behaves as an accelerator to the process of reciprocal interpretation.⁴⁰ As Thompson explains:

“..it is important to stress that the increased visibility afforded by mass communication is a source both of enormous political opportunities and of unprecedented political risks. Through the medium of television, political figures can communicate to a vast and widely dispersed audience, can present themselves and their views in a carefully controlled fashion. But this medium also allows for the possibility that political figures may appear incompetent, ill-informed, out of control, in ways and on a scale which never existed before. In the electronically mediated political arena, an impromptu remark or an emotional outburst can bring about the fall of an aspiring leader.”⁴¹

The frequency and intensity of this scrutiny not only magnifies the tension but also multiplies it. The magnification yields new details which in turn require a more precise and

⁴⁰ See M Edelman Constructing the Political Spectacle Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1988

⁴¹ J Thompson *op. cit.* pg 17

exacting standard from the leader. The exposure of a traditional political strategy to the microscopic scrutiny of modern technology, through the medium of mass communications and media, tends to emphasise and highlight the tension resulting from the essential contradiction of identifying an individual with a principle.

Pahlavi Iran as a case study

As a traditional society in the throes of socio-economic change, Iran during the Pahlavi era provides a useful case study for the analysis of ideology and political myth. Furthermore, this transition from a traditional to an industrial society during this period centred upon the aspirations and leadership of the two Pahlavi *Shahs* who sought to embody the ideals of modernisation and nationalism within their persons. In addition Iran during this period came into increasing contact with the West, and thus more Iranians came into contact with Western conceptions and ideas with which they could compare and contrast themselves. Indeed during this period Iranians moved both vertically, in gains in wealth, as well as feelings of international inadequacy, and horizontally; they travelled abroad on a scale unparalleled by citizens of other developing countries. The propensity for a multiplicity of collective and individual, often contradictory, consciousnesses was therefore profound. Of particular importance for this thesis is the emergence of the mass media, especially the rapid adoption of the radio throughout Iran, which, juxtaposed with the cultivation of the myth of the leader, positively facilitates the study of modern political myth.

Ideological dissemination was assisted by the tremendous growth in mass communications

which occurred in the more than fifty years of Pahlavi rule. Printed material became more influential as literacy rose, though it may be argued that for the bulk of the period, the print media had a limited influence. This is however to misunderstand the role of the educated elites in Iranian society, and to underestimate their social influence. Furthermore, in periods of liberalisation, such as 1941-53, the print media were active in supporting a wide variety of interest groups, albeit within a nationalist framework. As Cottam notes, ".the press of the past fifty years is replete with references to the days of Iranian supremacy; hardly an issue of any newspaper can be found that fails to refer to Iran's past."⁴² By far more important, was the growth in radio and television broadcasting, in particular the spread of the transistor radio which allowed ideological messages to reach a geographically disparate and often isolated population. Indeed technology assisted the centralisation of power in the Pahlavi state.

While recognising the importance of modern mass communications for the construction and dissemination of ideology, this did not obviate the need for traditional methods of discourse. On the contrary, it both supplemented and expanded its reach. Thus the medium of personal communication was greatly assisted by the advent of the telephone and modern transport. As a result such traditional modes of information transmission expanded into more diverse and complex networks. Being neither systematic nor exact, though sufficiently accurate to be accepted, such networks were prone to mythic reproduction. A rigorous domestic security service in the Pahlavi era only enhanced the utility of such a 'service'.

⁴² R Cottam Nationalism in Iran Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1964, pg 26.

Apart from these specific tensions, there are general cultural and historical tensions and circumstances which are conducive to the analysis of political myth. Iran's long and turbulent history has resulted in a rich tapestry of conflicting traditional myths. The consequent collective *Weltanschauung* which has resulted in the resilience and durability of the cultural phenomenon known as *Iraniyyat*, arose from compromise and appropriation facilitated by this rich reservoir of accompanying ambiguous myths. To take but one, if possibly the most famous, example of this 'contradictory consciousness', the Iran-Islam dichotomy, as Mottahedeh has said, there is a, "world of ambiguity between Iranian-ness and Islam."⁴³ Therefore it may be said that the dominant Iranian world view is cemented by a multiplicity of traditional political myths, which are a rich reservoir of material for ideologues and political myth-makers.

The ambiguity of this multi-faceted construction is assisted by the predominant language, Farsi and its dialects. As Beeman notes, "Persian is a language with a very simple grammatical structure and rich set of stylistic variables that help individuals to convey accounts of their feelings...The basic dimensions of Iranian society are not terribly complex in a structural sense, but they provide for a rich play of linguistic expression."⁴⁴ Furthermore, Zonis comments that, "...all forms of communication - speech and other behaviours - had as one component of their transmission of meaning that conveyed by

⁴³ R Mottahedeh - *Mantle of the Prophet* London, Chatto & Windus, 1986 pg 313.

⁴⁴ W O Beeman *Language, Status & Power in Iran* Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1986 pg 10. See also P Ricoeur *Poetry & Possibility in A Ricoeur Reader* M J Valdes (ed) pp 448-462.

nuance, that delicate variation in the execution of behaviours or articulation of speech at which Iranians are such masters. Second, virtually all Iranians participated in this form of discourse. The result was an extraordinarily complex communication field in which foreigners were grossly inept."⁴⁵

Sources

The sources for the study of ideology and political myth are potentially extensive, ranging from architecture and nomenclature, to the oral recording of the recollections of individuals who participated in political discourse during the time period under investigation. This potential is however limited by the availability of resources, whether records were kept of events and speeches, and the manner in which they were recorded. A speech which is orally delivered may contain nuances and emphases which later transcriptions fail to recognise. Furthermore, in analysing the development of a concept whose manifestation and expression is arguably ubiquitous, a certain amount of judicious selection is necessary when approaching sources, so as to allow a balanced assessment to be made of developments during the historical period in question.

The vast majority of the sources used for this thesis have been textual, with the occasional use of visual representations and personal interviews when they complement or support the textual evidence. Given the focus of the thesis on the structure of mythic relationships, in particular the relationship between political leadership and political myth, the sources

⁴⁵ M Zonis Majestic Failure Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1991 ft 66 pg 299.

reflect the ideological enunciations of the Pahlavi shahs especially Mohammad Reza Shah (1941-79), or the state apparatus which they instructed. The sources include speeches, private conversations recorded by Iranians, or by foreign diplomats, official government publications, as well as the major state newspapers of the period.

For the later period, more visual material is available in the form of films of the coronation (1967) and the celebrations of 2,500 years of the Persian Monarchy (1971), along with the 50th anniversary of the Pahlavi dynasty (1976). Additional visual material was provided by architecture, banknotes and stamps. Little cinematic or televisual material was available, but transcripts of Tehran Radio were available through the Summary of World Broadcasts of the BBC. Though these were English transcripts they represented the only available source for what was an increasingly important medium of ideological expression in Pahlavi Iran. Indeed the importance of both the Public Record Office files and the SWB was that they provided chronologically consistent sources, through which developments could be traced.

With respect to the Public Record Office files, it should be pointed out that although the earlier chapters rely heavily on material located in the Foreign Office files, the consular files contain considerable Persian language material (especially for the politically prolific period 1941-53), while the English records used are those which cite speeches, specific events of importance for ideological construction, and private conversations, either with Iranians or with the Shah himself. Memoirs, or comments by British diplomatic staff have been used rarely and mainly where they substantiate or support an event confirmed elsewhere. Two exceptions to this were the reports submitted by A K S Lambton, which

normally conflicted with Embassy assessments, and the memoirs of Sir Dennis Wright, which were kindly made available to me.

The main, though not exclusive, sources in Persian have been the collected speeches of Mohammad Reza Shah, although many of these are retrospective compilations and as such may exclude subjects considered unfavourable to the Shah; official publications issued on the occasion of the main festivals mentioned above; and five important texts which allow us to chart the trajectory of ideological development: 'Mission for my Country' (1961), 'Pahlavism' (1966), 'The White Revolution' (1967), issues of the party organ '*Rastakhiz*' (1975-76), in particular those issues dealing with the philosophy of *Rastakhiz*, and, 'Towards the Great Civilisation' (1977). Although the focus of the research has been the ideological constructs of the state, opposition literature and radio broadcasts have been used where possible to show the relationship between the different ideological constructs and the influences upon Pahlavi ideology. This is particularly the case for the chapter dealing with the period 1941-53 when state control was weak and political pluralism flourished.

Framework for Analysis

Critical Hermeneutics

The methodology adapted here from Thompson is one of hermeneutics, specifically, 'depth hermeneutics', which itself has drawn heavily on the theory of critical hermeneutics developed by Paul Ricoeur.⁴⁶ Along with the categorisation of political strategies which follows, the methodology selected is a framework rather than a definitive schema which will guide rather than dictate the direction of the research.

Critical hermeneutics, as understood here, provides a critical framework for the analysis of ideology, acknowledging the importance of socio-historical analysis and cultural empathy which must underpin the more detailed analysis of texts and symbols within a given political culture. It is critical not only in the rigorous totality in which it seeks to analyse ideological constructs but also in the awareness of the individual limitations of the student of ideology. Critical hermeneutics, while accepting the interpretive nature of ideological deconstruction, seeks to implement the precision of traditional ideological critiques. As Thompson argues, "The interpretation of ideology is a process of creative synthesis."⁴⁷

⁴⁶ P Ricoeur Hermeneutics & the Human Sciences (ed & trans Thompson) CUP 1981, in particular chapter 2, Hermeneutics and the critique of ideology pp 63-101.

⁴⁷ J B Thompson Ideology & Modern Culture pg 293.

Forms of Hermeneutical Inquiry ⁴⁸		
Methodological framework	1) Social-Historical analysis	-spatio-temporal settings; -fields of interaction; -social institutions; -social structure; -technical media of transmission
	2) Formal or discursive analysis	-semiological analysis; -conversation analysis; -syntactic analysis; -narrative analysis; -argumentative analysis.
	3) Interpretation/re-interpretation.	

Political strategies

The following political strategies, adapted from Thompson, have been identified and will be used and the categories are a framework for analysis. It must be emphasised that the categorisation is by no means exhaustive, nor are the categories definitive.⁴⁹ There may be overlaps, intentional or otherwise both between the general modes as well as their

⁴⁸ Adapted from J B Thompson *op. cit.* pg 281

⁴⁹ *Ibid* pp 52-67

subdivisions. Nevertheless, the following table will provide an essential guide and framework for reference for the empirical research which will follow.

<i>General Modes</i>	<i>Some typical strategies of symbolic construction.</i>
Legitimation	Rationalisation Universalisation Narrativization Reification Naturalisation Eternalisation
Dissimulation	Displacement Euphemisation Trope (eg: synecdoche, metonymy, metaphor) Passivisation
Unification	Standardisation Symbolisation of unity
Fragmentation	Differentiation Expurgation of the other Creation of social problems

In seeking to establish and sustain a particular relation of domination, all ideology by definition operates in order to legitimise and naturalise a given power relationship. Political myth, as argued above, is central to this process of naturalisation, and from the

above table it may be concluded that the most important mode of operation is that of 'legitimation' with particular reference, as it pertains to leadership, to the strategy of reification. However, all the modes of operation to a greater or lesser extent aim to assist in the process of social institutionalisation, by which it is understood, a popularly accepted legitimate authority, for the particular relation of domination.

With respect to legitimation, the particular strategies are understood as follows: *rationalisation*, by which it is meant 'perceived' rationalisation; a particular relation of domination is explained and interpreted as logical and sensical. *Universalisation*, by which it is meant a strategy in which a circumstance is legitimised by appearing universally applicable. Universalisation entails the justification of a situation or event by noting its apparently universal acceptance or existence, either within a given political culture or outside its boundaries.

Narrativization draws most clearly from traditional myth by embedding modern interpretations in well-known narratives and elucidating parallels and conclusions from this. It is a strategy which facilitates the personalisation of ideology and as such, the creation of political myth and enjoys a reciprocal relationship with it. Narratives and larger meta-narratives, particularly historical narratives, can be both manipulated and created by leaders seeking to justify their claims. This strategy is consequently closely linked to that of reification, by which it is understood, the materialisation of an abstract concept into a thing or person. It must be emphasised that a non-Marxist definition of 'reification' is being utilised with the emphasis on the process of 'personalisation' as opposed to 'de-personalisation'. Naturalisation and eternalisation are also ideological strategies which

encourage the development of political myth, although as argued above, all strategies tend towards a goal of naturalisation.

The second general mode of operation is termed *dissimulation* which is understood as the manipulation of the accepted social facts. As Thompson argues, dissimulation means that, "Relations of domination may be established and sustained by being concealed, denied or obscured, or by being represented in a way which deflects attention from or glosses over existing relations or processes."⁵⁰ Thus, through *displacement*, one appropriates the character traits of another much as Louis Bonaparte ignited a nostalgia for his illustrious uncle, and put it to good use, or as Mohammad Reza Shah less successfully tried to appropriate the characteristics of Cyrus the Great.

By *euphemisation* is understood the process by which standard descriptions with negative connotations are replaced by more positive terms, and vice versa. One of the most recent and explicit examples of this occurred during the Persian Gulf War. The Danish paper, *Politiken* examined the English language press and came up with the following revealing examples: while the allies had an army, navy and air force, the Iraqis possessed a 'war machine'; or alternatively, while the allies were 'professional' the Iraqis were 'brainwashed'.⁵¹ *Passivisation* is understood as a strategy in which the actor is deliberately 'hidden' possibly giving the impression that an event that has occurred, does so naturally. Thus, as Thompson argues, 'the prime minister has banned imports', is

⁵⁰ *Ibid* pg 62

⁵¹ D Kellner The Persian Gulf TV War Oxford, Westview Press 1992, pp 238-242

redefined as 'the banning of imports'.⁵²

Similar to euphemisation, is what Thompson calls 'trope', by which it is meant the figurative use of language. Thompson has subdivided 'trope' into *synecdoche*, *metonymy* and *metaphor*. By metaphor, one means the application of a description which would not make literal sense. Thus, for example, describing Margaret Thatcher as the 'Iron Lady'. A synecdoche is a method of figurative speech when the whole is stated but understood as a particular, or vice versa. Thus a nationality (the 'British') is used when only the specific government is meant. By metonymy, one means the substitution of the name of an attribute or adjunct for that of the thing meant. For instance, 'the crown' instead of the more personal, 'king'. Thus, with respect to Iran in the Pahlavi era, the ruins of Persepolis were frequently used to suggest the longevity of monarchy, or indeed simply the monarchy itself.

Unification can be achieved through the following strategies: *standardisation* is one method of achieving a sense of unity. This may be the adoption of a uniform, or a standard credo, or in a broader sense, this can be witnessed in attempts to standardise language, currency and laws. *Symbolisation of unity* involves the use of symbols and slogans which stress the unity of the group. As Thompson notes, this strategy is most obviously interwoven with narrativization strategies.⁵³ Symbols of unity include flags, anthems and assorted emblems.

⁵² J B Thompson *op. cit.* pg 66.

⁵³ *Ibid* pg 64

A fourth mode of operation can be categorised as *fragmentation*, which is closely linked to that of unification. Clearly, in most practical situations unification strategies are likely to enjoy only degrees of partial success. There will always be groups who will be more difficult to sway to one's position. Furthermore legitimacy is often enhanced or justified through the creation of problems. Fragmentation may be said to involve three strategies, that of emphasising disunity among one's opponents (*differentiation*); that of creating foreign enemies to foster unity; and, that of creating domestic enemies, or social problems. As Edelman says, "The language that constructs a problem and provides an origin for it is also a rationale for vesting authority in people who claim some kind of competence. Willingness to suspend one's own critical judgement in favour of someone regarded as able to cope creates authority."⁵⁴

Concluding Remarks & Structure of Study

The central thesis of this study argues that political myth can be interpreted as the personalisation or familiarisation of ideology. It provides either a human face to an ideological construct, or alternatively appropriates symbols already familiar to the target audience. It is thus closely bound to the traditional myths and 'histories' of a given political culture. The ultimate expression of this 'personalisation' is a particular individual. The ultimate personalisation of ideology lies with the cult (-ivation) of the individual; hence the Hegelian argument that the identification of a principle with an individual is political genius. Beyond, though included in, this specific example in which political myth

⁵⁴ M Edelman *op. cit.* pg 20.

becomes more tangible, it is argued that myth is the simplification of ideological ideas, the conceptual termination, or polarisation, of one ideological construct which opens the door of interpretation to others, the cyclical point of rejuvenation. By reducing an ideology to a 'self-evident truth', political myth seeks to institutionalise the power that ideology sustains and supports. Importantly, political myth remains an integral part of ideology, and at times the distinction is difficult to make. However, rather than see this as an argument against the utility of political myth it should be accepted as confirmation of the importance of political myth to the integral structure of ideology.

Chapter Structure

The thesis will take a chronological approach with respect to the division of chapters, with each chapter highlighting the thematic issues relevant to the argument developed about the nature and operation of political myth. As such, there has been no attempt to provide a comprehensive historical survey of Pahlavi Iran beyond what is relevant to the argument.

Chapter 2 - the Rise & Rule of Reza Shah

This chapter provides the ideological blueprint for the rest of the thesis on two counts: it allows us to discern the ideological parameters which characterise the Pahlavi state while at the same time providing a reference point for the development of those ideological parameters both in relation to each other and in relation to perceived social reality. The chapter highlights a number of points characteristic of the Pahlavi state which are important for the thesis, including: the crisis of legitimacy which was the critical characteristic of the regime as a whole and which provided the essential 'tension' which

encouraged political myth production and cultivation. This formed the basis of the fundamental ideological construct defined as 'dynastic nationalism'. The chapter also establishes the other important ideological parameters which were characteristic of the Pahlavi state, such as militarism, modernism and nationalism. In particular it will show the essential triangular tension between modernism, nationalism and traditionalism, which resulted in increasing political myth in the guise of dynastic nationalism.

Chapter 3: 1941-53 - Pluralism & the triumph of nationalism

This chapter complements the first in providing the societal background for the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah. It also elaborates on the ideological parameters introduced in the second chapter and provides an example of the cultivation of the individual in the person of Dr Mohammad Mosaddeq, which was to prove immensely influential for the Shah. Specifically, this chapter, confirms the strength of nationalism as the pivotal ideology in Iran; introduces the impact of the emergence of the modern mass media on ideological development principally through the emergence of the radio; elaborates on the ideology of dynastic nationalism, in this case incurred by a profound feeling of impotence, insecurity and inferiority felt by Mohammad Reza Shah; and, finally it combines the three elements discussed above in the oil nationalisation crisis in which the cult of individual is crystallised not around the person of the Shah but instead, Dr Mosaddeq.

Chapter 4 - the consolidation of power

This chapter represents a transitional phase when the Shah attempted to appropriate the

ideological potency of Dr Mohammad Mosaddeq while extending it and tentatively modifying it to identify himself with an idea of his own making. The Shah is thus seen attempting to appropriate a cocktail of ideological constructs more complex than his father - nationalism, socialism, modernism and traditionalism - and thus incorporating far greater tensions.

Chapter 5 - 1960-67: the White Revolution

Disappointed by failure in the 1950's, the Shah seeks in the aftermath of Dr Amini's reforms to identify himself with revolutionary reform, through the launch of a programme of development known as the 'White Revolution'. In ideological terms this marks a turning point for the Shah as a concerted attempt is made to identify him with an idea and to institutionalise and 'authorise' his power. Myth begets myth with the development of the concept of 'Pahlavism' while the tensions between the Shah's desire to portray himself as a moderniser and his traditional office, along with the tensions inherent with nationalism, force him to increasingly emphasise dynastic nationalism expressed in increasingly emphatic symbolic forms and ceremonial gestures, as a solution to the conundrum.

Chapter 6 - 1967-77: Towards the Great Civilisation; the myth of Imperial Authority

The tendencies visible in the previous chapter become emphatic at this stage. Reductionism, simplification and polarisation become explicit as the Shah moves to definitively establish his authority. It is in this period that the peculiar characteristics of the

relationship between political myth and political leadership become apparent in that a concerted effort is made to revise the historical record in order to satisfy the modern image of the Shah. The volatile cocktail of ideological constructs the Shah sought to reify in his own person was so contradictory as to result in the increasing generation of political myth. The Shah used the media more aggressively to pursue his ideological agenda which was essentially the identification of himself as the quintessential hero-saviour leading his country to the promised land.



Chapter 2

Defining the Ideological Parameters:

The Rise and Rule of Reza Shah

Introduction

In order to better understand the development of ideology and the use of political myth during the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, it is important to define the ideological parameters of the Pahlavi state. This can be best achieved by analysing the rise and rule of his father Reza Shah who dominated Iran between the years 1921-41. The creation and re-invention of modern political myths and their parent ideologies is a continuous process with often profound (if not necessarily widespread or popular) historical roots, and any such historical division into 'periods' may be regarded as problematic. This is particularly relevant for the study of myths and ideology in that many of the important personages involved in the construction and reconstruction of myths are themselves the practical products of ideological debates which may have occurred a generation earlier in their youth - they are in many ways the children of the Constitutional Revolution. Indeed, it must be stressed, and it will be shown, that Reza Shah and in particular the intellectuals who originally supported him, were very much of their time, influenced by and reacting to political events in the late Qajar period, the Constitutional Revolution and its consequences. Indeed, they were arguably the capable products of a particularly fertile and

dynamic era in modern Iranian history.

Nevertheless, it can with justification be argued that Reza Shah's determined and single-minded pursuit of his goals, aided and assisted by an influential clique of competent bureaucrats and ideologues, makes the period of his rise and rule a pivotal one in the development of modern Iran and the Pahlavi state in particular. The period from 1921 to 1941 provides us with both an historical and practical framework and a reference point from which to analyse the development of political myth in the last 37 years of Pahlavi rule, as well as providing more explicit examples of ideological and mythic construction which itself provided Mohammad Reza Shah, eager to elevate the importance, to the point of sanctity, of his father and founder of the Pahlavi dynasty, with a rich reservoir of material. Of central importance to this thesis is the attempt by Reza Shah to identify himself with the principles of modernity and nationalism as he understood them. Indeed, it would be no exaggeration to argue that, in retrospect, and with particular reference to the development of dynastic nationalism, Reza Shah and his associates established the ideological blueprint of the Pahlavi period.

This chapter will be divided into two unequal parts. The first section will deal with the broad historical context, such as the background to the rise of Reza Shah, emphasising the fragmented nature of the Iranian polity in this period. Linked to this analysis will be a more detailed scrutiny of the Iranian intelligentsia, the personalities involved, and their disproportionate influence on ideological construction during the period. Lastly, there will be a brief discussion of the importance of emergent 'nationalism', arguably the most influential ideology of modern Iran, indicating its dominance in modern Iranian political

culture through its pervasive use in both establishment and oppositional literature.

The second, more comprehensive section, will deal exclusively with the ideological parameters identified through a reading of the available sources. Having first identified the broad ideological categories and noted the general strategies they served, the chapter will proceed to analyse the various developments in ideological construction throughout the period emphasising the inter-relationship between the competing ideologies and the areas of political myth development.

Background to the Rise of Reza Khan

Of central importance to any understanding of the rise of Reza Khan and the establishment of the Pahlavi dynasty, is the fragmentation of Iranian society, literally as well as intellectually, and the consequent tension this resulted in during this period. Reza Khan represented for many from diverse intellectual backgrounds, the solution to Iran's problems. If anarchy is but a stepping stone to absolute power, in intellectual terms, diverse intellectual movements, initially at least, voluntarily submitted to the immediate expression of ideological reification known as Reza Khan. Indeed, it is important to remember that Reza Khan was very much a product of the intelligentsia. To paraphrase Tulard, faced with internal or external threats to its interests, the Iranian intellectual elites invented a 'saviour'.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ J Tulard Napoleon - The Myth of the Saviour (trans Waugh) London, Methuen, 1984 pg 350

As such it is important to recognise that the rise of Reza Khan and all that he represented, though in some way fortuitous, was by no means an aberration. Iran's political elite had been wrestling for nearly a century with the gradual but evident decline of Iranian power, made increasingly stark by the blatant influence of foreign powers in the country, especially Britain and Russia. This 'presence' of foreign powers, not only in political matters, but in educational establishments, was the first real catalyst to change in Iran. With her own weakness apparent, certain Iranian politicians sought to stem and indeed reverse the decline by appropriating what they felt had lent success to the Western powers. Among the many factors discerned, such as education, the most important was widely considered to be a clear sense of national identity.

The new brand of Iranian intellectual who had been educated abroad or who had encountered Europeans within Iran began increasingly to see Iran's salvation in what can be termed 'secular nationalist' terms, though it must be stressed that only a very small minority considered national Iranian identity as antithetical to religion in general and Shi'a Islam in particular. Many indeed remained personally devout, but retained a deep mistrust and suspicion of particular aspects of the Shi'a hierarchy.⁵⁶

These new nationalists retained an influence which belied their small numbers, and ranged from the elitist, largely establishment figures drawn from the aristocracy who felt that reform could be achieved from within, to radicals, who argued for more fundamental

⁵⁶ The relationship between the intelligentsia and the *ulema* was a complex one and was not in all cases antagonistic, as is revealed in the role played by the *ulema* in the Constitutional Revolution.

structural reform, and at an extreme, chauvinists, who somewhat paradoxically, viewed all things foreign with suspicion. Something of the temperament of this new breed of Iranian nationalist can be gauged by the writings of Mirza Agha Khan Kermani, recognised as the first Iranian nationalist ideologue, who wrote in the 1890s, "The root of each of the branches of the tree of ugly character of Persia that we touch was planted by the Arabs and its fruit [sprang from] the seed sown from the Arabs. All the despicable habits and customs of the Persians are either the legacy and testament of the Arab nation or the fruit and influence of the invasions that have occurred in Persia."⁵⁷

That these men remained a minority within the political elite explains their relative lack of practical political success throughout the 19th century, however their disproportionate influence on Iranian political thought is proved by the success, albeit temporary, of the 1906 Revolution, which sought to impose a Western style constitution on the Qajar monarchy, complete with an elected assembly.⁵⁸ The subsequent failure of the Constitutional Movement to fulfil its promise, compounded by the political and economic dislocation of the First World War, in which an estimated 25% of the Iranian population died not only from the direct consequences of military occupation and conflict, but also

⁵⁷ Quoted in S Bakhsh Iran: Monarchy, Bureaucracy & Reform under the Qajars: 1858-1896 London, Ithaca Press 1978 pg 345.

⁵⁸ The Electoral Law of September 1909, was in many ways explicitly 'nationalistic'. Article 4 notes that elected deputies must be able to speak, read and write Persian, which in 1909 must still have been a minority of the population as a whole. See E G Browne The Persian Revolution 1905-1909 London, Frank Cass, 1966. The delay in political repercussions may be a consequence of the fact that for much of the 19th century the standard of living of the average Iranian actually rose, and that economic decline only set in the last two decades.

from widespread famine induced by a political and economic breakdown⁵⁹, was acutely felt by the intelligentsia, who not surprisingly felt their hopes betrayed by a combination, they argued, of internal dissent, encouraged by the Qajar court, and foreign intervention. The war of course, also made it even more apparent, to Iranians of all economic strata, who now also came into contact with foreigners, how impotent their country had become⁶⁰.

The attempted imposition of the Anglo-Persian Agreement in 1919 was the final straw for many Iranian nationalists, and in many ways was the single most important event which convinced the Iranian intelligentsia that drastic measures were needed to 'save' the country. Certainly, the British were taken aback by the depth of feeling against the Agreement, though paradoxically, the architect of the Agreement, Lord Curzon, was one of the first to publicly acknowledge the emerging nationalism in Iran. Added to this the increasing impotence of the Iranian government, based in Teheran, to govern beyond its own provincial borders, resulted in the growing frustration of many Iranians and the desire for increasingly radical measures. Members of the Iranian intelligentsia, ambitious for reform and progress, and frustrated by the failure of the Constitutional Movement and apparent public apathy, saw their salvation and Iran's, in the image of a 'strong man'. As one historian has commented, "The reformist intelligentsia rallied behind Reza Khan,

⁵⁹ M Zirinsky - Imperial Power and Dictatorship: Britain and the Rise of Reza Shah 1921-1926 IJMES vol 24, 1992, pg 640.

⁶⁰ G Hamblin The Pahlavi Autocracy in the Cambridge History of Iran Vol 7, CUP 1991 pg 214.

perceiving him as a stabilising, nationalist force."⁶¹ Significantly, this conviction was shared by the British, without whose passive acquiescence nothing could be achieved.⁶²

Aside from the persuasive practical arguments in favour of the emergence of a 'strong man', there were also important cultural factors. In the first place, it should be noted that the concept of a 'saviour' was not alien to the cultural world view of many Iranians whether the framework of reference was essentially 'Iranian' - there was widespread familiarity with the tales of the *Shahnameh*⁶³ - or Islamic - familiarity with the Imamate. There was another less conspicuous cultural factor, and that was the intellectual conditioning of many of the intelligentsia themselves, who had acquired an affinity for French revolutionary history and political thought⁶⁴. Of returning Iranian students in the 19th century, Hedayat wrote, "each holds under his arms [sic] a thesis about the French Revolution and wishes to play the role of Robespierre or Danton..."⁶⁵. The noted historian and intellectual of early 20th century Iran, Kasravi openly compared Iran to France when he wrote that, "In Tabriz during the Constitutional Revolution, as in Paris during the French Revolution, the sans-culottes reared their ugly heads. The driving force of these

⁶¹ M R Ghods Iranian Nationalism & Reza Shah in *Middle Eastern Studies*, 27,1, 1991, pg 37.

⁶² For Sir Percy Loraine's role see: M Zirinsky *op.cit.* Interestingly, the British assessment may have been too pessimistic owing to their own conflicting reports. For sympathetic opinions among other foreign nationals see: Powell By Camel & Car to the Peacock Throne, New York, Garden City 1923, pg 307.

⁶³ See, Vita Sackville-West Passenger to Teheran London, Hogarth Press, 1926, pg 105, pg 121.

⁶⁴ See B Hopper The Persian Regensis, *Foreign Affairs*, 13, 2, 1935, pg 298.

⁶⁵ Quoted in Menashri Education and the Making of Modern Iran New York, Cornell University Press, 1992, pg 73.

men was towards anarchy. First the overthrow of the despotic order, and then to turn upon the rich and propertied classes. It was with the backing of these men that Danton and Robespierre rose to power. In Tabriz no Dantons and Robespierres appeared, but if they had we would also have had a 'reign of terror'."⁶⁶ Clearly, Reza Khan's admiration for Napoleon would be well received by an intelligentsia wary of the potential for revolutionary anarchy⁶⁷.

The Intelligentsia

Reza Shah could not have risen to power without the active support of a politically influential intelligentsia who virtually willed him into existence. It was their views that prepared the intellectual ground for the establishment of the Pahlavi dynasty and the policies that followed. Both Pahlavi monarchs enjoyed ambiguous if often tense relations with the Iranian intelligentsia, but while Mohammad Reza Shah ultimately sought a limited accommodation, Reza Shah became increasingly dismissive of their contribution as his reign progressed.

These men were drawn almost exclusively from the aristocracy and the propertied middle classes; those who could afford expensive Western education. Among their ranks were

⁶⁶ Quoted in Abrahamian The Crowd in Iranian Politics, Past & Present, vol 41, Dec 1968, pp 184-210.

⁶⁷ The admiration for Napoleon in Iranian political circles had been growing since the early 19th century; see A Amanat Nasir al Din Shah and the Iranian Monarchy London, I B Tauris 1997. Reza Shah was also an ardent admirer of Nader Shah; see comment by the British diplomat Mallet, quoted in Zirinsky *op. cit.* pg 656.

included, landlords, courtiers, businessmen, members of the literati, journalists and clerics. Although they may have argued as to the best method of reform, they all agreed on the fundamental aims, which could be summarised as 'unity', 'centralisation', and an end to 'foreign interference' in Iranian affairs. In 1917, Hassan Taqizadeh, the noted Iranian nationalist and Azerbaijani Democrat described Iran as such, "one homogenous nation...composed of one pure race, one culture, and one encompassing civilisation with one single historical heritage"⁶⁸.

To achieve these aims the intelligentsia sought to reorganise the regional administration on a 'rational' basis, settle the tribes, distinguish politics from religion (views nevertheless varied as to what this meant in practice), establish full constitutionalism, a full welfare system, provide universal free education, and propagate the Persian language⁶⁹. Though some reformists argued for greater regional devolution, viewing centralisation as a weakness to be exploited by foreign powers, by the end of the First World War, these people were in a minority, and it would be fair to say that in the initial stages the vast majority of the intelligentsia supported what Reza Khan purported to represent.

Of the 'Teheran clique'⁷⁰, as one British diplomat labelled the intelligentsia, a number were

⁶⁸ Quoted in M Reza Ghods *op. cit.* pg 36. Azerbaijan, one of the most populous provinces in Iran continued to provide the country with some of its leading statesmen and intellectuals. This was in part due to its economic and political importance throughout the Qajar period as well as its proximity to the outside world. Tabriz was effectively the gateway for new ideas coming from Russia and the Ottoman Empire.

⁶⁹ The programme of Davar's Renewal party; FO 371 9024 E6348 dated 14/5/23. It has since been argued that Davar personally favoured enlightened autocracy to constitutionalism.

⁷⁰ See FO 371 9024 E4612 dated 7/5/23.

especially prominent and worthy of mention⁷¹. Indeed, for at least the first half of his rule, Reza Shah was aided by a handful of extremely competent officials, one of whom arguably was the actual architect of many of the reforms⁷². As the British embassy noted in 1929, "When in February 1927 the then Persian government was reconstituted it was very soon realised that apart from questions connected with the army, the control of the whole machinery of government was centred in three men, Teymourtache, the Minister of Court, who was outside the Cabinet but yet dominated it; Prince Firuz, the Minister of Finance; and Davar, the Minister of Justice. These three men were intimate friends and for more than two years completely controlled the situation; it was an open secret."⁷³. Teymourtache was probably the most influential member of this triumvirate and he knew it. Clive later added, "The present arrangement whereby the Minister of Court is a grand vizier in all but name would appear to be a temporary expedient, due to the personality of Teymourtache and the idiosyncrasies of the Shah. It is unconstitutional and no-one expects it to last."⁷⁴

Mirza Abdul Hussein Khan Teymourtache was a major Khorasani landowner. Educated

⁷¹ For a more comprehensive list, see Abrahamian, Iran Between two Revolutions Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1982, pp 102-169, and the various Foreign Office lists of 'Personalities', for example FO 371 12300 E3366 dated 2nd August 1927.

⁷² After Teymourtache's fall, the foreign press attributed much of the reforms to him, "...down to, or up to, the Shah's social and hygienic education," much to the annoyance of Foroughi - FO 371 16941 E879 dated 28/1/33. For a long overdue reassessment of Teymourtache see, M Rezun Reza Shah's Court Minister: Teymourtache International Journal of Middle East Studies, (IJMES) 12, 1980, pp 119-137

⁷³ FO 371 13782 E4703 dated 16/9/29. See also Forbes Conflict: Angora to Afghanistan London, Cassell, 1931, pg 185.

⁷⁴ FO 371 13782 E6245 dated 2/12/29. Also FO 371 15341 E3611 dated 11/7/31.

at a military school in St Petersburg, he spoke French and Russian well, and understood English. He had travelled throughout Europe, including Germany, France and Switzerland and was recognised as an ardent nationalist and main architect of the repeal of the capitulations. Prince Firuz Mirza GCMG, a great great grandson of Fath Ali Shah, and had been educated in law at Beirut and Paris and was a member of the Paris Bar. He was fluent in French and understood English. Ali Akbar Khan Davar, the true technocrat, was the son of a minor court official. He studied law at Geneva University, having served in a number of ministries. Mirza Mohammad Ali Khan Foroughi, who held a number of senior posts in the 1920s before going out of favour had been educated in law and had been a colleague of Malkam Khan. Founder of the first Freemasons lodge in Tehran in 1909, he spoke French and English.

Among the literati who supported Reza Khan was Ahmad Kasravi, who later went on to write a comprehensive history of the period before being assassinated by Shi'a radicals in 1946; the poet Eshqi, who strongly attacked the Anglo-Persian Agreement, and who later wrote an operetta entitled *Resurrection* in which the great kings of Iran and Zoroaster returned to witness the pitiful state of their country; Bahar, and Arif who openly glorified the Zoroastrian faith. As one historian writes, "...the fact remains that they and their fellow poets have guided the public along the channels of patriotic thinking."⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Shafeq Patriotic Poetry in Modern Iran Middle East Journal VI, 4, 1952, pg 428.

A Concept of Nationalism

It is argued that 'nationalism' was and remains the paramount ideology of modern Iran, but it achieved this by being a broad church, and nationalist ideas were certainly not the monopoly of the intelligentsia who initially sustained Reza Shah. It is important to recognise that despite popular apathy the language of nationalism was not alien to the majority of the Iranian population⁷⁶. Although the majority of the population may not have been politically aware, or understood the precise rationale behind the activities of the political elite, the latter were not detached culturally from those they led, though they may have at times followed their passions to an extreme. In order to better appreciate the dominance of nationalist conceptions in early 20th century Iranian political culture it is helpful to look at oppositional literature, largely republican, which remained firmly embedded in nationalist ideology⁷⁷.

Three main opposition groups can be distinguished, the Republicans, the Communists and the *ulema*. Of the three, the Republicans were the strongest and present at the beginning of the period under discussion; the *ulema* were initially mollified by the rejection of republicanism in favour of monarchy, and the Communists emerged in the latter part of

⁷⁶ Loraine writes on his arrival in Iran in 1921: "...it seems to me that there is a far more effective and coherent public opinion than when I formerly knew this country and it is intensely nationalistic." And later, "These are my first impressions, the strongest is that of a growing national feeling." FO 371 6408 E14290 dated 23/12/21.

⁷⁷ A disaffected Iranian poet hired by the BBC Persian service likened Reza Shah to the tyrant Zohak and asked his listeners where such men as Fereidun and Kava were to remove this tyrant - see D Wilbur Reza Shah Pahlavi: the Resurrection and Reconstruction of Iran New York, Exposition Press, 1975, pg 207.

Reza Shah's reign from disaffected intellectuals⁷⁸.

It is important to recognise that republicanism, with its broad aim of eliminating 'royal and clerical despotism', enjoyed the support of significant sections of the Iranian political elite even dividing loyalties in the army⁷⁹, and was probably seriously considered by Reza Khan, prior to his visit to Qom⁸⁰. Many of those who later supported the installation of Reza Khan as Shah, still expressed the view that Reza was shah for life, and that his reign was a transitional one, for Iranians who had become used to the concept of a shah. Indeed as Reza Shah's attempt to impose a 'dynastic nationalism' increasingly failed, this option became more realistic. Many voiced the opinion that the *valiahd* (heir-apparent) would not succeed his father. The Republican pamphlets of the period were a mixture of ridicule (of the person of Reza Shah) and nationalist hyperbole. One article printed in India, and signed 'The Committee of Action of Persian Republicans', seems to set the blueprint for opposition criticism of the Pahlavi state right up until 1979. It read in part, "The government of Reza Khan expends over 50% of the state budget for military purposes, not in the interests of Persia but in the interests of Great Britain, and in order to the better to hold down the native population."⁸¹

⁷⁸ In a similar vein a proto Nazi Party was also set up, though quickly disbanded - FO 371 20835 E3685 dated 5/7/37.

⁷⁹ See FO 371 10145 E2914 dated 1/4/23. See also the 'Times' 19/3/24. A number of newspapers supported the establishment of a republic - see Abrahamian Iran Between.. pg 133.

⁸⁰ FO 371 10145 E3748 dated 29/4/23.

⁸¹ FO 371 15348 E3795 dated 4/6/1931; also FO 371 15352 E5662 dated 4/11/31.

Among the left wing opposition was Dr Taqi Arani, who increasingly turned to Marxism the more disillusioned he became with the Pahlavi state. Despite this, he remained fervently nationalistic, even chauvinistic, and argued in favour of the cleansing of the Persian language, the re-establishment of the centralised state of the Sassanians and the restoration of Zoroastrianism. In an article in *Iranshahr* he openly hailed Cyrus the Great and Darius the Great as among Iran's great heroes and in an article in *Farangistan* wrote that, "All patriotic Iranians, especially the officials in the Ministry of Education, must do their very best to replace Turkish with Persian. We must send Persian journals, Persian newspapers, Persian textbooks, and Persian teachers to Azerbaijan - that ancient homeland of Zoroaster and of the Aryans."⁸² The *ulema* were clearly most against the nationalist mood, and given the policies of the nationalists, were in many ways justified. However, even within this group, those who became politically active were popularly recognised as patriots. Many clerics were involved in the Constitutional Revolution and formed alliances with the nationalists, including importantly the prominent cleric Modarris, who was a fervent opponent of the Anglo-Persian Agreement and was recognised as a patriot.

Defining the Ideological parameters

The following ideological categories have been defined for the purpose of facilitating analysis. They provide a framework for ideological reference and suggest the major resources for the development of political myth. Since, "...Reza Shah never formulated a systematic blueprint for modernisation - writing no major thesis, delivering no grand

⁸² Quoted in Abrahamian *Iran between...* pg 156.

speeches, and leaving behind no last testaments..."⁸³, the current parameters are the result of retrospective construction, and are not definitive or exclusive. As will be seen, these categories will be added to and modified in the next chapter, to accommodate the pluralistic political environment which emerged after the abdication of Reza Shah.

It is unlikely that any of the major participants, avowed Marxists excepted, felt that they were following a particular ideology, although concepts such as 'nationalism' and 'modernisation' would have been familiar to them, especially those familiar with the West. As such, some of the policy initiatives, labelled here as tools, or symbols of ideological expression, do more often than not, express different ideological proclivities simultaneously. As argued, political myth is both the summation of one ideological construction while at the same time opening up the possibility of interpretation. For example the European hat was at once defined as 'modern' as well as, ironically, a nationalist icon dating to the Sassanians.⁸⁴ Indeed the ambiguity which existed between the parameters and the tension this caused facilitated political myth.

It should also be noted, that much like his son, Reza Shah was not himself effective in the dissemination of his views and plans. Arfa effectively concedes this when he writes, "The Shah received no help from the non-politically minded masses of the people, in whose interest his reforms were directed, but although the secret which he kept about the projected reforms, which were all to the advantage of the working classes, did not allow

⁸³ *Ibid* pg 140.

⁸⁴ D Wilbur *op. cit.* pg 166

them to realise the extent of the Shah's solicitude for them, little by little people understood that he was working for them, especially in the country....*all this even though not advertised in advance by State propaganda* [italics added], created a feeling of confidence in the public at large."⁸⁵

For the purposes of this period five ideological parameters have been identified, of which three can be regarded as major and two as relatively minor. The most pervasive ideology is that of nationalism.

- a) Nationalism;
- b) Modernisation;
- c) Dynastic Nationalism;
- d) Militarism;
- e) Traditionalism/Patrimonialism.

a) Nationalism:

Reza Shah and his government were intensely nationalistic.⁸⁶ A product of their age, they nevertheless occasionally took nationalistic concepts to an extreme and found it

⁸⁵ H Arfa Under Five Shahs London, J Murray, 1964, pg 283.

⁸⁶ As Haas wrote in 1945, "Far from talking of a `deified nation as Mussolini did, he did assign to the nation a place in the scale of values that came very near to such a conception." R Haas Iran New York, Columbia University Press, 1945 pg 169.

contradicting another major ideological cornerstone, that of modernisation.⁸⁷ Arguably the 'nationalism' espoused by Reza Shah and the intelligentsia was a consequence of 'modernism' as they understood it, however the tendency of nationalists to seek refuge in tradition (itself often recently 're-discovered') and to evoke sentiments of self-sufficiency often brought nationalism into conflict with the needs of rapid modernisation⁸⁸. The aim of the government in espousing nationalism was twofold. In the first place nationalist ideology was a tool of unification; while at the same time distinguishing the 'Iranian nation', from the 'outsiders'.

It may be added to this, that nationalism would prepare the country for modernisation. The creation of a homogenous nation, was to be achieved through policies which symbolised unity, and policies of standardisation, while fragmentation would be achieved by pursuing policies which accentuated the differences between Iranians and outsiders, as well as policies which encouraged the creation of social problems. It should be stressed that the ambition was not to simply unify the country in practical terms, but to create an emotional bond. Reza Shah was very clear that he intended to change attitudes among Iranians, and to instill a sense of patriotism.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ A commentary in *The Times* dated 29/7/30, argued, "When the choice has to be made between the two ideals of national self-sufficiency and modernisation, the former is preferred, with the unfortunate result in Persia of the backwardness in public works."

⁸⁸ It can be argued that in this period, with the Fascist dictatorships of Europe as the model, the nationalist need for self-sufficiency was not necessarily in conflict with ideas of modernisation, however it was likely to cause a conflict of interest when the desire for rapid development necessitated a measure of technology transfer.

⁸⁹ See Reza Shah's speech to the 9th Majlis, quoted in Wilbur *op. cit.* pp 149-150

b) Modernisation:

Closely related, though as noted above, sometimes in conflict with the predominant ideology of nationalism, was the ideology of modernisation.⁹⁰ Reza Shah and his government had a particular conception and vision of modernity which they sought to implant upon Iranian society. Many of the policies which served nationalism also served the ideology of modernisation, and vice versa. In many ways, nationalism was itself viewed as an aspect of 'modernity'. Modernisation provided the government with legitimacy, a degree of unity, and the converse, fragmentation, by distinguishing between those who were 'progressive' and those who were 'reactionary' or 'backward'. Modernity, as understood by the intelligentsia, was by extension progressive, and a government which pursued progressive policies was legitimate⁹¹; rational bureaucracy provided unity and cohesion, while those who disagreed with this particular conception of modernity were differentiated as backward and regressive.

c) Dynastic Nationalism:

Central to this thesis is the parameter of dynastic nationalism. As the label suggests it involved the linking of the dynasty to nationalism in the hope that it would be perceived

⁹⁰ FO 371 21895 E4770 dated 30/7/38 notes photos of a tour of an aircraft factory carefully excluded British technicians.

⁹¹ FO 371 12286 E4109 dated 10/9/27: Thus Teymourache's Iran-e No Party was committed to, "...the progress of Persia through the power of Reza Shah to civilisation and modernity." There is sufficient evidence to suggest that however unpopular Reza Shah may have become, people admired and respected what he had achieved, see FO 371 15341 E5391 dated 29/10/31.

as inseparable by the public. This was an ideological construct which intended to combine the other parameters within the person of the Shah, and in so doing, to institutionalise the dynasty and make it the focus rather than for instance, pure nationalism or modernisation. As argued, this process of personalisation made it amenable to the construction and development of political myth.

With the aforementioned ideologies, the dynasty and the person of Reza Shah were justified in the assistance they lent to the goal of creating a nation-state, or modernisation. But the dynastic nationalism espoused by the Shah and his most ardent admirers, elevated the role of the dynasty and shifted the focus. This process was noticed by Haas, who significantly says of Reza Shah, "Apparently it was his policy to divert the energies invested in religion to the nation and the dynasty. He was, of course, too wise and rationalistic to claim for himself any quasi-divine position, but it was his constant endeavour to make the people consider him and his dynasty as the great symbols of the nation and to implant veneration and love of the dynasty in the hearts of the people"⁹²

d) Militarism

Any analysis of the ideas which shaped and guided and the reign of Reza Shah would be deficient without the inclusion of the following categories. Both militarism and 'traditionalism' were important in the main because of the Shah's personal encouragement of these trends, which he regarded as essential to the retention of power.

⁹² Haas Iran pg 169.

Of the two 'militarism' was the more obvious. The Shah never tired of telling people that he was a soldier first and foremost and he recognised that his power rested with the growing army. For Reza Shah, the army, and military life in general represented all that was good about Iran describing it as, "the soul of the nation"⁹³. It was the lack of a good army, it was argued, which had resulted in decline during the Qajar period. The army was to be the ultimate tool in re-shaping both the Iranian mentality and wielding the country into a unified whole, principally through conscription, though the army was also intended to educate the public through various programmes.⁹⁴ The discipline of a modern military would serve as an example which the modern nation would emulate, thus providing an educational, moral as well as practical tool for the dissemination of patriotism. The importance of the armed forces for nation building was of course common in this period in Ataturkist Turkey as well as much of Europe.

e) Traditionalism:

The practice of 'traditionalism' was intended to legitimise the Pahlavi dynasty in the eyes of the old aristocracy and the Shi'a hierarchy. It was aimed at reassuring these important sections of society that there would be more continuity than change. On the whole, as Reza Khan he was more able and willing to utilise traditionalism than he was after becoming Shah when he found little need to consistently cultivate the support of these sections of society. However, it is argued that ultimately Reza Shah did follow a well-

⁹³ D Wilbur Reza Shah... pg 95

⁹⁴ M R Ghods Government and Society in Iran, 1926-34 Middle Eastern Studies, 27, 2, 1991, pg 223.

established pattern of patrimonialism, because although he expressed contempt for the feudal landowners, he himself joined their ranks as the largest landowner in Iran.⁹⁵ The contradictions between traditionalism and modernisation was one essential tension which encouraged the reification of a complex of ideas here defined as dynastic nationalism, within his person. It is in this process that political myth - the personalisation of ideology - becomes explicit.

The Rise & Rule of Reza Shah

Although all five ideological parameters were in evidence throughout the rise and rule of Reza Shah it is argued that the importance of the parameters fluctuated. Both modernisation and nationalism were central to the ideological foundations of the Pahlavi state and continued to be explicitly promoted in government literature, speeches and the media. Although it is at times difficult to distinguish between these two pivotal parameters, (indeed ideas of modernisation were rarely expounded by Reza Shah himself who preferred to derive his rhetoric in the language of nationalism) it can be argued that as the reign progressed the emphasis shifted from modernisation to nationalism. The centrality of these parameters should not however detract from both militarism and traditionalism which both continued to play an implicit role in the ideological complex. Militarism, though never explicitly promoted was central to Reza Shah's world-view, while traditionalism was exploited when politically expedient or convenient for the ideological and practical establishment of the Pahlavi monarchy. Dynastic nationalism, and

⁹⁵ M R Ghods *op. cit.* pg 219, argues that, "Traditionalism and patrimonialism, and not any ideological blueprint, guided his rule."

the cult of the individual gained increasing ground as the reign progressed, ultimately subsuming the other ideological parameters, though it must be stressed that eulogies to the 'saviour' were present during Reza Khan's rise to power and assumption of the crown.

The Construction of Power 1921-1926: Modernisation & Nationalism

The rise of Reza Khan from an officer in the Cossack regiment to dynastic founder is a matter of continuing controversy, and as a result would continue to provide fodder for political myth construction throughout the Pahlavi era and beyond. The nature of the coup and his consolidation of power, along with the fact that Reza Khan was already identified by some with the persona of national saviour, encouraged the development of political myth which at the same time allowed his rise to be interpreted in widely differing ways. The Pahlavi dynasty in effect began with an essential tension of problematic legitimacy.

British involvement in the coup which brought Reza Khan to political prominence and installed the government of Seyyid Zia Tabatabaie in 1921 can no longer be dismissed. However the degree of direct involvement from Whitehall as opposed to the energetic responses of local British military and diplomatic officials, was probably not as great as opponents of the Pahlavi regime have argued⁹⁶. Belief in British involvement in the establishment of the Pahlavi state was to haunt Reza Shah and his son as much if not more

⁹⁶ See Zirinsky *op. cit.* pg 639 "...Britain did less than is believed by those who accept the myth, but more than London thought at the time..." On the other hand a British embassy report from 1932 concedes that the British put Reza Shah 'on the throne'. FO 371 16077 E2844 dated 8th June 1932.

than the 1953 coup was to cause problems of credibility for Mohammad Reza Shah. Indeed the popular view that the British were involved in the 1921 coup was noted as early as March 1921 by the American embassy and relayed to the Iran desk at the Foreign Office⁹⁷, and Reza Khan was sufficiently concerned to issue a proclamation emphasising his authorship of the coup⁹⁸.

In the immediate aftermath of the coup, Reza Khan sought to consolidate his power base with the traditional political elite whom Tabatabaie had targeted in his proclamation as the causes of Iran's recent political and economic woes⁹⁹. The result was a second 'coup' which witnessed the removal of Tabatabaie and his replacement by Qavam as prime minister. Reza Khan, who had been appointed Minister of War by a grateful Tabatabaie was now dispatched by Qavam to restore order and central government authority throughout the country, a task which Reza Khan pursued with singular determination earning the admiration of the British Minister Loraine who was impressed by the apparent transformation of the Iranian military¹⁰⁰. This vigorous pursuit of central government authority, which resulted in Britain effectively abandoning its protégé, the Sheikh of Mohammerah, also allowed the new Minister of War to consolidate his personal standing within the new army.

Indeed, the first few years of Reza Khan's rise to power, although frequently interpreted

⁹⁷ Zirinsky *op. cit.* pg 646

⁹⁸ Wilbur *op. cit.* pp 62-63

⁹⁹ FO 371 6403 E4906 dated April 1921.

¹⁰⁰ FO 371 9024 E4612 dated 7th May 1923

and justified as a powerful exhibition of the new nationalist mood, and eagerness to impose a 'modern' government structure upon the country through centralisation, carries hallmarks of the traditional patrimonial consolidation of power so evident in the rise to power of many of Iran's previous kings and dynastic founders, including Shah Ismail, Shah Abbas the Great, Nader Shah and Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar, all of whom had to effectively 'construct' an army, with which to 're-conquer' Iran¹⁰¹. As such, the restoration of central authority, although legitimised by the intelligentsia as an essential precursor to the implementation of reforms which would restore national dignity, can easily be interpreted as the traditional consolidation of power by a warlord with dynastic ambitions, with the new army substituted for the traditional tribally based armies of the past. Certainly, the belief that the Pahlavi army was little more than an manufactured tribe surfaced many times in opposition rhetoric, not least during the Revolution of 1978-79. At the same time being the military arm of a coup engineered by the liberal intelligentsia, Reza Khan's rise to prominence broadly echoed the coup d'etat of the 18th of Brumaire, allowing pro-Western modernists to draw their own parallel and impose their own interpretation on events.

During this period Reza Khan's speeches appealed to both nationalist and traditionalist sentiment, but paid little direct attention to the language of modernisation. Thus in the aftermath of the first coup in 1921 Reza Khan addressed Iranians with terms such as 'fellow countrymen', and ending with 'Long live the Persian nation.'¹⁰² Again, prior to one

¹⁰¹ Given that Nader Shah was one of Reza Khan's heroes this parallel cannot have escaped his attention.

¹⁰² FO 371 6403 E4906 dated April 1921

military operation in 1923, the Iranian historian Makki has Reza Khan urging his men on with words that echo those of the young General Bonaparte, "Gentlemen! Our homeland stands in urgent need of its brave sons; it is up to you to show lofty resolve in the service of your country, and to make efforts to secure the independence of your country. Have positive confidence that through unity and the principle of centralisation of the forces, you will harvest the fruits of magnanimity. Be alert and diligent; the dust of Ardashir is watching over you."¹⁰³ The language of modernisation was chiefly the preserve of the intelligentsia, including Seyyid Zia, and Davar, the future Minister of Justice whose 'Renewal' Party issued a programme in 1923 urging the reorganisation of government on rational lines and the creation of a welfare state.¹⁰⁴

In the meantime, the foundations of dynastic nationalism were being laid by literati impressed by the Minister of War's practical achievements. Thus the poet Arif wrote, "The winds of the Sardar Sepah [Reza Khan] will revive this country from the verge of destruction...".¹⁰⁵ It should also be remembered that Western commentators were also keen to rationalise and hence legitimise Reza Khan's rise and rule in this manner. Thus Loraine, who admired the practically minded and forthright Reza Khan argued that the recent upsurge in military spirit was entirely due to Reza Khan's leadership¹⁰⁶ and that any

¹⁰³ Makki *Tarikh-I bist Saleh-ye Iran* (A twenty year history of Iran, Tehran 1944-46, pg 354. The public reaction to Reza Khan's 'imperious' edicts and declarations was not always sympathetic - see Katouzian *Nationalist Trends in Iran 1921-26* IJMES 10 1979, pg 539.

¹⁰⁴ FO 371 9024 E6348 dated 14 May 1923

¹⁰⁵ Quoted in M R Ghods *Iranian Nationalism and Reza Shah* Middle Eastern Studies, 27, 1, 1991, pg 42.

¹⁰⁶ FO 371 9024 E4612 dated 7th May 1923

hope for the salvation of the country lay in his hands¹⁰⁷.

Consolidating his power base in the army, Reza Khan moved to secure the premiership at the end of 1923, relying on fervent nationalism to legitimise his political ascent.¹⁰⁸ In a speech on November 12th 1923, which highlighted the emphasis of nationalism over modernisation, Reza Khan argued that Iranian nationality had to be reconstructed not only through the elimination of internal dissent, which had been achieved, but through a change in attitudes, especially towards foreigners. "It is incumbent upon every Iranian to maintain the glory of Iranian history by learning to rely upon himself and upon the powerful force of the nation.....Compatriots! It is a thousand times better to starve in poverty and destitution rather than to prostrate yourselves in humiliation before foreigners."¹⁰⁹ At the same time, the importance of the army was emphasised as witnessed in a discussion with the American traveller Powell, "In the course of a long and very candid conversation with Reza Khan I asked him what, in his opinion, was the most pressing need of Persia. 'A foreign loan', he answered promptly. 'And what would you do with it?' I asked him. 'Treble the size of the army.'¹¹⁰ On the 4th anniversary of the coup, Reza Khan described the army as the 'soul of the nation,'¹¹¹ in effect arguing that the army *was* the essence of Iran.

¹⁰⁷ FO 371 9024 E6353/E6928 dated 4th July 1923

¹⁰⁸ FO 371 [...] E11729/77/34 dated 30th October 1923

¹⁰⁹ Quoted in Wilbur *op. cit* pp 73-74.

¹¹⁰ Powell By Camel and Car to the Peacock Throne 1923 pg 298.

¹¹¹ Quoted in Wilbur *op. cit.* pg 95

One of the most serious reforms which Reza Khan sought to implement was that of universal conscription, which, as well as increasing the size and importance of the army, would have had a major impact on the social and economic life of the country. Indeed the imposition of conscription was one of the most visible and profound acts of 'modernisation' and as such at this stage he shifted once again to ally himself with the proponents of modernisation. The social and economic impact of such a move was cause for concern, and the *ulema* in particular were wary of the 'secularising' effects which two years military service might have on the country's youth. Having failed to get his way in the 4th Majlis, Reza Khan engineered elections for a more pliable 5th Majlis. This convened on 11th February 1924¹¹² and succeeded in ratifying a dramatic legislative programme which included compulsory 2 year military service, a cut in the court budget, the abolition of decorative court titles which had become the hallmark of the Qajar court (ie *al-mamalek*, *al-Saltaneh*), made it a statutory obligation for all citizens to obtain birth certificates and register family names, levied taxes on tea, sugar and income for the proposed trans-Iranian railway, standardised weights and measures, and reformed the country's calendar, replacing the lunar Hejri year with the old Iranian solar calendar (still dated from the flight to Medina) and adopting Persianised months in place of the Muslim ones.¹¹³

Reza Khan himself adopted the old Iranian name 'Pahlavi' as his surname, the name given to Middle Persian, the language of Sassanian Iran, though there is evidence he was

¹¹² FO 371 [..] E2431/455/34 dated February 16th 1924.

¹¹³ Abrahamian Iran Between... pg 132.

unaware of the origins of the name.¹¹⁴ A publication carrying the date to July-August 1924 (Dhu al Hijja 1342) entitled *Shahanshah Pahlavi* (itself an indication of the presence of dynastic nationalism prior to the deposition of the Qajar dynasty) argues that the name means 'civilised', 'free' and was accorded to the best of people during the Sassanian period. Indeed it argues that it was the family name of the Sassanian 'tribe' (*ta'efeh*) and this remarkable lineage represented the purest of Iranians - a formidable claim which would seek to provide Reza Khan with a royal pedigree without comparison¹¹⁵. The adoption of the name 'Pahlavi' is the earliest and clearest indication of Reza Khan seeking through political myth to alter his historical record in line with his image and aspirations. As argued the personalisation of ideology itself results in more political myth.

Reza Khan and his reformist allies in the 5th Majlis made one further foray into modernising discourse, and this was the promotion of republicanism which had been gaining ground among certain members of the intelligentsia and had even divided loyalties within the army.¹¹⁶ There is little doubt that Reza Khan was influenced by developments in Turkey, and although the British legation notes that he had dismissed notions of a

¹¹⁴ Wilbur *op. cit.* notes pg 229, that Reza Shah asked Ernst Herzfield what the name actually meant. Recent commentators have suggested that the 'Pahlavis' were one of the seven great aristocratic clans of the Achaemenian period.

¹¹⁵ It is possible that the date 1342, alludes to the solar calendar dating it to May 1963, yet the history recorded certainly does not carry on further than 1925 (suggesting perhaps that the actual publication date post-dated the authors dated introduction). The fact that it uses Islamic months would seem to indicate that it predates the reform of the calendar. Furthermore, there are none of the characteristic references to his son that would have appeared on official publications of this date.

¹¹⁶ For a comprehensive discussion see Vanessa Martin Mudarris, Republicanism and the rise to power of Riza Khan, Sardar Sipah Brismes Journal, Vol 21, 2, 1994, pp 199-210, 1995.

republic as early as 1923 following a trip to Qom¹¹⁷, there is evidence that he toyed with the idea a little while longer, encouraging the media to publish articles in favour of republicanism while at the same time attacking the decadent Qajars.¹¹⁸ Such ridicule of the Qajars of course served to elevate the person of Reza Khan who was perceived as everything the Qajars were not.

Thus the journal *Iranshahr* in an editorial entitled 'Republicanism and Social Revolution', suggested a strategy of universalisation when it argued that, "Today almost all of Europe, Including Russia, has adopted the republican system of government. There is no doubt in our minds that in the modern age the republican form of government is the best system of government..."¹¹⁹ Poets and writers were also reported to have been paid to ridicule the Qajar Ahmad Shah and write favourably about the republican movement. Thus the poet Arif wrote a poem entitled 'The Republican March' which included the following lines: "From the Angel Gabriel, afar, hear the soul stirring soul of Pahlavi, Arif, may Sardar Sepah [ie Reza Khan] live long in Iran, for he will lead the country facing extinction to its survival."¹²⁰ The Majlis even began to draw up a bill for the abolition of the monarchy and

¹¹⁷ FO 371 10145 E3748 proclamation dated 29th April 1923

¹¹⁸ FO 371 [...] E3512/255/34 Intelligence summary dated 1st March 1924. Money was also allocated to sympathetic members of the clergy. See also FO 371 [...] E3944/255/34. See also FO 371 [...] E3743/455/34 a useful diary of events on the republican movement, dated 1st April 1924 which notes that, "The abuse of the Kajars was accompanied by the by the most flattering remarks and praise of the Serdar Sepah, whom the papers proposed to elect President of the future republic."

¹¹⁹ H Kazemzadeh Republicanism and the Social Revolution in Iranshahr 2 (February 1924) pp 257-258. Quoted in Abrahamian Iran between.. pg 133.

¹²⁰ Quoted in Wilbur *op. cit.* pg 76.

deputies avidly scrutinised the American Constitution.¹²¹

Growing concern over the consequences of a republic witnessed a strong traditionalist surge against such a development, and even some members of the liberal intelligentsia, fearful of possible dictatorship, sought refuge in tradition. Thus a move intended to rid the country of 'royal and clerical despotism' instead resulted in a consolidation of royal and clerical tradition; a consequence Reza Khan could not ignore nor was indeed inclined to. On the 4th March 1924 it was noted that the *ulema* in Qom had declared a republic to be contrary to Islam, and indeed would mean the end of Islam.¹²² Mudarris, a staunch opponent of Reza Khan, was also known to be working against the establishment of a republic.¹²³ In the face of such opposition, Reza Khan, 'bowed' to establishment pressure, and as he had detached himself from Seyyed Zia Tabatabaie in 1921, now he moved to position himself firmly with the traditionalists.¹²⁴ Indeed according to one recent interpretation of events Reza Khan actively cultivated *ulema* support in order to restore some of his battered prestige following the apparent unpopularity of republicanism.¹²⁵

On April 1st 1924, Reza Khan had decided emphatically against the institution of a

¹²¹ See Vanessa Martin *op. cit.* pg 203, and Wilbur *op. cit.* pg 77.

¹²² FO 371 [...] E3944/255/34 Intelligence Summary dated 8th March 1924.

¹²³ FO 371 [...] E3945/255/34 Intelligence summary dated 15th March 1924.

¹²⁴ The apparent confusion over the popular status of republicanism can be witnessed in the pages of the 'Times' which carried two differing reports dated 19th March 1924.

¹²⁵ Vanessa-Martin *op. cit.* pg 210. See also FO 371 [...] E3743/455/34 dated 1st April 1924 reports Reza Khan's indecision and uncertainty over the popular response to republicanism.

republic, issuing a declaration which made clear his alliance with the traditionalists, “...from the very first both I and, indeed, the whole army have considered the care and the preservation of the glory of Islam as one of the greatest of our duties and objectives, and have always striven that Islam might advance daily in the path of progress and exaltation, and that the honour owed to sanctity might be completely observed and respected, therefore at the time when I went to Kum [sic] to bid farewell to the ulema, I took the opportunity of exchanging views with them, and finally we decided that it was expedient to proclaim to the whole people that the question of the republic be dropped...”¹²⁶ The fact that he publicly acknowledged his discussion with the *ulema* and that the decision was made after consultation undoubtedly strengthened his position with the traditionalists and the *ulema* in particular. Here, apparently, was man who would compromise with the traditional sources of authority and whose reformist zeal was tempered by respect for tradition.

Arguably, political weakness forced such a compromise with tradition and the traditionalist fear of an Ataturkist dictatorship was to a considerable extent assuaged by the alternative trajectory of a dynastic change rather than an abolition of the monarchy.¹²⁷ This was by no means a smooth process and although the Majlis began discussions for the deposition of the Qajars in 1924, the actual deposition was not ratified by the Majlis until 31st October 1925, when the government was temporarily entrusted to Reza Khan Pahlavi

¹²⁶ FO 371 [...] E3748/455/34 inclosure, prime minister’s proclamation from ‘*Sitareh Iran*’ dated April 1st 1924.

¹²⁷ FO 371/Persia 1926/34-11500 Annual report for 1925.

“pending the establishment of a final form of government.”¹²⁸ Within a month it was becoming apparent that Reza Khan would soon become Reza Shah though it was still not clear whether he would be a transitional monarch ‘for life’ or actually found a new dynasty.¹²⁹ This last debate was itself resolved in the next month, when the Majlis invested dynastic sovereignty in Reza Shah Pahlavi.

Reza Shah became king on the twin pillars of tradition and nationalism while at the same time purporting to be a force for modernisation. His first edicts acknowledged his debt to the forces of tradition by stressing the importance of Islam. He also adopted largely symbolic policies which emphasised the traditional patriarchal role of the monarch. He reduced the price of bread, urged women to be ‘moral’ in their everyday conduct and, in an act echoing the behaviour of the most ‘just’ of Iran’s past rulers, he instituted a series of ‘complaints boxes’ through which the ordinary man could make direct appeals to the Shah.¹³⁰ Nationalism was served by the fact that the deposed dynasty was ‘Turkish’ as against the ‘Persian’ character of the Pahlavis, as noted by The Times, “Under the Qajars, who were Turks, the mothers of princes in the line of succession had to members of the Royal tribe, consequently no son of a Persian mother could sit on the throne of Persia. In future this will be reversed.”¹³¹

¹²⁸ The Times dated 3rd October 1925. Although there was apparently little general interest in the deposition of the Qajars, there were reports that members of the clergy and merchants had “expressed amazement at the audacity of Reza Khan in aspiring to kingship.” See FO 371 [...] E7529/18/34 dated 19th November 1925.

¹²⁹ FO 371 10840 E7540 dated 21st November 1925.

¹³⁰ FO 371 10840 E7219/E7532 dated 23rd November 1925 & 8th December 1925.

¹³¹ The Times dated 13th December 1925. This was also commented upon by the British Embassy, see FO 371 10840 E7677.

The coronation ceremony, although replete with nationalist imagery, paid more heed to tradition than may have been expected from a modernising monarch, although as Loraine noted, difficulties arose when officials failed to discover the correct procedure from previous coronations, and that the only real guideline was that the crown had to be placed on the head of the Shah by the eldest member of the Imperial family; a possibility made less likely for a “dynasty of humble origin and recent creation.”¹³² In the event, the coronation ceremony was modelled upon the non-religious portions of the British coronation ceremony, while the act of crowning would be performed by the Shah himself. The mullahs were present at the ceremony, and there was no music in deference to religious sensibilities.

As the Shah sat on the throne, the *Imam-Jomeh* of Tehran proceeded with a speech sprinkled with verses from the Qoran, following which, the Minister of Court, Teymouratche, proceeded towards the throne with the ‘Pahlavi crown’ which according to Loraine combined, “the forms and *motifs* of European regalia with those of the tiaras of the Achaemenid and Sassanian dynasties. The crown was delivered to the Shah by both the minister of court and the “aged mullah of Khoi”, another symbolic gesture to the *ulema*, and was promptly placed by the Shah upon his head, thus associating himself not only with modernisation, but with Iran’s ancient dynasties. Additional regalia, included the sword of Nader Shah and a royal sceptre, which the Shah wore, while other artefacts of royalty not worn by the Shah included the swords of Shah Abbas the Great and Shah Ismail, Nader Shah’s bow and Shah Ismail’s armour.

¹³² FO 371 [...] T 6376/191/379 dated May 1st 1926.

The twin pillars of tradition and nationalism were evident in the Shah's coronation speech in which he stressed that, "...the object to which my special attention has been and will be directed is the safeguarding of religion and the strengthening of its basis, because I deem this as a measure which is beneficial for national unity and to the social morals of Persia..."¹³³ This was followed by a speech from the prime minister which quoted verses from Ferdowsi, after which the Shah left the palace in a glass coach flanked by outriders - one aspect of the ceremony which was definitely borrowed from Britain, although the presence of detachments of tribal levies in national costumes provided a more 'authentic' national and traditional flavour.

The Consolidation of Power: Nationalism and Modernisation

Until 1932, Reza Shah was assisted and very possibly guided by his Minister of Court, Teymourtash, who broadly shared the monarch's vision of a national renaissance taking Iran into the modern world. Arguably many of the policies adopted during this period were instigated and prepared by the Minister of Court, a probability not lost on the British legation who noted that, "Taimourtache [sic] is of course the prime mover in the present Nationalist policy of the Persian government..."¹³⁴ For the period up to Teymourtash's arrest, three policies will be detailed in order to highlight the development of the

¹³³ FO 371 [...] T 6376/191/379 inclosure document 87, dated Mayst 1926 - translation of Shah's speech from throne.

¹³⁴ FO 371 [...] E2316/526/34 dated 5th May 1927. See also M Rezun Reza Shah's Court Minister: Teymourtash IJMES 12 1980 pp 119-137.

ideological parameters and their relationships to one another as well as the growing primacy of nationalism within the ideological arena. All the parameters discussed above, save traditionalism, were to a greater or lesser extent promoted by the Pahlavi state in policies which dealt with conscription, the repeal of the capitulations and the reform of the judiciary, and the dress code.

The mood could be conveniently summarised by the programme of Teymourtash's *Iran-i No Party* (New Iran) which called for, "The independence of Persia under the banner of Pahlavi; the progress of Persia through the power of Reza Shah to civilisation and modernity; resistance to foreign influence; opposition to all reactionary and subversive ideas..."¹³⁵ The centrality of the person of the Shah is evident. In addition, the fact that *mullahs* were not permitted to join the new party confirmed the shift away from the traditionalists.¹³⁶ Indeed proponents of traditionalism were to find themselves largely in opposition to government policy and there is little evidence that the government sought to accommodate the views of traditionalists.

Among the most serious structural changes to be addressed was the continuing existence of 'capitulatory rights' which had been offered to foreign governments throughout the previous century and which provided for extra-judicial privileges for foreign citizens. Nationalist opinion viewed them as an affront to national dignity and sovereignty, and wanted their abolition. For this to be achieved, Iran needed a domestic judicial system

¹³⁵ FO 371 12286 E4109 Intelligence Summary, dated 10th September 1927.

¹³⁶ FO 371 12293 E3909 dated 13th September 1927. Clive described the party as 'Fascist'.

comparable to those operating in the West, and this in turn entailed removing judicial authority from the *ulema*. The decision to abolish the 'capitulations' was announced at the opening of the new Courts of Justice on 26th April 1927¹³⁷ and the British diplomat Clive, with a view to the position of the Anglo-Persian Company, expressed concern over the possibility of implementing a new judicial system complete with laws and a trained legal profession within a year.¹³⁸ The rapidity with which the Minister of Justice, Davar, was expected to implement the overhaul reflected a nationalist determination which superseded considerations of practicality and also revealed how concepts of modernisation took second place to the nationalist agenda. Although the dis-enfranchisement of the *ulema* was undoubtedly seen as a worthwhile consequence there is no evidence to suggest that it was the prime mover behind the decision.

The dominance of nationalism could also be witnessed in the implementation of a number of minor reforms in which Iranians were increasingly separated and distinguished from foreigners ranging initially from the justifiable - Iranians were no longer permitted to be hired as agents for foreign legations¹³⁹ - to (one year later) the increasingly sensitive, which required that the flags of foreign legations only be flown on special days, and that the term 'oriental' be dropped since it suggested inferiority.¹⁴⁰ It may be argued that in constructing their own political myths such as a new national flag and more positive

¹³⁷ The decision to reform the judiciary had been revealed earlier, see FO 371 12293 E1225, dated 14th March 1927.

¹³⁸ FO 371 [...] E2316/526/34 dated 5th May 1927.

¹³⁹ FO 371 12286 E4109 Intelligence Summary, dated 10th September 1927

¹⁴⁰ FO 371 13071 E4672 dated 24th September 1928.

terminology, the Iranians were determined to curtail and limit the myths of others.

The traditionalists, represented in the main by the *ulema* but also containing members of the traditional middle classes (*bazaaris*), were not prepared to accept the changes without a measure of resistance. The *ulema* began to agitate against the changes in the dress code which promoted the wearing of the Pahlavi hat and short jacket, especially among government employees, as well as the reforms in the judiciary which resulted in an eight day strike in Isfahan.¹⁴¹ Although the government had not made it compulsory there was evidence that the police and army were encouraging members of the public to make the change.¹⁴² The other cause for discontent was the implementation of conscription which again found widespread opposition among the traditional middle class who were concerned for the social and economic consequences of losing an adult male for two years to a state organisation. The main disturbances occurred in Isfahan and Shiraz where the bazaar closed down prompting the Shah to comment that, "the foreigners were still at work and had now succeeded in making trouble down there." The opposition was so strong that the Shah was persuaded to compromise with the *ulema* - although the choice of Teymourtash as negotiator was undoubtedly misplaced given *ulema* misgivings - arguing that the law would not be applied rigorously for many years, and that importantly there would be an option to buy oneself out of military service.¹⁴³

This compromise however represented only a temporary respite for the traditionalists as

¹⁴¹ FO 371 12286 E4109 Intelligence Summary, dated 10th September 1927

¹⁴² FO 371 [...] E353/95/34 dated 31st December 1928.

¹⁴³ FO 371 [...] E4979/520/34 dated 5th November 1927.

the emphasis shifted towards revisions in the dress code. The imposition of the new dress code, although incremental, was probably the most explicitly ideologically driven policy implemented by Reza Shah. Its aim was to change attitudes through imitating the fashion of the West - by dressing like the Europeans, it was hoped Iranians would begin to think like them. Although it failed to draw on subjects familiar to most Iranians, drawing its inspiration from an alien culture, it was arguably an attempt at mass identification with the principle of modernisation (as dictated by the West). It was the attempted personalisation of an ideology on an unprecedented scale and one that presaged the era of mass communications.

There was however a limit to the Shah's tolerance, and when the Queen was allegedly insulted by a mullah in Qum for apparently 'revealing' too much whilst visiting a shrine, Reza Shah reacted ferociously, reportedly entering the shrine with his boots on and beating the chief of police as well as the mullah in question.¹⁴⁴ Later in the year, following a visit by the King and Queen of Afghanistan, when the latter had appeared unveiled, Reza Shah used the opportunity to relax the strict dress code for women. Meanwhile the European style of dress was continually being encouraged and when a deputation of merchants all suitably attired in Pahlavi cap and frock coats went to see him, Reza Shah was, "enormously pleased and made them a little speech about uniformity in dress and manners, which, he said, [would] lead to uniformity in life and politics, and would finally wield Persia into a unified whole."¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ FO 371 13064 E2128 dated 23rd April 1928.

¹⁴⁵ FO 371 13071 E4672 dated 24th September 1928

Thus the dress code reflected not only nationalism and modernism, but in its uniformity, an aspect of militarism. Some Iranians indeed suggested that the Pahlavi cap appealed to the soldier in Reza Shah. As Clive noted when the dress code finally passed into legislation, the Pahlavi cap and frock coat had the unfortunate quality of making “the wearer look like a railway porter....Many believe that the Pahlavi cap is but a stage on the road to the adoption of the European hat and many would wish that it were so, but others believe that the somewhat vague military conception of the head-wear delights the heart of the Shah, and that it is likely to remain at least during his lifetime as the universal head-gear of his subjects.”¹⁴⁶

The law that was introduced to the Majlis at the end of 1928 instituted a series of fines and terms of imprisonment for those who failed to comply and although the *ulema* and the priests of other faiths were exempted there is evidence that the police and army were not especially discerning when it came to enforcement. The law was further added to when in 1930 the government ordered all school children to wear clothing made from Iranian cloth, extending the regulation a month later to all government employees.¹⁴⁷

The combination of unpopular conscription and dress laws, along with a rigorous policy of enforcement made the Shah increasingly unpopular especially with the traditional middle classes and aristocracy for whom the Shah made no pretence of tolerance. His visit to Shiraz at the end of 1929 is a good example of the pattern of developments when

¹⁴⁶ FO 371 13781 E353 dated 31st December 1928.

¹⁴⁷ FO 371 14538 E1804 dated 7^h April 1930, and FO 371 13542 E2447 dated 14th May 1930.

attempts to whip up some genuine enthusiasm for the visit and promote the myth of the saviour through the press, fell on largely deaf ears. The crowds that did turn up were organised by the local governor general, Abul Hasan Khan Pirnia who according to the local British consular official, “had worked like a trojan in the past month to stir up enthusiasm for the visit,” and in the event such was the security that few managed a glimpse of the Shah as he sped away in his car. This simply encouraged Shirazis in the view that the Shah was afraid. When presented with a delegation of notables, mullahs and merchants, the Shah ignored them or was perceived as rude, with the impression being that he preferred the company of the foreign legation representatives.¹⁴⁸

The disparity between the ideological determination of the government and the growing resentment and resistance of Iranian society was most obvious in the ambitious government programme of town planning which sought to replace traditional urban structures with ‘modern’ housing and boulevards on a perceived European model. As with the dress code, though familiarly ‘modern’ to those acquainted with the West, this materialisation of a concept of Western modernisation was essentially alien to the traditional political culture of Iran. The results at times impressed foreign observers, who remarked on the progress that had been made on road construction and upkeep, though others considered the developments to be superficial.

Forbes, writing in 1931, described Tehran as “slightly Hollywoodesque, for the new

¹⁴⁸ FO 371 13781 E95 dated 7th December 1929 notes that in Tabriz the police and army regularly tear “off the hats of aged sheikhs, trampling on them and otherwise destroying them.” On the visit to Shiraz the Shah is quoted as having accused the presented notables of being *muft-khur* (parasites).

streets looked as if they had not quite settled where they were going, and the rows of new houses, one room deep, were all frontage."¹⁴⁹ Favourable impressions aside, even the British embassy had to concede that, "houses that might impede the municipal schemes [were] being ruthlessly swept away with little or no compensation to the owners."¹⁵⁰ Under such circumstances it is not surprising that resistance to change mounted and in some cases new towns were simply left uninhabited, as one visit to a new town in Sistan revealed:

"This 'town' which had been constructed within the year by Sarhang Murteza Khan in anticipation of His Majesty's visit, is commonly known as 'the town of walls'. It is distinguished by the fact that it has no inhabitants, although giving the illusion of fine streets and sumptuous houses. There are some eight wide, straight avenues, brilliantly illuminated at night by electricity, bounded on either side by high white-washed walls and with quite magnificent porches at regular intervals, apparently the entrances of the houses of the wealthy. To those 'in the know' that is 'the sum and total' of the town, with the exception of the house, situated in a garden which the Shah occupied. Behind the walls and within the fine entrances are plots of waste land, on which there are not and never likely be, any buildings. The inhabitants continue to live in the ancient part of the town which His Majesty did not see. Sarhang Murteza informed me that His Majesty was well pleased with the 'new' town. He also complimented Hisam ud Dawla on his garish, modern dwelling and told Shaukat ul Mulk to learn from his nephew and bring his fine old

¹⁴⁹ Forbes Conflict: Angora to Afghanistan 1931 pg 105

¹⁵⁰ FO 371 13071 E5964 dated 17th December 1928.

Persian house at Birjand `up to date.'¹⁵¹

The reforms which were implemented in the first ten years on Reza Shah's rule (1921-31) were dramatic in their breadth and had a profound impact on Iranian society. They accelerated the pace of socio-economic change and added to the essential tension which had characterised Iran in the aftermath of the Constitutional Revolution. Questions remain as to how far the central government was able to penetrate the rural areas where the majority of the population still resided. That said, the fact that many peasants migrated regularly to towns for work or to sell produce meant that they too were affected by the changes, even if it was temporary.

By 1930, the triumvirate which had guided Reza Shah's policy was breaking apart. The Shah arrested Prince Firuz, the Minister of Finance for embezzlement, and within two years, the dominant personality of Teymourdash was also removed.¹⁵² Teymourdash was the first to be murdered, while Firuz survived until 1938, a few months after the energetic Davar committed suicide rather than face humiliation at the hands of his monarch.¹⁵³ Without the triumvirate to coordinate and check developments, policies were administered with even more haste and the cultivation of dynastic nationalism was emphasised with

¹⁵¹ FO 371 15341 E606 dated 21/1/31; see also FO 371 13781 E95 dated 7/12/29, street widening in Tabriz; FO 371 16076 E1458 dated 23/3/32, Shiraz; FO 371 16953 E1101 dated 27/2/33, new town of Tol-e Khosrow; Filmer *The Pageant of Persia*, Indiana, Bobs-Merrill, 1927, describes the development of Malayer. See also the `Times' 8/4/31.

¹⁵² FO 371 14542 E1804 dated 7th April 1930 & Rezun Reza Shah's...

¹⁵³ According to one book, Davar left a forthright letter for the Shah to read criticising the implementation of policies. See B Aqoli *Davar va adleyeh* (Davar and the administration of Justice) Tehran, Elmi Publishers, 1369 / 1990

increased vigour.¹⁵⁴

Institutionalising the dynasty - the politics of dynastic nationalism

The removal and murder of Teymourtash along with the break up of the triumvirate indicated that dynastic nationalism, with Reza Shah and the Pahlavi dynasty as the focus of political developments now superseded both nationalism and modernisation as the ideology of primacy. Though both continued to be promoted with vigour, threats to the security of the dynasty over-rid all other considerations. Teymourtash was simply the most visible and powerful of a series of able reformers and technocrats who were sacrificed because he feared their political ambition.¹⁵⁵ Similarly, despite charges of embezzlement, Prince Firuz's Qajar lineage had led the Shah to believe that there was going to be an imminent Qajar uprising.¹⁵⁶ In an atmosphere of growing paranoia it is natural that the two ideological constructs of militarism and dynastic nationalism would gain in emphasis.¹⁵⁷

Militarism was evoked in part because it pleased the Shah, but also because it consolidated the loyalty of a grateful army, while dynastic nationalism and the cult of personality that it entailed was in part a result of official obsequiousness in the face of the potential

¹⁵⁴ FO 371 16951 E610 dated 14th January 1933. Laments that with Teymourtash gone no one will stand up to the Shah.

¹⁵⁵ See Rezum Reza Shah's., who argues that it was popularly held that Teymourtash would succeed Reza Shah as the first President of a Persian Republic.

¹⁵⁶ FO 371 15341 E3611 dated 11th July 1931

¹⁵⁷ FO 371 14542 E1802 dated 7th April 1930 notes Teymourtash's discomfort at the increasing suspicions of the Shah.

consequences of the imperial displeasure. As the Shah became increasingly convinced of his identification with the principles of progress and national independence, so courtiers competed to reassure him of this, and to reinvent the past.

The importance of the army for the succession ensured that the crown prince became involved and identified with it from an early stage, and the Shah continued to give preferential treatment to soldiers in particular the officer corps, ensuring that ample funds were always allocated from the budget.¹⁵⁸ In his final dispatch Clive noted, "the artificial growth of militarism in what is essentially a nonmilitary country. The arrogance and indiscipline towards the civil population of the officers and men of this new army are growing more marked. The Persian soldier today carrying his rifle does not hesitate to level it at any civilian on the slightest provocation, real or imagined...The newly enrolled conscripts are the worst offenders...The danger which 10 years ago existed from banditry is today tending to increase from the forces called into being to suppress it."¹⁵⁹

At the end of 1931 the Shah ordered an amendment to the conscription law requiring all students of theology to perform military service after the completion of their studies thereby eroding the concessions he had previously granted the *ulema*. As one diplomat noted, "The Shah has not forgotten the instrument by which he rose to power, and continues to take a deep and personal interest...They profit by their importance in the eyes of their royal master and, though naturally timid, adopt a swashbuckling attitude and strut

¹⁵⁸ FO 371 13542 E6707 dated 3rd December 1930

¹⁵⁹ FO 371 15341 E3611 dated 11/7/31. Also FO 371 17907 E1133 dated 31/1/34. A notorious case of favouritism was recorded in *The Times* 28/11/33.

about the streets of the capital shouldering their civilian brethren into the gutter.”¹⁶⁰

The fear, distrust and disdain which he engendered in the general populace and the traditional middle classes in particular contrasted markedly with the steady stream of eulogies which emanated from government officials.¹⁶¹ The closing session of the 8th Majlis saw a number of deputies compete to praise the Shah. The President of the Majlis, Mirza Hussein Khan Dadgar argued that the 8th Majlis had been successful, “owing entirely to the wisdom and firmness of His Imperial Majesty the Shah....Mirza Khalil Khan Fahimi then eulogised the President for his self denial, his calm temper and his impartiality, and went on to allude to the happy results obtained and reforms realised under the aegis of His Majesty. Another speaker...observed that the people of Persia ought to thank God for giving them such a sovereign as Riza Shah Pahlavi.”¹⁶²

As Hoare summarised, “..the sum and substance of the matter...is that nothing has any existence in this country but for the grace and creative will of the supreme mind and no man has any personality or authority but by the imperial inspiration. In fact the Lord *he* is God.”¹⁶³ To complement the rhetoric, lavish festivals were organised in commemoration of the Shah’s birthday, in a clear example of the naturalising tendency political myth, seeking to embed a particular concept within popular culture. In some cases nevertheless,

¹⁶⁰ FO 371 17907 E1133/1133/34 dated 31 January 1934.

¹⁶¹ FO 371 16953 E1101/1101/34 dated 27th February 1933

¹⁶² FO 371 16941 E878/47/34 dated 28th January 1933

¹⁶³ FO 371 16941 E879/47/34 dated 28th January 1933. See also FO 371 17890 E56 dated 6th December 1933 in which concern is expressed over the ‘insistence’ of the use and ‘arrogance’ of the title *Shahanshah* (king of kings).

the effect was counterproductive, ““The first chariot, in the form of a large head, was supposed to be a ‘div’ (devil) announcing the arrival of the procession. The irreverent saw in this head a likeness to Reza Shah Pahlavi.”¹⁶⁴

At the opening of the 9th Majlis the Shah said that one of the major aims of the session was to prepare for the “..moral purification and the education of the public.”¹⁶⁵ The reform of education and the founding of Tehran University was to be one of the great achievements of Reza Shah, but as with other reforms, the pull of competing ideological imperatives diluted the effectiveness of this achievement. Reza Shah made it clear that he wanted Iranians to study in Iran rather than be faced with having to go abroad, but integral to this was the desire to control education and to avoid having to send Iranians abroad where they may be confronted with political ideas contrary to the security and stability of the dynasty.

Education reforms had been initiated in the mid 1920s, but had only really gathered pace by the end of the decade. In 1928, a standardised textbook was enforced throughout all secondary schools along with a standardised Persian. Local dialects were avoided and history teaching emphasised the Achaemenid period while geography stressed the unity of the nation.¹⁶⁶ With the Persianisation of elementary schools proceeding vigorously, the government turned its attention to foreign schools, preventing Iranians who had not

¹⁶⁴ FO 371 17907 E2251 dated 24/3/34. See also FO 371 17907 E3490/940/34 dated 24th May 1934 - the army were often heavily involved in such festivals.

¹⁶⁵ FO 371 16941 E1878/47/34 dated 25th March 1933

¹⁶⁶ See Menashri *op. cit.* pp 93-98.

attended completed elementary school in Persian from attending them and insisting that they teach at least some classes in the Persian language.¹⁶⁷

The law for the foundation of Tehran University which was passed on 29th May 1934 also highlighted the nationalist mood combined with a desire for state control. Thus the principal of the university was to be appointed by royal decree,¹⁶⁸ and students, certainly in secondary school, were expected to parade once a week under the aegis of an officer from the army.¹⁶⁹ As Reza Shah told students being sent abroad, "You will render full service to your country only when you have served in the army. Military service is one of the essential duties of every patriot, especially the student class."¹⁷⁰ The foundation of the university was swiftly followed by the establishment of a language academy which would scrutinise the Persian language for extraneous Arabic loan words, and replace them with Persian words, a process which was begun in the Bill establishing Tehran University.¹⁷¹

Nationalism, along with a desire to differentiate oneself from the Persia of the Qajars also influenced the decision to insist that foreigners henceforth call the country Iran.¹⁷² The Pahlavi state in effect sought to re-invent the country by redefining its name. A term,

¹⁶⁷ FO 371 [check reference] dated 1934. This policy was combined with that of highlighting the importance of Iran's poets, in particular Ferdowsi.

¹⁶⁸ FO 371 [...] E4642/2960/34 dated 24th June 1934

¹⁶⁹ FO 371 18988 E616 dated 12th January 1935. Also see Haas *op. cit.* pg 169.

¹⁷⁰ Quoted in Wilbur *op. cit.* pg 143.

¹⁷¹ FO 371 18992 E4041/608/34 dated 14th June 1935.

¹⁷² FO 371 18988 E3505/305/34 dated 29 December 1934, FO 371 18988 E952/305/34 dated 23rd January 1935.

familiar to most Iranians, was appropriated and emphatically associated and identified with specific ideologies, such that along with the term 'Pahlavi', it was one of the most evocative and profound expressions of political myth developed. Like the 'Lion & Sun' motif, the term 'Iran' was the summation of a particular ideological conception which opened the door to other interpretations - indeed the precise meaning of 'Iran' is still contested.

The desire to present a 'modern' image to the word was further boosted when the Shah decreed on his return to Iran from Turkey on the abolition of the Pahlavi cap and its replacement with the European hat¹⁷³ which was enforced with similar zeal.¹⁷⁴ This latest campaign on the dress code was to culminate in Reza Shah's most striking assault on tradition - the forced abolition of the veil for women, given visible manifestation when the Queen attended a ceremony in European dress. The reaction to this policy even among the professional and propertied middle classes varied from satisfaction at seeing the members of the *ulema* "dying of grief and strain", to a sense of the ridiculous born from the knowledge that unaccustomed as they were to European dress, their appearance might be regarded as ludicrous. As one British diplomat noted, "What, I think has hurt the richer classes most is that they know themselves to be ludicrous in their Europeanised roles, and ridicule is notoriously hard for an Iranian to bear...one feels that many wrongs will have been forgotten before people forgive the Shah for the offence which has given to nearly

¹⁷³ FO 371 18992 E4041/608/34 dated 14th June 1935.

¹⁷⁴ FO 371 18992 E4628/608/34 dated 12th July 1935.

all classes by his passion to imitate Ataturk.”¹⁷⁵

Protests that did emerge from this policy were often brutally suppressed, the most notorious having occurred in Mashhad.¹⁷⁶ Protected by the army, and promoted by comprehensive censorship which prevented news of protests or dissent from being published,¹⁷⁷ the Shah’s identification of himself with his conception of Iran continued to be emphasised. As one commentator noted, almost all nationalist outbursts were state controlled and press articles frequently extolled “the Shah as the father of his people,” concluding pessimistically that, “In his policy of centralisation and unification the Shah has created enemies and in destroying the power of the mullahs he has forgotten Napoleon’s adage that the chief purpose of religion is to prevent the poor from murdering the rich. There is nothing to take the place of the religious influence, save an artificial nationalism which might well die with the Shah, leaving anarchy behind it.”¹⁷⁸

Conclusion

As will be seen in the following chapter, the ideology of nationalism remained central to Iranian political discourse and continued to be a source of legitimation for the actions of politicians from all sides of the political spectrum. That some form of ‘anarchy’ did

¹⁷⁵ FO 371 20048 E476/E994/E1155/E1565/E2325/E3172/E4515/405/34 dated 11th January 1936. Provides a comprehensive survey of the consequences of this reform.

¹⁷⁶ FO 371 18992 E5443/608/34 dated 23rd August 1935.

¹⁷⁷ FO 371 20052 E1147/1147/34 Annual report dated 28th January 1936

¹⁷⁸ FO 371 18992 E794/794/34 dated 5th January 1935 - views of Mr Busk.

emerge in Iran in the aftermath of Reza Shah's abdication might in part have been due to the fragile ideological basis of the Pahlavi regime and the difficulty inherent in combining often contradictory ideological constructs within the person of the Shah. Dynastic nationalism, rather than nationalism remained the problematic construction.

This chapter has sought to provide an overview of ideological construction and operation in the Pahlavi period and as such points to developments which would recur, albeit complicated by greater political plurality as well as awareness through the emergence of mass communications. Some of the theoretical arguments about the concept and operation of political myth are indicated by the desire of the Shah to identify with certain ideological parameters and the consequences of this for myth, in particular the adoption of the surname 'Pahlavi', an early attempt to redefine the past; but also the desire to identify with the 'nation' and to impart a particular conception of the term 'Iran', a term which amply illustrates the quality of rejuvenation characteristic of myth. The coronation ceremony itself was also a powerful expression of political myth in that familiar symbols were associated with particular ideological constructs such as modernisation, nationalism and traditionalism, and indeed it is this trilateral tension which is essential to any understanding of ideological development in the Pahlavi period.

Reza Shah's Iran was quintessentially a state replete with multiple competing tensions, both materially and ideologically. It can be argued that Reza Shah, inherited, exacerbated and created tension, the most important being the essential tension between the cocktail of contradictory ideological constructs he sought to embody. Reza Shah was unable to solve the essential crisis of legitimacy which stigmatised his rule and sought to remedy this

by personifying a number of ideological constructs which could institutionalise his rule. To a greater or lesser extent therefore he sought to identify himself and his dynasty with the concepts of modernisation and nationalism, while at the same time aware of the essential traditionalism of his office. The trilateral tension which resulted from the contradictory pulls of these ideological constructs, resulted in the hybrid construction known as dynastic nationalism - the desire to combine these contradictory elements within the person of the Shah. Political myth both eased and exacerbated such tensions, with the consequence that his son inherited an ideological environment more contentious and complex than his own.

Chapter 3

1941-53 - political pluralism and the ascendancy of nationalism.

Introduction

The twelve years following the abdication of Reza Shah, between 1941 and 1953, were witness to a dynamic period of political activity in Iran. Situated after the political suppression of the previous 16 years and the developing political suffocation of the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah, the period provides a valuable window into the dynamics of political and ideological relationships. As a result the focus of the chapter will not rest exclusively with the monarchy which in this period had lost the primary position it had enjoyed in the Iranian political arena. Though it remained in many ways the lynchpin of the Iranian state, around which others sought to manoeuvre, its ability to operate unhindered was at times severely curtailed, and certainly during the premiership of Mosaddeq, the Shah was effectively powerless. Nevertheless, the monarchy did remain a key player, its very existence attracting support and criticism, and the analysis of ideological utilisation by other groups will be limited to the extent that they affected the monarchy, or provided it with an ideological reservoir, from which, reinvigorated, it sought to appropriate.

With the emergence of limited political plurality and the advent of mass communications, ideological discourse in Iran became more complex. The state-centred framework

established in the previous chapter was openly challenged by various groups seeking to redefine ideological constructs in their own interests. As such, this chapter allows us to see the operation of ideology and political myth in a far more dynamic environment. The period can effectively be divided into two parts: the first to 1946, essentially the period of the Allied occupation, sees the breakdown and fragmentation of the artificial ideological consensus imposed by Reza Shah and the challenges posed to it; while from 1947 onwards we witness the Shah's first attempts to reinvent dynastic nationalism in light of these changes. Ironically, this attempt at re-invention was definitively appropriated by Dr Mohammad Mosaddeq who became the supreme icon of the nationalist movement.

As with the previous period, tensions throughout Iranian politics and society were high and so too was the tendency for ideological constructs to develop into political myth. Indeed, so intense was the tension that the tendency towards polarisation between rival factions often became explicit, and the potential for myth to build upon myth, particularly through the process of rejuvenation, becomes apparent. This was particularly true during the oil nationalisation crisis. Above all this was quintessentially a period of conflicting personalities in which myth came to be used to personify both friend and foe in the political battles that ensued. It was to have a profound effect on the young Mohammad Reza Shah and to become a major part of his ideological inheritance.

The Socio-Historic Context

The levels of political awareness

In assessing the general levels of political awareness in this period it may be useful to start with a self-assessment provided by 'progressive elements in Iranian society' in an anonymous letter to the British Embassy in 1946. The writers note that: "About two thirds of the population of Iran is composed of peasants and tribesmen who are illiterate...In recent years the Tudeh Party has conducted a campaign against their exploitation, which has made them conscious of this aim, which is for them their only interest in politics. Otherwise their apathy is unbounded. The other third of the population live in towns and nearby villages; more than half being illiterate labourers...with slightly more political consciousness resulting from their contact with town life... There remains one sixth of the population with degrees of political consciousness varying according to their standard of education and intelligence. They include government employees and other people in receipt of salaries, artisans, shopkeepers... Over this stratum sits a class estimated to be a mere one per cent of the whole population which possesses and controls nearly all the wealth of the country and rules its people... They are the real rulers of the country..."¹⁷⁹

Though the writers lament the 'unbounded apathy' of the rural masses, they do nevertheless point to the fact that this was the period when their political consciousness was being awakened, largely through the systematic efforts of the communist Tudeh

¹⁷⁹ FO 248 64/149a/46, dated 17 August 1946.

Party, ably assisted by the occupying Soviet forces. For the Tudeh, the rural peasantry were an untapped political resource, and they expended much effort in seeking to cultivate their loyalty. It is true that the rural population were as yet not as relatively important in a political sense as their urban cousins, and their political awareness remained very much second hand, but they were never entirely ignorant of developments, and as the period progressed, could not realistically be ignored.

As one Times columnist wrote, "...this illiterate peasant is no fool. The poets are his companions and he knows his Ferdowsi and Hafiz and Saadi. Given incentive, he is quick and apt..."¹⁸⁰ Similarly, the British Embassy noted in 1941 that the Iranian public was a good deal more sceptical about Allied war aims than at first expected: "British propaganda...suffers, however, from one grave handicap. References to the objects for which the war is being fought - democracy, freedom, liberty, the security of the smaller nations - have a cynical sound in Persian ears."¹⁸¹

The low level of literacy attested to in the above letter is reinforced by an industrial survey conducted for the Seven Year Plan published in 1326 [1947-48], which reveals that among industrial workers literacy levels were no higher than 10-20%. Thus in chemical factories, of 4548 workers, some 1331 were registered as literate, whereas among 4501

¹⁸⁰ The Times - Persia Old and New: Younger Generation groping for Reforms - dated 25 April 1946.

¹⁸¹ FO 371 27188 - Intelligence Summaries 1941. It should be noted that in contemporary British sources, 'Iran' was still referred to as 'Persia'. Whenever such sources are quoted, this usage is retained.

workers in the sugar factories only 297 were noted as literate.¹⁸² This challenges the concept of political dynamism and at least favours the view that politics remained the preserve of the political elite and was focussed almost exclusively in Tehran. Indeed Tehran's primacy in domestic politics and the consequent dubious legitimacy of many 'national' parties was criticised in an article entitled 'Parties of Iran' in the newspaper *Rahbar* in April 1943: "Do not wonder that instead of parties of Iran we speak of the parties of Tehran. All the parties arise in Tehran and consist of some interested persons staying in the capital..."¹⁸³ However it is argued that so intense was the level of political activity among the intellectuals and professional classes, and such was the social structures prevalent that even the illiterate were drawn in some measure towards political awareness and participation.

The Mass Media

Some idea of the level of political activity can be ascertained by the propensity for political parties and the proliferation of newspapers. That both these organs often lacked structure and durability should not detract from the fact that they existed because of tremendous political enthusiasm. One scholar has recorded 22 significant parties active between 1941-46, each with a comprehensive political programme.¹⁸⁴ Parties mushroomed in the run up to elections and branches or associate parties were established in provincial centres;

¹⁸² FO 371 75485 E6175 dated 13 May 1949 - Naficy - Statistics for the principal industries of Iran for the year 1326 [1947-48].

¹⁸³ Quoted in Machalski Political Parties in Iran in the Years 1941-1946 *Folia Orientalia* III, 1961, pg 169

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

student groups were actively cultivated.¹⁸⁵ Trade Unions and 'Workers Committees' also developed and invariably produced lists of demands which contained political rhetoric. In the case of the Azerbaijan Workers' Committee, the Soviet influence is clear, when the first article of its 35 point programme of action stresses that it has been established "To fight energetically against *despotism, dictatorship and fascism* [italics added], and to establish complete liberty: of the nation, of association, of the individual, of language, and of the press."¹⁸⁶

Press activity was if anything even more energetic, and every political grouping had at least one newspaper, usually a weekly, with which to voice its views. The number of newspapers often surprised Western observers. Bullard noted in 1943 that, "There are 47 newspapers in Tehran, a city of only 750,000 inhabitants, the large majority of whom are illiterate."¹⁸⁷ By 1951, in the lead up to oil nationalisation, this figure had risen to some 700 papers in Tehran alone.¹⁸⁸ Cuyler-Young noted astutely in 1948 that, "In few countries of the literacy percentage of Iran are journalists more numerous, facile, superficial and irresponsible. Yet for all the spawning and specious nature of the Iranian press, it can be said that a considerable section of it is substantial and serious, and influential beyond what literacy statistics might lead one to expect, since papers are read in groups and news and opinions passed on by readers to illiterate friends and

¹⁸⁵ FO 248 1428 - files relating to the Majlis elections of 1943; dated 14 July 1943 and 7 August 1943.

¹⁸⁶ FO 248 1410: 'Programme and Desires of the Azerbaijan Workers Committee', dated 26 February 1942.

¹⁸⁷ FO 248 1427, dated 24 April 1943.

¹⁸⁸ FO 248 1514, file 10101/4/51 dated 5 January 1951.

acquaintances."¹⁸⁹ Indeed the awareness of widespread illiteracy ensured that many pamphleteers would ask readers to inform others who were unable to read of the contents of a particular pamphlet.¹⁹⁰

The one party that actively sought the support of the illiterate be they in cities or in rural areas was the Communist Tudeh Party. A thorough organisational framework and a seductive programme of action, along with a measure of support from the Soviet authorities resulted in a positive and arguably successful attempt to mobilise the otherwise politically apathetic masses. The other parties and political groupings, often suspicious of the 'masses' were forced to react to the Tudeh challenge. The British Consul in Tabriz notes the development of Tudeh tactics as early as December 1941 along with the concern of the traditional political elite:

"...It is not that the 'proletariat' here are communist minded so far, but the authorities fear that the demagogues...will gradually work upon them to cause unrest and later revolt against the established order. One of the new 'parties' is called Tudeh Azerbaijan'...and its aim seems to be to interest the lower classes, who so far have never been touched by political ideas. Its newspaper 'Azerbaijan'...prints twice weekly cartoons of wretched peasants and farmers being beaten and bullied by hard faced landlords, or drawings of rich capitalists cheating poor ragged workers of a halfpenny while handing out large banknotes

¹⁸⁹ T Cuyler-Young The Problem of Westernisation in Modern Iran Middle East Journal 2, 1948; pg 130.

¹⁹⁰ FO 248 1410; copy of a notice placed upon a wall in Tabriz, dated 24 February 1942

to dancing girls at cabarets, and so on."¹⁹¹ Almost ten years later, Lawford noted of the Tudeh paper *Mardom*, that, "the paper is clearly designed less as a medium for educating Persians in the theory of dialectical materialism than as a weapon in the Tudeh Party's campaign to achieve political power in this country."¹⁹² It should be clear from the above two examples that groups were using imagery and political myth to cultivate support among the masses.

The Radio

With Soviet finance and support the Tudeh also had a spectacular new tool of dissemination which required no literacy, allowed immediate reception of political news and propaganda, and was dependent upon no-one: the radio. The Allied occupation as well as political interest ensured a relatively wide ownership of radios which meant that rousing speeches were no longer limited by space. As Pyman noted of the relatively remote town of Arak in central Iran: "A member of the Qajar family who owns a good deal of land near Arak told me the other day that there are many wireless sets in the villages in that area to which all the peasants listen. The effect of this and of the bundles of Tehran newspapers which periodically reach the village is to give people an interest in politics which they never had before and a critical attitude towards their landlords."¹⁹³ Governments of the day were quick to acknowledge the power of radio and would broadcast programmes to repudiate Tudeh views, stress their own commitment to reform

¹⁹¹ FO 248 1410 - report of the British Consul in Tabriz, dated 29 December 1941.

¹⁹² FO 248 1494, Lawford to Bevin, 101/5/15/50, dated 18 February 1950.

¹⁹³ FO 248 1531 10105/50 - Memorandum by Pyman dated 28 January 1950.

and of course trumpet their achievements.¹⁹⁴

The limits of plurality

Nevertheless, there were limits to this emergent political dynamism. As Abrahamian points out ".of the 12 premiers, 9 came from the 19th century titled families, 2 from Reza Shah's bureaucracy, and one from his military elite. Similarly, of the 148 cabinet ministers, 81 were sons of the titled and wealthy families, 13 were technocrats representing the court, 11 were army officers, and eight were prosperous entrepreneurs outside the bazaar." He adds, "Of the 148 ministers, only 15 were salaried personnel and modern educated professionals with roots in the middle class and without links to the palace. What is more, of the 50 ministers who held three or more cabinet posts, 39 came from titled and landed families, seven from the upper echelons of the bureaucracy, two from prominent military households, and only two from the salaried middle class."¹⁹⁵ As if to emphasise the venality of the system Elwell-Sutton commented in 1949 that, "The 300 odd vacancies in some 24 cabinets between August 1941 and November 1948 were filled with few exceptions from a clique of 70 to 80 politicians, all over 50 years of age, and many over 60."¹⁹⁶ Even the Majlis, which so frequently argued with the executive, remained the preserve of the traditional elite. Of 128 deputies elected in 1943, 44 had sat in the

¹⁹⁴ FO 248 1494 101/5/15/50 dated 18 February 1950, on government attempts to broadcast to minorities in their own language.

¹⁹⁵ Abrahamian Iran between two revolutions pg 170 - one can contest his use of 'middle class'.

¹⁹⁶ Elwell-Sutton Political Parties in Iran The Middle East Journal, 3, 1, 1949, pp 45-62

previous Majlis, 65 were landowners, 13 connected with commerce and industry, 4 were mullahs and another 46 were dependant on various forms of political activity including a number who were elected to serve traditional interests.¹⁹⁷

Despite the existence of various competing political 'fractions' and parties this group remained essentially fluid, choosing to revolve around personalities. The Shah in this period was but one personality attempting to re-invent himself as the saviour of Iran. Few parties could develop coherent durable structures which would outlive the founder. The only real contender was ironically the Tudeh Party (and its offshoots) which despite solid social foundations, suffered the stigma of foreign support. Qavam enjoyed modest success with the establishment of the authoritarian Democrat Party. The National Front, a broad coalition of parties, was the most successful of all the political groupings but this was more down to a unique combination of talents and circumstances (ironically a well defined 'enemy'), rather than coherent structure and organisation. Indeed Mosaddeq argued against any such organisation, saying that the country was not ready for such a body.¹⁹⁸ Indeed the necessity for political manoeuvre at the highest level along with the need to mobilise a politically unsophisticated mass resulted in the simplification of ideological constructs. Add to this prudent ambiguity a broad agreement on the direction of reform

¹⁹⁷ FO 248 1435 22/181/44 dated 22 September 1944. For detailed backgrounds of Azerbaijani deputies see file 22/151/44 dated 18 May 1944; for Fars see file 22/38/44 dated 19/4/44; Hamadan & Malayer file 22/126/44 dated 31 March 1944; and Khorasan file 22/103/44 dated 23 February 1944. For a not untypical character assessment of the foremost deputy from Kermanshah see FO 248 1428 dated 7 June 1943.

¹⁹⁸ R Ramazani Intellectual Trends in the politics and history of the Musaddiq era in J Bill & W R Louis (eds) Mosaddeq, Iranian Nationalism and Oil London, I B Tauris, 1988, pg 311

and it becomes more easily understandable why personalities featured so highly in this period. All this was conducive to the formation of political myth.

Ideological Constructions

Limited political plurality and the emergence of mass media encouraged a greater level of ideological sophistication and subtlety, and although the parameters outlined in the previous chapter remain valid some further categorisation is required to reflect the complexity of the period. Principally, this revolves around the ideology of nationalism, so decisively appropriated by Reza Shah in the guise of dynastic nationalism, was now in turn appropriated by other groups eager to champion the cause in their own image.

Nationalism:

Developments confirm that this was by far the most potent ideological construction of the period. Iranians of all political persuasions attempted to appear more nationalistic than the other and the most stinging criticism of a political opponent remained the charge of 'traitor'. Competing agents, including the Shah, sought to appropriate as much nationalist myth as possible. Its fundamental credentials as the ultimate arbiter of legitimacy were not challenged, and so pervasive was this concept that it spawned a number of ideological subsets. However, though the generalities were accepted, the details of nationalist ideology and myth were seriously disputed. The crown no longer had a monopoly, and its conception was under challenge.

The differences were often subtle, but to take one example; the use of the term 'Iran'. Reza Shah had ordered the official use of 'Iran' in order to establish a particular historical narrative which would connect the modern state to its Aryan past. The new nationalists debunked this dubious connection replete with racial overtones, but were equally passionate in its usage as a term which would foster unity. Thus one could still be a Kurd or Azerbaijani and still be fundamentally 'Iranian'. This emphasis is more clearly seen when contrasted with the British persistence in using the term 'Persia' and 'Persian'.

Dynastic nationalism, the emphatic identification of the Pahlavi dynasty with the ideology of nationalism remained important to the Shah himself and by personalising this construct we witness an attempt at inventing what can be termed the 'myth of the saviour'. However, just as groups sought to detach the dynasty from an association with nationalism, they redefined nationalism in other terms and in turn sought to personalise these new distinctive nationalisms in their own leaders. There were thus many potential 'saviours' during this period, though ultimately Mosaddeq appeared to have achieved what others could only aspire to in eventually coming to symbolise nationalism without distinction. Arguably he achieved this by leading a broad based movement which effectively combined all the strands of nationalist thought, including socialistic as well as religious trends and utilising to great effect a strategy of differentiation through which the 'enemy' of the Iranian nation was identified and personalised.

Ideological Development: Fragmentation and Re-invention

This complex period can be divided into two broad sections for the purposes of

ideological analysis. The first period to 1946 essentially witnessed the challenges to and fragmentation of the ideological consensus imposed by Reza Shah. Associations were challenged and the young Shah and the military sought to distance themselves from Reza Shah and much of what he appeared to represent. Nevertheless there were limits to this process, and the greater the challenge the keener the army and the Shah were to reinvent themselves. For the Shah, this attempted identification with a new type of nationalism gathered speed in the aftermath of the fall of autonomous Azerbaijan and witnessed attempts to reinterpret the past and rehabilitate his father for current political needs. It proved to be an attempt too far, as the Shah found himself outmanoeuvred by a more skilful politician.

Ideological fragmentation

The Impact of the Allied Invasion and Occupation:

The immediate impact of the allied invasion and subsequent occupation of Iran was a virulent attack upon the ideology of militarism. Similarly, with the abdication of Reza Shah, the attempted cult of the Pahlavi dynasty came under rapid scrutiny and criticism. As parties developed, a softer nationalist concept with a strong socialist agenda became prominent, though as the allied occupation became protracted and relations with the occupying powers became more tense, so more general nationalistic and anti-imperialistic views were expressed. This reaction, and the fear for the integrity and unity of the state helped rehabilitate within the general consciousness, the institutions of the monarchy and the army.

Having been trumpeted as the very soul of the nation by Reza Shah, the undignified rapidity of the armed forces apparent disintegration in the face of the allied attack brought the military into popular disrepute and effectively destroyed its acquired myth of social and political superiority. Similarly, the particular conception of monarchy espoused by Reza Shah, dictatorial and aloof, was seen as a prime reason why the Iranian state failed to respond effectively to the Allied invasion. Key to this defective structure was the close association between army and monarchy which was regarded as detrimental to the security of the State.

As such, traditionalist politicians, most of whose formative years revolved around the events of the Constitutional Revolution, sought to divest the crown of its authority over the armed forces and bring the military under civilian control.¹⁹⁹ This attack upon the army and the monarchy was supported by the new young socialists who along with the traditionalists viewed the 'military state' as conceptualised by Reza Shah to be detrimental to the welfare of the country. Though these two ideological camps differed strongly on the specifics of political reform (most young socialists had little time for the old elite), the allied invasion offered them the opportunity to challenge the centralised militarist-monarchical autocracy, which they both had reason to despise.

Not surprisingly the army and the monarchy sought to defend their positions and rallied

¹⁹⁹ FO 248 1407 dated 13 August 1942. See also Seyyid Zia's speech to the 14th Majlis, quoted in Abrahamian Iran Between Two Revolutions pg 205.

to each other.²⁰⁰ The Shah was weaker and was encouraged to distance himself from the person of his father.²⁰¹ This clearly was not a credible position to take especially when it became apparent that the new Shah was in reality in awe of his father,²⁰² as he was later to indicate; but in the immediate aftermath of the invasion, it was deemed prudent to publicly argue against 'dictatorship'²⁰³, to emphasise a willingness to reign rather than rule and to acknowledge the excesses of the father. In effect the Shah sought to redefine the image he had inherited from his father in line with the ideological realities of his own time accounting for the subtleties in ideological development which had taken place in his own more pluralistic environment.

In contrast to his father, he became more accommodating, stressing to the Majlis, that he 'had no powers', in effect using dissimulation to acquire greater real power.²⁰⁴ His apparent lack of power also allowed him to draw on traditional mythic narratives such as the 'reluctant leader' with greater veracity. Indeed his real weakness meant that traditionalists, eager to maintain the social status quo in an increasingly destabilised situation turned to support this symbol of unity (as long as he stayed just that). Thus as

²⁰⁰ FO 248 1407 file 1628, note 9/7/42, records quite clearly the relationship between the Shah and the army, noting that so uncertain was the Shah of his position that he stationed 600 soldiers round Saadabad Palace. Significantly, some older generals were reportedly less trustworthy.

²⁰¹ The Times, 18 September 1941, notes the lacklustre reception given to the Shah as he was to be sworn in.

²⁰² FO 248 1426 - Interviews with the Shah dated 21 August 1943.

²⁰³ FO 248 1426 - Interviews with the Shah, dated 21 August 1943.

²⁰⁴ FO 248 1407 file 628 - HM Minister's relations with the Shah, note no. 9/20/42 [1942; exact date unclear].

early as late 1942, the Prime Minister, broadcast a speech effuse with praise for the "...beloved shah who is the source of the nation's happiness.." ²⁰⁵ The Shah was assisted in this belief in himself by a characteristically sycophantic court, ²⁰⁶ as well as the general adulation of the provincial populace who frequently expressed genuine enthusiasm on meeting the Shah. ²⁰⁷ Ironically therefore, his real weakness was compensated for by a reconstruction of the ideology of dynastic nationalism.

The army sought refuge with the crown ²⁰⁸, though initially it sought to disassociate itself from such an exclusive relationship. Eager to deflect criticism, it first sought to re-legitimise its social and political status in Iranian society by divesting itself of responsibility through the rationalisation of its defeat and indicating the relative commonality of such rapid defeats in modern warfare. Thus in 1942, the minister of War claimed that the defeat of the army was due to poor mechanisation, noting that other armies had suffered similar reversals for just such technical weaknesses (presumably France in 1940 and the USSR in 1941). ²⁰⁹ Then it sought to distance itself as a tool of the monarchy, and re-associate itself as the ultimate symbol of national unity. As one Majlis deputy noted, "...people must not get into the habit of the thinking of the army as something distinct from the nation; it

²⁰⁵ FO 248 1407 file 628 - HM Minister's relations with the Shah, press summary dated 17 September 1942.

²⁰⁶ FO 248 1407 dated 10 April 1942.

²⁰⁷ FO 248 1423, note from Bullard dated 29 June 1943.

²⁰⁸ FO 248 1427 - Persian Government & Internal Affairs, dated 8 May 1943, notes that Misbahzadeh, the former editor of Keihan was aware of the influence officers had on the shah.

²⁰⁹ FO 248 1409 file 49, internal situation Fars; press summary dated 13 April 1942.

was not.²¹⁰ Nevertheless the relationship between the monarchy and the military remained intense, helped by the Shah's personal fascination with all things military.²¹¹ The Shah always regarded the army as his chief pillar of support²¹².

The armed forces felt deeply humiliated by the defeat and their dislike for the allied forces and desire for revenge²¹³ was both endemic and infectious among a population whose national pride was dented and whose relationship with the occupying powers rapidly turned sour. The popular cynicism towards allied war aims and the ostensible reasons given for the invasion were initially outweighed by the general satisfaction at the abdication of Reza Shah. But the social reality of occupation, including food shortages and economic dislocation²¹⁴ encouraged nationalist sentiment expressed through crude fragmentation²¹⁵. At one stage the outbreak of disease was blamed on Polish refugees and

²¹⁰ FO 248 1409 file 49, internal situation Fars; Deputy Anwar quoted in a press summary dated 13 April 1942.

²¹¹ FO 248 1426 - Interviews with the Shah, undated noted 1943. Also memo dated 2 July 1943, notes that dull conversation revitalised by the mention of the 'war'.

²¹² FO 248 1407 - HM Minister's relation with the Shah, file 628, dated 19 August 1942.

²¹³ FO 248 1409 - file 39, Internal situation Fars; report on the general situation dated 10 June 1942.

²¹⁴ FO 248 1427 - Persian Govt. & internal affairs; letter from Bishop of Isfahan to Bullard dated 4 May 1943. See also FO 371 35109 - Intelligence Summary 1943 file E1734 dated 23 February 1943, which notes that "Tehran is on the verge of starvation."

²¹⁵ FO 248 1427 - Persian Government & Internal Affairs, file 544, dated 24 April 1943, notes that the press blame the British for everything. See also Bullard's report dated 6 April 1943.

the Allies who brought them.²¹⁶ Many openly voiced their support for the Germans, and swastikas were daubed on pavements.²¹⁷ Efforts were made to re-legitimise the concept of nationalism through universalisation and fragmentation. In one speech the Shah sought to draw comparisons between Iranian nationalism, fighting for 'independence', and American nationalism, subtly noting its distinction from the British.²¹⁸

At the same time officials, such as the Shah and the Prime Minister Soheili in their New Year messages sought to alleviate the sense of hardship and humiliation by placing events within an intensely nationalist interpretation of history. Thus Soheili notes, "Since the day when Iran was united under the banner of Cyrus the Great and in the centre of Asia achieved unprecedented power and became famous throughout the world, and the star of her prosperity rose daily towards its zenith, 2500 years have passed. During this time, this 2500 years, the people of this land have experienced repeatedly calamity, misfortune, scarcity and famine, but they have never lost their courage and they have resisted until they successfully overcame their afflictions and experienced once more the more prosperous and more glorious days of former eras. This *truth* [italics added] is one of the secrets which compelled our ancestors to treasure to this extent the coming of the New

²¹⁶ FO 248 1410 - Internal Situation Azerbaijan, file 144, dated 23 April 1942.

²¹⁷ FO 248 1462 - Persian Govt. & Internal Situation 1946; letter from Arfa to Embassy dated 8 September 1946. See also FO 371 27188 E8305/268/34 dated 19 November 1941, which reveals that at the opening of the 13th Majlis, crowds shouted 'Long Live Hitler!'

²¹⁸ FO 248 1423 - Interviews with the Shah, note from Bullard dated 29 June 1943.

Year."²¹⁹ This narrative argued for the pivotal role Iran was playing in the war effort. So much so, that by the end of the war, official nationalist disdain for the Allies was set aside and, though popular anti-Allied sentiment remained strong, far from distinguishing oneself from the Allies, Iranian nationalism found it prudent to associate with them. As one intelligence officer wryly noted in 1945, "Persia celebrated the victory of herself and her Allies over Germany with restrained elation."²²⁰

The Shah in his message, was keener to utilise aspects of racial nationalism, though he was also aware that the general situation was encouraging a tendency towards community orientated socialist policies. Nevertheless, though his real political weakness brought some respite from the criticism, his failure to control the extravagancies of the court, especially during a time of hardship, contrasted sharply with his purported image as the caring monarch, and as such the ideology of dynastic nationalism came under renewed attack.²²¹ Traditionalists, naturally sympathetic to the institution of monarchy frowned upon the loose morals exhibited by the court, however criticism from the new socialists was stronger. The monarchy dealt with this challenge in two ways. By exaggerating the potential for social disruption and revolution, he sought to manipulate the traditionalists' desire for a symbol of unity. At the same time he strove to become more revolutionary than the revolutionaries and through reification, to posit himself as the champion of youth and the lower classes. As such, he cleverly sought to extend his appeal to two disparate

²¹⁹ FO 248 1427, file 544 - Persian Government & Internal Affairs; text of Soheili's NoRuz broadcast dated 23 March 1943.

²²⁰ FO 371 45458 - Intelligence Summaries 1945, E3434, dated 28 May 1945.

²²¹ FO 248 1407 file 628 dated 19 August 1942. See also FO 248 1426 dated 18 March 1943; 3 August 1943.

groups.²²²

The alliance between the traditionalists and radical national socialists proved short-lived. The traditionalists became increasingly concerned about the growing strength of the socialist agenda, with ideas which would challenge the socio-economic status quo. For the socialists and communists, supported by the occupying Soviet forces in the north, restricting the power of the monarchy and divesting it of control of the military was but the first step towards a complete change of the social order. No clearer indication of this perceived threat and the impact it had on restoring the 'value' of a strong army (and by extension the monarchy), can be given than the reaction to the workers revolt in Isfahan in 1944, couched of course, in nationalist terms. As Abrahamian notes, "Fatemi of the Patriots, who a few months earlier had demanded a drastic cut in the army, now declared, "unless we immediately finance an effective army, such uprisings as occurred in Isfahan will spread and destroy the whole foundation of private property." Similarly, a Democrat, whose spokesman had been vocal in denouncing the chiefs of staff, exclaimed, "now that our house is on fire, all citizens should be in favour of a strong military. Without a strong military, the fire will consume Iran."²²³ Characteristically, it was the construction of a 'social problem', the classic patrimonial political tactic of fragmentation which resulted in the gradual rehabilitation of the military-autocracy.

²²² FO 248 1423 - Talks with the Shah, dated 15 January 1943. See also FO 248 1426 - Interviews with the Shah dated 15 April 1943.

²²³ Abrahamian *op. cit.* pg 209.

The Tribal Revolts.

The tribal revolts, principally, that led by Nasir Khan Qashqai in Fars, reflected another attempt to redefine the boundaries of nationalist ideology and to present an alternative perspective. The opponents of renewed tribalism attempted to de-legitimise the movement by attacking it as anti-nationalist and as the source of all the economic troubles of the country. Nasir Khan, aware of these attacks, stressed his nationalism and his loyalty to the concept of an Iranian state. To Nasir Khan, it was the Pahlavi state which was the source of all problems, and which by its very nature was contrary to nationalist interests.

In a declaration to the people of Fars, he differentiated himself and his aims from those of the Pahlavi state, "Today even the brigands of the glorious cycle of Pahlavi are attempting to accuse the true patriots of the country [*vatan-parast va mellat doost*] of being the cause of intrigue and disorder in the country...O Iranian nation! I have put everything I have, my life, my honour and my tribe for your sake and am prepared to make all sacrifice for my country. I pray to God to be able to stop all such disorder. But the Iranian nation should take a fundamental decision, and do not let the reins of the country into the hands of unqualified persons, and not allow such people to rob the country."²²⁴

There can be no better indication of the dominance of nationalist ideology within the Iranian consciousness than its use by a tribal chief whose tribe undoubtedly suffered under a previous interpretation of nationalism. It is also significant that Nasir Khan's objection

²²⁴ FO 248 1409 - Internal Situation: Fars file 39, dated 12 February 1942. See also letter from Nasir to Ghulam Hussein Muhazzab, dated 17 March 1942.

to the centralised state did not extend to a rejection of European style clothes, which had originally caused such irritation. As the British Consul in Isfahan records, "He was quietly and extremely well dressed (without hat) in the European manner and in fact apart from a suggestion of sleekness and for alertness not generally associated with the soil could easily pass as a young and prosperous English farmer."²²⁵

In the initial popular reaction to the rule of Reza Shah, there was considerable sympathy for the views and grievances of the tribes. As one British diplomat noted, "...there has been much agitation in the press and among certain deputies in favour of Nasir and the Qashqai. Nasir, who is really a rebel, has been held up as a great patriot and the Qashqai as the potential backbone of the defence of Persia's independence. The tribes, it is being argued, should be conciliated and preserved as fighting units..."²²⁶ The newspaper *Etela'at* carried Nasir's plea for justice for the tribes.²²⁷ Another paper, *Mehr-i Iran*, carried an article which noted that, "Persian history is full of great deeds of tribesmen in defence of the nation's soil."²²⁸ There was a clear attempt to rehabilitate the 'tribe' by seeing them as a positive force in Iranian history, though it is significant that even those who sympathised with the tribes agreed with the principle of forced settlement. Nationalist concerns over territorial integrity combined with a desire to protect private property tended to outweigh any such sympathetic sentiments. Thus Majlis Deputy Nobakht's defence of the Qashqai

²²⁵ FO 248 1347/1348, file 64 - Internal Situation in Fars; file no. 64/329/44 dated 9 October 1944.

²²⁶ FO 248 1409 file 39, dated 4 November 1942.

²²⁷ FO 248 1409 file 39, dated 17 January 1942.

²²⁸ FO 248 1409, file 39, dated 13 April 1942. See also letter to *Asr-i Azadi* dated 20 April 1942.

position in the Majlis was shouted down with allegations that the Qashqais threatened internal security.²²⁹

Ultimately, the fear of state disintegration, engendered by the separatist movements in Azerbaijan and among the Kurds, along with the simple social reality that many tribesmen were not upstanding citizens and prone to looting²³⁰, meant that the initial challenge to the centralist conception of modernisation failed.

The Separatist Movements in Azerbaijan and Kurdistan.

In a period replete with crises and tension, the separatist movements in the Soviet occupied provinces of Azerbaijan and Kurdistan marked the first serious challenge to the Pahlavi State and the popular self-conception of nationhood. It showed how myth was developed to combat myth and, in particular, by seeking to reinterpret the meaning of 'Iran', it harnessed far more intense feelings than any previous event and involved a greater variety of ideological sets and competing perceptions. Once again the pervasive ideology was nationalism, and one of the curiosities of the crisis was the similar ways in which the central government in Tehran and the separatist movements espoused nationalist rhetoric. Thus, although the government in Tabriz berated Tehran for centralised government along with the exclusive use of Farsi, within the boundaries of Azerbaijan itself, it tended to mimic those very policies.

²²⁹ FO 248 1409, file 39, dated 13 April 1942.

²³⁰ FO 248 1409, file 39, - Letter from the Boir Ahmadis, dated 7 April 1944.

As such, the ideologies of nationalism and modernisation can be seen from two distinct perspectives. The political nature of the Soviet sponsored movements in Azerbaijan and Kurdistan, set the pace for the socialist policies which were to be adopted by most groups, and their overt secularism was to encourage the emergence of religious nationalism. The crisis also witnessed the first concerted construction of a myth of the saviour around the person of the prime minister Ahmad Qavam, who had engineered the return of Azerbaijan, though ironically the very public entrance of the shah and the army into Tabriz was to provide a substantial boost to the Pahlavi dynasty and the status of the military, both of whom sought to capitalise from new Cold War tensions.

Nationalism remained the primary ideological tool of political rhetoric for both sides during the dispute. Initially, there was considerable caution on behalf of the new 'Azerbaijani National Government', and Pischevari was anxious not to ignite the nationalist anger in Tehran. As such, talk first revolved around autonomy with specific statements rejecting any notion of violating Iranian integrity.²³¹

In Tehran however the reaction was not as conciliatory as that initially offered to the Qashqai. Talk of autonomy, along with obvious Russian support raised the spectre of another Treaty of Turkmenchai²³². For many, Pischevari's claim for autonomy was an act of deception which did not concur with social reality; such as the fact that the Tehran appointed governor of Azerbaijan, Murteza Qulikhan Bayat discovered that the Democrat

²³¹ The Times - Text of the manifesto of the Azerbaijani Majlis, dated 17 December 1945.

²³² The Times, dated 28 January 1946.

Party of Azerbaijan treated him, "not as governor but as ambassador to the Azerbaijan Republic."²³³ On the other hand, there is also evidence to suggest that the allegations of separatism had been encouraged by Azerbaijani emigres in Tehran angered at the socialist bent of the new provincial administration in order to promote nationalist sentiment in the capital as well as elicit support from supporters of traditionalism, the army and the monarchy against the spectre of Marxism.²³⁴

Whatever the perceived reality, feelings rapidly polarised with ideological constructions developing into political myth. The media along with popular writers such as Ahmad Kasravi were swift to raise the alarm, through a particular interpretation of Iranian history, crude differentiation and exaggeration of the extent of the problem. Arguably, the paranoia over imminent national disintegration fuelled the growth of the problem. Thus Kasravi protested the existence of separate nations arguing, "If similar claims are to be advanced by other linguistic minorities - especially Armenians, Assyrians, Arabs, Gilanis and Mazandarani - nothing will be left of Iran." The newspaper *Etela'at* in an editorial entitled 'Azerbaijan is the centre of Iranian patriotism', argued that Turkish was simply a tongue left behind by the Mongol and Tartar invaders.²³⁵ Such rhetoric was not confined to radical nationalists, but was even voiced by papers close to the liberal Seyyid Zia. The paper *Kushesh* insisted that Persian must remain the language of education in Azerbaijan

²³³ The Times, dated 12 December 1945. See also FO 248 1463 - Internal Situation Azerbaijan; press attache report, dated 26 February 1946; also, conversation between Pishevari and Consul, dated 17 October 1946, and similar conclusion drawn from conversations with the Kurdish leader dated 11 September 1946.

²³⁴ FO 248 1410 - Internal Situation Azerbaijan, file 144, dated 20 February 1942.

²³⁵ Quoted in Abrahamian *op. cit.* pg 218.

since Turkish was only an 'unfortunate deposit' left by the 'savage Mongols'. A Liberal Majlis deputy protested, "...this so called democratic Party of Azerbaijan is striking terror among peace-loving citizens and is spreading the false notion that Persian is not the mother language of all Iranians."²³⁶

That developments in Mahabad and Tabriz could cause such consternation among the political and intellectual elite in Tehran was probably less a result of genuine Azerbaijani nationalist sentiment, and more to do with the organisational structure and political leanings of the leftist Democratic Party. Backed by the Soviet authorities the separatist movements were able to exploit the socio-economic disparities of contemporary Iranian society and eventually suggest national independence. Ironically their methods bore a striking resemblance to those of Reza Shah, whom they obviously detested.

The initial stage of this policy was to inculcate a sense of distinctiveness through a strategy of differentiation towards the Azeri population within a particular conception of Iran, especially through an emphasis on the use of the Azeri language in pamphlets and programmes of action²³⁷. Anxious not to be labelled as 'traitors', the leftist groups sought to exploit feelings of injustice among the Azeris, and grievances against the central government.²³⁸ The personalisation of ideology became apparent as landlords were often portrayed as agents of central government, hence 'Persian', and foreign. Thus, the British

²³⁶ *Ibid* pg 219.

²³⁷ FO 248 1410 - Internal Situation in Azerbaijan, file 144, - 'Programme & Desires of the Azerbaijan Workers Committee; dated 26 February 1942.

²³⁸ FO 248 1410 file 144, notice placed on Tabriz wall, dated 24 February 1942.

Consul in Tabriz noted that the newspaper "Azerbaijan....prints twice weekly cartoons of wretched peasants and farmers being beaten and bullied by hard faced landlords, or drawings of rich capitalists cheating poor ragged workers of a half-penny while handing out large banknotes to dancing girls at a cabaret."²³⁹ The paper did not avoid more direct attacks upon the competency of central government and was not averse to the use of dissimulation in order to aggravate the sense of distinction. As the Tabriz Consulate noted, "The newspaper 'Azerbaijan' overstepped itself last week in its usual anti-government tirades by printing an article accusing the local authorities of sending large quantities of wheat...to Tehran while there was only 40 days supply left here, so that in a few weeks Azerbaijan would be without bread. As a result the whole ignorant population of Tabriz rushed to the bakeries..."²⁴⁰

Such policies were not always effective. As the British Consul in Tabriz noted, "It was interesting to learn from one landowner at Rezaieh that the minority of good and humane proprietors who had not ill-used their peasants but had lent them money in times of need and taken an interest in their lives and welfare, were not being victimised now; on the contrary, the villagers in some cases stuck by them as an island in a surrounding sea of troubles."²⁴¹

Distinct from its attempts to encourage class differentiation and social problems, the leftist

²³⁹ FO 248 1410 - Internal Situation in Azerbaijan, file 144, dated 29 December 1941. See also memo dated 9 March 1942.

²⁴⁰ FO 248 1410 file 144, dated 8 April 1942.

²⁴¹ FO 248 1410 file 144, dated 28 January 1942.

groups also aimed to present themselves as socially aware, and part of the mainstream national socialist ideology. Thus Tudeh Azerbaijan was effectively renamed the Democratic Party of Azerbaijan. Political programmes talked of the fight against 'despotism', 'dictatorship', and 'fascism'. The first two slogans had good Iranian roots, the last however is a clear indication of Soviet influence.²⁴²

On the whole the extreme left wing groups had the most sophisticated political programmes and the organisation with which to disseminate it. It is a measure of their ideological strength that most other political factions adopted socialist policies, and attempted to mimic organisational practices.²⁴³ Probably the most effective political reaction to the Democratic Party of Azerbaijan, was the Democrat Party of Qavam which had developed a far more authoritarian structure than other parties. Additionally, as one of Qavam's advisers was later to admit, "...the situation forced us to adopt a radical image to compete with the revolutionaries."²⁴⁴ It is also an indication of the effectiveness of the secularising tendencies of the communist movement that Azerbaijan was witness to the first, albeit tentative, religious reaction, in the form of an Islamic Revolutionary Party.²⁴⁵

²⁴² FO 248 1410 file 144, article 1 of the Azerbaijan Workers Committee, dated 26 February 1942. See also Tabriz consulate commentary dated 16 March 1942. Also T Cuyler-Young The Problem of Westernisation in Modern Iran Middle East Journal, 2, 1948.

²⁴³ FO 248 1442 - Persian Govt. & Internal Situation file 150, notes on Majlis proceedings, file 150/44/44, dated 6 April 1944.

²⁴⁴ Quoted in Abrahamian *op. cit.* pg 231. See also FO 248 1462; undated file 65/94/46 - the Programme of the Democrat Party of Iran.

²⁴⁵ FO 248 1444 - Internal Situation in Azerbaijan, file 439; report file 439/6/44, dated 6 April 1944. This, and the fact that Pishevari called on Azerbaijani's to join in *jihad* against the government in Tehran, (see also Rossow R The Battle for Azerbaijan Middle East Journal, 1, 1947) (continued...)

Once sentiment had been sufficiently aroused in this direction, it was but a simple step to push in practice for independence, allowing Pischevari to claim, with some justification, that such a demand was a natural outgrowth of years of social and economic neglect by central government. Thus in justifying Azerbaijani independence, Pischevari argued, "Azerbaijani's are Persians [Iranians] and wish to remain part of Persia [Iran] but they cannot surrender the liberties which they have won with so many sacrifices...I was ready to convert the national government into a provincial council and to recommend officials be appointed by the central government but the government would not agree..."²⁴⁶

Despite remaining vague about the issue of national independence,²⁴⁷ the new Azerbaijan government set about establishing the symbols of the new nation with a vigour and enthusiasm which would have made Reza Shah proud. The policy had been implemented from the beginning of the movement in order to make explicit differences with Tehran. Thus it was noted in 1941 that, "The party held a large meeting at a theatre this week to pass a resolution whereby the wide main thoroughfare of Tabriz had its name solemnly changed from Khiaban Pahlavi (after the ex-shah who created it) to 'Khiaban Sattar Khan' for one section and 'Khiaban Bagher Khan' for another after two local nationalist

(...continued)

East Journal, 10, 1,1956, pp 17-32) are the first tentative indications of 'religious nationalism', perhaps reflecting the growing politicisation of the masses.

²⁴⁶ FO 248 1463 file 69; Summary of Pischevari speech file 69/191/46, dated 17 May 1946.

²⁴⁷ FO 371 52680 - Reactions to Azerbaijan; E9036, dated 11 September 1946, reveals that Pischevari still shied away from publicly declaring 'independence'.

firebrands of the 1909 revolutionary days."²⁴⁸ By 1946 symbols of nationhood were far more explicit, including the overwriting of Iranian postage stamps, the issue of banknotes, the institution of new festivals as well as a new national flag. This flag was on show during the Noruz celebrations: "The new Azerbaijan flag was conspicuous in the procession: it consists of the Persian tricolour, green, white and red, with a badge in the middle composed of ears of corn surrounding a conventional representation of mountains with the rising sun or some sort of beacon above them and the word 'Azerbaijan' inscribed between the tops of the ears of the corn."²⁴⁹ It is significant that the authorities sought to acquire familiar symbols of nationhood, and re-define them through the ideology of *Azeri* nationalism

In addition a new curriculum was imposed, "which not only endeavours to impart to the students a sound knowledge but also make them politically minded, by teaching them the history of Azerbaijan and enables them to judge for themselves where their real interests lie."²⁵⁰ Ironically, despite their own differences with monolithic Iranian nationalism, Azerbaijani nationalism was found to be no more tolerant towards minorities.²⁵¹ Two laws most similar to those of Reza Shah, were those insisting on the use of 'domestic' textiles in manufacture, and the imposition of conscription, which was described as a 'national duty'. Conscription was no more appealing to Azeri nationals than it was to Iranian

²⁴⁸ FO 248 1410 file 144, Consular report dated 29 December 1941.

²⁴⁹ FO 248 1463 - Internal Situation, Azerbaijan; report on Noruz celebrations file 69/90/46, dated 23 March 1946.

²⁵⁰ FO 248 1462 - Persian Govt. & Internal Situation file 65; summary of article from *Havanan* newspaper dated 6 October 1946.

²⁵¹ FO 371 52679 file 5; Consular tour of Azerbaijan, E7642 dated 8 August 1946.

nationals, and the legislation caused much discontent.²⁵²

The movement centred in Mahabad, was not as well organised as that of Azerbaijan and initially at least it bore more similarity to the revolt of Nasir Khan, in that the Kurds sought more autonomy over their own affairs. Although there was little affection for the central government especially in the guise of the armed forces who viewed Kurdistan as their special preserve, efforts were geared towards de-centralisation rather than independence. However agitation, and no little Soviet support encouraged the development of a fledgling nationalist movement complete with the explicit development of political myth.

Thus the British Consul noted that despite government incompetence, its position in Kurdistan remained relatively strong and that, "There is no genuine demand from Kurds... for independence."²⁵³ Indeed, in one of the first demands laid down by the Kurds for greater decentralisation, Soviet influence is apparent as it required that, "Arms held by Ajams [Iranians] who are the enemies of the Kurds and Fascists, must be collected and handed in to the Soviet authorities..." The Iranian government was aware of Soviet agitation and protested to the Allied powers that the Kurds involved were simply bandits. Indeed the Kurds admitted in their demands that they had looted.²⁵⁴

²⁵² FO 248 1463 file 69, Situation report 69/50/46, dated 23 February 1946. The 'Times' records that Pishevari on a visit to Tehran, took to wearing the uniform of the 'national' army, dated 28 April 1946.

²⁵³ FO 248 1410 file 144, reports dated, 24 May 1942, 22 May 1942.

²⁵⁴ FO 248 1410, file 144, Kurdish Demands, dated 30 April 1942.

Soviet influence was most obvious in the use of narratives and euphemism to extol the Kurdish national cause. For example, a Kurdish independence pageant was held in Mahabad, which according to the British consul in Tabriz, involved, "A woman, with her hands chained, and carrying two babies on her arms, represented Kurdistan. She took her stand before three men representing Persia, Turkey and Iraq. A hand, bearing the Hammer and Sickle device, then came from behind the screen and unlocked her chains. Her veil fell and revealed on her bosom a Red Flag bearing the words: 'Long live Stalin, the liberator of small nations.' Durakhshani, the Commandant of Persian troops...said this new activity in the cause of Kurdish independence had begun immediately after the inauguration of the Mahabad branch of the Iran-Soviet cultural Society, about three weeks ago..." Furthermore, when the Kurdish leader Qazi Mohammad appeared in Tabriz, "he was greeted with the 'Kurdish hymn to Stalin' in which Stalin is extolled as the supporter and the saviour of Kurdistan. Portraits of Stalin were carried in the procession."²⁵⁵ The Kurdish conception of what could be constituted as 'modern' also bore the hallmark of Soviet ideology: "We desire to inform the whole world that the Kurdish nation, in solid unity, desire to adopt modern educational methods and to reject age old agricultural and other implements which have been in use since the days of Adam, and to adopt mechanistic implements..."²⁵⁶

The separatist movements in Kurdistan and Azerbaijan failed because they did not concur

²⁵⁵ FO 371 45503 - Kurdish Demonstrations - file 2495; E3660 dated 16 May 1945; E8663 dated 12 November 1945.

²⁵⁶ FO 248 1463 file 69 - Kurdish declaration broadcast on Tabriz radio, file 69/120/46, dated 23 April 1946.

sufficiently with the social reality of sentiment within those territories²⁵⁷, and did not anticipate the strength of Iranian national feeling, which effectively forced the government in Tehran to take action. There is little doubt that many of the political and intellectual elite were concerned about copycat movements, and indeed Nasir Khan had reacted to developments in Azerbaijan by starting his own 'Fars National Movement', which was in reality ineffectual. The liberation of Azerbaijan was seen as a major turning point for Iranian nationalism, and popular sentiment was well expressed by chief of staff Razmara, who said, "Today the population of Iran is celebrating the liberation of Azerbaijan but in fact we should be celebrating the liberation of Iran as a whole for, by deciding to intervene in Azerbaijan, we have dispelled a tremendous danger and serious menace to the entire territory of Iran."²⁵⁸ Three ideological parameters were to benefit from the crisis in Azerbaijan and Kurdistan: nationalism, militarism, and dynastic nationalism. All three were to draw strength from the visible triumph of the underpinning ideology of Iranian nationalism.²⁵⁹

The idea that Iran was in need of a saviour, someone distinct from the young shah, had been reverberating around elite circles since the abdication of Reza Shah. Many leading intellectuals and politicians sought to fill this vacuum in the national consciousness,

²⁵⁷ FO 248 1463, file 69, reveals that Azerbaijan forces fighting the Turkish speaking Afshar tribe, file 69/4/46 dated 2 January 1946. Also the reality of poor attendance at rallies, file 69/459/46, dated 4 December 1946.

²⁵⁸ FO 248 1463 file 69, file 69/467/46 dated 28 December 1946.

²⁵⁹ 'The Times' 19 December 1946, notes that Turkish books were ritually and publicly burned in Tabriz.

including the young shah, but he lacked credibility among the elite.²⁶⁰ This preoccupation with a great leader is exemplified by the fact that most political parties were centred around individual politicians - the Tudeh was the one significant exception to this rule. Qavam was the first politician able to exploit this sentiment and give substance to the myth. He spared no effort in cultivating this image of himself and even tested the idea with the British Embassy²⁶¹.

Among the many nationalist leaflets dropped in Tehran to mark the success of the government mission to Azerbaijan (which effectively signalled its ultimate return to Iran), were ones which read, "Freedom lovers of Iran guided by Qavam as Saltaneh, Iran's able statesman, are advancing towards new and greater triumphs and victories."²⁶² Qavam's cultivation of this image was not surprisingly to draw criticism from his political foes who were at once jealous of his success and anxious about his authoritarian tendencies. Characteristically, the saviour was charged with aspiring to 'dictatorship' and the dissimulation which had made him the 'guide' of 'freedom lovers', was used to equally good effect against Qavam. Far from being a friend of freedom, Qavam was now decried as its enemy; the newspaper *Atesh* headlined that 'Freedom was in Danger'.²⁶³ So suspicious were his critics of his intentions, that a power cut which prevented the full

²⁶⁰ FO 248 1427 - Persian Government and Internal Affairs, file 544; interview with Zarin Kafsh, dated 3 September 1943; also undated report of conference in favour of Seyyid Zia on 14 June 1943.

²⁶¹ FO 248 1427, file 544; interview with Qavam dated 25 November 1943.

²⁶² FO 371 52678 file 5; E5994, dated 28 June 1946.

²⁶³ FO 248 1474 - Persian Government & Internal Situation, file 13, file no. 13/74/47 dated 14 July 1947.

broadcast of the Shah's Noruz speech, but which was restored in time for Qavam's, was ascribed to a deliberate action by the Prime Minister!²⁶⁴

Political intrigue prevented Qavam from fully capitalising on his carefully cultivated myth of the saviour, and it would be left to Dr Mosaddeq, and to some extent Ayatollah Kashani to truly exploit the myth. For the time being it was the military and the Shah who basked in the reflected glory of Qavam. For the military, the re-occupation of Azerbaijan ensured their rehabilitation in the national consciousness. They were once again perceived as a tool of national unity. In this respect the crisis had positive implications for the military. The Shah, as Commander in Chief, also gained credit but the net gain was probably not as substantial. The Shah and the dynasty had come in for substantial criticism in Azerbaijan; the Shah's birthday was not commemorated²⁶⁵, and Reza Shah was described as Reza Khan²⁶⁶. Furthermore, insiders were aware that the 'liberation' of Azerbaijan had more to do with Qavam's diplomacy than the Shah's leadership.

Nevertheless, the Shah gained because it was considered necessary to restore the political balance.²⁶⁷ Such sentiments were able to benefit from the increased popular appeal of the monarchy in times of national crisis. Thus the chief of staff Razmara, in the French language newspaper 'Journal de Tehran emphasised that the Shah preceded Qavam in

²⁶⁴ FO 248 1474, file 13, file no. 13/26/47 dated 26 March 1947.

²⁶⁵ FO 248 1463 file 69, file no. 69/381/46 memo dated 28 October 1946.

²⁶⁶ FO 248 1462 file 65, Article from *Azad Mellat* dated 6 October 1946.

²⁶⁷ FO 248 1427 file 544, interview with members of the elite, dated 11 July 1943, in which they acknowledge the importance of royal mystique in maintaining the loyalty of the tribes.

significance for the liberation of Azerbaijan: "...Celui qui fut le principal auteur de cette liberation est sans aucun doute Sa Majeste Imperiale le Chahinchah...Apres Sa Majeste Imperiale le Chahinchah, celui qui joua le plus grand role dans la liberation de l'Azerbaijan, fut Ghavam Saltaneh."²⁶⁸

The Times reported that, "The troops were enthusiastically received in Tabriz by the crowds who lined the streets draped with the national colours and decorated with portraits of the Shah." The monarchy and the army cannot but have benefited from the fact that, "In Tehran the opinion is that this is one of the great days in the history of Persia." They were both centre stage in the grand theatre of Iranian history. A national holiday was declared and a 'big military parade' was arranged.²⁶⁹ It was also noted that the Kurds welcomed the arrival of the troops with patriotic demonstrations, although some of this enthusiasm was probably engineered.²⁷⁰

The Azerbaijan crisis effectively marked the beginning of the Cold War²⁷¹; a development which the Shah and the army were quick to exploit. In an audience with Le Rougetel, the Shah was quick to situate Iran within the new Cold War tensions, and to rationalise his desire for a large well equipped army. Thus, "The Shah also spoke of the re-equipment of the army which he is now inclined to think of as a first line of defence against a Soviet

²⁶⁸ FO 248 1463 file 69, file no. 69/467/46, dated 28 December 1946.

²⁶⁹ The Times - 14 December 1946. See also The Times - 27 October 1946, which indicates the popular reception received by the shah and the army.

²⁷⁰ The Times - 19 December 1946.

²⁷¹ Rossow *op. cit.* pg 17.

invasion of the Middle East."²⁷² The communists, down though not out, reacted angrily to this new tendency. Their chief newspaper, *Mardum* ridiculed the new Cold War environment, describing, "America's declared interest in the integrity of Persia as blatant hypocrisy, the real purpose of the USA being firstly to prepare Persia as a battleground for a capitalist struggle against the USSR and secondly to use the country as a market for old clothes and military junk."²⁷³

The Shah, meanwhile continued to capitalise on his new popularity with a three week visit to Azerbaijan in 1947. By all accounts he was received enthusiastically, "Bouquets of flowers were thrown into the train and in some villages cows and sheep were slaughtered in honour of the Shah....The royal visit is a symbol of the newly restored national unity..."²⁷⁴ The popularity of the Shah at the conclusion of a tense national crisis, especially given his relative ineffectuality throughout it, is testament to the fact that the monarchy was the personalisation of nationalism in the eyes of many Iranians; and, as an expression of political myth enjoyed a degree of institutionalisation within Iranian political culture. It was the symbol of national unity and could be identified with interpretations of 'Iran'.

The fact that there was very little talk of republicanism reflected the understanding of this fact by the political and intellectual elite. However the Shah's interpretation differed. For

²⁷² FO 248 1474 - Persian Government and Internal Situation, file 13, Le Rougetel in audience with the Shah, file no. 13/124/47, dated 13 November 1947.

²⁷³ FO 248 1474 file 13, Creswell to Bevin, file no. 13/109/47 dated 23 September 1947.

²⁷⁴ The Times - 29 May 1947.

him the sanctity of the institution was not distinct from the person; adulation for the institution (as expressed, for instance by Razmara above) was in his eyes adulation for his person. Rather than respect the institution to which he was born, the Shah was to draw increasing criticism for the 'uncharacteristic' behaviour of the court, a problem he would exacerbate as he turned his attention to developing the ideology of dynastic nationalism.

Ideological Reconstruction

Redefining the parameters of Dynastic Nationalism:

Increasingly convinced by his own sense of mission, the Shah was encouraged to develop the ideology of dynastic nationalism. Acutely aware of the problems of associating himself too closely with the dynastic nationalism of his father, Mohammad Reza Shah moved cautiously at first, and sought to redefine himself within the context of his ideological predicament. He sought to identify himself with the new interpretations of nationalism, but this policy of differentiation from his father sat uncomfortably with his own sentiments and when he felt secure enough he turned his attention to reinventing the past to suit his present image.

As has been noted, the institution of the monarchy increased in popularity during peak periods of uncertainty and tension²⁷⁵, and its political influence among the rural masses, in one sense the 'politically unaware' remained strong. Even among the politically aware,

²⁷⁵ FO 248 1474 file 13, Press Summary, file no. 13/76/47, dated 8 July 1947.

talk of 'republicanism' in this period was relatively slight. This fact is even admitted by critics of the notion of monarchical mystique, such as Azimi who notes that, ".it appears that there had been no serious thinking towards such an end [republicanism]," adding that it was an indication of the strength of "royalist subculture" within the Iranian body-politic.²⁷⁶

The British diplomat Lawford, who was able to become quite close to the Shah noted: "I was very much struck by the popularity of the Shah in all the countryside through which we passed on our various journeys. Every morning as we rode out of the gates of the palace and through the villages that are scattered over the valley there were groups of peasants, often in very ragged clothes, who shouted and cheered and applauded with what appeared to be sincere enthusiasm."²⁷⁷ This enthusiasm was facilitated by the fact that the Shah was apparently at ease when it came to dealing with the common people, and was not averse to walking among them unguarded and hearing their petitions.²⁷⁸

At the same time, the Pahlavi Dynasty, especially in the immediate aftermath of the abdication of Reza Shah, was deeply unpopular, in particular with the political and

²⁷⁶ F Azimi Iran: The Crisis of Democracy London, I B Tauris, 1989, pg 344. See also FO 248 1493, file 101/2, Seyyid Zi'a comments, file 101/2/248/50, dated 10 December 1950.

²⁷⁷ FO 248 1493 - General Political Situation , file 101/2, conversations between Lawford and the Shah, file no. 101/2/196/50, dated 16 September 1950.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid*, Lawford, also see file 101/2/185/50, Alam's comments on the Shah's trip to Kurdistan, dated 28 August 1950.

intellectual elite.²⁷⁹ It may be argued that as more Iranians became politically aware and discerning, so the fascination with monarchy waned, and criticism of the specific activities of the dynasty grew. The Shah was severely handicapped in this respect as his father's heir, and by the continuing antics of the court which clashed dramatically with the popular expectation of what an Iranian royal court should be like. Thus during his dispute with Qavam in the aftermath of the liberation of Azerbaijan, it was noted that Qavam still elicited respect and sympathy as a part of a noble and distinguished family while the Shah was disliked as the son of an upstart and a tyrant.²⁸⁰

Court extravagance was arguably a more serious problem since it was one the Shah was expected to manage. As early as 1943 members of the establishment criticised the excessive expenditure of the royal family and doubts were expressed as to the Shah's willingness to curb this expenditure.²⁸¹ There was continued criticism of lavish parties and Princess Ashraf was increasingly viewed as the real power behind the throne.²⁸² Such behaviour was to carry social and political repercussions and it was noted that, "...feeling now varies between mild dismay and violent indignation at His Majesty's failure to make himself master in his own house."²⁸³

²⁷⁹ As early as 1944, Mosaddeq urged the Shah to distance himself from his father - FO 248 1442 - Persian Govt., file 150, file no. 150/118/44, dated 17 October 1944.

²⁸⁰ FO 248 1474 file 13, Memo file no. 13/36/47 dated 26 April 1947.

²⁸¹ FO 248 1426 - Interviews with the Shah, files dated 26 July 1943, and 13 July 1943.

²⁸² FO 248 1493 file 101/2 - the clergy were similarly un-enamoured by the affairs of the court, file no. 101/2/248/50, dated 10 December 1950.

²⁸³ FO 248 1485 - Persian Government and Internal Situation, file 21; file no.21/13 (continued...)

The Shah was, however, sufficiently moved by his reception in Azerbaijan and by the general popularity of the monarchy as an institution, to effectively ignore the criticism and seek to redefine himself and his dynasty in the eyes of the Iranian people. He was encouraged in this decision from an early stage, by courtiers and other sycophants, as well as those who saw political advantage in manipulating the shah. As the British Embassy noted in 1942, "The Shah...is gradually being got at by flatterers: in fact by just the sort of people who turned his papa in the wrong path. One of the major curses in Iran in the past has been the king-worship which dates from Darius or earlier..."²⁸⁴

Men such as General Razmara used displacement and narrative, as well as drawing unfavourable comparisons with Reza Shah, to urge the Shah to greater action: "...He is continually filling the Shah's head with the type of advice most palatable e.g. 'be the man your father was' - 'the country is in such a mess that only the personal rule of an absolute ruler can save her' - 'the Majlis: its rooted interests and internal jealousies is preventing the government from governing therefore you must shut it.'"²⁸⁵ Others genuinely felt that the Shah had much to offer, including Alam, and Seyyid Zia who believed him to be a 'Man of Destiny'.²⁸⁶

(...continued)

49 Lambton's Assessment dated 27 January 1949, file no. 21/262/49 Le Rougetel to Bevin dated 18 November 1949.

²⁸⁴ FO 248 1407 - HM Minister's relations with the Shah, file 628, Memo dated 10 April 1942.

²⁸⁵ FO 248 1442 - Persian Govt. & Internal Situation, file 150; report file no. 150/174/44 dated 2 December 1944.

²⁸⁶ FO 248 1485, file 21 - conversation with Seyyid Zia, file no. 21/290/49, dated 12 December 1949. FO 248 1493, file 101/2 - conversation with Alam file no. (continued...)

In attempting to reinvent himself, the Shah sought to distance himself from the traditional social alliances of the monarchy and instead to be seen as the champion of the emergent young radical intelligentsia. He was a keen advocate of social reform and made it known that the plight of the average Iranian was a matter of great personal concern. Thus Bullard noted in 1943, "I felt that the Shah now wishes to be regarded as the champion of youth and of the lower classes and the protagonist of social reform..." adding significantly, "...that he greatly distrusts the class represented by the Prime Minister."²⁸⁷ Furthermore, "...The Shah said that the hope of the country lay in the hand of the young - in ideas and not necessarily only in age. He referred to a movement and what he described as 'le type des jeunes' which he said was growing, and encouragement must be given to them."²⁸⁸

Indications are that the Shah enjoyed some success in pursuing this new image, as the military attache noted, "The Shah was given a very enthusiastic reception by a crowd of about 10,000 spectators at a football match between British and Persian teams in Tehran, which may indicate that attempts that have recently been made to represent him as the champion of youth have not been without success."²⁸⁹ It is debatable how genuine the Shah was in his advocacy of social reform and arguably his revolutionary credentials were always tempered by political realities which dictated that his natural allies remained the

(...continued)

101/2/56/50 dated 25 March 1950. The Shah may have also drawn strength from the example of Napoleon, see FO 248 1442, file 150, file no. 150/18/44, dated 1 February 1944, which notes the prominent placement of a statuette of Napoleon in the Shah's study.

²⁸⁷ FO 248 1423 - Interviews with the Shah, dated 15 January 1943.

²⁸⁸ FO 248 1426 - Interviews with the Shah, dated 15 April 1943.

²⁸⁹ FO 371 35109 - Intelligence Summary file 110, E552/110/34 dated 27 January 1943.

conservative traditional elements in society. Furthermore, the failure of the court and to an increasing extent, the Shah, to curtail their often lavish expenditure drew criticism, especially from the most extreme left-wing groups.

In order to counter this challenge, the Shah attempted, unsuccessfully, to become even more radical, at one stage advocating a further decentralisation of power²⁹⁰, and shocking many of his traditional supporters, by announcing on a visit to the United States that he intended to redistribute crown lands to the peasants.²⁹¹ Needless to say, "...The impact on the political scene has been very great. Liberal and reformist elements see in the Shah's decision the beginning of a process which alter for the better the whole economic, social and political structure of Persia; the great landowners and those who depend on them are alarmed and are seeking to prevent and forestall the promulgation of analogous legislation applicable to their own estates."²⁹² However the Shah limited the favourable impact of this legislation by putting the funds received from the sale of lands at the disposal of a charity run by the ever unpopular Princess Ashraf²⁹³. Thus it may be said, that he succeeded in alienating both the radicals and the traditionalists.

Contrary to the image which he tried to portray, the Shah was neither sympathetic to

²⁹⁰ FO 248 1493 - General Political Situation, file 101/2/118/50, conversation with the Shah, dated 10 June 1950.

²⁹¹ FO 248 1485 - Persian Government & Internal Situation, file 21, file no. 21/271/49 dated 24 November 1949.

²⁹² FO 371 91519 - The Shah's sale of Crown Lands, file 1461, E1461, dated 12 February 1951.

²⁹³ FO 371 75504 - Royal Family Affairs, file 1944, no specific date or file no; dated 1949.

greater decentralisation, nor particularly enamoured with democracy. Indeed the evidence suggests that he favoured greater centralisation with himself at the helm.²⁹⁴ In many ways the militaristic vision predominated. In order to make such an outcome plausible, he was forced to re-cast the image of his father, to many Iranians the quintessential despot, in a new mould. As one personalities list reported, "...the present ruler, retains a warm filial regard for his father and pays him the compliment of imitating him as much as possible; he also initiates propaganda in favour of Reza, but it is not taken seriously."²⁹⁵ This propaganda involved the careful reconstruction of the historical record stressing the achievements of Reza Shah, while ignoring the essential arbitrariness of his rule. Thus for instance in 1943, there was, "A campaign for the whitewashing of the ex-Shah, representing him as a misunderstood and much maligned public servant, led astray by astute politicians."²⁹⁶ This reinterpretation also allowed the Shah to realign himself with the radicals by blaming the evils of Reza Shah on the traditional elite political class. Nevertheless on Reza Shah's death the following year few were overcome by grief. The

²⁹⁴ See FO 248 1423 - Interviews with the Shah, discussion with the military attache, dated 16 August 1943; general report undated; conversation with Misbahzadeh dated 8 May 1943; FO 248 1442 - Persian Govt., conversation with Lascelles, file no. 150/85/44 dated 14 August 1944; FO 248 1493 - General Political Situation, conversations with the Shah file no. 101/2/119/50, dated 12 June 1950; conversation with Shepherd file no. 101/2/104/50, dated 31 May 1950; FO 248 1514 - Internal Situation, interview with the Shah, file no. 10101/12/51, dated 14 January 1951.

²⁹⁵ FO 371 40224 - Personalities, file 2218, dated 14 March 1944. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that the Shah idolised his father; see FO 248 1442 - Persian Govt. file 150, conversation between Trott and the Shah, file no. 150/81/44, dated 27 July 1944. Also FO 248 1493, file 101/2, conversation with Shepherd, file no. 101/2/211/50, dated 9 October 1950; conversations with Lawford, file 101/2/196/50, dated 16 September 1950.

²⁹⁶ FO 248 1427 - Persian Govt. file 544, conversation with Minister of Interior Bahramy, dated 22 February 1943; see also FO 248 1426 - Interviews with the Shah, memo dated February 1943;

Shah's decision to initiate a period of mourning was criticised, and many sections of the press analysed Reza Shah's reign unfavourably. The Tudeh Party even expelled a member who had attended a mourning ceremony.²⁹⁷

This, however did not deter the Shah, and the strategy gained momentum in the aftermath of the triumph of Azerbaijan, as preparations were made to bring the body back to Iran. As Le Rougetel noted, "Many laudatory articles on the late Shah's reign have recently been published urging that justice should at last be done to the memory of a great and patriotic sovereign."²⁹⁸ In seeking to achieve his father's rehabilitation into the national narrative he capitalised on growing nostalgia for the 'order' his father represented, in stark contrast to the apparent chaos of contemporary Iran.²⁹⁹ Thus he encouraged the Majlis to confer the title of the 'Great' on his father, in a deliberate attempt to sanctify the dynasty. The move was not welcomed, and many felt that the Majlis was 'usurping the functions of history'.³⁰⁰ As Le Rougetel noted, "...the attempt to elevate the reputation of Reza Shah by conferring him the title of 'the Great' has offended the Persian sense of propriety. Especially of late the Persians have been favourably inclined towards achievements of the late Shah, but they do not consider that this is the moment to honour him with the title

²⁹⁷ FO 248 1442 - file 150, file no. 150/144/44, dated 18 October 1944.

²⁹⁸ FO 248 1478 - Royal Family Affairs, file 83, Le Rougetel, file no. 83/7/47, dated 2 February 1947.

²⁹⁹ FO 248 1442, file 150, file no 150/97/44, dated 5 September 1944. Also FO 248 1493 file 101/2, conversation with Shepherd, file no. 101/2/229/50, dated 20 November 1950; FO 248 1514, file 10101, Shepherd memo, file no. 10101/68/51, dated 12 March 1951.

³⁰⁰ The Times - 22 June 1949.

which has so far been reserved for such venerated figures as Cyrus and Shah Abbas."³⁰¹

Despite, or because of, this concerted campaign, the practicalities of returning the body of Reza Shah proved problematic and prolonged, not least because the Shia clergy were unsympathetic. The Shah had wanted to bury Reza Shah in the grounds of Saadabad Palace, but the mullahs argued that since he had been interred in non-Shia ground, he had to be re-interred within proximity of a shrine. The Shah's suggestion of either Mashhad or Qom was turned down by the local ulema.³⁰² With respect to the tomb itself, the Tudeh Party criticised the lavish expenditure, and protested that the money could have been better expended on the poor.³⁰³ Probably the best and most favourable commentary on the whole affair was offered by a local gardener who noted, "Why do they not leave the old Shah where he is? Then there would be plenty of room in the new tomb for the present one."³⁰⁴

The Shah had been greatly assisted in his attempt to both reinvent himself and his dynasty by a fortunate escape from assassination which had elicited widespread public sympathy.³⁰⁵ On a visit to Tehran University to commemorate its foundation by his father the Shah had

³⁰¹ FO 371 75504 - Royal Family Affairs, file 1944, Le Rougetel, date 1949.

³⁰² FO 248 1478 - Royal Family Affairs, file 83, Le Rougetel, file no. 83/19/47, dated 8 May 1947.

³⁰³ FO 248 1494 - Tudeh Party activities, file 101/5, article from *Mardum*, file no. 101/5/50/50, dated 15 May 1950.

³⁰⁴ FO 248 1513 - Royal Family Affairs, file 194/2, file no. 194/2/8/50, dated 19 April 1950.

³⁰⁵ FO 248 1485 - Persian Government & Internal Situation file 21, file nos 21/44/49 dated 14 February 1949, 21/36/49 dated 7th February 1949.

been shot and hit several times at close range, but by dint of good fortune survived the attack despite being wounded in the face. The assassination attempt, and its almost miraculous failure, one of several throughout his reign, was to have a profound impact on the Shah's perception of his own role and manifest destiny. Public sympathy, outraged at the attack on the institution, if not the person of the monarch, nevertheless provided the Shah with further encouragement and provided the catalyst, despite some considered protests, for the government to outlaw the Tudeh Party.³⁰⁶

Arguably, the Shah mis-interpreted public sentiments when he decided to exploit it to his benefit by pushing through constitutional reforms which would increase his direct political power through the establishment of a second representative house, the Senate. The reform which was pushed through in the face of concerted opposition, meant that the Shah would be able to nominate half the senators. In order to sell reform particularly to foreign critics, the Shah unashamedly used dissimulation and universalisation appealing to the ideological logic of the West . In an interview with a journalist from the United Press which was reprinted in the French language *Journal de Tehran*, the Shah noted that the creation of a senate had restored balance to the constitution, and that now the Iranian monarchy better resembled the constitutional monarchies of Europe.³⁰⁷

The Shah, convinced of his own mission, and supported by a carefully cultivated myth of his dynasty's role in the progressive narrative, had promised that his new powers would

³⁰⁶ FO 248 1485 - Persian Government & Internal Situation file 21 no 21/46/49 dated 11th February 1949.

³⁰⁷ FO 248 1485, file 21, file no. 21/143/49, dated 11 May 1949.

allow him to implement practically, the social causes he had been championing. The reality was that he did little better than his predecessors. As Le Rougetel noted in a letter to Bevin, "The Shah, who had promised a new deal, has failed to live up to his promise. Therefore it is generally felt, he must be either knave or a fool, or both. This is of course, a heaven sent opportunity for all adversaries of the Shah, his dynasty or his country, and they have not been slow to exploit it."³⁰⁸

It was indicative of the Shah's less than central role in Iranian politics at this time that just as his pursuit of dynastic nationalism was gathering pace, he found himself marginalised by events and outmanoeuvred by his political rivals. Far from projecting himself as the leading character in the political theatre, the Shah found his influence waning rapidly. His wedding to Soraya Esfandiari, intended to solidify the dynasty by providing a male heir, was a haphazard affair. Efforts were made to capitalise on the fact that Soraya was Iranian, despite the fact that her mother was German, and this does seem to have flattered national pride, though it is a matter of debate how popular the wedding ceremony and festivities actually were.³⁰⁹ Though the press dutifully trumpeted the occasion and new postage stamps were issued, there was some concern over the inclusion of 'opium smoking' Bakhtiariis into the Court, and the mullahs frowned on the European character and upbringing of the new queen.³¹⁰ Once again sensitive to charges of extravagance, the

³⁰⁸ FO 248 1485, file 21, Le Rougetel to Bevin, file no. 21/262/49, dated 18 November 1949.

³⁰⁹ FO 371 91627 - Wedding to Soraya, file 1941, E1941 dated 21 February 1951, and E1941, dated 26 February 1951. See also The Times 12/2/51.

³¹⁰ FO 248 1513 - Royal Family Affairs, file 194/2, file no. 194/2/24/50, dated 13 October 1950.

Shah limited the festivities, so much so that, "When..it became known that though the Agha Khan and Begum were coming for the wedding, they would not be accompanied by Rita Heyworth, the realisation struck home that glamour as well as pomp was to be absent: the issue of a special commemorative postage stamp and the reported arrival of a German circus were poor consolations."³¹¹

The Shah's first attempt to seize the political initiative had failed. His youthful enthusiasm for his father and the dynasty had resulted in the premature implementation of policies which he could neither sustain nor the public genuinely support. By seeking to directly influence the political process he needlessly attracted criticism and was effectively outmanoeuvred by politicians who were more astute and more in tune with public sentiment. As a joint US-British assessment noted in 1951, "The Shah..has thus far been unable to use nationalist elements to strengthen the crown or to effect much needed reforms in the face of the landowning-merchant oligarchy."³¹² The fact that by late 1951, pamphlets protested the official commemoration of the Shah's birthday, is an indication of how low the esteem of the dynasty and indeed the institution of monarchy had fallen.³¹³ It was to be Dr Mosaddeq rather than the Shah who was to become the supreme icon of the nationalist movement.

³¹¹ The Times - 11/2/51. FO 371 91627, E1941, dated 26 February 1951.

³¹² FO 248 1514 - Internal Situation, file 10101, file no. 10101/452/52, dated 19 November 1951.

³¹³ FO 248 1514, file 10101, pamphlet distributed at the Tehran sports stadium, file no. 10101/418/51 dated 29 October 1951, some of the pamphlets were actually thrown into the royal box.

The Oil Nationalisation Crisis & the triumph of 'nationalism':

The oil nationalisation crisis which witnessed the ascendancy of Dr Mohammad Mosaddeq as the supreme symbol of Iranian nationalism was a fitting apogee of a period permeated with social tensions and political crises. All the major ideological trends which had been exhibited, albeit tentatively, since 1941, now competed in an atmosphere of heightened tension, resulting in the polarisation of ideological constructions and a propensity for political myth which encouraged the development of semiological or mythic chains with mythic constructs developing and reacting to previous constructions and consequently building on each other.³¹⁴

The confrontation with the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC) and Great Britain was a direct consequence of the developments in Azerbaijan and Qavam's clever out-manoeuving of Soviet territorial and economic designs on northern Iran. While it appeared as though the Shah had gained the upper hand on the domestic political scene, the country's nationalist deputies, probably encouraged by a disenchanted Soviet Union, turned their attention to the other Great Power with possible territorial and definite economic interests in the country. It seemed logical to many that the arguments used to prevent a Soviet oil concession in the Caspian, could now be put to good use against the existing British oil concession in the south. Under the circumstances, it is surprising that neither the British, nor indeed the Shah appreciated the growing nationalist outrage against AIOC. As a result, they were both caught unawares by the first traditionally based

³¹⁴ See above, pp 13-14.

patrician politician to exploit and encourage popular feeling. This was facilitated by the comprehensive development and use of an aspect of nationalism which may be categorised as 'anti-imperialism'.

Dr Mosaddeq provided the concept of anti-imperialism, a concept with which many intellectuals³¹⁵ and working class Iranians would have been familiar, with a tangible and accessible target. Just as Dr Mosaddeq sought to identify himself with the ideology of nationalism so he identified his enemy with all that as anti-nationalist. Thus, just as Dr Mosaddeq became the personalisation of the ideology of nationalism so too did the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company and to a lesser extent Great Britain (in the tangible manifestation of the British Embassy and Consular offices) become the familiarisation of the opposite of nationalism. They both became potent symbols of ideological constructs, symptoms and causes of an intense ideological conflict with a profound impact on the political culture of the country.

The Anglo-Iranian Oil Company was the very visible manifestation of foreign economic and political control in Iran. Its existence, and the generous concession which it enjoyed irritated many Iranians, but it was Dr Mosaddeq, who sensing the mood, recognised the opportunity provided by the need to ratify the Supplementary Oil Agreement, to challenge this. The National Front, which Dr Mosaddeq led, initiated a concerted campaign of dissimulation and fragmentation to excite popular opinion against AIOC. The oil company

³¹⁵ Khalil Maliki formulated a comprehensive theoretical framework for this 'anti-imperialism' dubbing it the third force. It is at this stage that the notion of 'neither East nor West' enters Iranian political discourse.

represented all that was wrong with Iran, and it was argued, was the major obstacle to reform and social progress.

Thus Mosaddeq characterised the oil company as 'dragon' which was sitting on a 'hidden treasure' (ie oil), and stressed that, "The first step towards any reform in Persia is the nationalisation of oil."³¹⁶ Later, as pressures increased, he was even more explicit in stating, "...that is our thesis, that all the poverty, confusion and calamity that now have befallen upon us are the results of the unjustified interferences by the former Oil company and the British Government in our internal affairs."³¹⁷

Significantly, Mosaddeq was keen not to implicate the British people in his attack on the oil company. This may have been the dual consequence of his own instinctive dislike for excessive mob incitement as well as his realisation that the movement had to rationalised abroad, especially in the United States. Thus in a speech following the nationalisation he argued that the British government had been unreasonable and , "would not accept this fair offer by you people of Persia." Upon which the crowd chanted 'Death to Britain', and Mosaddeq responded by saying, "No, I will not have you say, 'Death to Britain'; we want God to guide the British government to recognise our undoubted rights."³¹⁸

³¹⁶ The Times - 25 May 1951.

³¹⁷ FO 248 1531, file 10105, file no. 10105/153A/52, dated 12 April 1952.

³¹⁸ FO 248 1514 - Internal Situation, summary of Dr Mosaddeq's speech, file no. 10101/368/51, dated 28 September 1951. See also 'Conversation with Dr Mosaddeq', by Kingsley Martin, in the New Statesman and Nation, 12 January 1952, in which he stresses several times that there is no quarrel with the British people. It may be interesting to consider the impact of Khalil Maliki's visit to Britain when he mixed with working class people, and came away with a firm belief that the two 'peoples' had much in common.

The campaign against Britain was greatly assisted by the perception of British omnipotence³¹⁹ which lent great weight and a sense of historical auspiciousness to the movement to nationalise AIOC. Indeed, it would not be too far fetched to suggest that the movement took on the characteristics of a crusade or jihad, as was to become more apparent by the involvement of Ayatollah Kashani and the emergence of *religious nationalism*. The first indications of this radicalisation of nationalist ideology was the assassination of Prime Minister Razmara, who arguably had remained pragmatic to the last. Far from being condemned, Razmara's assassin, a member of the *Fedayin-i Islam*, was hailed as a national hero and granted a Parliamentary pardon. None of the ulema were willing to accept the invitation to deliver the sermon at Razmara's funeral, and on the very day of his assassination people in the bazaar openly rejoiced. The President of the Senate was hard pressed to describe the murder as an 'unexpected event.'³²⁰ Dr Mosaddeq went on record to say that, "The bullet which was fired by Khalil Tahmasibi [Razmara's assassin] not only saved Persia from a great danger but it also saved the whole of the East."³²¹

The notion that the movement to nationalise the oil industry was one of 'universal' or international importance was one that Mussadiq continually stressed. The notion that this

³¹⁹ This is epitomised by a private discussion between the leading lights of the National Front, and a British diplomat who notes, "My numerous denials that we were all powerful and ubiquitous in Persian politics were greeted with polite laughter - FO 248 1493, file 101/2, file no. 101/2/211/50, dated 9 October 1950.

³²⁰ FO 248 1514, file 10101, file no 10101/78/51, dated 11 March 1951.

³²¹ FO 248 1531, file 10105, a pamphlet circulating in Tehran, file no. 10105/88, dated 3 March 1952. FO 248 1493, file 101/2, file no. 101/2/261/50 dated 31 December 1950, notes that the National Front hoisted pictures of the murderer of Hazhir in the Majlis with the caption praising him for having killed a 'traitor'.

was an auspicious moment for Iran and for world history, not only reassured a population under increasing economic pressure but it also encouraged that little extra effort. Thus Mosaddeq would argue, "Sometimes great opportunities arise for nations which, if exploited intelligently, will change the course of history to their advantage and will end centuries of privation, misery, and despair." Then as if to reassure the country as to its ability to achieve this historic change, he added, "No one can deny our ancient and glorious culture. The pages of history bear witness to the talent and capabilities of our forefathers. The museums of the world vividly manifest the genius of our ancestors."³²² Again, as pressures increased so narrativisation, naturalisation and rationalisation were used to legitimate the struggle, "No effort, no reward. History bears witness that no nation has ever achieved independence or gained freedom without undergoing toils and hardships."³²³ In a radio message broadcast in 1953, he argued, "No nation has succeeded in shaking off foreign yoke without struggle, as can be testified by ancient and modern histories of nations and freedom movements...Our movement served as inspiration to national risings of other peoples, and today peoples of north and south Africa anxiously await our success."³²⁴

Dr Mosaddeq's nationalist message fared less well abroad as he sought to convince the United States in particular that Iran's struggle was a natural outcome of nationalist

³²² FO 248 1514, file 10101, file no. 10101/517/51, dated 18 December 1951.

³²³ FO 248 1531, file 10105, speech to 17th Majlis, file no. 1015/153A/52, dated 12 April 1952.

³²⁴ FO 371 104561, file 1015, text of Mosaddeq's speech, file no. 1015/26, dated 23 January 1953..

aspirations as enshrined in the new United Nations³²⁵, and that the movement was similar to the America's own struggle for independence against Britain. Dr Mosaddeq used universalisation and rationalisation to legitimise his case before the United States. His methods were not lost upon the British, who discovered that their appeal to the United Nations had inadvertently allowed the Iranian premier to travel to the United States and present his case in person. Thus one journalist commented, "Ardent nationalists who are engaged in enlisting sympathy in the United States, always try and invoke the `spirit of '76'."³²⁶ There was also a marked increase in the use of the word `liberty', for the benefit of US audiences.³²⁷

Dr Mosaddeq became increasingly disillusioned with the lack of practical help from the United States. In an interview with American editors he complained, "We are very grateful to the American people for their very valuable moral support...but we expected the American government to pay more consideration for the rightful demands of the Iranian people, being cognizant of the fact that the American people have acquired their liberty and independence through their continued national struggle."³²⁸

³²⁵ The Times - 3 May 1951; of course Iran had been one of the first countries to appeal to the UN Security Council over the occupation of Azerbaijan, with apparent success.

³²⁶ The Times - 22 October 1951; see also The Times - 8/10/51; 23/10/51.

³²⁷ Iranian politicians had frequently liberally used such words as `despotism', `tyranny' and `freedom'. The use of `liberty' may simply reflect the preference of a given translator, nevertheless its use may not be entirely coincidental.

³²⁸ FO 248 1531, file 10105, file no. 10105/124, dated 24 March 1952 - not surprisingly, the word `liberty' is used many times in his talk. FO 371 98633, file 11345, E11345, dated 20 March 1952 notes that, "This was beautifully stage managed by Mosaddeq who..used his opportunity so skilfully that it contributed largely to the
(continued...)

It would be erroneous to suggest however that Dr Mosaddeq was universally successful in justifying the pursuit of his policies. On the contrary, as economic austerity began to bite, Dr Mosaddeq's relative success in manipulating ideological constructs was subjected to an equally acute reaction. The auspicious moment in Iranian history, the notion of no gain without pain, decreased in attractiveness as hardship began to be felt. The National Front, compounded their problems by harping on the same themes which seemed increasingly ridiculous. Furthermore, the National Front became increasingly ruthless in its suppression of critics, alienating many of its supporters, including Ayatollah Kashani who complained of unconstitutional behaviour. Opponents were directly attacked as agents of the British³²⁹. Dr Fatemi was quick to ascribe blame for his near assassination on the machinations of British Intelligence, and on his way to the hospital was quoted as alleging, "The British killed me."³³⁰ It is not entirely coincidental that the National Front coalition began to fall apart as the tangible and familiar manifestation of the British bogey, in the guise of the British Embassy was removed from the scene, when diplomatic ties were finally severed.

Many critics of National Front policy found it difficult to directly challenge their fundamental goal, not only because of the practical difficulties, but because nationalist ideology had effectively become institutionalised within the political culture. To be

(...continued)
discomfiture of his enemies in the Senate."

³²⁹ The Times - 27 September 1951.

³³⁰ FO 248 1531, file 10105, quoted from *Bakhtar-e Imruz*, file no. 10105/141, dated 31 March 1952. His impromptu remark was quoted in the newspaper *Shahid*, file no 10105/88, dated 3 March 1952.

labelled a 'traitor' or a 'foreign hireling' was the worst possible slur that could be inflicted, and so criticism tended to be of methods as opposed to principles. Anonymous writers however were able to use ridicule to good effect against the theatrical Dr Mosaddeq. A leaflet, entitled, 'A defence of Dr Mosaddeq by the late Shir Ali Khan, Muzaffar ud Din Shah's gunman' is indicative of some of the reaction to the dramatic rhetoric of the National Front, and growing popular frustration, it begins:

"Why does this foolish nation not appreciate the great leader who has freed them from the yoke of colonialism, and why do they complain that they have no bread and sugar? The intelligent and able leader is indignant that the people only think of their stomachs and considers them to be worthless. The people say that the leader is mad but Matin Daftari says madness is a good thing and without it the leader could not have accomplished so much. Were not Hitler and Mussolini both mad!

Makki says that oil is dead and we should live without it. Didn't our forefathers live without oil for thousands of years? The possession of motor cars and railways does not add to the honour of the nation. See what fine people this great leader has appointed to govern you....

The ignorant people should not question the conduct of their leaders, who know better than they do. If Musaddiq has made any mistake it has been his kindness which has encouraged the people to ask for reforms. Oh stupid people, what do you know about oil, what does it matter to you that American oil shares have gone up. America is a great nation and has as many donkeys as there are people in Iran, and will send you the same donkeys as advisers.

The Americans have given you these fine Cyprus donkeys, so that in 50 years time you will

all be able to go all over the country mounted on them and will have no need for motor cars.

If you were an appreciative nation you would ask your great leader to pardon you for complaining. You will be able to lead a simple life, riding a donkey, and without electricity, cars, sugar, tea, medicine and textiles, now that you have been relieved of the burden of oil.

*So, shut up.*³³¹

This satirical leaflet highlights a major conflict with nationalism, the concept of modernisation. Many pragmatists, Razmara included, recognised that some measure of cooperation with the developed world would be necessary if the ambitious programme envisaged in the Seven Year Plan were to be implemented³³². Dr Mosaddeq had accepted the need to keep British technicians in the oil industry, but he stubbornly refused to concede terms which he felt would compromise his nationalist principles, or more to the point, the principles he had publicly espoused, and which his supporters expected him to keep. It may be argued that the decision to mobilise the masses of urban Iranians had seriously limited his room for political manoeuvre - Dr Mosaddeq had become a prisoner of his slogans.

The leaflet also highlights the development of the myth of the saviour, which Dr

³³¹ FO 248 1531, file 10105, file no. 10105/135, dated 29 March 1952

³³² FO 371 75483 - The Seven Year Plan, file 1103, E2624, dated 22 February 1949 - As far as Ebtehaj was concerned the implementation of the Seven Year Plan was the only way to 'save Iran'.

Mosaddeq was particularly adept at cultivating. It is almost ironic, and somewhat prescient of later developments, that what the Shah sought to cultivate for himself was appropriated by his rival who he habitually liked to call, 'our Demosthenes'³³³. As the British Embassy noted in 1951, "...Dr Musaddiq is personally popular and has succeeded in making himself a symbol of the Persian conception of nationalism..." He had achieved this quite simply by doing, "...something which is always dear to Persian hearts: he has flouted the authority of a great power and a great foreign interest and he has gone a long way towards damaging the prestige of the first and the prosperity of the second."³³⁴

It was not only his oratory and his dramatic actions against the British which appealed to the general public however, his general appearance, frequently mocked by his opponents also had a great impact. Dr Mosaddeq strove to project an image of himself which denoted a frugal and simple life; his frequent appearances in 'pyjamas' indicated to the general public that he had not forgotten a very traditional domestic Iranian living style.³³⁵ Had he always appeared in tie and suit, he would undoubtedly been criticised as a part of the aristocratic elite, which of course he was. This fundamental aspect of social reality combined with the increasingly harsh measures imposed by the government ensured that the myth of the saviour was challenged with accusations of dictatorship, by now an increasingly common reaction to those aspiring to the role of 'saviour'.

³³³ FO 248 1493, file 101/2, Shepherd's audience with the Shah, file no 101/2/104/50, dated 31 May 1950. This is an interesting characterisation since Demosthenes was the orator who opposed Philip and later Alexander of Macedon.

³³⁴ FO 248 1514 - Internal Situation, file 10101, Situation report, file no. 10101/277/51, dated 4 September 1951.

³³⁵ Gandhi used similar imagery in India.

By 1952 even some of his closest allies such as Makki and Kashani were accusing Mosaddeq of dictatorial tendencies³³⁶, and by 1953 it was not uncommon for newspapers to call him the 'father of the nation' one day, and 'Hitler' on the next.³³⁷ Nevertheless it is testament to the potency of the myth that almost to the end, "The Shah continues to insist to all his advisers that it would be unwise for him openly to oppose Musaddiq until the myth of his greatness has been exploded."³³⁸

Dr Mosaddeq was not the only nationalist saviour to emerge from the crisis. Arguably he owes much of his fame to posterity which has remembered him as the 'tragic hero', the martyr to his cause. Certainly the personality cult he fostered was shared with Ayatollah Kashani, to whom he was indebted for much grass roots support³³⁹. Kashani was the personal manifestation of religious nationalism, which made a significant impact during this crisis because the widening of political awareness among more traditionally minded lower classes. As one Western commentator noted, "This large segment of the populace in recent years has found a shrewd and willing leader and spokesman in Ayatollah Seyyid Abdul Qasim Kashani, who in the present phase of the nationalist struggle is such a powerful symbol because of his life-long opposition to the British and his persecution in

³³⁶ FO 248 1531, file 10105, file no. 10105/296 dated 7 August 1952.

³³⁷ FO 371 104561, file 1015, press reports, file no. 1015/18, dated 28 January 1953.

³³⁸ FO 371 104564, file 1015, file no. 1015/82, dated 19 March 1953.

³³⁹ FO 248 1514, file 10101, file no. 10101/103/51, dated 19 March 1951, notes that Mosaddeq and Kashani both wish to be 'top national hero'.

imprisonment and exile at their hands."³⁴⁰ As to his methods, an intelligence report noted that, "Kashani has taken full advantage of his unusual theatrical talents, displaying exceptional skill in exploiting his rural contacts and the self interest of the Iranian clergy, and appealing to the piety of small merchants in urban centres. He has not hesitated to use his position as a member of the Moslem clergy to arouse latent suspicions of the Christian West..."³⁴¹

The emergence of religious nationalism in this period is probably one of the most significant ideological developments which was subsequently ignored by policy makers and historians of the period.³⁴² Yet at the time, all the political groups found it prudent to increase their use of religious terms and concepts, and essentially to appear 'Islamic'. While allowing ideologies to appropriate some of the sanctity of religion, the shift towards more Islamic terminology can also be interpreted as a desire to familiarise ideological constructs in the language, meaning and symbology of popular culture.

Thus Mosaddeq in a report to the Majlis argued, "Anyone who aims to belittle the holy struggle of our nation by assessing the achievements of the Iranian movement in economic terms and by comparing the independence of our country with a few million pounds, has

³⁴⁰ T Cuyler-Young The Problem of Westernisation... pg 139.

³⁴¹ FO 371 104565, file 1015, Intelligence report, file no. 1015/126, dated 1 May 1953.

³⁴² See FO 371 98720, file 1782, file no E1992, dated 28 January 1952, on attacks on Christians.

undoubtedly perpetrated a blunder.³⁴³ Not only was the struggle holy, but the Majlis also became 'sacred'.³⁴⁴ Such language not only appealed to the masses, but also dignified the movement and elevated it to the realms of the sacred. In return, Mosaddeq agreed to consider laws banning alcohol, which many of his deputies objected to on fiscal grounds, and to ban missionaries in Iran. Two Christian priests were indeed expelled on charges of spying for Britain.³⁴⁵ Even the outlawed Tudeh Party, who had appropriated many Zoroastrian festivals, found it prudent to exploit the religious concept of martyrdom and sought to adopt Imam Ali as the martyr of the masses.³⁴⁶ The Shah, so often criticised by religious leaders re-discovered a public interest in such matters which would serve him well.³⁴⁷ Though Kashani was not overtly critical of secularism, he was wary of arguments which called for a complete separation of religion from politics.³⁴⁸ He also used the charge of 'secularism' to good effect against Qavam, when the latter sought to displace Mosaddeq.³⁴⁹

³⁴³ Quoted in F Azimi *op. cit.* pg 334. This is remarkably similar in sentiment to Ayatollah Khomeini's argument that the revolution was not orchestrated for the price of watermelons. See also FO 248 1514, file 10101, file no 10101/476/51, dated 25 November 1951.

³⁴⁴ FO 371 104563, file 1015, Report to the Majlis, file no 1015/79, dated 14 March 1953.

³⁴⁵ FO 371 98720, file 1782, file no. E17802, dated 3 May 1952. FO 371 104564, file 1015, file no 1015/81, dated 20 March 1953.

³⁴⁶ FO 248 1494, file 101/5, Summary of *Mardum*, file no. 1015/87/50, dated 19 August 1950. The Tudeh appropriation of festivals such as *Mehrgan* is interesting.

³⁴⁷ FO 248 1514, file 10101, file no. 10101/214/51, dated 14 June 1951.

³⁴⁸ FO 248 1531, file 10105, Kashani interviewed in the Daily Mail, file no 10105/99, dated 10 March 1952.

³⁴⁹ FO 248 1531, file 10105, Kashani's statement printed in *Shahid*, file no. (continued...)

The limits of religious nationalism became clear when Ayatollah Kashani tried to universalise the struggle. That the movement was of world importance flattered Iranian sensibilities; however, Kashani's attempt to make the movement one among a number of other 'Islamic' movements found little popular support. He orchestrated demonstrations in favour of the struggle in Egypt against Suez, and in support of the people of Tunisia. With respect to the latter, it was noted, "Practically nobody seems to have turned up and one newspaper report put the attendance at 17."³⁵⁰ He established a 'Movement of the East' (*Nezhat-e Sharg*), ostensibly to unify all Muslim peoples, though the reception abroad as well as at home was modest, and in some places hostile³⁵¹. Seyyid Zia alleged that Kashani even suggested he [Kashani] become the new Caliph, to which he had retorted that no Shi'a could become Caliph.³⁵²

One of the most telling examples of the lack of purely religious sentiment was the popular response to the foundation of Israel. Kashani made a point of differentiating Iranian Jews from the Jews in Palestine, and though a demonstration was held, and editorials urged greater concern, the public on the whole remained apathetic.³⁵³ An Islamic Economic Conference in Tehran in 1950 was boycotted by several Arab countries because of Iran's

(...continued)

10105/268, dated 27 July 1952.

³⁵⁰ FO 248 1531, file 10105, file no 10105/76, dated 21 February 1952.

³⁵¹ FO 248 1531, file 10105, Assessment by Middleton, file no. 10105/330, dated 30 September 1952.

³⁵² FO 248 1531, file 10105, Note by Falle, file no 10105/325, dated 28 August 1952.

³⁵³ FO 371 68722, file 520, E6689 dated 19 May 1948, E7338, dated 26 May 1948

de facto recognition of Israel, and Kashani's attempt to hold an Islamic Conference in Tehran in 1952 were effectively scuppered for similar reasons. In this case though, even the Iranian government was unswayed by the Ayatollah's argument that it would foster Islamic unity and neutrality in the event of a third world war, and disassociated itself from the event.³⁵⁴

As religious imagery and personalisation was used in the nationalist cause, so it was natural that critics of the National Front, would likewise use such language. Euphemism was used to compare Kashani to Shuraih Qazi, the Muslim judge who outlawed Imam Hussein and his Islamic credentials were attacked.³⁵⁵ Other pamphlets were less inventive, directly attacking Kashani for corruption and excessive wealth, though it did use hadith to justify its attack.³⁵⁶

Probably the most inventive use of myth in this respect was by nationalists who regarded the influx of religious terminology as detrimental to their cause and directly dependent on US support. "No one yet knows what the insincere and unfriendly Americans want to do with this country. The Yankees perhaps thought that as the Persians are Moslems and as Kashani has religious and spiritual influence over them it is impossible for them to become Communists. They therefore thought that they should be put under pressure in order that

³⁵⁴ FO 371 82335, file 1104, E1104, dated 7 December 1950; FO 371 98719, file 1781, E1781, dated 18 December 1952.

³⁵⁵ FO 248 1514, file 10101, Anti Government Pamphlet, file no. 10101/421/51, dated 25 October 1951.

³⁵⁶ FO 248 1531, file 10105, Anti-Kashani pamphlet, file no. 10105/28/52, dated 21 January 1952.

they may be reduced to destitution and then made into soldiers to fight the Communists..."³⁵⁷ Such rationalisation was not entirely without social foundation; as early as 1943 it was noted, "...While the priesthood has little influence with the so-called educated classes, it is still regarded with some respect by the lower classes, and the advances now being made to certain influential mullahs probably have their origin in the hope that their influence may be used against the spread of Communist ideas..."³⁵⁸

Fear of the spread of Communist ideas and the revolutionary destruction of the old order resulted in further social tension. The creation of social problems in the guise of a destructive revolution from below had fuelled political rhetoric for many years. The Shah used it to consolidate power and in tandem with other politicians, to urge reform. Carefully managed reform, it was argued would satisfy growing expectations. This theory however, appeared during the oil nationalisation crisis to be backfiring. Despite being banned, the Tudeh Party continued to grow in strength, and in conjunction with other socialist parties, appeared to form the backbone of the National Movement.

They continued to publish their newspaper which predicted the inevitable destruction of imperialism; during marches, they openly defied and insulted the institution of the monarchy.³⁵⁹ However, the Tudeh Party was never wholeheartedly behind Dr Mosaddeq

³⁵⁷ FO 248 1531, file 10105, Pamphlet, file no. 10105/70, dated 18 February 1952. This very argument was of course used by opponents of the Islamic Revolution in 1979.

³⁵⁸ FO 371 35109, file 110, Military Attache, E3588, dated 29 June 1943.

³⁵⁹ FO 248 1516, file 10105, Tudeh Party assessment, file no 10105/?/51, dated 23 May 1951. FO 371 104561, file 1015, Azerbaijan Day Celebrations in Isfahan, file no. 1015/3, dated 31 December 1952.

and the National Front, and tended to criticise the Prime Minister with equal venom, despite the arguments of Mosaddeq's opponents that the two were close allies.³⁶⁰ It is testament to the strength of the myth of the communist bogey that both sides, including Dr Mosaddeq, exploited this Cold War narrative to justify support, especially American. Thus it was reported in the New York Herald Tribune that, "Premier Musaddiq warned the Western world today that any right wing coup against his government would only pave the way for certain communist dictatorship."³⁶¹

Concerned about the apparent upsurge in revolutionary socialist ideas, the traditionalists, who still dominated elite politics, turned to their chief ally, the institution of monarchy. Many of the traditional elite quickly erased any notion of national socialist reform and instead sought to justify the limitation of the franchise.³⁶² For them, the crisis they were witnessing was a direct result of premature democratisation. This view was not new, and indeed had been voiced by the Shah, but it now seemed to be backed by the evidence on the streets.³⁶³ In addition they looked to disenchantment within the military and among the religious classes concerned by the growth in the new atheistic ideology.

³⁶⁰ FO 248 1516, file 10105, Excerpts from *Mardum*, in one Mosaddeq is compared to Attila, file no 10105/29/51, dated 6 August 1951.

³⁶¹ FO 371 104565, file 1015, file no. 1015/124, dated 30 April 1953.

³⁶² FO 248 1462 - Persian Govt. file 65, the notion that the traditional elite adopted 'socialist ideas' for expedient reasons was noted by some Iranians, file no 65/149a/46, dated 17 August 1946.

³⁶³ FO 248 1474, file 13, Isa Sadiq told Butler that the franchise should be limited by an educational test, file no. 13/43/47, dated 9 June 1947. See also FO 248 1485, file 21, file no. 21/132/49, dated 12 April 1949.

The military had traditionally enjoyed a large share of the annual budget, but in the atmosphere of austerity they found their budget drastically cut with the result that many officers were made redundant. These disenchanted officers formed a retired officers association who were reported to be actively participating in anti-government sedition.³⁶⁴ Mosaddeq was aware of the danger from the military and sought to cultivate loyalty by forming a new political party and encouraging senior officers to join it. It was undoubtedly counter-productive that an oath of loyalty had to be taken to the Prime Minister.³⁶⁵ His plan failed dramatically, and the staunch Mosaddeqist vice president of the Majlis, Razavi was effectively heckled out of a speech to officers.³⁶⁶ Furthermore, it was noted that there was growing clerical support for the Shah in Mashhad.³⁶⁷ This would be solidified by the rupture between Mosaddeq and Kashani over the former's increasingly unconstitutional behaviour.

Staunch supporters of Dr Mosaddeq contend that his increasing accumulation of power was warranted by the persistent crisis, and point to the emergent alliance forming against him, which only encouraged him to accumulate more powers in order to fulfill his promises. Others argue that this reactionary alliance was itself prompted by the Prime Minister's unconstitutional accumulation of power. The reality is far more ambiguous. Dr

³⁶⁴ FO 371 104563, file 1015, report in *Etelaat*, file no 1015/96, dated 13 March 1953.

³⁶⁵ FO 371 104566, file 1015, report in *Dad*, file no. 1015/33, dated 10 April 1953.

³⁶⁶ FO 371 104567, file 1015, file no. 1015/163, dated 21 May 1953. This reaction was in marked contrast to the previous year when it was recorded that many in the army were disillusioned with the Shah's inaction - see FO 248 1531, file 10105, file no. 10105/295, dated 2 August 1952.

³⁶⁷ FO 371 104566, file 1015, file no. 1015/143, dated 6 May 1953.

Mosaddeq had always cultivated the image of crisis in order to rationalise and justify the hardship caused by the oil boycott. Part of this image required the persistent vigilance against plots and coups, and this process effectively took on a life of its own, becoming an end in itself irrespective of the real propensity for coup attempts. The fact that a real coup was being engineered became almost incidental to the debate whose primary purpose seemed to be to intensify the ideological atmosphere.

With the departure of the British Embassy, Mosaddeq's core supporters turned their attention to the monarchy as the source of right wing reactionism, in effect re-personalising the ideological struggle. As one diplomat noted, "...even the staunchest believer in the occult powers of the British Embassy cannot entirely escape the feeling that perhaps there are in Persian politics some forces which have some responsibility. A domestic scapegoat is therefore essential and for this role the Shah is obviously cast."³⁶⁸

It is important to recognise that in the ensuing power struggle, "Although nominally the centre of the dispute the Shah appears in fact, to be a pawn in the game. The crowds which shouted for him on Saturday and Sunday were almost certainly doing so at the behest, to begin with, of Kashani, and other elements opposed to Musaddiq, and later at the behest of Musaddiq's National Front supporters as well..."³⁶⁹ Opponents of Mosaddeq alleged that he wished the Shah to leave Iran. They played on sentimental fears and loyalty, arguing that the departure of the Shah would result in the political fragmentation

³⁶⁸ FO 248 1541 - the Shah & the Imperial Court, file 19401, dated 21 April 1952.

³⁶⁹ FO 371 104563, file 1015, file no 1015/61, dated 2 March 1953.

of Iran.³⁷⁰ Mosaddeq found it prudent to publicly refute this allegation and also took measures to increase surveillance on the tribes who were known to have monarchist tendencies.³⁷¹ In the end the Shah had probably been urged to act by persuading him that his dynasty may be in danger. As Falle noted in 1952, one method to catalyse the Shah into action may be to point, "out that a continuation of the present situation is dangerous for the dynasty."³⁷²

When the (self-fulfilling) prophecy was fulfilled and the coup attempt, organised by Britain and America with the support (passive or active) of the traditionalists, in favour of the monarchy, was uncovered, opinions were polarised. Some even argued that the coup had been government inspired in order to provide a pretext to depose the Shah. The press tended to take sides according to their political tendency. Thus *Bakhtar-e Emruz* argued for the establishment of a regency council; *Niruye Sevom*, declared the Pahlavi dynasty to be at an end. Significantly, even the Pan-Iranist parties attacked the Shah. The Tudeh Central committee issued a statement calling for the termination of the monarchy and called the Shah a, "treacherous man who has committed thousands of crimes in his kingship; must be tried and sentenced to death."³⁷³

³⁷⁰ FO 371 104564, file 1015, comments by Deputy Mir-Ashrafi, file no. 1015/95, dated 12 March 1953. See also FO 371 104562, file 1015, on Kashani's role in mobilising crowds in favour the shah, file no. 1015/51, dated 2 March 1953.

³⁷¹ FO 371 104564, file 1015, file no. 1015/104, dated 6 April 1953. FO 371 104565, file 1015, file no 1015/109, dated 10 April 1953.

³⁷² FO 248 1531, file 10105, file no. 10105/230, dated 12 June 1952.

³⁷³ FO 371 104569, file 1015, file no. 1015/205, dated 16 August 1953.

Despite these protestations, the alliance between the traditionalists, the military, the religious classes, as well as foreign encouragement, in support of the institution of monarchy, proved too strong. Once it became apparent that Mosaddeq had been overthrown, agents began constructing new myths to rationalise and legitimise recent events. Foreign involvement, could of course not be mentioned. The army once again proclaimed itself the protector of the nation. Colonel Pahlavon declared, "My dear compatriots, listen. I am a soldier and a faithful patriot. A number of traitors like Fatemi want to sell out the country to foreigners...The Royalists have defeated the demagogue government through which Fatemi was ruling. The Persian nation, officers and police have taken the situation into their hands..."

A certain Major Mirzadian hinted at the practical reasons behind the coup, "I am a simple infantry officer who has been retired by Mosaddeq the traitor. We have proved to the world that the Persian army is the protector of this country and is under the command of the Shah."³⁷⁴ On his return from Rome, the Shah tried to rationalise his impromptu departure by explaining that it was due to 'fatigue'. The alliance which had engineered his return by exploiting the essential mystique of the institution of monarchy may have questioned the Shah's subsequent reflection on Divine providence: "I myself on several occasions have been ready to lay down my life for your survival and will unhesitatingly continue to do so. In the February 15th incident [assassination attempt in 1949] God Willed that I should survive..."³⁷⁵

³⁷⁴ The Times - 20 August 1953.

³⁷⁵ The Times - 23 August 1953

Concluding Remarks

This period is important for several reasons. On the one hand it provided a critical inheritance for the Shah's ideological development complementing the cruder categorisations of ideological development during the reign of Reza Shah with a more sophisticated and subtle diversity of ideological construction. The appropriation by Dr Mosaddeq of the mantle of nationalist hero, and his successful identification with that principle was to be a pivotal influence on the Shah's own perspective of his role and along with the influence of Reza Shah, was to represent the two great personal models the Shah sought to emulate and indeed surpass. For the Shah himself, the period represented a harsh lesson in Iranian political processes, but many of the ideas which were to shape his future policies and political strategies, as well as his flaws, were already apparent, and the pattern by which the young Shah sought to cultivate the ideology of dynastic nationalism only to find himself outmanoeuvred and marginalised by a more sophisticated politician, parallels developments near the end of his reign.

Political plurality and the growth of political awareness, especially through the emergence of mass communications along with the experience of Soviet propaganda, all contributed to the increasing complexity of the period in terms of ideological constructions and the development of political myth. The categories of ideological construction become more subtle and nuanced, while the increasing use of the radio and the desire to reach a wider audience and mobilise them encouraged the simplification of ideological constructs into the verbal imagery of political myth. Pluralism however meant that ideological perspectives could be challenged, not only the meanings ascribed during the reign of Reza

Shah but the new interpretations developed in the aftermath of his abdication. A reciprocal dialectic emerged in which ideological interpretations became increasingly polarised and for the first time it is possible to witness the development of a reciprocal semiological chain in which myth is constructed upon myth. It is in this period for instance that the myth of the 'saviour' is emphatically challenged by charges of 'dictatorship'. The epitome of one ideological construct is effectively and convincingly re-interpreted and turned on its head.

The personalisation or familiarisation of ideology, the quintessential act of political myth construction, is also manifested in several different ways. The increasing incorporation of Islamic terminology and imagery in political discourse can be seen as an attempt by politicians to define ideological constructs in terms familiar to a section of Iranian society which was becoming increasingly important in political terms. While political actors sought to identify with principles, the most successful political operator in this regard showed that political myth could be used just as effectively in demolishing certain relations of domination as it was in sustaining them. His successful identification of the ideological construct of anti-imperialism with the vague concept of 'Britain' and its effective personalisation onto British diplomatic and government personnel in Iran comprehensively undermined Britain's position in Iran, at the expense, as Dr Mosaddeq was well aware, of other pressing ideological concerns such as modernisation. There can be no greater testament to the power of political myth.

Chapter 4

The Consolidation of Power 1953-60.

Introduction

“...After leaving Tehran last August with what must have been little hope of returning he [the Shah] suddenly found himself swept back on a wave of popular enthusiasm. Almost all experienced observers here, both Persian and foreign, are agreed that this enthusiasm was generated more by the Persians’ deep rooted feelings for the institution of the monarchy than by any strong sentiments in favour of the person of the present Shah. Unfortunately His Majesty has, I understand, interpreted it largely as a demonstration of personal affection. This and the doubtful quality of much of the advice he receives from his court have not made it easy for him to make an accurate appraisal of the present state of the country.”³⁷⁶

With the fall of Dr Mosaddeq, as with the abdication of Reza Shah twelve years earlier, the ideological consensus which had been constructed around the person of Dr Mosaddeq was emphatically challenged and deconstructed by his opponents. Whereas in the previous situation the autocrat was challenged by a plurality of political groups espousing diverse ideological tendencies, in this case the main challenge came from a reinvigorated if not yet reconstructed, autocratic power base in the person of Mohammad Reza Shah. The chapter will look first at the attempted deconstruction of the Mosaddeqist myth of the saviour and

³⁷⁶ FO 371 109986 EP 1015/14 Political and Economic Situation, dated 12 February 1954.

the appropriation of national socialist ideology by the Shah and will conclude with an assessment of the Shah's attempt to incorporate this into a reconstructed ideology of dynastic nationalism which sought to portray the Shah as a 'democratic sovereign,' with the people's welfare and interests at heart.³⁷⁷

The contradictions and tensions implicit in his attempt to reinvent a traditional monarchy as a modernising institution vital for the progress of the country was in part transcended by his cultivation of the Cold War narrative; an ideological construction essentially alien to Iran, but indicative of the continuing integration of Iran into the global system. The Shah exploited the emergent Cold War narrative by situating himself and *his* country within it, allowing him not only to deal with his enemies, whom he labelled 'communists', but also to ingratiate himself with his new American allies and to secure arms and munitions for the Armed Forces. Indeed, the militarism which had been a hallmark of the Pahlavi autocracy previously was now effectively disguised and justified within this myth.

Whereas Reza Shah was content to portray himself and his dynasty as indispensable to the nationalist programme of modernisation, the son sought to develop a more sophisticated role. For Mohammad Reza Shah a particular vision of modernisation had to be articulated. Not content with railways and schools, the Shah wanted Iran to become a 'model' country and the key word he wanted to associate with his rule was 'progress'. As such he began to articulate a role for himself and his dynasty not only as the saviour of the country

³⁷⁷ FO 371 109986 EP 1015/14 dated 12 February 1954. See also Alam's reasoning behind the *Mardom Party*, FO 371 140790 EP 1015/78 dated 4 November 1959. FO 371 133007 EP 1015/55 dated October 1958, notes that the monarchy still retained some mystique among the peasantry.

but as the guarantor of future happiness and prosperity. By the end of this period it is this particular conception of himself which begins to gain currency, though one would have to wait for the launch of the 'White Revolution' in 1963 for these ideological constructions to gain full expression. Indeed, in this period ideological articulation by the Shah was hampered in some measure by his inability to divert as many resources as he would have undoubtedly liked, and in part through a persistent hesitancy and lack of confidence.³⁷⁸

The overwhelming tension of the period continues to be the essential crisis of legitimacy surrounding the Pahlavi dynasty which was now deepened by widespread suspicions of foreign intervention in his restoration to the throne in 1953. Indeed, the over-riding aim of the policies pursued by the Shah was to legitimise his rule and his dynasty.³⁷⁹ The Shah's precarious *de jure* hold on the throne was revealed in a comment by Henderson who in discussions with a disillusioned Minister of Court Ala, discovered that, "Abdul Reza was openly intriguing with Amini, the former Minister of Court, and others against his elder brother, the idea apparently being to depose the Shah one day, pass over Ali Reza and have the son of Abdul Reza declared Shah under a regency.... The people behind this little plot apparently think that they can count on the support of Kashani and Makki and the advantage of bringing Abdul Reza's infant son to the throne was that he had in his

³⁷⁸ FO 371 120752 EP1942/1 dated 14 February 1956; EP 1942/2 dated 11 April 1956; point to the fact that the Shah often asked for guidance from the British and Americans. Lambton was probably the most consistently scathing foreign commentator on the Shah's ability to actually *do* anything - FO 371 114810 EP 1018/30 dated 18 July 1955. See also FO 371 114810 EP 1018/18 dated 8 June 1955.

³⁷⁹ FO 371 114807 EP 1013/8 dated 19 April 1955, makes it clear that the Shah was not content to reign.

veins the royal blood of the three families of Zand, Qajar and Pahlavi, and, therefore, could be regarded as embodying all 'legitimist' claims."³⁸⁰

Socio-Historical Context

Political framework - tensions at the centre

This period marks the definitive integration of Iran into the international ideological system and its situation within a global meta-narrative of Cold war politics largely alien to the framework of political culture familiar to the majority of Iranians. This process was assisted and accelerated by the continued growth in mass communications. It is significant that the United States was far more enthusiastic in supporting the Shah's desire to expand his armed forces than other foreign powers or indeed Iranian politicians and this was in large part due to the Shah's exploitation of ideological constructions and political myths familiar to US policy makers.

American aid to Iran increased dramatically during this period, not only in terms of financial aid, but also men and materials. The US Point Four programme was implemented and for the first time American personnel began to arrive in substantial numbers throughout Iran. There was considerable debate as to the actual benefit of the aid and the American embassy eventually concluded in a report that the Iranians were unfortunately settling into a mentality that the US would bail Iran out financially, however badly they

³⁸⁰ FO 371 109986 EP 1015/18 dated 18 February 1954.

mismanaged the economy.³⁸¹

Key events in the development of this relationship were the Shah's decision against the wishes of many Iranian intellectuals and nationalists to take Iran into the Baghdad Pact (later CENTO); the Iranian reaction to the Suez crisis, which highlighted popular and official feelings and differences towards a Western alliance; the impact of the Iraqi Coup in 1958, and the withdrawal of Iraq from the Baghdad Pact, and the military coup in Turkey in 1960. These last two events in particular were to have a catalytic effect on the speed and rationale behind reform in Iran.

Domestically, following the downfall of Dr Mosaddeq the Shah in alliance with his Prime Minister, Zahedi, targeted his left wing opponents but significantly took a more lenient line against the Nationalists including Mosaddeq, much to Zahedi's chagrin³⁸². Furthermore, he exploited the growing difference in opinion between Zahedi and the head of the Seven Year Plan organisation, Abol Hasan Ebtehaj, who under the Shah's patronage effectively ran a second government complete with its own budget and autonomous policy making. These differences eventually led to Zahedi's resignation in much disgust and resentment at what he perceived to be the Shah's ingratitude, and he was replaced by the aged Ala.

³⁸¹ FO 371 120714 EP 1015/37 dated 29th October 1956. See also J A Bill The Eagle and the Lion: the tragedy of American-Iranian relations New Haven, Yale University Press, 1988, pp 125-26

³⁸² FO 371 127074 EP 1015/5 dated 4 February 1957, in an article by Elwell-Sutton for the Scotsman, the author notes that the weeks following the coup one word dominated - *enteqam* - 'revenge'.

The revenue derived from the oil agreement negotiated after the fall of Mudsaddiq was allocated for development projects and was largely under the control of the Seven Year Plan Organisation (SYPO) headed by the erstwhile Abol-Hasan Ebtehaj. Ebtehaj, a banker by training can be considered one of the foremost economic planners in modern Iranian history. Convinced that Iran needed economic development above all else, he jealously guarded the revenues under his management and launched a number of long term infrastructural projects. He was hampered in his ambitions by his perceived arrogance which alienated many colleagues, and the failure of the government to adhere to budget limits by embarking on among other things, fanciful and grandiose schemes³⁸³, resulting in the erosion of oil revenues at his disposal as those were diverted to cover the continuing government deficit. He was a bitter opponent of the Shah's plans, supported by the Americans to expand the military.³⁸⁴

In conjunction with his cultivation of American support, which was by no means consistent, the Shah sought to cement his links with the military, which was considerably more heterodox in its views of the monarch than commonly assumed. It should be remembered that until Eqbal's appointment as Prime Minister, Tehran laboured under a military government under the iron fist of General Bakhtiar, and that his experience in this

³⁸³ FO 371 110003 EP 1101/1 dated 14 May 1954.

³⁸⁴ See Bostock & Jones - Planning & Power in Iran: Ebtehaj and Economic Development under the Shah London, Frank Cass, 1989, for a detailed if sympathetic account of Ebtehaj's attempts at development to 1959. According to K Farmanfarmayan, who worked under Ebtehaj, the latter was bitterly opposed to greater military expenditure: "...Once Admiral Radford had finished talking about his purpose to look into military need and military requirements, Ebtehaj made a fist and raised it and banged on the table so hard....and said, 'Admiral Radford, Iran needs development, not military expenditure.'...." pg 153.

post led him to becoming the first chief of the State Security apparatus, SAVAK, in 1957. Many viewed SAVAK as the extension of the military government into a military autocracy over the entire country,³⁸⁵ arguing that the military was little more than a tool of oppressive dictatorship and not an extension of national integrity.

Although the Shah was cautious in his approach to the *ulema*, it is remarkable how quickly the Shah was to turn on the recognisable pillars of monarchy. In contrast to his assiduous cultivation of the military, he displayed a confident contempt for the land-owning classes viewing them as an obstacle to his plans and more importantly as a potential source of political challenge. Furthermore, his tacit approval of the persecution of the Bahais in 1955, was more a reflection of his weakness with respect to the senior *ulema*, particularly Borujerdi, rather than a healthy relationship.

Of great significance was the foundation of the *Mardom* party, ostensibly an opposition party, through which the Shah undoubtedly sought to experiment with more revolutionary ideas, and to co-opt many former nationalists and Tudeh party members into his camp. The *Mardom* party was to prove a vital ideological melting pot which would gradually articulate a suitable myth of progress for the democratic Shah to espouse and lead.

Throughout the Shah consolidated his grip on the electoral process, which lost any credibility it may have had, during this period, as the Shah and his government, contrary to the rhetoric, blatantly rigged electoral results. Nevertheless, in 1960 he may have

³⁸⁵ FO 371 120714 EP 1015/33 dated 29 September 1956.

miscalculated as he had done in 1950, as Iranians began to debunk the 'bogus history' which sought to depict him as a 'national champion'. With economic difficulties again cutting into the utopia of promised prosperity, and the military coup against Menderes in Turkey adding to his anxiety³⁸⁶, the Shah decided, under some pressure, to bide his time, and appoint Dr Amini as prime minister. He was to prove the Shah's last independently minded prime minister until Bakhtiar was appointed in 1979.

Socio-Economic Development and Political activity

Iran enjoyed economic growth during this period but it remained erratic and uneven, with Tehran enjoying most of the development³⁸⁷. In order to satisfy the mounting criticism, targeted especially at continued inflation,³⁸⁸ the government was encouraged to embark on short term, visible, economic projects which would yield political benefit, a tendency which Ebtehaj neither empathised nor sympathised with. The professional educated classes grow as a proportion of the population, and it would be fair to say that the politically conscious also increased, in part as a legacy of the Mosaddeq crisis, but also as a result

³⁸⁶ FO 371 149757 EP 1015/41 dated 3 June 1960.

³⁸⁷ FO 371 133006 EP 1015/38 dated 21 August 1958, Sir Roger Steven's last dispatch notes that, "...There have been plenty of superficial changes in these four and a half years, most of them *according to Western ideas* [italics added], for the good...."

³⁸⁸ See FO 371 109985 EP 1013/8 dated 14 April 1954;

of urbanisation³⁸⁹ and the growth in communications³⁹⁰, and the Shah's initial attempts to mobilise the lower classes in his favour.³⁹¹ As Elwell-Sutton wrote in 1957:

"It is an age of campaigns in Persia - campaigns against corruption in the civil service, against illiteracy, against opium, and above all against pessimism and despair. Every radio programme, every newspaper, carries its quota of 'pep talks' designed to overcome what even the authorities have to admit is the prevailing atmosphere of gloom and cynicism.

Intellectual inquiry and scepticism is attacked as near treason..."³⁹²

Indeed it is worth noting that despite the government suppression of political activity³⁹³, especially in the military government of Tehran, political activity continued, with many

³⁸⁹ FO 371 133006 EP 1015/? dated 15 April 1958; see also FO 371 127142 EP 1822/1 dated 12 March 1957, which provides details of the 1956 census. Addendums to the overall census figures can be found in FO 371 140866 EP 1822/1 dated 1 December 1959.

³⁹⁰ FO 371 127074 EP 1015/3 dated 15 January 1957; according to Embassy official Carless, "...with better communications many peasants who formerly lived in blissful, isolated ignorance now know enviously about the comforts and dubious attractions of life in Tehran and other larger towns to which they are unfortunately attracted." See also FO 371 127138 EP 1743/1 dated 30 May 1957, an embassy official writes, "...The political consciousness of the Iranian proletariat has developed quite rapidly during the past decade as the result of broadcasting, better communications (bus services are now quite highly developed), Tudeh propaganda and the stirring events of the Musaddiq era.....". FO 371 149761 EP 1015/143 dated 23 December 1960, includes a letter from the Iranian embassy in London which alleges that Tehran, a city of 2m, possesses 40,000 television sets and 200,000 radios. See also FO 371 157600 EP 1015/36 dated 22 February 1961, which also includes a detailed class analysis.

³⁹¹ FO 371 109985 EP 1013/2 dated 30 January 1954, notes the government's decision to establish a 'National Guidance Council' which will control broadcasting and will be 'an instrument of propaganda'.

³⁹² FO 371 127074 EP 1015/5 dated 4 February 1957, article in the 'Scotsman'.

³⁹³ FO 371 127074 EP 1015/15 dated 14 April 1957, Eqbal bans political activity by students arguing that, "In my opinion the destruction wrought by these treacherous and illogical parties was worse than the Mongol invasion."

organisations active in the National Front, re-emerging in the late 50s. The British Embassy counted some 8 active parties, apart from the government sponsored organisations, which despite restrictions, remained politically influential.³⁹⁴ The government and foreign observers had to accept that a growing politically aware public had emerged and had to be managed³⁹⁵. As an embassy official noted:

“In Reza Shah’s Iran life was governed by tradition and custom. Poverty prevailed but ignorance and traditionalism formed a strong shield against discontent. Today, however, poverty remains but the shield has been pushed aside by changing conditions. The political ideas and new hopes which were disseminated up and down Iran by the outlawed Tudeh party will now be carried, either unwittingly or consciously, further afield by the new literates. Poverty and education, when allowed to meet, are an explosive mixture...”³⁹⁶

Sir Roger Stevens, in his last dispatch, was quite clear how the persistent discontent had to be handled, “...This process will not be arrested until and unless there is a ‘popular’ government, *by which I mean a government that has established certain myths* [italics added].....”³⁹⁷

Most criticisms of the Shah and his behaviour came from the politically active intelligentsia, those who provided the core support for the National Front, as well as

³⁹⁴ FO 371 127075 EP 1015/38 dated 16 August 1957.

³⁹⁵ FO 371 133006 EP 1015/38 dated 21 August 1958.

³⁹⁶ FO 371 127138 EP 1743/1 dated 30 May 1957; see also FO 371 133057 EP 1731/2 dated 15 August 1958, which details the increases in education.

³⁹⁷ FO 371 133006 EP 1015/38 dated 21 August 1958.

members of the political elite, who were coming under increasing verbal attack from the Shah and were threatened with land reform, and the urban lower classes. It was also the case that most of this was focussed in Tehran and that the citizens of other cities at times remained indifferent to the political irregularities of the government. Indeed many viewed an autocratic Shah as the natural and best form of government.³⁹⁸

In the country-side, many peasants retained an almost mystical reverence of the Shah, and it is not surprising therefore that he saw them in many ways as his natural constituency. But these people, who often migrated to the cities also retained a loyalty to Islam; a loyalty which the Shah along with most political activists failed to gauge accurately. A report by John Russell on the Moharram festivities which he witnessed in south Tehran in 1957 reveals the continuing disparity between the political machinations of the elite and their 'professional' constituents, and the mass of the poor.

"...Here the mullahs preach every evening in packed audiences. Most of the sermons are revivalist stuff of a high emotional and low intellectual standard. But certain well known preachers attract the intelligentsia of the town with reasoned historical exposes of considerable merits...The Tehran that we saw on the tenth of Moharram is a different world, centuries and civilisations apart from the gawdy superficial botch of cadillacs, hotels, antique shops, villas, tourists and diplomats, where we run our daily round...But it is not only poverty, ignorance and dirt that distinguish the old south of the city from the parvenu north. The slums have a compact self-conscious unity and communal sense that is totally lacking in the smart districts of chlorinated water, macadamed roads and (fitful) street lighting. The bourgeois does not know his neighbour: the slum-dweller is intensely

³⁹⁸ FO 371 157600 EP 1015/36 dated 22 February 1961.

conscious of his. And in the slums the spurious blessings of Pepsi Cola civilisation have not yet destroyed the old way of life, where every man's comfort and security depend on the spontaneous, un-policed observation of a traditional code. Down in the southern part of the city manners and morals are better and stricter than in the villas of Tajrish: an injury to a neighbour, a pass at another man's wife, a brutality to a child evoke spontaneous retribution without benefit of bar or bench.....³⁹⁹

Seizing the Nationalist Agenda.

The Shah basically pursued two strategies in his attempt to assume the mantle of nationalist leader: in the first place he attacked Mosaddeq as a leader, seeking to identify him with the chaos which two years of 'negative nationalism' had brought the country. At the same time he often dealt leniently with other nationalist leaders, and even appeared magnanimous towards his fallen foe, Dr Mosaddeq, much to Zahedi's irritation,⁴⁰⁰ and the puzzlement of many of his staunchest supporters. He developed his own concept of 'positive nationalism' which he described as constructive and creative, and justified Iran's adherence to the Western alliance partly in this way.

As such, the Cold War narrative was itself integrated into this particular nationalist agenda and allowed the Shah, however imperfectly, to bridge the conflicting concerns of nationalism and modernisation. At times, however, as will be seen, the Shah's desire to

³⁹⁹ FO 371 127139 EP 1781/3 dated 7 September 1957.

⁴⁰⁰ FO 371 109986 EP 1015/4 dated 4 January 1954.

pursue positive nationalism conflicted with the more radical national aims of those he wished to co-opt who saw no benefit in participating in an alliance with the West, and in order to satisfy the desires of this group, the Shah exploited Iran's claim to Bahrain.⁴⁰¹

Though resources were limited to begin with, the two-pronged strategy outlined above was already in evidence in 1954. August 19th, the first anniversary of Mosaddeq's fall was designated a national holiday and as one British official noted, "...Celebrations on this scale have not been seen here for some years..."⁴⁰² At the same time, the Shah made known his displeasure after 12 university professors had commented that the coup of 28th Mordad was 'regrettable; they were duly dismissed'⁴⁰³. However, with a 'magnanimity' which was to become a hallmark of the Shah's characterisation of himself, he allowed himself to be persuaded to have them reinstated. Not only that, he issued a *firman* that the children of those convicted of treason under Mosaddeq be given a proper education, and duly offered 500,000 rials for the purpose⁴⁰⁴.

Indeed one British diplomat noted, "There is reason to suspect that the Shah has been 'reinsuring' with the nationalists, but the most recent reports suggest that he may be having second thoughts. Although in a speech not long ago he declared that supporters of Musaddiq were today even more dangerous than the Tudeh Party, engineer Hasibi has

⁴⁰¹ FO 371 133009 EP 1018/2 dated 17 January 1958.

⁴⁰² FO 371 109985 EP 1013/17 dated 21 August 1954.

⁴⁰³ FO 371 109985 EP 1013/25 dated 1 December 1954.

⁴⁰⁴ FO 371 109985 EP 1013/26 dated 15 December 1954. See also FO 371 114807 EP 1013/2 dated 26 January 1955.

been released and there is a possibility that Dr Baqai may be allowed freedom of movement, and even that new elections may be held in Kerman with Baqai allowed to participate.⁴⁰⁵ Later it was noted that, "...the Shah's equivocal attitude towards some nationalist elements could develop into positive encouragement if he thought that support elsewhere for him was seriously weakened."⁴⁰⁶ That said, there were limits to that magnanimity, and the Shah was perturbed when Ebtahaj began employing former Iran Party members in the Seven Year Plan Organisation, on the justification that they were the only honest and efficient people available. The Shah is rumoured to have complained to Ebtahaj about, "...those people who broke my statues."⁴⁰⁷

Those people who were executed, including Fatemi, were emphatically identified as communists as opposed to nationalists, thereby denying an epithet which may have legitimised them,⁴⁰⁸ and associating them with a group which both the landlords and *ulema* disliked. At the same time it both perpetuated and helped integrate Iran into the Cold War narrative. That said, even at this early stage, being labelled a communist or Tudeh Party member did not necessarily result in the satisfactory differentiation of the target. Though many were suspicious of the Tudeh, the harsh measures directed against them may have actually won them some sympathy.⁴⁰⁹ On the other hand his generosity to his nationalist enemies caused puzzlement among the traditional supporters of the monarchy who felt

⁴⁰⁵ FO 371 114807 EP 1013/9 dated 3 May 1955.

⁴⁰⁶ FO 371 114811 EP 1018/33 dated 3 August 1955.

⁴⁰⁷ FO 371 127074 EP 1015/4 dated 19 January 1957.

⁴⁰⁸ FO 371 109985 EP 1013/24 dated 17 November 1954.

⁴⁰⁹ FO 371 109985 EP 1013/23 dated 3 November 1954.

that in appearing weak the Shah had lost substantial prestige.⁴¹⁰

With time, the Shah's attacks on Mosaddeq and his government increased. In 1956, with the economy failing to improve at the rate which had imprudently been promised in the aftermath of 1953, politicians began to excuse current bad performance on the malpractices committed under Mosaddeq. In a press conference Finance Minister Foruhar detailed the ills existing in the Iranian economy, especially the consistent failure to balance the country's budget. He avoided the issue of military expenditure and instead emphasised the increase in the money supply administered by Dr Mosaddeq arguing that, "...it will be admitted that the country's budget deficit is nothing new. For several years now the country has been plagued by it..."⁴¹¹ In a subsequent press conference, aware of US pressure not to bail out the Iranian economy, and the need to enforce austerity measures, Foruhar reassured reporters that, "...It should be remembered that before 1334 [1955] too the country faced a budget deficit. In the days of Dr Mosaddeq this was met by expending the country's reserves, borrowing from the International Monetary Fund and issuing banknotes..."⁴¹²

In a clear indication of the growing importance of the mass media, the Shah took the decision to attend press conferences where he could explain the ideas he cherished more clearly to the Iranian press whose duty it would be to disseminate them dutifully to the general public. At his first impromptu press conference in 1958, the Shah's pursuit of the

⁴¹⁰ FO 371 120713 EP 1015/10 dated 23 April 1956.

⁴¹¹ FO 371 120734 EP 1113/8 dated 20 April 1956.

⁴¹² FO 371 120734 EP 1113/14 dated 11 August 1956.

nationalist agenda took on a characteristic form, as attempts to deconstruct the Mosaddeqist myth of the saviour was accompanied by a reinterpretation of the meta-narrative of nationalist history. Thus, not only was Mosaddeq's record attacked but nationalist history was reinterpreted to have begun with the accession of his father to power. Furthermore, the *real* nationalists were those who overthrew Mosaddeq in support of the monarchy, rather than the other way round. Having dismissed criticisms of the country's economy as unwarranted and universalising the debate by pointing to deficiencies elsewhere, he then went on to remind people of his own nationalist pedigree in effect seeking to reverse the reinterpretation and rejuvenation which had occurred in the aftermath of Reza Shah's abdication [*italics added*]:

“...In 1299 [1921] *your Shah* came to power. What was his motive? Nationalism.....The only motive of my father's rising in 1299 was nationalism.....On the 25 Shahrevar when the Union was transferred to me I had to go to the Majlis to take the oath...The people's goodwill towards me was not simply due to my popularity as a crown prince but a token of the Iranian spirit of nationalism.....The point I wish to stress here is that I was trained in my father's school, whose whole life was spent in love of his country and who was a great patriot. At the commencement of my reign, when the country was occupied by foreign forces, my inspiration was to endeavour to deliver my country from the domination and influence of foreigners.”

It is clear from this speech that any earlier attempts to distance himself from his father's legacy had been abandoned. He then went on to attempt a characterisation of Dr Mosaddeq as a stooge of foreign powers, the most treasonable characteristic in the eyes of nationalists, and against any form of modernisation. He depicted the coup d'etat which

overthrow Dr Mosaddeq as a spontaneous rising against the chaos he had engendered and as an expression of positive nationalism. “....Let me speak of the 28 Mordad (August 19 1953), which is more than a personal matter. On that day the whole people throughout the country arose, whilst I myself was not here. At that time the people realised that the country’s independence was about to disappear.....These successes were all the outcome of the spirit of nationalism which I have called constructive or positive...” Then he stressed again that, “...The Iranian regime became national from the time when my father took office.”

The Shah continued to elaborate on his theme of positive nationalism, and in this the first echoes of a yearning for an ancient Persian purity become apparent [*italics added*]:

“We do not think that our greatness and progress can come from the adoption of a negative policy. We enjoy the bounties of God. We have wealth and *we belong to a race that has had thousands of years of life*. Iranians have grappled with great difficulties for years and survived. We have the ability. By pursuing a positive nationalism the rights, interests, dignity and respect of Iran may attain perfection. In this manner we can collaborate with other living nations. To prove our nationalism we do not need to destroy buildings or to plunder, or to use abusive language about this or that. These acts are not evidence of social maturity, good character and strength. They are evidence of weakness. *By adhering to our ancient customs and traditions we can obtain the maximum benefits for our nation*. By this policy we have protected our interests more than others who raise a hue and cry. In this regard we might cite the oil question and foreign policy. I have said time after time that we have worked to guarantee the interests of Iran. We have no consideration except the protection of our own interests. Our nationalism is positive. For that reason it is creative. It is associated with good conduct and propriety. An Iranian is not an ill-behaved

person. An Iranian does not find his happiness in making others unhappy.....Tell the history of Iran to Iranians.

In the past Iranians rendered services to their country. Did Iranian mothers prevent their sons from going to battle? Did they cry 'hold back'? Are we not of the same race? I do not think we have changed. These facts should be set forth to the public. There are other things than the past to make us strong. Social order is being improved, and social justice even more so. In the past there was no talk of social justice, but the people were self-sacrificing.

These are the principles of positive nationalism. To consolidate nationalism we have to remove the weak points in the administrative apparatus and social character, and in the organisation of the country as a whole. These are in brief my views on the path of positive nationalism. The press should strive to promote them.”⁴¹³

In a booklet published later in 1958 to highlight the achievements of Iran, Mosaddeq does not even get a mention. The Shah achieves centre stage as the leader who averted disaster, “...the stamina of Iran’s people and their national pride, the integrity of its patriots, and the leadership of His Majesty the Shahinshah [during the oil crisis] were such that disaster was avoided and the political situation was stabilised.”⁴¹⁴ This was an important shift. Indeed, although the Shah was to continue to emphasise his own nationalist credentials,

⁴¹³ FO 371 133006 EP 1015/47 dated 24 September 1958. Following a protests, the Shah made it quite clear to the British ambassador that his aim was to demolish Mosaddeq’s credentials as a nationalist champion, rather than emphasis British interference. See FO 371 133006 EP 1015/46 dated 24 September 1958; also FO 371 133006 EP 1015/50 dated 30 September 1958. On the theme of Iranian’s as a pure race see the Shah’s press conference in FO 371 133006 EP 1015/54 dated 31 October 1958.

⁴¹⁴ FO 371 133022 EP 1102/12 dated 30 August 1958.

the person of Mosaddeq was to retreat further into the background, as the Shah sought to *de-personalise* the ideological identification and as such comprehensively remove the political myth Mosaddeq continued to represent in his identification with nationalist ideology. Thus at a press conference in 1959, familiar themes are reiterated [italics added]:

“The question is that the conditions in our country are completely changed from 30 years ago. *It was in 1920 that Iran’s national and nationalist revolution started.* This national revolution put an end to the feudal government and to the various powers who exercised influence in our country for many years.....

From 1920 to 1941, our country progressed along a path which is known to all. Our country thus completed its revolution, i.e. it did the very same thing that some other countries feel proud in having performed with a spontaneous revolution removing the old regime and taking a new path....

...This revolution was repeated once again in 1953. This time, a people who saw their country on the brink of destruction spontaneously rose throughout the country and showed that they were not prepared to give up the many thousand year old independence of their country and *to leave their country at the mercy of misguided, atheist, unfortunate and wretched people whose actions regrettably would have culminated in the interests of others,* and which would have ended the independence of this country. Actually in practice, we have had two national and nationalist revolutions.....⁴¹⁵

A few weeks later on the occasion of the anniversary of the coup, the Shah reiterated his themes with adding religious terminology which may have served to couch events in terms

⁴¹⁵ FO 371 140789 EP1015/57 dated 30 July 1959.

familiar to the masses, and added a touch of sanctity [*italics added*]:

“Many greetings to the pure souls of those brave Iranians who gave their lives in 1953 for Iran’s independence and honour. What better reward for those who had the honour to take part in the *national rising* or for those who were martyred for the sake of their sacred aim - their country’s independence - than that today we witness the results of their sacrifices. None of us has yet forgotten the discouraging and dark situation of those days which culminated in the national rising of 1953. *The country was in turmoil and disorder, our economy ruined and our production apparatus almost paralysed....No one had any confidence and hope, even for his life.....*

This was exactly what the *foreign inspired* former Tudeh Party wanted to implement....As a result of disorder, subversion, propagation of distrust and destruction of the country’s economy, the former Tudeh Party had advanced so far in practice that it had to take only a few more steps to implement its destructive aim. *In those days, treason.....was encouraged....*At such a time - when the sovereignty, independence and national dignity of this ancient land was on the threshold of annihilation - *you Iranian patriots arose*. With your brave uprising, which recalls the most glorious risings of the people of this land in the past for the salvation of Iran, you brought about today’s stability.”⁴¹⁶

At his press conference on the 25th August, the Shah emphasised his own importance further stressing the ideology of dynastic nationalism. In answer to a reporter’s question, which was couched in now familiar obsequious terms, about the coup, the Shah revealingly replied, “In 1953 the people rose spontaneously all over the country. The reason for this was that the great majority of people believed in the cause....Perhaps they

⁴¹⁶ FO 371 140789 EP 1015/64 dated 20 August 1959.

thought that the independence of the country depended on the monarchy, or, *perhaps my reign* [italics added]....⁴¹⁷ This was an important shift, in that the focus of the uprising was no longer the independence of the country, which would have retained credibility, but was now the institution of the monarchy, or even more, the person of Mohammad Reza Shah. In these comments one can quite clearly see the links between nationalist champion and the development of the myth of the 'democratic sovereign' destined to save his country.

There was also an increasing desire to cement these new ideological interpretations within symbolic festivities and concrete memorials, using familiar cultural icons, with the obvious intention of institutionalising and socialising the constructs. Thus the Shah welcomed the suggestion that a mausoleum be constructed for the "martyrs of the national rising."⁴¹⁸ Similarly, the celebrations commemorating the fall of Dr Mosaddeq became increasingly extravagant. In the run up to the anniversary itself, it was decided in 1959 to commemorate the 9th Esfand, when the crowds had prevented the Shah from leaving the country.⁴¹⁹ This was then followed by the main celebrations which Kellas describes the celebration of 1959 thus:

"....A quite remarkable effort was made this year to celebrate the anniversary of the 'National Uprising' of August 20.....Two warm summer nights, a riot of coloured lights, martial music, spouting fountains and a full moon made a carnival in the capital, and

⁴¹⁷ FO 371 140789 EP 1015/65 dated 27 August 1959.

⁴¹⁸ FO 371 140789 EP 1015/65 dated 27 August 1959.

⁴¹⁹ FO 371 140887 EP 1961/2 dated 4 March 1959.

strenuous jubilation took place throughout the provinces. In Tehran every building in the main streets was beflagged, every tea house hung with rugs and tinsel, every wall plastered with posters or painted with slogans, every window equipped with a portrait of the Shah. Loudspeakers bellowed resounding speeches. Helicopters showered leaflets. Jet aircraft screamed over the town. The garrison was at home to the public, and its barracks, and the zoo and the fun-fairs, were invaded by holiday crowds.

Monster rallies were organised on successive days by the *Mardum* and *Melliun* political parties. Under the banners of the Government Party, of merchant guilds, sports clubs and workers' unions, 800 lorries, 500 buses and 90 jeeps manned by demagogues with microphones, smothered by flowers, displaying gigantic pictures of the king and scattering pamphlets, jerked through crowded streets from square to square. Patient labourers, rounded up from the southern slums, the bazaar, the suburbs and the neighbouring villages for the excitement of a day, sweated like cattle cheerfully in the lorries. In the buses frantic youths waved flags from the windows, and sober clerks sat quietly enjoying the ride. Orators, politicians and priests, excelled themselves in the frenzy of patriotic eloquence, and press and radio echoed with defiant rhetoric. 'Let the world know', said a broadsheet, 'that so long as living hearts palpitate in the breasts of Iranians, the independence of Iran will endure'; and so on to the same effect.....⁴²⁰

In the following year, the same themes continued, though Mosaddeq was not mentioned by name, it was quite clear that the Shah wished to stress that he had brought the country to ruin by selling out to the Tudeh, who were foreign inspired, whereas, he (the Shah) had even told the British Ambassador in 1952 that he would personally stand and fight against

⁴²⁰ FO 371 140789 EP 1015/66 dated 25 August 1959.

a foreign invasion should it occur.⁴²¹ Again, in his speech to the Majlis, he described the movement against Mosaddeq as quintessentially nationalist. "...Ours was not only a military movement but it was a national movement. The people were the first to start. I call this movement 'positive nationalism'..."⁴²² In 1960, in addition to the celebrations there was an explicit example of political myth, as Kellas noted that, "...The opportunity was taken, moreover, to inaugurate a ghastly new sculpture in the square of the 28th of Mordad, representing in colossal dimensions a soldier and a workman bullying a diminutive dragon. (Mr Ala suggested to me that the dragon must be 'Mr K' but perhaps he is 'Dr M' himself). Party leaders harangued the people from the steps and many wreaths were laid."⁴²³

One could have expected Dr Mosaddeq's popularity to have been low in the aftermath of the coup as peoples' memories of the chaotic conditions preceding his downfall were fresh, but it is apparent that the government's decision to put him on trial revived much of his earlier popularity. Indeed as early as November 12 1953, it was reported that widespread demonstrations had occurred in Tehran in favour of Mosaddeq, and that the bazaar had closed as a mark of protest against his trial.⁴²⁴ In fact, the public show trial was the perfect stage for Mosaddeq to make his theatrical comeback.

As one British official noted, "When he fell Dr Musaddiq was largely discredited.....He

⁴²¹ FO 371 149757 EP 1015/48 dated 17 June 1960.

⁴²² FO 371 149757 EP 1015/42 dated 13 June 1960.

⁴²³ FO 371 149835 EP 1961/7 dated 23 August 1960.

⁴²⁴ FO 371 109986 EP 1015/3 dated 29 December 1953.

might have remained so if he had not been brought to trial in the full glare of publicity. Although his performance in court was not very effective the trial seems to have revived amongst the Persian people a great deal of the popularity which he had previously enjoyed.....the majority of the people probably still favour Dr Musaddiq in spite of his policies or lack of them....⁴²⁵ Later that year it was noted that, "The articulate part of the Persian public has I believe realised that an oil settlement is desirable.....Nevertheless, in their hearts they accept these hard facts reluctantly. The blow to their foolish hopes has left their nationalism still extremely sensitive. They were not as they see it on the wrong course, they were misled by Musaddiq slightly off the right one....Nationalistic principles remain sacred - better an oilless economy than that these should be sacrificed."⁴²⁶

It was probably the acceptance of this reality, that helped persuade the Shah that some form of accommodation with the Nationalists was preferable, though he was also undoubtedly motivated by a desire to outshine his rival. It is debateable how effective this policy of co-option was, though there is evidence that members of the National Front felt that his leniency was a reflection of his weakness. The release of Baqai and Ayatollah Kashani in 1956 caused consternation among his supporters as Russell noted; "...their release has tended to restore some heart to the nationalist rank and file (although 'rank and file' is perhaps an expression inappropriately applied to a movement which is primarily intellectual and bourgeois), encouraging them to believe that neither the government nor the Shah have any real teeth when it comes to a showdown. The

⁴²⁵ FO 371 109986 EP 1015/14 dated 12 February 1954.

⁴²⁶ FO 371 110060 EP 1534/49 dated 13 March 1954.

'Traditionalist' politicians are correspondingly depressed by this further example of the Shah's vacillation, and the military governor in particular is said to feel that much face has been lost..⁴²⁷ The continuing activities of Dr Baqai, who was subsequently re-arrested, and other nationalist leaders reflects their continuing political influence.

Still others were sceptical of the Shah's decision to begin attending press conferences, and critics argued that it was acceptable for the Shah to participate actively in propaganda.⁴²⁸

Reaction to the Shah's re-interpretation of recent history remained unsympathetic. Many considered that he missed opportunities to restore confidence and instead, "...For the rest they dismiss the speech as a vainglorious and unconvincing effort, based upon bogus history, to represent the monarch as a national champion..."⁴²⁹ As for the popular reaction to the increasingly elaborate annual celebrations, Kellas made the following observations in 1959:

"The fact is that the Shah and Government were determined to make the most of this slightly equivocal anniversary as a manifestation of patriotism, loyalty to the crown and resistance against the Soviet Union. They spared no effort to that end. Army, Air Force, Police, provincial and municipal authorities, the political parties, industry and the bazaar were mobilised. Workers and staffs were paraded; shopkeepers flagged their shops upon instructions. In this sense it is true that the celebration was contrived. 'All this', said an old man in the crowd of spectators in Parliament Square, as a score of perspiring hooligans

⁴²⁷ FO 371 120713 EP 1015/10 dated 23 April 1956.

⁴²⁸ FO 371 133007 EP 1015/56 dated 1 November 1958.

⁴²⁹ FO 371 149757 EP 1015/42 dated 13 June 1960.

swept by in jeeps, 'is to be seen with the eyes, not with the heart.'⁴³⁰

The Shah pursued a two-pronged strategy of ideological deconstruction and tentative reconstruction in this period in a process which witnessed his definitive employment of the mass media, and which highlights the structural development of ideology and political myth. The process of rejuvenation is apparent. From the starting point of Mosaddeq's identification with nationalism and his personal representation of the 'saviour' within that construction, the Shah sought first to reverse the interpretation by identifying Mosaddeq with ideas that were opposed to nationalism. At the same time, he moved ahead to re-identify himself and his dynasty with nationalist ideology, including the co-option of many former nationalists, and as a consequence had to reinterpret the historical narrative of nationalism to suit this reconstruction. Possibly as a consequence of the failure of the this policy the Shah's attack on the Mosaddeqist myth became more direct, emphatically depersonalising the construct by removing any mention of Dr Mosaddeq from comments about the period. The contradictions and tensions implicit in this attempted appropriation encouraged the Shah to situate himself and his particular conception of dynastic nationalism within the Cold War narrative.

Integrating Iran into the Cold War Narrative

The one significant area in which the Shah did differ quite strongly from the nationalists was on the question of foreign policy. Neutralism remained a popular sentiment among Iranians, and most nationalist leaders and intellectuals favoured a non-aligned approach

⁴³⁰ FO 371 140789 EP 1015/66 dated 25 August 1959.

to international relations similar to that espoused by India⁴³¹. The Shah however was quite emphatic in his desire to bring Iran firmly into the Western camp, and almost unilaterally took Iran into the Baghdad Pact in 1955. For him this was an important aspect of his 'positive nationalism', despite the continued scepticism shown by his critics at home and even his allies abroad⁴³². The Americans were however more sympathetic, and the Shah exploited this sentiment in order to secure financial and military aid for the Armed Forces, and the country in general.⁴³³ Thus militarism⁴³⁴ was justified, not unusually, by raising the spectre of communism⁴³⁵. Though the Shah viewed the military as *the* dependable pillar of his throne the evidence suggests that it was weak.

The Shah was not slow to identify the economic and military potential of Iran as crucial to the Western alliance, as Sir Roger Stevens points out, "...When I presented my credentials...the Shah spoke to me cordially and at length about his desire to see Persia

⁴³¹ FO 371 109985 EP 1013/1 dated 16 January 1954. See also FO 371 109985 EP1013/12 dated 12 June 1954. FO 371 109985 EP 1013/16 dated 7 August 1954.

⁴³² FO 371 110060 EP 1534/32 dated 25 February 1954, Stevens argues that Iran should sort out her economy before joining a military pact. See also FO 371 114820 EP 1071/1 dated 31 January 1955, on British reservations.

⁴³³ FO 371 114820 EP 1071/5 dated 11 February 1955, notes that the Shah's decision to take Iran into the Baghdad pact followed a visit to the US. See also FO 371 114820 EP 1071/16 dated 12 March 1955, on the Shah's motives. See FO 371 110035 EP 1202/1 dated 21 December 1954, which notes that the US planned to raise the strength of the Iranian army by 60% in 15 months. FO 371 140841 EP 1201/1 dated 29 January 1959, the British military attache notes that the Iranian army will be larger than the British by 1962.

⁴³⁴ FO 371 120734 EP 1113/7 dated 10 March 1956, notes the Shah's favouritism for the army. See also FO 371 133007 EP 1015/63 dated 17 December 1958.

⁴³⁵ The Iraqi revolution of 1958 also had a significant effect; see FO 371 140821 EP 1102/9 dated 10 September 1959.

militarily strong. Persia, he said, was essential to the defence of the Middle East and any military understanding between Turkey and Pakistan must, in the long run, take her into account....⁴³⁶ During his subsequent trip to the United States, the Shah was more emphatic using constructions familiar to his audience, "...I am convinced that one of the essentials for preventing international communism from realising its ambitions with regard to Iran is for us, with the help of great free nations, particularly the US, to strengthen our armed forces to the extent that would render them capable of putting up an honorable defence if Iran is attacked."⁴³⁷

Problems were immediately apparent, when it was discovered by government officials that the frontline defence for the Baghdad Pact was to be the Zagros mountains, thereby entailing the immediate sacrificing of two thirds of the country to any Soviet invasion. This contradiction between the theory and the practice was, unsurprisingly, unacceptable to Iranians, and the government was careful never to announce this publicly. In private it sought to persuade the allies to establish a more 'northern' line. This in turn, allowed the Iranian service chiefs to argue for even more arms and aid in order to make such a defence practicable,⁴³⁸ though as one British diplomat later noted, "it may be that the Shah's insistence on expanding and modernising his army is based to some extent on his belief in its role as the defender of his southern, rather than his northern, frontiers..."⁴³⁹

⁴³⁶ FO 371 109985 EP 1013/4 dated 27 February 1954.

⁴³⁷ FO 371 114866 EP 1941/1 dated 5 January 1955.

⁴³⁸ FO 371 127111 EP 1201/1 dated 14 January 1957.

⁴³⁹ FO 371 133021 EP 1072/2 dated 17 February 1958.

The Cold War of course had its uses in silencing critics of military expenditure at home. The Shah stressed Iran's importance, thereby flattering national pride. In a speech to the Majlis in 1957, the Shah said, "To strengthen our defensive and military power is not only in the interest of Iran, but also that of the Middle East and the free world."⁴⁴⁰ Indeed the Shah continually tried to diffuse criticism of military expenditure at home by universalising the debate and pointing out that expenditure was proportionately far less in Iran than in many other countries. Indeed, "...In comparison with other countries our military expenditure is not great. It would be a good idea if we considered the military expenditure of countries like Switzerland and Sweden and found out what percentage of their revenues is spent on their armed forces. In 1948 when I was in Switzerland that country was spending 50% of its budget on its armed forces....At the moment this country is trying to arm its forces with the latest weapons. We must note this fact: that if we had not joined the Baghdad Pact and, like any other independent country, had to secure equipment for our defence, our military expenditure would have been 5, 6, or even seven times more than it is now.....By this calculation the money spent on our armed forces is about 17% of the country's budget, and comparing this sum with the 50% of Switzerland, the 75% of Pakistan, or the nearly 50% of India it is very little...."⁴⁴¹

This comparative rise in Iran's international importance was of course also used abroad. A British diplomat in Rome noted that the Shah, "... looked on Iran as being the key point

⁴⁴⁰ FO 371 127095 EP 1104/2 dated 11 February 1957.

⁴⁴¹ FO 371 133026 EP 1113/1 dated 13 February 1958. See also FO 371 140789 EP 1015/71 dated 26 September 1959; FO 371 149792 EP 1201/3 dated 2 February 1960.

in the defence of peace and of the whole Western position. History showed that many of the movements for world conquest had flowed out from or through Iran, and the stability of that country was a matter of concern for all - more so than, for example, Indo-China, Formosa or even Korea.....”⁴⁴² In conjunction with Iran’s importance to the Western world, especially in comparison with other ‘less important’ countries, came the notion that Iran was a tranquil and stable country with a great future; concepts that would also feature heavily in the democratic sovereign’s ‘vision’ of a stable, secure and progressive future.⁴⁴³

Something of the tedium induced in his allies by the Shah’s constant reference to this argument can be gauged from Harrison’s report in 1960:

“...The Shah then started talking about the future prospects of various Asian countries....and drew the conclusion that in contrast to Iran, the exploitation of natural resources and the increase in national production could not possibly keep up with the prospective increase in population in those countries. This of course led easily to the conclusion that the West should do more to support strategically-placed, pro-Western Iran, etc etc.

To change the subject, I said I thought the Azerbaijan day military parade had gone off very well. The Shah agreed that the human material was quite good, but how pitifully inadequate and out of date the equipment was compared with that of countries like

⁴⁴² FO 371 133007 EP 1015/60 dated 3 December 1958. See also FO 371 133019 EP 1055/1 dated 13 May 1958, where British impatience with familiar arguments becomes apparent.

⁴⁴³ FO 371 140787 EP 1015/9 3 February 1959. The germination of this concept begins in this period and receives its most famous outing with President Carter’s visit to Iran in December 1977.

Afghanistan and even Iraq. Iran's friends and allies must give more material aid, etc etc.

In a further attempt to get away from this rather monotonous refrain, I asked the Shah whether he had met Dean Rusk. He said he thought not. But he was rather wondering about the triumvirate, Dean Rusk, Chester Bowles and Adlai Stevenson. Rusk was a Far Eastern expert, Bowles was interested in India and Stevenson in Africa. Was there not the risk of US foreign policy becoming rather distorted? Iran's allies must not forget their true friends, etc etc....⁴⁴⁴

That this strategy seemed to work better in the United States reflects the fact that the Cold War narrative was quintessentially an American construct and Americans were familiar with the implicit meanings of the terms used. It was to reach its apogee with the Nixon doctrine. Iranians, on the hand, as the Americans were to discover, were neither familiar, nor particularly interested in their role as a frontline state in the Cold War. "According to their [US] own information, the general Iranian view is that the Americans are being 'had for suckers', and that their aid has been poured out wastefully in support of a useless regime with little benefit to the country."⁴⁴⁵ Nevertheless, Iranian officials, including the Shah, recognised the advantages to be gained from playing along with the narrative, since, "...the Americans will bail them out yet again to stop them falling prey to communism."⁴⁴⁶ US impatience with the Iranian inability to get their house in order led to tighter controls under the Kennedy administration, with controversial results for Iranian economic and political development.

⁴⁴⁴ FO 371 149761 EP 1015/142 dated 15 December 1960.

⁴⁴⁵ FO 371 120714 EP 1015/37 dated 29 October 1956.

⁴⁴⁶ FO 371 110060 EP 1534/49 dated 13 March 1954.

The benefits which would accrue to the armed forces from this integration were intended to cement the relationship between the military and the Shah and ensured a measure of security for the Shah's regime.⁴⁴⁷ Contrary to expectations however, and despite the obvious military role in the coup against Mosaddeq, the relationship was at times frosty, with at least two major conspiracies and the development of antagonistic relations between the Shah and both General Zahedi⁴⁴⁸ and subsequently, General Bakhtiar (military governor of Tehran and first head of SAVAK).

The first major conspiracy was uncovered only a year after the overthrow of Mosaddeq and involved a large section of the officer corps. "The communist organisation recently discovered in the defence and security forces...had achieved a very serious degree of penetration. Many of the officers involved had a reputation for honesty and efficiency. The three services, the police and the gendarmerie were all affected throughout the country and even the Military Intelligence Bureau had been heavily penetrated. So far about 600 suspects (nearly all officers to the rank of Colonel) have been arrested and more are being sought or watched. 1000 NCOs are believed to have been connected with the organisation. Two special Courts Martial have been set up and hearings are about to start....."⁴⁴⁹ Still later it was rumoured that some 450 officers and NCOs had been

⁴⁴⁷ FO 371 127111 EP 1201/1 dated 14 January 1957, notes that the Armed Services are indeed a privileged class.

⁴⁴⁸ FO 371 109985 EP 1013/17 dated 21 August 1954.

⁴⁴⁹ FO 371 109985 EP 1013/20 dated 21 September 1954; see also EP 1013/8 dated 14 April 1954, and EP 1013/27 dated 29 December 1954.

discovered with Tudeh affiliations, though the obvious embarrassment was kept quiet.⁴⁵⁰ The most famous conspiracy was led by General Qarani in apparent league with the United States⁴⁵¹, a view reinforced by the fact that Qarani received a relatively light sentence and his conditions in prison were comparatively comfortable.⁴⁵² Indeed in 1958, the British embassy had reached the conclusion that, "...in the event of a coup d'etat the army would not repeat not support the Shah."⁴⁵³ In light of the recent Iraqi revolution, the threat of a coup was not far from the Shah's mind, and it should come as no surprise that the Shah sought to re-insure himself with "...an unprecedented list of promotions..." indicating, "...that loyalty must in part be purchased."⁴⁵⁴

Reconstructing dynastic nationalism: towards a 'Democratic Sovereign'

The development towards the 'democratic sovereign' which as has been argued was a more sophisticated interpretation of the ideology of dynastic nationalism, was a natural outgrowth of his wish to usurp the nationalist mantle from Mosaddeq and other National Front leaders. The Shah had always wanted to present himself as a champion of the masses and had made efforts towards this prior to the rise of Mosaddeq. His failure in

⁴⁵⁰ FO 371 120714 EP 1015/35 dated 12 October 1956.

⁴⁵¹ FO 371 133009 EP 1018/4 dated 28 February 1958 & 1018/7 dated 4 March 1958.

⁴⁵² According to one commentator Qarani apparently argued that he was in actual fact a mole.

⁴⁵³ FO 371 133006 EP 1015/32 dated 8 August 1958.

⁴⁵⁴ FO 371 140841 EP 1201/1 dated 29 January 1959. See also FO 371 149792 EP 1201/3 dated 2 February 1960.

1951 however, was Mosaddeq's success and he was determined to recast himself in the latter's image. In order to achieve this reification of himself the Shah attacked tradition, although as will be seen he did not feel confident enough to challenge the *ulema* directly; he presented himself as primarily occupied with the political, economic and social welfare of the mass of his people; and, he articulated a particular vision of the future, which encompassed his own ideas on 'modernity', and laid great emphasis on the notion of 'progress'.

In time he would seek to re-energize the myth of the saviour, that is, not just a democratic sovereign, but a national saviour in the best traditions of Cyrus the Great, destined to save his country from chaos and anarchy.⁴⁵⁵ This myth was of course to receive more attention later in the reign, but it makes an early appearance. The foundation of the *Mardom* Party under the leadership of Asadollah Alam, as an experimental vehicle for some of the Shah's bolder ideas will also be examined.

The Shah was impressed by Mosaddeq's ability to retain the loyalty of the masses by presenting himself as an incorruptible popular champion unconnected and indeed antagonistic to the traditional political elite, who were increasingly characterised as

⁴⁵⁵ The Shah privately considered himself 'predestined', a notion that was reportedly dismissed in a letter from Dulles to Ambassador Chapin. The American's denied the authenticity of the letter which read in part, ".You know, of course, that we have never cherished any illusions about the Iranian sovereign's qualifications as a statesman. The man tries to pose as the Cyrus of modern times. He has no grounds whatsoever for doing so." See FO 371 133009 EP 1018/7 dated 4 March 1958.

corrupt and parasitical.⁴⁵⁶ As such he sought to emulate him with a concerted attack on the landlords.⁴⁵⁷ In 1954, he gave a speech urging social reform and criticising 'wealthy tax dodgers'.⁴⁵⁸ By the late 50s the notion that the landlords were 'feudal' was gaining currency, an identification familiar both to Iranian literate in Marx as well as Western political scientists.⁴⁵⁹ Furthermore, in order to differentiate himself from the land-owning aristocracy, to which he ostensibly belonged (despite the fact that they never really accepted him), he sought to surround himself with left wing thinkers, not known for their sympathy towards landowners. Indeed, Lambton discovered in conversation with two Iranians that some of the Shah's new advisers had Tudeh affiliations.⁴⁶⁰

The Shah sought to demonstrate his concern for the welfare of his subjects through leading by example. Despite criticisms earlier in his reign that the distribution of crown lands to peasant proprietors was more of a public relations exercise, the Shah continued with this programme after Mosaddeq's fall.⁴⁶¹ The criticisms continued, and in 1956, the Shah felt the need to justify his policies and action with the publication of a booklet

⁴⁵⁶ FO 371 114810 EP 1018/14 dated 12 April 1955.

⁴⁵⁷ FO 371 133004 EP 1015/7 dated 24 March 1958.

⁴⁵⁸ FO 371 109985 EP 1013/4 dated 27 February 1954. See also FO 371 109985 EP 1013/24 dated 17 November 1954. FO 371 109986 EP 1015/15 dated 20 February 1954.

⁴⁵⁹ FO 371 149804 EP 1461/1 dated 7 January 1960, in conversations with the then minister of agriculture, Amuzegar, it was noted, "...What he really had at heart, and the Shah also, was to attack the social system on the large holdings, the *feudal relationship* [italics mine] between landlord and peasant, though he could not say this openly in the Majlis..."

⁴⁶⁰ FO 371 114810 EP 1018/30 dated 18 July 1955.

⁴⁶¹ FO 371 109985 EP 1013/3 dated 12 February 1954.

entitled - 'The Pahlavi Estates Offices - in the service of the people'⁴⁶². It outlines effectively the image which the Shah wished to convey; that of an all-knowing wise Shah bestowing progress upon his grateful people. Challenging those who opposed land reform, the booklet argued:

"It is unfortunate that after the...start in the distribution of land, two classes rose in opposition to the reform, and tried their best to hamper the work - these were those who promised the villagers that agricultural reform can only be carried in the promised paradise, and some of the large landlords who were harbouring a misconception that the division of land was against the step against the law of ownership. A third group were those who, in sincere faith, thought that because of lack of capital and know-how, the new small-holders will not be able to take full advantage of the land, and Iran's rural districts will deteriorate.

If we forget the first detractors, the last groups were very much mistaken. Contrary to what they thought the distribution of land did not weaken the rights of property, but by creating new owners, strengthened these rights and created new champions for them. The villagers will have gained pride in themselves and their country. To quote HIM the Shah, no cone can stay in equilibrium on its head, and the basic stratum of our social structure are these very same villagers who constitute the broad base of the tapering cone. A historical example is the action of Iran's ancient kings who, in order to safeguard the frontiers, granted arable land to wandering tribes who, becoming owners with pride in their property, defended the country....."

Apart from an early allusion to the 'black and the red', this passage also highlights the

⁴⁶² FO 371 127095 EP 1104/3 dated 16 March 1957. The booklet, which is contained in this file, was published in 1956.

Shah's vision of an Iranian 'yeomanry', proud owners of land they are eager to defend, together with a tentative identification with Iran's ancient kings. The process of historical reconstruction was being expanded and was itself acquiring a personal characterisation. In continuing the attack upon the landlords, the booklet describes them as 'capitalists', clearly borrowing from left wing terminology.

The British were more sceptical of this particular vision of an Iranian yeomanry, "...The practical aim of land reform in Iran, quite apart from any considerations of social justice, must be to turn an indigent peasantry into an independent and self-reliant yeomanry, and if possible to increase production. The Government's American advisers (the United States Operations Mission) appear to be working on the assumption that anyone who owns his own land becomes *ipso facto* hard working, thrifty and enterprising in the Middle Western tradition; and they have succeeded in communicating something of their conviction to the Shah. Unhappily in Iran there is, or has been until recently at any rate, some substance in the more cynical landlord's contention that, if peasants had more money, they simply smoked more opium..."⁴⁶³

The booklet further hinted at the Shah's vision for the future, since having articulated a vision of the present and the past, he now had to elaborate on a purpose:

⁴⁶³ FO 371 140856 EP 1461/1 dated 15 January 1959; US intellectual support was no doubt predicated on the assumption that an independent peasant class was conducive to democracy. See also FO 371 140856 EP 1461/2 dated 15 January 1959: "Critical observers argue also in general terms that the notion of the self reliant Iranian yeomanry proudly working their own farms is an American pipe-dream, for the Iranian peasant's object in life is not hard work, bigger production and independence but to work as little as he can and if possible to get rich quick."

“Three years ago HIM the Shah decreed that model villages be built in the uncultivated lands of the Imperial Estates so that villagers who owned no land could be settled in them....The completion of the first part of the village was notified to Tehran in June 1955, and on the 7th July HIM the Shah visited the village, and amid grateful reception of the villagers, gave them their title deeds....Thus with an expenditure of 10 million rials, the model village of Shah Abad, was brought into being and eighty families have become small landowners....”

It cannot have gone unnoticed that the village was named `Shah-Abad' (ie made bountiful by the Shah). In addition, the Shah decided to experiment with modernisation as he understood it, on his remaining estates, with a clear bias towards industrialisation with the construction of model factories to produce a variety of goods.⁴⁶⁴ As to role of the lower and upper classes:

“...the Shah who considers that any reform must first start with the lot of the working classes; when this step has been achieved, it would make possible all-embracing reforms covering the whole country. His Imperial Majesty has stressed this point at every opportunity, that reforms should first include the workers and, that the more privileged classes must be the instruments of this reform....”

Later, the model village explained in the aforementioned booklet, developed into the model country, the precursor of the `Great Civilisation. In fact in a press conference held on 1958, the Shah was repetitively emphatic:“...I am not content with seeing Iran a progressive country. I want my country to be a model country....I want Iran to become a model country, a model of justice and the administration of justice and a model of

⁴⁶⁴ FO 371 110004 EP 1104/9 dated 21 December 1954.

progress.....We have the possibilities for making Iran a model country....”⁴⁶⁵ His emphasis on the terms ‘progress’ and ‘justice’ helped him to identify with those historical kings who were popular in Iranian culture.⁴⁶⁶

Progress for the Shah in practice meant catching up with the West, indeed his historical frame of reference was the West. In a press conference in 1958, the Shah noted that Iran was ‘lagging’ behind Europe with regards to the emancipation of women, adding, “I am sure, however, that since the Iranian nation is progressing in every respect and our society is changing rapidly from medieval conditions to a progressive and modern society, this transformation,” would take place shortly.⁴⁶⁷ Earlier that year he suggested the construction of department stores, dismissing as unrealistic the complaint that it could lead to the unemployment of 20,000 shopkeepers.⁴⁶⁸ Still later the Shah noted enthusiastically that, “I have heard tell that the plain of Gurgan has been completely modernised. In a short time this region will resemble a centre of European or American activity..”⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶⁵ FO 371 133007 EP 1015/54 dated 31 October 1958.

⁴⁶⁶ The term ‘progress’ was used frequently, see his speech to the nation, in FO 371 140789 EP 1015/64 dated 20 August 1959. The most obvious just king was Khusrau Anushiravan ‘the Just’. See A K S Lambton Justice in the Medieval Persian Theory of Kingship in Studia Islamica XVII, Paris 1962 pp 91-119

⁴⁶⁷ FO 371 133007 EP 1015/59 dated 24 November 1958.

⁴⁶⁸ FO 371 133026 EP 1113/1 dated 13 February 1958, the extension of this, the suggested clearing of the bazaars entirely was a major contributing factor to the revolution in 1979.

⁴⁶⁹ FO 371 157601 EP 1015/55 dated 28 March 1961. In an article for the Spectator, Michael Leapman noted the unevenness of development and emphasis on Westernisation, see FO 371 149761 EP 1015/143 dated 23 December 1960.

One major consequence of being a popular, progressive monarch, eager to be associated with the West was the need to fulfil one other important aspect of Western political culture - democracy. At first he strove to point out the popularity of his policies. Thus, in an interview for the New York Post, the Shah dismissed opposition to his plans from the 'Thousand Families', a term which increasingly acquired negative overtones, whom he described as an 'insignificant handful, but instead pointed to the support he had from the 'barefoot millions'.⁴⁷⁰ By 1957 however, this image of a populist sovereign was insufficient, and the Shah to do more than talk about democracy and to experiment with a two party parliamentary system, similar, on the surface at least, to systems prevalent in the UK and the United States.⁴⁷¹ Eqbal, was approached to head the 'conservative' *Melliun* party, while Asadollah Alam, ironically a major landowner from Khorasan and a clear indication of the tensions between the Shah's image of himself and his actions, was to lead His Majesty's loyal opposition, the 'progressive' *Mardom* (peoples) party. Eqbal was reluctant to participate in the charade, but Alam was enthusiastic and set about using the new party as a vehicle to attract the young and the radical into the Shah's camp.⁴⁷²

The 'Mardom' Party

The foundation of the *Mardom* Party is a turning point in the Shah's reign because it marked the moment when the Shah began the transition from what was still ostensibly a traditional monarchy to a revolutionary leadership supported by a party organisation

⁴⁷⁰ FO 371 133007 EP 1015/62 dated 9 December 1958.

⁴⁷¹ FO 371 127074 EP 1015/18 dated 27 April 1957.

⁴⁷² FO 371 140789 EP1015/54 dated 15 July 1959.

geared towards the propagation of a distinct ideology and political myth. Ideological construction was henceforth a premeditated and calculated political act. Alam's reasoning behind Mardom as told to Kellas is revealing, and is worth quoting in full [italics added]:

"....Asadullah Alam went on to explain that what he had in mind was in fact a '*white revolution*', which he hoped to bring about under the auspices of the Shah. He was working upon His Majesty's mind to this end. He confessed he had made little progress so far but he was confident that the Shah, for whose intelligence and good will he had the highest regard, would allow himself to be persuaded that he must take the lead of a *popular and national crusade*.

Asadullah explained that to his mind the problem of the survival of the regime was a matter not so much of economics as of psychology and public relations. Colonel Nasser had contrived to inspire the Egyptian people with new zeal by persuading them that his government was their own. Dr Musaddiq had elicited the same enthusiasm by the same means. Asadullah had studied this phenomenon and concluded that the key to success was popularity based upon a measure of nationalistic fervour, which in turn must be founded in some patriotic aspiration, such as the recovery of Bahrain or a struggle against Arab expansion.

Asadullah added that the masses must also be shown that in the development programme of the Plan Organisation there was something for the peasant and the man in the street. The most popular man of the day was M Moman, Mayor of Tehran, who was cleaning the streets and planting gardens which every man could see for himself and enjoy. The mayor's predecessor M Montasser had built an hygienic slaughter house, a much more important and fundamental improvement, but who cares about slaughter houses?....

....a progressive monarchy under a young ruler more popular than Colonel Nasser,

Asadullah hoped to prevail upon the Shah to be rid of the present 'establishment', the existing ruling classes must give place to new and younger men. The old gang were not of course to be hurt; this was white not a red revolution; but the Shah must sack them all. Asadullah proposed that the Shah should dissolve the Majlis, dismiss the government and liquidate the ruling classes on the grounds that they were obstructing the necessary reforms and inhibiting the realisation of national aspirations which were the object of Imperial policy.

The Mardom Party was to be the instrument of this new order. Asadullah confessed, however, that the Party's progress was not rapid. He found the younger intellectuals, whose support he courted, reluctant to join; they were suspicious and sceptical. To encourage them he was trying to persuade the Shah that the government should be encouraged to fight his Party, to persecute and be oppressive. He suggested that there might even be an election which his party should lose; the loss would be attributed to the riches of the old order and the honest poverty of the peoples' own Mardom Party. Slowly, nevertheless, young nationalists were beginning to approach him. A young man had recently called upon him calling himself a 'pan-Iranian nationalist', and told him that he stood for 'nationalism without Shah'. The Shah was an enemy of the people....." Alam tries to persuade him otherwise. "Not only was he, Asadullah, a king's man, willing to listen to the young man but the king himself would hear him with sympathy, for His Majesty was the champion of the people.

Asadullah confessed that he was experiencing difficulty with the Shah himself in promoting these ideas, and with Dr Eqbal. The Shah was wary, apprehending that Asadullah was a bit too impulsive and enthusiastic. He was afraid also that popular and nationalistic policies, however well controlled, might endanger stability...⁷³

⁴⁷³ FO 371 133006 EP 1015/34 dated 15 August 1958; FO 371 140790 EP 1015/78 dated 4 November 1959; see also FO 371 133006 EP 1015/37 dated 20 August (continued...)

It should perhaps not be surprising to learn that at the first party conference, the 175 delegates in attendance thanked, “the democratic sovereign of Iran, guarantor of liberty and the Constitution.”⁴⁷⁴

The party emphasised that it was to be a nationwide party ignoring class or wealth, and if it failed to convince others, it certainly did its best to assure itself. At the third party conference, Alam trumpeted, “...Gradually, as the true nature of the party broke through the clouds of uncertainties, hesitations and bewilderment manifested by incredulous onlookers, the people found out that the Mardum party was truly the home of the people...”⁴⁷⁵ It is interesting that in a society popularly recognised as stratified into the haves and the have-nots, the Shah should have promulgated a myth of a meritocratic ‘classless’ society. It is unclear whether he perceived this as the future of Iran, or as he reportedly explained to students, he understood it to be the present state of affairs. Certainly he was participating in the invention of tradition. “...I added that fortunately there were no family or class barriers in Iran; that anyone with talent could rise to a high position. This is one of the precious traditions which we have ardently preserved...”⁴⁷⁶

(...continued)

1958, on the Shah’s initial reluctance towards a ‘white revolution’.

⁴⁷⁴ FO 371 140790 EP 1015/78 dated 4 November 1959.

⁴⁷⁵ FO 371 149756 EP 1015//39 dated 24 May 1960, The government paper, Farman, replied acidly to Alam’s assertions: “Mr Alam was one of the larger feudal barons in the country, more interested in dancing the rumba and grinding the faces of his peasants than in the welfare of the nation.”

⁴⁷⁶ FO 371 140788 EP 1015/48 dated 30 June 1959; this is not entirely implausible, in that the famous 19th century reforming prime minister, Amir Kabir, was the son of a
(continued...)

Reconstruction: from democratic sovereign to revolutionary leader

By the end of the decade, the Iranian government was sparing no effort in spreading the Shah's message: "...At the end of December the Government initiated a propaganda campaign intended to demonstrate the extent of progress achieved during the last six years since the Shah's restoration. The Minister of State in charge of propaganda, Mr Nasratullah Mo'inian, claimed to be publishing 275,000 posters, 180,000 pamphlets and 750 illustrated articles, and to broadcast 120 radio talks and 800 commentaries..."⁴⁷⁷

Harrison noted that:

"...The Iranian press and wireless afford an impression of a popular, active, earnest young monarch, now exhorting his Parliament to pass progressive legislation, now adjuring municipal authorities to care for the common people, now opening bridges and inaugurating new hospitals, now distributing title deeds to grateful peasants, now castigating corruption and reaction, now entertaining a procession of foreign rulers, now received by foreign princes with the honour due to the heir of Cyrus the Great; supported by a devoted prime minister and loyal government in indefatigable pursuit of the welfare of the people, upholding the national interest against the malevolence of threatening neighbours, and building a prosperous future upon a foundation of social justice, a developing industry and agrarian reform. An established and duly elected Parliament, a Lower Chamber comprising two respectable political parties and a handful of independent members, and a senate of venerable elder statesmen, senior soldiers and scholars, confirms

(...continued)

cook, albeit the court cook. Curzon also noted that Iranian society was highly 'democratic'.

⁴⁷⁷ FO 371 149755 EP 1015/20 dated 18 February 1960.

this agreeable impression.⁴⁷⁸

If his critics found it difficult to swallow this image whole, it seemed as if the Shah was beginning to feel confident in this characterisation of himself (and his dynasty) as the saviour of the nation. He had retained a private conviction of himself as 'destined' for some time⁴⁷⁹; but by the end of the decade he was becoming more public with this view.

In a press conference in 1959, he allowed himself the following digression:

"...I do not think it inappropriate to mention that when in other countries a man renders the public a service....people enthusiastically exalt him, they construct statues and memorials and mourn his death. In this connection I do not speak of myself because there is no need to. But there is no one who does not know that my father's work and my own work in this country has not been confined to building schools and hospitals. You can compare the situation with the time before my father. One could not go to Khuzistan because the government had no authority there.....This was the country which my father took over. When he went he handed over a country throughout which reigned law and order, security, progress and activity. These things shall be registered in history.

After 1941, great progress was achieved, and although it is natural that I should claim credit for it, I do not wish to do that because it was by the grace of God that I succeeded. In this period things have been done which are quite obvious..... You all know that during talks about dispossessing the former AIOC, there were hints of British warships and paratroopers entering Iranian waters. I frankly told the British Ambassador that if such an invasion took place, I would personally take my place at the head of the Iranian forces -

⁴⁷⁸ FO 371 149756 EP 1015/23 dated 8 March 1960

⁴⁷⁹ FO 371 110092 EP 1941/19 dated 18 October 1954, Shah notes that the hand of 'Providence' had been at work in 1953, among other times.

both military and guerilla - and would fight such aggression.

...During these long years I have had to be at my work not only mornings, afternoons and evenings, but also at midnight or even two or three in the morning. I have had to defend the rights of the people during all these hours....⁴⁸⁰

In an interview for the New York Post, the Shah provided his own interpretation of the events of 1953, "Previously I was ready to die for my people, but the uprising demonstrated that my people were also ready to die for me."⁴⁸¹ This wasn't simply his 'election' as the Shah frequently liked to say, but the crystallisation of a unique relationship.

His affection for Cyrus the Great, though not as yet trumpeted, was not a secret, and arguably represents an appropriation of personalisation. Association with Cyrus the Great not only provided Mohammad Reza Shah with a worthy reference point, and his dynasty with an aura of longevity, it represented an appropriation of myth. Cyrus the Great was an increasingly familiar personality in the meta-narrative of Iranian history and was generally recognizable as the first 'great' king, and as the founder of a unified Iranian state and creator of the Achaemenid Persian Empire, possibly the greatest of Iranian kings. For a growing number of Iranians, the reputed humanity and political acumen of Cyrus, made

⁴⁸⁰ FO 371 140788 EP 1015/48 dated 30 June 1959. FO 371 149832 EP 1941/24 dated 10 November 1960. See also FO 140789 EP 1015/65 dated 27 August 1959, by this stage some questioners were urging the Shah to 'find solutions' to the constraints of government and bureaucracy. The notion that all modernisation began with Reza Shah is repeated elsewhere, see FO 371 133022 EP 1102/12 dated 30 August 1958.

⁴⁸¹ FO 133007 EP 1015/62 dated 9 December 1958.

him the personalisation of Iran. Mohammad Reza Shah wanted to become the personalisation of Iran through the ideology of dynastic nationalism. Arguably, unable to achieve this on his own merits his identification with Cyrus the Great was an attempt to acquire this personalisation by association and default.

It was known that the Shah intended to celebrate the 2500 anniversary of the Imperial Monarchy, though it was being habitually postponed. The announcement in 1959 of the impending celebrations, announced by Shoja ed-din Shafa however made public the present incumbent of the Peacock throne's affection for his illustrious predecessor (while his reference to a 'Bill of Rights' was clearly directed to an American audience):

“....The reign of Cyrus the Great was the beginning of 'liberalism' and political freedom in the history of mankind; the monarch's public notice issued on the occasion of the fall of Babylon was the first Bill of Rights. Such an enduring monarchy was the secret of the survival of Iran. The commemoration would introduce to the world the real Iran, not the nation misrepresented by the Greek, Roman and other historians...The Departments of Fine Arts and Archaeology of the Ministry of Education were to fund an exhibition. The University of Tehran were to publish a book about Cyrus, to organise courses of lectures, to arrange an international congress of orientalists and to publish an encyclopedia of Iranian civilisation. The Institute of Translation and Publication of the Pahlavi Foundation would publish certain historical works. The Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs would issue special stamps. The Ministry of Interior would erect statues of Cyrus in Tehran and Shiraz. The Ministry of War would administer a festival programme in the nature of a national and historical tattoo.....”⁴⁸²

⁴⁸² FO 371 149835 EP 1961/1 dated 29 December 1959. The Iranian government's
(continued...)

When a crown prince was finally provided by his third wife, Farah Diba, the Israelis, in a gesture of goodwill which cannot have been without significance, offered the Shah a Biblical parchment in praise of Cyrus the Great. Everyone, it seems, had expected the Shah to name the baby boy, either Reza or Cyrus, in the event he was called 'Reza Cyrus'.⁴⁸³

It would be incorrect to suggest that this perception which the Shah sought to institutionalise was dismissed in its entirety by the populace⁴⁸⁴. Some evidence points to fact that most criticism of the Shah's behaviour was either concentrated in Tehran, or among the socio-economic groups who were under attack.⁴⁸⁵ There is also some truth in the fact that Iranians instinctively distrusted their governments and were liberal in their criticisms and often too late in their praise⁴⁸⁶. However in assuming the reins of power, the Shah was bound to attract criticism, and it would be fair to say that the politically

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wish that similar celebrations be organised abroad was met with puzzlement, FO 371 140887 EP 1961/4 dated 27 August 1959: "...The Iranians seemed to be in danger of over-estimating the general interest in foreign countries in a rather esoteric anniversary..."

⁴⁸³ FO 371 149816 EP 1671/15 dated 8 November 1960.

⁴⁸⁴ FO 371 120714 EP 1015/31 dated 11 September 1956, on Shah's mystique.

⁴⁸⁵ FO 371 149762 EP 1016/6 dated 10 November 1960 notes that: "The general attitude toward the Shah (this was just before the birth of the heir) seemed to be that people liked him and admired the work he was doing for Iran; one man said to me that the only people who were against him were those in Tehran. There was no great interest in the question of elections, though it was recognised that the latest attempt had been a fiasco. The view was expressed that it was the duty of the Shah and of his governments to guide the backward Iranian nation at a gradual pace towards democracy...."

⁴⁸⁶ FO 371 127135 EP 1671/4 dated 9 March 1957, the Shah asks the press for constructive as opposed to destructive criticism.

conscious and active, who were concentrated in Tehran, were increasingly disenchanted with the Shah⁴⁸⁷. Many found it difficult to reconcile the traditional institution of the monarchy with the democratic sovereign the Shah wished to portray⁴⁸⁸. The vision of an egalitarian, progressive Iran seemed at odds with the uneven economic development of the present, and the *ulema* were increasingly concerned with a royal lifestyle at odds with Shi'a Islam.

With respect to the *ulema* the Shah found it prudent to proceed carefully, emphasising his wish to spread the faith of Islam⁴⁸⁹, and going on a pilgrimage to Mashhad⁴⁹⁰. In 1955 he notoriously turned a blind eye to the persecution against the Baha'is in an effort to heal his persistently tense relations with Ayatollah Borujerdi⁴⁹¹. Baha'is were officially banned from associating in groups, and the Bahai temple in Tehran was very publicly demolished. The Shah expressed public regret over the incident⁴⁹². Privately, the Shah agreed that the

⁴⁸⁷ FO 371 140787 EP 1015//15 dated 18 February 1959. See also FO 371 149755 EP 1015/20 dated 18 February 1960, which notes that nevertheless even among the less politically conscious, the birthday of the 12th Imam was celebrated with more enthusiasm than the anniversary of the attempted assassination attempt on the Shah.

⁴⁸⁸ FO 371 133022 EP 1102/7 dated 2 June 1958, in an effort to deflect criticism of his business activities the Shah established the Pahlavi Foundation, but this again failed to convince his critics. See also FO 371 140787 EP 1015/18 dated 23 February 1959, where Lambton notes that it is not corruption *per se* that is the problem but the fact that most people believe it has breached acceptable standards.

⁴⁸⁹ FO 371 109986 EP 1015/22 dated 20 March 1954.

⁴⁹⁰ FO 371 114807 EP 1013/6 dated 23 March 1955.

⁴⁹¹ FO 371 120714 EP 1015/35 dated 12 October 1956, Lambton comments that Borujerdi in fact stopped meeting with Shah on account of his wayward lifestyle.

⁴⁹² FO 371 114863 EP 1781/1 dated 12 May 1955. See also FO 371 114863 EP 1781/6 dated 26 May 1955, FO 371 114863 EP 1781/9 dated 3 August 1955.

mullahs had to be removed from politics, but argued that the time was not yet ripe, and that it could take several years before he could move against them.⁴⁹³ By 1957 one traveller to Mashhad (Russell) was moved to note, "Reza Shah must have been spinning in his grave at Rey. To see the arrogance and effrontery of the mullahs once again rampant in the holy city! How the old tyrant must despise the weakness of his son, who has allowed these turbulent priests to regain so much of their reactionary influence."⁴⁹⁴ As late as 1959, the Shah was cultivating relations with Ayatollah Borujerdi in a bid to elicit his support against the Soviet Union.⁴⁹⁵ Ayatollah Borujerdi replied by issuing a *fatwa* declaring the proposed land reform to be against Islam⁴⁹⁶; much to the irritation of the Shah who finally decided to throw caution to the wind, ".....it may be worth reporting that Dr Eqbal has written to Ayatollah Borujerdi saying that if he did not come into line on the Bill, the Shah would carry out a 'white coup d'etat', close up the two houses of parliament, and shear the clergy of their remaining privileges. Whether or not the Shah really has it in mind to carry out this apparent threat, the remarkable thing is that Eqbal has apparently gone on record in writing to this effect...."⁴⁹⁷

With respect to criticisms about a monarch being incompatible with democracy, few people had any illusions that the system of government was democratic in the slightest,

⁴⁹³ FO 371 114811 EP 1018/37 dated 9 August 1955; also FO 371 114811 EP 1018/46 dated 29 September 1955.

⁴⁹⁴ FO 371 127075 EP 1015/30 dated 27 June 1957.

⁴⁹⁵ FO 371 140789 EP 1015/61 dated 13 August 1959.

⁴⁹⁶ FO 371 149804 EP 1461/5 dated 1 March 1960.

⁴⁹⁷ FO 371 149804 EP 1461/7 dated 8 March 1960.

and it was almost taken for granted that elections would be rigged. However, the Constitutional movement and the establishment of the Majlis were important political reference points for most politically conscious Iranians, and the Shah recognised that he had to maintain at least the facade of parliamentary government⁴⁹⁸. He constantly stressed his constitutional credentials and repeatedly emphasised that freedom and democracy existed in Iran. In private he was far more forthcoming, even admitting to Sir Roger Stevens, that his imposition of a two party system was a farce.⁴⁹⁹

Eventually, the bubble burst, and though most elections had been rigged it was the promise of multi-party free elections in 1960 which caused the greatest protest, largely because having promised so much, expectations were dashed when it became apparent that the Shah intended to blatantly rig the vote. The daily *Sedaye Mardom* wrote on 14 August 1960, "...Indeed whilst on the one hand the rulers of the country maintain that these elections are free, 20m Iranians assert that they are not free, and since propaganda about freedom of election persists the dissatisfaction of public opinion increases..."⁵⁰⁰

Kellas observed the air of ridicule in which people perceived the elections:

"...It is claimed that many papers have been spoiled and many bogus or facetious votes cast for the Twelve Imams, Madame Delkash, the cabaret singer, and Mr Shamshiri, who

⁴⁹⁸ FO 371 127075 EP 1015/45 dated 6 November 1957, notes that Eqbal's obsequiousness effectively shattered the facade of democratic government.

⁴⁹⁹ FO 371 133006 EP 1015/37 dated 20 August 1958. Students in Isfahan noted that people couldn't tell the difference between Mardom and Mellium, see FO 371 149762 EP 1016/2 dated 23 February 1960. See also FO 371 149832 EP 1941/9 dated 12 July 1960.

⁵⁰⁰ FO 371 149758 EP 1015/84 dated 16 August 1960.

runs the chelo-kabab house in the Bazaar.....Personally I have found it hard to trace anybody, from my cook to the Minister of Court, who has taken the trouble to vote at all; and the wry explanation for the most part is that 'it has no purpose'. Certainly a substantial proportion of the urban middle class have no intention of voting, a privilege which belongs to base mechanicals...⁵⁰¹

The Shah sought to recover the situation by announcing that if the people so wished it, he would cancel the elections; he would do this, he argued because he was a true democrat.⁵⁰² Obviously concerned at the loss of credibility the Shah reiterated his claim again at a press conference on August 27th, ".....I have never acted contrary to the provisions of the Constitution and I am not prepared to do so now. I can act only within the framework of the law, unless the people - the real people, not two or three thousand people who stage demonstrations in the streets - show me that it is their inner wish and desire that the second alternative (annulling of the elections) be taken, in spite of the fact that this is outside the limits of the law. I am always willing to do anything for the sake of the country if I know that it is the real desire of the people."⁵⁰³

In order to convince sceptical allies (especially after the Iraqi Revolution) and domestic

⁵⁰¹ FO 371 149758 EP 1015/87 dated 23 August 1960. See FO 371 149760 EP 1015/123 dated 19 October 1960, the Shah admits to Harrison that it was mistake to say the elections would be free.

⁵⁰² FO 371 149759 EP 1015/96 dated 29 August 1960.

⁵⁰³ FO 371 149759 EP 1015/105 dated 10 September 1960, the Shah also took the opportunity to point out that the 1951 elections (under Mosaddeq) were far worse in terms of vote rigging.

critics, he stressed the compatability of monarchy with Iranian political culture.⁵⁰⁴ In an interview with the correspondent for the New York Post in 1958 he dismissed comparisons with Iraq by stressing the 2600 [*sic*] year old tradition of monarchy.⁵⁰⁵ This was printed in a subsequent article.⁵⁰⁶ In a subsequent press conference in 1959, his concern with his legitimacy and the continuing stigma of the 1953 coup are apparent, "...I can say that the reason for tranquillity and stability in our country is the fact that Iran is ruled by a natural and not an imposed regime..."⁵⁰⁷

In his Nowruz address in 1959, he said, "At the beginning of this New Year, speaking as the guardian of this glorious throne which has a 2500 unbreakable bond with the hearts of the people of this land..."⁵⁰⁸ At a press conference on the 23 June 1959, the Shah apparent confidence belied a sensitivity to the challenges he was facing, "...One of our glories is that our regime in Iran is so natural that there is no need for dictatorship. For this very reason there is no torture or pressure. The people like the regime because it is of their own making and choice and is a natural one..."⁵⁰⁹ The plans for the celebration of 2500 years of Imperial Monarchy were clearly aimed in part at reinforcing this

⁵⁰⁴ FO 371 133006 EP 1015/37 dated 20 August 1958. See also FO 371 133066 EP 1961/4 dated 30/October 1958.

⁵⁰⁵ FO 371 133007 EP 1015/62 dated 9 December 1958.

⁵⁰⁶ FO 371 140787 EP 1015/2 dated 7 January 1959.

⁵⁰⁷ FO 371 140787 EP 1015/9 dated 3 February 1959.

⁵⁰⁸ FO 371 140787 EP 1015/21 dated 2 April 1959.

⁵⁰⁹ FO 371 140788 EP 1015/48 dated 30 June 1959, note that he uses the word 'natural' twice within three sentences.

naturalisation.⁵¹⁰ As his autocracy became more apparent⁵¹¹, this attempt at naturalisation was less convincing in relation to democracy (although in time he would try and redefine 'democracy'), though it came to convince his increasingly receptive Western allies, and in cementing the myth of the saviour. There was of course a more fundamental contradiction in the democratic sovereign relying so heavily on 'tradition' which had little to do with democracy. He would ultimately seek to resolve this by both redefining the concept of democracy (essentially a variation on populism) and combining both elements into the myth of the saviour.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter highlights a number of characteristics in the development of political myth and its relationship with ideology. Unlike the previous periods there is no emphatic central personality around which ideological constructs gravitate and the decreasing level of political plurality inhibits the potential for ideological friction and tensions. As such, although there are still essential tensions particularly in the aftermath of the coup and the Shah's attempts to re-identify himself with a more refined, if still contradictory cocktail of ideological constructs, the propensity for political myth development is more difficult to distinguish from their parent ideologies. This ambiguity is retained in the next period and indicates the continuing difficulty in distinguishing political myth from ideology. At the same time there are still interesting insights into the construction of political myth.

⁵¹⁰ FO 371 140887 EP 1961/1 dated 1 January 1959.

⁵¹¹ FO 371 140789 EP 1015/50 dated 9 July 1959, notes that although the Iran is not a police state, SAVAK enjoys enormous powers.

Whereas in the aftermath of the abdication of Reza Shah an increasingly pluralist political environment rigorously challenged the imposed ideological consensus (hegemony), after 1953, the deconstruction of the Mosaddeqist myth was led by the Shah. In contrast to the previous case, the deconstruction proved to be difficult and the Shah moved to depersonalise the ideological challenge, in effect seeking to reverse the process which had resulted in Mosaddeq's identification with a particular conception of nationalism. In seeking to reconstruct his own ideology of dynastic nationalism the Shah borrowed heavily from the leftist nationalist discourse and compensated for weakness at home by seeking to situate his own conception of Iran within an external Cold War narrative indicating both Iran's integration into international ideological discourse, but also importantly, the Shah's growing attachment to an ideological discourse alien to popular Iranian political culture.

This weakness was in turn compensated for by the use of the mass media to convey the Shah's message to the Iranian people, and the move to create the *Mardom* party and the tentative development from democratic sovereign to revolutionary leader. In constructing his new image, the Shah characteristically had to reinvent the past, appropriating the nationalist narrative for his own dynasty and for the first time articulating a more coherent vision for the future. As such the process of the personalisation of ideology now encourages both the reinterpretation of the past as well as the construction of the future. The Shah's increasing association of his dynasty with the Achaemenids, and himself with Cyrus the Great, as well as suggesting dynastic longevity, illustrates the process of ideological personalisation by proxy. This appropriation of a political myth by association simply multiplied the tensions and contradictions already implicit in the personalisation of

ideology and would itself yield more explicit political myth construction later in the reign.

Chapter 5

The Myth of the White Revolution - Mohammad Reza Shah, 'Modernisation' and the Consolidation of Power.

Introduction

*"....He [the Shah] often grew impatient when American diplomats urged him to modernise at a pace faster than his careful crawl. 'I can start a revolution for you,' he apparently told an American diplomat, 'but you won't like the end result.'"*⁵¹²

*.The Shah believed in his White Revolution. When I met him a few days after my arrival in Teheran in February 1965 he sounded convincing as he told me. "We must forget all our past disagreements and close ranks to rescue the country from underdevelopment and ensure a bright future for future generations." He was sitting on a marble table in his sister Princess Ashraf's villa, with his hands beneath his thighs and his legs dangling. "I am going to go faster than the left," he promised. "You're all going to have to run to keep up with me. All the old economic and political feudalism is over and done with. Everybody should benefit directly from the product of his own labour. That's the objective of my agrarian reforms. And for the workers we shall institute profit sharing....All young people must come back and take part in our great work."*⁵¹³

⁵¹² FO 371 133055 EP 1671/5 dated 3/10/58. Article in the Spectator, written by Andrew Roth.

⁵¹³ F Hoveida The Fall of the Shah London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1979, pg 134.

The launch of the White Revolution marks a turning point in the ideological development of Mohammad Reza Shah. Pushing aside the hesitancy of previous years the Shah for the first time sought to pursue a coherent ideological programme which encapsulated his particular conceptions of modernity and nationalism within a reconstructed ideology of dynastic nationalism, intended above all to institutionalise himself and his dynasty within Iranian political culture. It was a political act calculated to emphatically identify the Shah with a particular ideological construct - it was in effect a programme of ideological reification in his person. With the publication of 'Pahlavism' it also marked the period when personalisation was increasingly extended into personification, that is to say, it was increasingly insufficient for the Shah to become identified with an ideology, the process was taken a stage further, and the Shah embodied an ideology. The emphasis was no longer on acquisition and appropriation but on the initiation of ideas by the Shah.

The heightened intensity which this process entailed resulted in greater tensions as the contradictions between the ideological cocktail of constructs which the Shah sought to represent manifested themselves both with perceived social reality as well as the consequence of the friction between the different constructs the Shah sought to synthesise. One major consequence of this was a major attempt to reinterpret the past characteristic of the mythic process.

The 'White Revolution' was intended to be a bloodless revolution from above aimed at fulfilling the expectations of an increasingly politically aware general public as well as an ambitious and growing professional socio-economic group, and as such anticipating and

preventing what many considered to be the danger of bloody revolution from below.⁵¹⁴

Although many were looking to heal the socio-economic problems of the country, this was fundamentally a political programme conceived by members of the political elite in order to sustain as much of the established *relations of domination* as realistically possible.⁵¹⁵ This was a status quo centred upon the institution of the monarchy as the lynchpin of Iranian state and society.

Aside from the Shah, there were three men who typify the prevailing attitudes towards the construction of the 'White Revolution': Asadollah Alam, the nominated leader of the *Mardom* Party, who according to the sources initially conceived of the idea, saw the White Revolution as a vehicle for consolidating the power and authority of the Shah; Ali Amini, prime minister from 1961-62, whose government launched land reform and other reforms and who frequently used the phrase 'White Revolution', regarding it essentially as social and economic reform with a monarch who reigned rather than ruled; and Hasan

⁵¹⁴ FO 371 157605 EP 1015/123 24 May 1961. This sentiment was echoed by Amini himself; FO 371 157612 EP 1015/280 dated 9 November 1961. See also FO 371 157604 EP 1015/116 dated 21 May 1961.

⁵¹⁵ FO 248 1580 dated 30 May 1960, Dr Ram in discussion with Kellas: "Dr Ram claimed that the truth of course was that the Bill was a political measure. It was intended to show the world that Iran was not a feudal society, such as was supposed to be a liability in the struggle against communism. It might indeed enjoy some success in this respect. But the proper way to resist Communism was economic, and the land reform law was not economic...." In an undated memo from 1960, Webster Johnson USOM adviser in the Agricultural Bank noted that: "In conversation generally I have said that we believe some form of agricultural revolution as regards techniques is necessary for Iran but that a technical revolution is quite different from re-distribution of land, which a matter of politics and so largely outside our sphere...." FO 248 1580. For a comprehensive analysis of land reform see E Hooglund Land & Revolution in Iran, 1960-1980, Austin, Texas, University of Texas Press, 1982, and A K S Lambton The Persian Land Reform, 1962-1966, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1969.

Arsanjani, Amini's vigorous Minister of Agriculture, whose concept of 'White Revolution' was nothing less than the imposition of a social and economic revolution, in which the monarchy would be a welcome and long overdue casualty. After considerable prevarication, and a supporting role during the Amini administration, the Shah not surprisingly opted for Alam's conception and in 1963 was to launch his 'White Revolution', as a political exercise pursuing a particular conception of modernity undoubtedly influenced by his perception of the industrialised West in his quest to secure dynastic legitimacy and the institutionalisation of his monarchy.

The Shah was anxious to be seen not only as a 'democratic' monarch, progressive and benign, always with the welfare of his people in mind, a characterisation he had pursued to variable effect in the post-Mosaddeq period, but as a 'revolutionary' monarch. In so doing, he would appropriate the myths of the left and National Front as a champion of revolutionary nationalism which would assist in legitimising himself and his dynasty. As the founder and guarantor of a new order for Iran, he would consolidate his dynasty's position within the political system, which he would argue was dependant upon the continuation and consolidation of his dynasty. The ideologies of modernisation and nationalism were to be synthesised in a definitive reconstruction of dynastic nationalism labelled 'Pahlavism'. Monarchy and modernism, perceived as contradictions by many, was thus rationalised into compatibility, even necessity, by the Shah, who saw no contradiction in drawing upon the traditional myths of past monarchs, likewise considered initiators of 'just' orders.⁵¹⁶ He also developed a vague notion of an alternative utopia, originally

⁵¹⁶ The two key historic monarchs being Cyrus the Great 559-529BC, and the
(continued...)

labelled the model society, and subsequently, (perhaps influenced by Johnson's Great Society in the United States), the 'Great Civilisation'.

The 'White Revolution' was therefore a strategy for legitimation, through the fusion of a cocktail of contradictory ideological constructs providing an implicit tension which encouraged the development of political myth⁵¹⁷. Socio-economic benefits were emphasised in an effort to disguise the real political gains, though many commentators were aware of the real motives. The Shah also tried to harness the White Revolution as a vehicle for unifying the country by ostensibly giving peasants a stake in the economic welfare of the state, while at the same time of course being grateful to their sovereign for having released them from their 'servitude' to ruthless and exploitative landlords. These landlords which not only included the aristocracy but members of the *bazaar* and *ulema*, were characterised as the 'feudal' reactionary enemy, in a direct borrowing of language which can have meant little to most Iranian peasantry.

The Socio-Historic context

The decade of the 1960s continued to be turbulent for Iran, not least because of the tremendous growth in education both within the country but also in the impact of Western student politics on the Iranian students who travelled abroad in increasing numbers.

(...continued)

Sassanian, Khosrau Anushiravan.

⁵¹⁷ Political myth thus provides an ambiguous interpretative matrix which allows these contradictory tensions to be resolved, if temporarily. This conceptualisation draws on Gramsci's notion of 'contradictory consciousness', operating within the individual.

Harrison noted the dramatic expansion of geographic mobility, "Forty thousand Iranians of the upper and middle classes now travel abroad year and year on private and official business, for pleasure, for medical treatment and for training. No less than 6000 Iranians apply to Her Majesty's Embassy here alone for visas for the United Kingdom annually. In reverse moreover, the country is invaded by foreigners; the European and American communities in Tehran numbered 700 in 1914 and today well over 10,000." With respect to the student population he noted that, "there are now 17,000 students at six universities in the country and 15,000 more abroad; and between 20 and 30 thousand seek admission to the Universities from secondary schools each year."

Furthermore, many of the students of the previous two decades were now in positions of considerable influence, not least Amini's Ministers for Agriculture and Education, and their ideas had been shaped by developments in the post war era. Put simply, a substantial 'middle class' or professional class, was finally coming of age.⁵¹⁸ According to Harrison, "the development of a substantial middle class or middle classes, of professional, technical, clerical and managerial people, is the most notable feature of the last 35 years of Iranian social history."⁵¹⁹ It is important in this respect also to recognise that the political elite were also increasingly divided as to the need and nature of the reform. The fractures emergent among the 'ruling' class both bureaucrats and landowners contributed to an atmosphere of change and encouraged the view that radical reform was needed to secure and stabilise the country and the ruling establishment. Harrison's astute analysis of this

⁵¹⁸ FO 248 1582 EP 1015/36, dated 1st March 1961.

⁵¹⁹ See also FO 371 157599 EP 1015/7 dated 31 October 1961 - Lambton's assessment of growing middle class 'political consciousness'.

development is worth quoting in full:

“Throughout the upper and middle classes, there are professional people, politicians, economists, planners, bankers, architects, journalists and writers who have been highly educated abroad; the elder, or pre-war, generation for the most part in France, the younger in the US, Germany, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Although most of these people belong to privileged or prosperous families, whether of the upper or upper middle classes, they comprise a number of the real Iranian reformers and even revolutionaries. *Many indeed would readily connive at revolution, if they judged that it would serve to amputate the ‘dead hand’ of social and bureaucratic tradition and would offer a hope of more efficient administration and fulfilment of their own ideas whether political and economic aspirations or personal ambitions.* [Italics added] These people have seen what is going on in more highly developed societies. They are well read, they have been members of students’ unions and debating clubs; and above all they have escaped for a few years from the autocratic system of domestic relations of Iranian family convention. They are acutely conscious, not so much of the absence of political freedoms in their own country, as of social injustice, nepotism, corruption and incompetence.....The bulk of them are not more than 45 years old, and some of them together constitute virtually a corporate intellectual elite.....”⁵²⁰

Added to these factors must simply be the impact of the economic growth and land reform which affected Iran during this decade causing massive socio-economic dislocation and tension, all of which would have contributed to a certain ideological dynamism. The economic expansion and transformation is exemplified by the growth in telecommunications and mass media. Harrison noted that there were now some 1,000,000

⁵²⁰ FO 371 157610 EP 1015/229 1 August 1961.

radio sets in the country, up tenfold from 1940, while a contemporary commentator was impressed by the rapid adoption of the television set, a whole new medium for the monarchy to reach the people. As Hambly noted, "in 1962 it was estimated that there were 67,000 television sets in use reaching a potential audience of 670,000.....an audience far exceeding to total number of readers of newspapers and magazines..."⁵²¹ For all these reasons, the need for a clear programme of reform within a pronounced ideological framework, became a matter of urgency.

Constructing the 'White Revolution'.

As noted in the previous chapter, Asadollah Alam, the leader of the *Mardom* Party was clear about the political imperative when he first suggested the concept of a 'White Revolution' as a vehicle for the Shah in discussions with a cautious Sir Roger Stevens in 1958.⁵²² In the aftermath of the Iraqi coup d'etat, Alam argued that a 'White' (ie bloodless) revolution was needed in Iran if the Iraqi coup was not to be repeated in Iran. Astutely, Alam argued that for the people to be mobilised behind the Shah in this 'revolution' an enemy had to be provided. After all, he conjectured, it was the presence of a tangible enemy which had contributed so much to Mosaddeq's popular success.

⁵²¹ See G Hambly Attitudes & Aspirations of the Contemporary Iranian Intellectual RCAS, Vol LI, part II, 1964 pg 134. The Iranian embassy in London estimated that there were 40,000 television sets and 200,000 radio sets for a population of 2,000,000 in Tehran in 1960; see FO 371 149761 EP 1015/143 dated 23 December 1960.

FO 371 133006 EP 1015/34, dated 15 August 1958. Alam himself lacked credibility as a champion of the poor, even the pro-Royalist paper, *Farman* commented that, "Mr Alam was one of the larger feudal barons in the country, more interested in dancing the rumba and grinding the faces of his peasants than in the welfare of the nation." FO 371 149756 EP 1015/39 dated 24 May 1960.

Significantly, the Shah was initially not overly enamoured with leading a revolution, even one that was ostensibly bloodless.⁵²³ However, domestic and international pressures gradually convinced the Shah that if he did not lead the reform, he and his dynasty might be overcome by revolution from below.⁵²⁴ This view was confirmed by the anxiety caused by the overthrow of the Menderes regime in Turkey in 1960.⁵²⁵ Russell noted that, “..I fear that immediate methods are needed, perhaps even a dash of cheap economic demagoguery...”⁵²⁶

The notion of a ‘White Revolution’ thus gradually entered Iranian political discourse and was seized upon by a number of reformers as a convenient conceptualisation of the more

⁵²³ FO 371 133006 EP 1015/37, dated 20 August 1958. It should be remembered that since the overthrow of Mosaddeq the Shah had consistently argued that Iran had had her revolution and consequently was an ‘island of stability’; see FO 371 149757 EP 1015/45 dated 7 June 1960. Later Arfa would argue in conversation with Sir Roger Stevens that the whole notion was the Shah’s idea in the first place, see FO 371 170374 EP 1015/33 dated 18 February 1963.

⁵²⁴ In 1961, an article in the Christian Science Monitor made the following astute remark, “...Dr Musaddiq underestimated the attachment of Iranians to the institution of monarchy, although the present Shah, strictly speaking is not of royal blood. If the Shah can identify himself with successful reform, radical changes in the present social and political system of his country would not automatically mean the establishment of a republic...” FO 371 157603 EP 1015/99 dated 15 May 1961. See also FO 371 157605 EP 1015/139 dated 1 June 1961, on the impending fear of revolution.

⁵²⁵ FO 371 149757 EP 1015/45 dated 7 June 1960: “..The coup has caused within the regime itself considerable anxiety....Only a few have taken comfort from the reflection that unpopular regimes have been swept away in neighbouring countries while Iran continues to confound the critics who have so long and so loudly proclaimed her to be the least stable element in the Western alliance in the Middle East.

⁵²⁶ FO 371 133006 EP 1015/50 dated 30 September 1958.

or less dramatic reforms they hoped to apply⁵²⁷. The Shah once again lost the initiative as he had done in 1951, because his attempted re-invention in the 1950's as a democratic and progressive monarch lacked credibility in the eyes of the people. In effect the Shah once again lost control of the political process although his role was not as diminished as under Dr Mosaddeq.⁵²⁸

In effect, a looming economic and political crisis precipitated by the cancellation of the elections of August 1960, combined with international pressure and a not untypical measure of procrastination by the Shah resulted in the leadership of reform falling onto the shoulders of a respected Iranian aristocrat, who had been ambassador to Washington, Dr Ali Amini. Amini, and his zealous Minister of Agriculture, Dr Hasan Arsanjani represented the highly educated and socially privileged 'revolutionaries' alluded to in Harrison's dispatch quoted above, though it would be fair to argue that Amini, was more reformer than revolutionary.⁵²⁹

⁵²⁷ The Shah first publicly used the term in July 1960, in reference to the emergence of 'new, (younger) blood' in the Majlis elections; FO 371 149758 EP 1015/72 dated 26 July 1960. Amini uses the term in a discussion with Harrison as noted in FO 371 157604 EP 1015/109 dated 17 May 1961.

⁵²⁸ See FO 371 149756 EP 1015/23 dated 8 March 1960 [quoted above pg 216]. See also FO 371 149758 EP 1015/84 dated 16 August 1960. Comments by Kellas, see page 224 above; FO 371 149758 EP 1015/87 dated 23 August 1960. The Shah of course had always been keen to stress his democratic and progressive credentials, see FO 371 149755 EP 1015/2 dated 29 December 1959. See also FO 371 149755 EP 1015/20 dated 18 February 1960.

⁵²⁹ In a private conversation Arsanjani is reported to have said, 'The monarchy is like a chair which stands on four legs, I have destroyed one of them.' [ie the landed aristocracy]. Amini distinguished between a 'white revolution' and real revolution, implying that the former merely represented radical reform - see FO 371 164183 EP 1015/77 speech to the Ministry of Justice dated 12 June 1962.

Ironically, despite his widely known liberal credentials, the fact that Amini's relatively brief premiership was conducted in the absence of a sitting Majlis, incurred the wrath and enmity of National Front politicians who accused Amini of un-Constitutional behaviour. Nevertheless, in his brief 18 month tenure, Amini and Arsanjani began the process of land reform in earnest, with the tacit approval of the Shah.

Indeed the Shah's desire to be seen at the forefront of the reform movement can be seen in his address to the outgoing Senate in which he identified the present state of Iran with the 'Middle Ages', using language which many under attack considered more appropriate to Europe than to Iran.⁵³⁰ Aside from providing a reference with which opponents of reform could be identified, this may also be considered a strategy of universalisation and rationalisation, since the West provided the model for modernity and was perceived as scientific and rational, what was thought backward for Europe was equally backward for Iran.

Amini was well aware of the concern that land reform, which involved the redistribution of large estates among tenant farmers, was causing among most landlords, many of whom resented the allusion to feudalism. Though most had accepted that some measure of land reform would be inevitable, after all even Dr Mosaddeq had proposed it, few were ready for the extent to which they would be stripped for the economic and consequently, political power. A previous attempt had been considerably modified by the sitting Majlis, but now Dr Amini, in the absence of a Majlis, was able to propose much tougher

⁵³⁰ FO 371 149804 EP 1461/3 dated 30 January 1960.

legislation, and his enthusiastic Minister of Agriculture was keen to apply it. With customary vitriol, Arsanjani attacked the backward and reactionary 'feudalists' and emphasised the 'progressive' nature of the reform which would pre-empt a red revolution. Since many ulema were also major landowners, and private property was considered inviolable in Islamic Law⁵³¹, they too became the target of attack, and along with the landlords were later to be characterised as '*black reaction*' by the Shah, while the left would be characterised as *red subversion*.⁵³² These two euphemisms were the quintessential aspects of the myth of the White Revolution, and effectively de-personalised and differentiated opponents of reform.

Indeed much of Arsanjani's rhetoric was seen as excessive and regarded by many as counter-productive: "The Minister of Agriculture, by an intemperate campaign against 'feudalism' in the name of land reform, has provoked disturbances amongst the peasantry and alarm against landowners..."⁵³³ On another occasion on a trip to Maragheh in Azerbaijan, the site of the first land redistribution, the minister became embroiled in a bitter argument with a local landlord,

"..The party then witnessed perhaps the most dramatic event of the day when Colonel

⁵³¹ FO 371 149804 EP 1461/5 dated 1 March 1960 - Ayatollah Borujerdi issues a fatwa condemning land reform as against Islam. The Shah's reply to this move was unusually blunt, threatening the ulema with a 'white coup d'etat'. See FO 371 149804 EP 1461/7 dated 8 March 1960.

⁵³² Ammini sought to pacify the ulema by appointing a religious adviser to the cabinet, going on pilgrimage to Mashhad and Qom and visiting Kashani; FO 371 157611 EP 1015/241 dated 22 August 1961.

⁵³³ FO 371 157608 EP 1015/185 dated 22 June 1961.

Esfandiari appeared for an interview with the minister during a tea interval.....It appears that the notorious Colonel had risen from the people to be the owner of 20 villages, 15 of which he had recently sold or donated to his children and relatives. He was offering four of the remainder for distribution and retaining one which had a population of 10,000 people. He pointed out that in doing so he was acting strictly within the terms of the law. Dr Arsanjani became very indignant and swore he would deprive the colonel of this village as it was iniquitous that he should remain in control of so many people. He added for good measure that he would strip him of his medals, to which Esfandiari responded that he could have the medals any time he cared to come for them..."⁵³⁴

Like the Shah, Arsanjani was contemptuous of Iran's tribes and drew analogies with European history: "...[He] called the persistence of the tribes in living a nomadic life 'a vestige of the dark ages'. He said it was time for them 'to end this medieval practice of migration and living in tents', a practice useful for little except the opportunity it gave foreigners to take photographs of them. He envisaged the settlement of the tribes in agricultural areas where they could engage in farming..."⁵³⁵

However, the Minister was convinced that the development of sedentary agriculture was the salvation of Iran, and though he frowned on industrialisation in stark contrast to the Shah, he shared the latter's belief in the abilities of the Iranian peasant and actively promoted a conception of a liberated Iranian yeomanry: "The Iranian peasant, who, although wholly illiterate, could recite his national epic by heart, was filled with resources of intelligence and character which had been untapped for centuries. The lamp and the

⁵³⁴ FO 248 1589, dated 6 May 1962.

⁵³⁵ FO 248 1589, conversation with Phillips dated 4 December 1962.

bulb were there and only the liberation of a just social order was needed to supply the necessary connection and the electric current to light them. Every aspect of Persian life and initiative began in the village. The only real source of a potential resurrection of Iran was the Persian peasant.⁵³⁶

Contradictions & Tensions

The landlords and ulema challenged land reform on three grounds: first they contested the identification with feudalism; second they attacked the interpretation that the land reform represented progress arguing instead that it would cause social and economic dislocation, and third, and probably most damning, was their argument that the reform as administered by Amini, and subsequently the Shah, was illegal in that it both contradicted Islamic law and had been implemented in the absence of a sitting Majlis, and was therefore unconstitutional.⁵³⁷

Landlords were particularly incensed by the notion that they were exploitative 'feudalists',

⁵³⁶ FO 248 1588 , conversation with Kellas dated 17 March 1962. In a subsequent conversation, Kellas unsuccessfully compared land reform in Iran with that of Egypt, Arsanjani, "went on to complain that I had a low opinion of the skilful Iranian farmers, while I magnified the ability of the degraded fellahin of Egypt." FO 248 1589 dated 6 May 1962. See also M R Pahlavi Mission for My Country New York, McGraw-Hill, 1961 pg 10. Also Shah's speech on 5 Dey 1341 / 25th December 1962 on the occasion of the murder of Engineer Malek Ebadi in Enghelab-e Sefid Shahanshah (The White Revolution of the Shahanshah), Tehran undated.

⁵³⁷ FO 371 157607 EP 1015/177 dated 20 June 1961. See also FO 248 1588, note by Kellas dated 31 January 1962. See also FO 248 1589 dated 24 November 1962, a number of ulema including Khomeini protest that the land reform is both un-Constitutional and anti-Islamic.

and argued that the high estimation of the Iranian peasant was misplaced.⁵³⁸ More seriously, they argued that such a radical change in the socio-economic patterns of life could only harm agriculture and encourage migration to the cities. Initially, landowners were able to express their views in the press. Ibrahim Mahdavi, in the newspaper *Nedaye Sepehr* argued against the tendency to associate with the West, "If this kind of ownership has a feudal root it has vanished since a long time ago to the establishment of constitution and law and relations between the villages and towns....Owing to the above factors feudalism in the shape as existed in Asiatic and Western countries never existed and cannot be coincident with land ownership in Iran..."⁵³⁹ Amini, from a landowning family himself, was sensitive to the criticisms of the landlords, and tried to soften Arsanjani's rhetoric.

Meeting landlords, who had organised themselves into an association, he argued that the primary purpose of the land reform was to maximise agricultural yields, he played down any notion of class warfare but argued that in some cases landlord-tenant relations resembled the traditional perception of the Western feudal model.⁵⁴⁰

Most landlords were not impressed by Amini's reassurances, and though they were prevented from airing their grievances publicly, they were privately scathing about the

⁵³⁸ Thus in a speech commemorating the death of engineer Malek Ebadi, dated 5th Dey 1341 [1962], the Shah argued that, "...They treated Iranian peasants as their own, or members of their own tribes, and made use of them in this way...."

⁵³⁹ FO 248 1580; Ibrahim Mahdavi, dated 21 September 1960.

⁵⁴⁰ FO 248 1585 1461, Keyhan International dated 20 July 1961, and letter dated 4 November 1961.

reform. Although some accepted land reform they were critical of its political aims.⁵⁴¹ One landowner, Malek Mansur, a bitter opponent of the reform described the whole process of land reform as nothing more than a public relations exercise.

“In one case, after a quite bogus exposition of the activities of a rural cooperative society by the Minister of Agriculture, His Majesty had asked a peasant upon whom he was conferring title deeds whether he had found the cooperative useful; and the peasant replied ‘What cooperative?’ In another case His Majesty had asked a peasant, to whom he was about to give title deeds covering an allotment of 12 hectares, what was his annual income. The peasant replied, ‘30,000 tomans’. His Majesty asked that his question should be translated into Turkish and it was repeated in that language. The peasant protested that that he understood Persian very well, explained that he farmed in fact a hundred hectares and that his income was indeed 30,000 tomans. Whilst a third peasant was receiving his title deeds from the Imperial hand, it was known to all present that his house was being burned by Fazlullah Beg, Khan of the Shahsavan, who is the landlord in those parts...”

Indeed according to Prince Malek Mansur, the peasants were reluctant to receive their deeds, knowing that having accepted them they could no more depend upon the indispensable assistance of Fazlullah Beg in hard times, and were earning his unlimited malevolence. Mr Malek Mansur observed that the error of land reform and of so many other government projects was that they represent an ill-conceived endeavour to help the people in spite of themselves. But it was socially and economically hopeless to try and work in spite of the people, instead of with the people. In any case, in his view, the Ministry of Agriculture were totally unequal to their task; if the doors of the Ministry were

⁵⁴¹ FO 248 1580, Kellas in conversation with Hussein Ali Qaraguzlu, dated 28 January 1960. See also FO 248 1588, Kellas in conversation with Mr Afshar, dated 10 April 1962.

closed today, it would be two years before any farmer was aware of it.”⁵⁴²

Other landlords ridiculed the notion suggested by the Shah and Arsanjani among others that the Iranian peasant could be transformed into a patriotic ‘yeoman’. Thus the Shah had argued that, “Land reform in Iran has many different meanings. The aim of this work is not only that we give paper documents to some people and say that they have become the owners of land. No, they will become free-men who will elevated heads and independent spirits, with hope for the future, will become not only the owners of the land which they cultivate but also the owners of their own future and their childrens’ and shareholders in the present administration and the future of the nation....”⁵⁴³

According to Sultan Ali Soltani, “...The regime expected that the distribution of land would produce a nation of patriots with a stake in the country, which they would be ready to defend against the Soviets. They were waiting for the camel’s tail to reach the ground (Persian for a ‘blue moon’). On the contrary, they were promoting distrust, disorder and communism...”⁵⁴⁴ Others, despite their suspicions of the United States, itself a reflection of both the success of the Cold War narrative, but the failure of the Shah’s interpretation, directed their venom against Arsanjani whose enthusiasm for land reform at whatever cost

⁵⁴² FO 248 1585 1461, Kellas in conversation with Malek Mansur dated 14 July 1961.

⁵⁴³ *Enghelab* speech on the occasion of the anniversary of the death of Engineer Malek Ebadi, dated 5th Dey 1341 / 25th December 1962

⁵⁴⁴ FO 248 1588, conversation with Kellas dated 22 January 1962.

was causing consternation.⁵⁴⁵ The British diplomat Makinson recounts a conversation with a certain Yusuf Akbar:

“...He said that strictly between ourselves he thought Arsanjani was going ‘dotty’. He said that only the night before he, Arsanjani, had received an invitation, which he had publicly accepted, to attend a showing in Persian of a film about land reform in Mexico, called ‘Viva Zapata’. Arsanjani had been scheduled to make a speech, but had apparently been dissuaded from such political foolishness. To do so would, according to Yusuf, have been public incitement to the peasants to riot...”⁵⁴⁶

The harsh reaction to the reform highlighted the tensions inherent in such a profound process if applied rapidly and without apparent coordination. The rhetoric, and in particular the emphasis on ‘feudalism’ however also indicated the growing division between the new technocrats and their allied aristocratic reformers, and the traditional landowners, who found themselves politically and in some measure economically, disenfranchised, over-night. These divisions were to remain in place until the end of the Shah’s reign and the latter was confirmed in his belief that no progress could be made with

⁵⁴⁵ FO 371 149804 EP 1461/6 dated 8 March 1960. “...Almost all critics of the bill are curiously united in blaming the ‘Americans’ for imposing it. Some argue that it has been thrust upon the Shah and the Government by the Americans, regardless of special conditions in Iran of which they have no experience, out of a misconceived notion that the existing system of land tenure is ‘feudal’ or reactionary. Others are persuaded that the Shah is promoting the bill in an inept endeavour to ingratiate himself to ill-informed American public opinion as a ‘progressive’ monarch. Some even believe that the Americans are dictating legislation in this sense in order to break the political power of the landowners, traditionally the friends of the British in Iran, regardless of the natural order of Iranian society...” See also FO 248 1589 dated 10 September 1962, in which Lambton notes the dangerous repercussions for the regime of the prevalent idea of American imposition.

⁵⁴⁶ FO 248 1589, dated 29 October 1962

the traditional classes - the forces of black reaction.

The Shah was acutely aware that the longer he remained marginal to the process of reform, the less important he would become. He was thus anxious to divest Arsanjani and Amini of any credit in initiating and pursuing the reform programme, the Shah quietly sought to reconstruct his reformist credentials during the Amini administration, while preparing to appropriate the entire reform programme and remould it in his dynasty's image, and ultimately, his name.

The Shah and *the* 'White Revolution'

As early as October 1961, the Shah was privately confiding that he may take direct control of the government, accusing Amini, somewhat unfairly, of 'dithering'.⁵⁴⁷ Privately, he had made it clear to Harrison that, 'he did not consider that Constitutional Monarchy, in our form, was applicable in this country. He also made it fairly clear that it was his present intention to rule for the next few years without a Parliament....'⁵⁴⁸ By the beginning of 1962, the government was facing serious protests from students who rioted in Tehran University campus. Police and paratroopers were sent in to disperse the students during which hundreds were injured.⁵⁴⁹

⁵⁴⁷ FO 371 157611 EP 1015/253 dated 5 October 1961. See also EP 1015/255 dated 10 October 1961.

⁵⁴⁸ FO 371 157611 EP 1015/260 dated 5 October 1961. Alam, unusually, expressed concern at the possible outcome of direct rule, see FO 371 157612 EP 1015/267 dated 25 October 1961.

⁵⁴⁹ FO 371 164180 EP 1015/19 dated 23 January 1962; also FO 371 164181 EP
(continued...)

Amini, increasingly seen as a tool of the Americans, was also losing any sympathy he had enjoyed as a 'progressive' reformist landowner. The students, who had been shouting long live Dr Mosaddeq and down with Amini, and down with the Shah, were accused by the government of having provoked the police, and to have been encouraged by an unholy alliance with the landlords - black reaction as the Shah liked to label them. The British embassy was understandably dubious of Amini's assertions: "An alliance of student agitators and 'feudalists' against the programme of reform of a 'progressive' government is....hard to believe....."⁵⁵⁰

In the climate of increasing crisis, the turning point was to come in a confrontation with the military.⁵⁵¹ Amini, anxious to put Iran's financial house in order had tried to cut the military budget which had brought him into confrontation with the Shah and the military. He had also hoped for US aid to cover Iran's budget deficit which was not forthcoming.⁵⁵² As a result Amini resigned in July 1962, and the Shah appointed the loyal Alam in his place.⁵⁵³ The scene was now set for the launch of *the* White Revolution.

(...continued)

1015/23 dated 24 January 1962, and EP 1015/29 dated 24 January 1962.

⁵⁵⁰ FO 371 164181 EP 1015/32 Hiller, dated 31 January 1962. See also FO 371 164181 EP 1015/29, Hiller, dated 24 January 1962.

⁵⁵¹ FO 371 157605 EP 1015/136 dated 26 May 1961, notes that the military had become increasingly dissatisfied with austerity measures and retirements (cf Mosaddeq). FO 371 157606 EP 1015/156 dated 6 June 1961, notes that Amini's insistence that officers wear civilian clothes in non-military environments had caused discontent among the officer corps.

⁵⁵² FO 371 164184 EP 1015/84 dated 18 July 1962.

⁵⁵³ FO 371 164184 EP 1015/85 dated 19 July 1962. Few were convinced by Alam's appointment and generally regarded it as the Shah concentrating power in his own
(continued...)

The White Revolution was itself launched by decree (the six points were first articulated in November 1961) and ratified by Referendum in January 1963. It was composed of 6 principles, including land reform, was to be subsequently extended to 12 points and by the late 1970s to a total of 17 points. What distinguished this 'White Revolution' from what had preceded under Amini was the fact that it represented a definite programme rather than a vague idea, and that its focus was the Shah as leader. Many of the myths which the Shah was to develop following 1963 were nevertheless being articulated to a greater or lesser degree during the Amini administration, and in order to trace the trajectory of this development it is important to analyse developments during this period.

There were several themes which the Shah attempted to promote in his own person, two of which had been emphasised with vigour by the Amini administration. The Shah wanted to identify himself with 'progress' and what was understood as 'anti-feudalist'⁵⁵⁴. In addition to this he sought to develop the concept of the democratic sovereign, into the revolutionary monarch, and as such the language of political discourse became littered with 'revolutionary' rhetoric which to many sat uneasily on the shoulders of a king. Tied to this was his desire to be the monarch of an egalitarian and 'democratic'⁵⁵⁵ society, populated by liberated, economically prosperous peasants, eternally grateful to their liberator. This likewise was an uneasy companion to a monarchy which would emphasise

(...continued)

hands - see FO 371 164185 EP 1015/110 dated 25 August 1962.

⁵⁵⁴ During the First Farmers' Cooperative Congress the delegates urged the Shah to ban the term *ra'yat* (serf) from all official documents. *Enghelab* dated 19 Dey 1341 / 8th January 1963

⁵⁵⁵ The Shah was to subsequently articulate his own particular conception of democracy.

the importance of the social and political order. Unlike Amini and Arsanjani, the Shah wanted to promote industrialisation which was essential to his conception of progress and modernity.⁵⁵⁶ Unlike Amini, the Shah was dismissive of the opposition, and characterised them as either reactionary (black) or subversive (red). His target audience were the 75% of the population which represented the peasantry, and although he continued to pay scrupulous attention to the army, which despite all evidence to the contrary, he continued to view as a vital pillar to the monarchy, he neglected the burgeoning professional classes.⁵⁵⁷

Probably his most controversial ideological construction was his vision for the future. He began with arguing for the development of a 'model' country, which by the early 1970s had grown into the 'Great Civilisation'. This was his conception of a new order which would successfully amalgamate monarchical tradition with 'modernity'; a monarchy based on the support of a grateful and liberated peasantry. Thus in a speech to farmers at Chehel Sotoon and Esfahan in 1962, the Shah said, "With respect to farming, industry, social activities, good works, the effect of this move in the future will be so great that I think the necessity of this order will be obvious to everyone.....The next generations will live in an environment which I hope will be equal and comparable to the highest social standards anywhere on the planet....Thus on this road the freemen and free-women of Iran must

⁵⁵⁶ FO 371 157601 EP 1015/55 dated 28 March 1961 - the Shah continued to pay lip-service to decentralisation, even though one aspect of land reform was in actual fact to centralise power.

⁵⁵⁷ FO 371 164186 EP 1015/135 dated 17 November 1962.

head towards the future.”⁵⁵⁸ This vision of the future was not only an ideological paradise, but a material one too: “...Your income should be such that you and your family are full. That you will have smart clothes. That you will have a nice house...”⁵⁵⁹

The Shah’s strategy can be divided into appropriation; (land reform he was always at pains to point out, had been his idea); differentiation, (enemies were to be de-humanised, or in Dr Mosaddeq’s case de-personalised, and marginalised); and legitimation through association with ‘rational’ and ‘universal’ norms, many of which were borrowed from the West and therefore meant little to traditionally minded Iranians. He was to return to tradition in his bid to secure the dynasty within his conception of ‘modernity’, and a beginning was made in his re-construction of popular democracy, a reaction to the expectations of the popular conception of modernity among professional Iranians.

Indeed as early as January 1960 the Shah emphasised his identification with progress while at the same time differentiating himself from traditionalist ‘reactionaries’, and taking the opportunity to attack Dr Mosaddeq:

“..As you have noticed yourself, reactionary thoughts and concepts are dying out in our country. The things we are doing today were perhaps unthought of a few years ago. I well remember that in 1950 when I proceeded to distribute my own estates....At that time we were the first country in this part of the world to do this. But in 1952, the then head of government prevented me from distributing my own estates. But as you see such

⁵⁵⁸ *Enghelab* speech dated 13 Esfand 1341 / 3rd March 1963

⁵⁵⁹ *Enghelab* address of the Shah to the heads of the Dehqan Congress, 7 Shahrivar 1341 / 28th August 1962

reactionary and ridiculous thoughts have disappeared now...The more the people of Iran become educated....the weaker and less effective these thoughts become. Of course all of us shall witness the progress of our society in spite of such reactionary thoughts. These thoughts cannot prevent the realisation of the aspirations of the majority of the people who are definitely not reactionary....The more progressive a country and the more educated a people, the easier it would be to enforce laws such as the proposed legislation on land reform...’’⁵⁶⁰

He was also at pains to take any credit for achievement to date away from Amini. Thus in an article published in the Echo of Iran, it was argued that Alam and the Shah had always supported Arsanjani and the ‘millions of peasants and toilers’, but that Amini had been obstructing progress. Indeed it even quoted Arsanjani as saying:

“...On the first day when I assumed the charge, I submitted all the clauses of land reform law to the Shah and the first person who was greatly interested in this programme and who in spite of all false reports and tricks by influential persons showed [no] resistance and thus proved his great far-sightedness and devotion to the progress of the country was the Shah himself. It is my honest duty to thank the Shah whole-heartedly at this juncture because at his heart his is always thinking of means and ways for the progress of millions of peasants and toilers of Iran...’’⁵⁶¹

It is worth noting that initially, though the Shah noted his own pioneering role, his importance did not as yet supersede that of the country as a whole, there were as yet limits to the myth of the saviour. Thus it was the ‘genius’ of Iran as well the Shah had pioneered

⁵⁶⁰ FO 371 149755 EP 1015/12 dated 26 January 1960.

⁵⁶¹ FO 248 1589 Echo of Iran dated 9 September 1962.

land reform in the region. These themes of anti-reactionary progress along with a bright future (it is worth noting how many times the word `progress' is mentioned in the following passage) were highlighted again during a speech to the 20th Majlis in 1961:

“.....The progress made during the previous session shows that our country is well on its way to prosperity. It has made great progress in the political, economic, social, educational and health fields. Although considered just a beginning, the progress has been so great that never before has so much been accomplished in such a short time.....There is little need to mention here that all this progress has been made in peace, order and political and social stability. We have been able to achieve all these outstanding successes because traitors, subversives and demagogues have been kept out of affairs. We hope that our progress in the future will still be greater so that our country becomes, as is our aim, a model of spiritual and material progress....⁵⁶²”

This intrinsic genius came out more clearly in his articulation of Iran's bright future:

“I would like to point out that Iran is a country which can rightly hope to have a very bright future. This is because on the one hand we have great natural wealth and resources and on the other we have an ancient civilisation which produced great geniuses...Before long our country will stand out as a rock of stability and security in this rough and stormy sea....⁵⁶³”

Not surprisingly revolutionary developments administered by a revolutionary monarch had to be of historic significance, and as such another aspect of many of the speeches was to

⁵⁶² FO 371 157600 EP 1015/35 dated 23 February 1961.

⁵⁶³ FO 371 157599 EP 1015/19 dated 20 January 1961.

emphasize the historical profundity of developments - contextualising and rationalising developments within a perceived narrative of Iranian history. Thus, in a speech on the occasion of Farmers Day, the Shah commented, "The land reform movement is not a reform limited to lands but something that will alter Iranian society....It is the most deep rooted and revolutionary action that can happen in the life of a nation...What has taken others centuries to perform or has been accompanied by bloody revolution, which in itself can cause problems, we are performing in a short period..."⁵⁶⁴

In November 1962, the Shah described land reform as one of the most revolutionary measures to have been taken in 3000 years of recorded Iranian history.⁵⁶⁵ In a speech to farmers at Maragheh at the completion of land reform the Shah said,

"The work which we have begun is not just one type of limited land reform for the peasants. This action will transform Iranian society. In other words it is one of the most profound and in reality, revolutionary, applications, which is possible to occur in the life of a nation. Other nations have only achieved such great works slowly over centuries and sometimes through a bloody revolution....But I think we should take pride in this that this great work, which others have taken centuries to complete we have been able to initiate this programme with ease and simplicity in this region and other regions, and achieved results within a short time."⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶⁴ FO 248 1589 dated 23 September 1962.

⁵⁶⁵ FO 371 164186 EP 1015/138 dated 27 November 1962 - such historical importance provides another vital transitional bridge between revolutionary monarch and Divinely guided monarch. Curiously such sentiments were echoed by the BBC Persian service, see FO 371 170412 EP 1461/5 dated 29 January 1963.

⁵⁶⁶ *Enghelab* dated 1 Mehr 1341 / 22nd September 1962

Or again at the Farmer's Cooperative Congress: "Something which may be most nations could not to this standard, during centuries of conflict and blood-letting occasionally achieve, we have achieved in one year....The magnitude of this profound social reform is so great and because we are looking at it from a close distance, maybe we fail to understand its importance...."⁵⁶⁷ During a dinner at Saltanatabad, the Shah reiterated familiar themes,

"...This step that we have taken today, just as you are aware, perhaps in the entire 2500 year history of Iran, no action which has overturned society in this manner has been conducted. It is a matter of pride that a programme of this magnitude has almost been completed in the space of one year. Without being involved in convulsions. Without the nation encountering revolution. Without bloodletting. Now, I don't know how much information you have about what has occurred in other places but I can tell you such work may take 100 years, two hundred years, three hundred years, and then still their programmes have not been as progressive...."⁵⁶⁸

The Shah's vision of an egalitarian meritocracy of which he was the champion and guarantor was targeted essentially at the younger generations. This was a utopia that had been cultivated since the 1940s but which was given new energy with the advent of the White Revolution, and in particular land reform which had indeed altered socio-economic relations. His enthusiasm for this message won him derisory epithets from his opponents. On the Shah's visit to Turkey, Harrison noted that:

⁵⁶⁷ *Enghelab* dated 19 Dey 1341 / 8th January 1963

⁵⁶⁸ *Enghelab* dated 20 Dey 1341 / 9th January 1963

“the Shah was reported in the press here to have told a gathering of Iranian students...that Iran was no longer a land controlled by a thousand families. ‘Today....ours is a country of farmers, labourers, merchants and office workers, and the laws that are being enacted are designed for the majority.’ There would be equal opportunity for all honest and dedicated persons and there would be no limit to the progress which could be made. In a speech at a land distribution ceremony at Kermanshah on November 14, the Shah used precisely these same words adding, however, that Iran belonged to all without special privilege to any group.....during his tour of Azerbaijan in September, when he spoke of the revolutionary nature of the current programme of land reform. It is statements of this kind that have been earning him in less progressive quarters the title of the ‘Royal Revolutionary’ or the ‘Imperial Communist’....”⁵⁶⁹

Those who did not agree with the vision being proposed were de-personalised and dismissed as ignorant by the Shah,

“Of course we should not be surprised that in among this population of the country, we can estimate that several hundred people, don’t understand. This inability to understand may have several reasons. One is that they simply don’t have the capacity for thought and understanding. These people, their brains (minds) and thought work in different ways. They call these people shallow (-minded). One may also call them many other things, but in any case maybe they are not really to blame since nature has not allowed their small and tired brains (minds) the ability to understand or think.”⁵⁷⁰

During a speech at the Farmer’s Cooperative Congress in 1341/1963 he identified the forces of black and red with ‘Ahriman’ the Zoroastrian ‘devil’:

⁵⁶⁹ FO 371 164186 EP 1015/135 dated 17 November 1962.

⁵⁷⁰ *Engheleb* speech to farmers in Birjand dated 13 Farvardin 1342 / 2nd April 1963

“...Without doubt the reactionary agents of black who for their own selfish reasons want to keep the Iranian nation in the whirlpool of suffering and poverty and injustice, will not stand in the face of these profound and fundamental changes. Similarly the subversive forces of red whose aim is the overthrow of the nation and its surrender to foreigners, are unhappy with the progress of this programme and will try and destroy it. In these circumstances in accordance with my royal duties and loyalty to the oath which I took to protect the rights of the exalted nation of Iran, I cannot be indifferent in the fight between the forces of God and the forces of Ahriman. Since I have raised the standard of this fight on my shoulders.....”⁵⁷¹

Here also are clear allusions to traditionalism and religious nationalism with an evocation to Divine Providence. Allusions which were more clearly evoked in a speech to peasants in the holy city of Qom, where the Shah made plain his religious ‘credentials’, and conviction and the fact that he was ‘blessed’. “One night I dreamt that I was sitting opposite the Commander of the Faithful and his holiness had zulfaqir across his knee and he gave a bowl and bade me drink from it saying that tomorrow I would be well. In actual fact that night I sweated, my temperature fell and from the next day I regained my well-being.” He also stressed his conviction that he had received visions from the Imams.⁵⁷² Such religious imagery would be central to his later emphasis on the ‘myth of the saviour’.

Contradictions & Tensions

⁵⁷¹ *Enghelab* speech at Farmers’ Cooperative Congress dated 19 Dey 1341 / 8th January 1963

⁵⁷² *Enghelab* speech to the people of Qom, dated 4th Bahman 1341 / 23rd January 1963

It was however in his discussion of political democracy that the apparent contradictions in the Shah's strategy became most obvious to critics. The Shah was aware of this and espoused his ideas on this matter with caution. Having initially argued in print that the monarchy could be abolished if it out-lived its usefulness, he now proceeded to argue that the institution was in fact a necessity. Thus in 1961, he cheerfully wrote: "I have learned to look with some detachment at my own position and at the role of our ancient monarchy; and if ever I felt that Persia's monarchy had outlived its usefulness, I would be happy to resign as king and would even join in helping to abolish our monarchical institution."⁵⁷³ However privately and increasingly in public he argued that democracy in the Western sense, was not suitable to Iran in its present situation,⁵⁷⁴ and though he constantly referred to the possibility of democracy in the future, by the 70s, this expedient was discarded in favour of his own conception of democracy which though initially temporary, had become permanent.

It is indicative that in his first significant book, Mission for my Country, published in 1961 he also argued,

"I have tried to make it clear that modern democracy, as I see it, is a very broad concept. But democracy is not a series of activities alone; above all it is a philosophy of life, never easy, either for an individual or a nation to acquire. Real democratic government is indeed the most intricate and difficult kind to achieve...we must also realise that the achievement

⁵⁷³ M R Pahlavi Mission for My Country pg 327.

⁵⁷⁴ FO 371 157611 EP 1015/260 dated 5 October 1961; in discussions with Harrison, the Shah expresses concern over the possible composition of a freely elected Majlis. See also FO 371 157612 EP 1015/261 dated 29 October 1961. See also FO 371 157612 EP 1015/271 dated 30 October 1961.

of political, economic, and social democracy perforce takes time...There is a limit to the speed with which men and nations can develop in freedom. If we try to rush the process too fast, or if we become impatient or cynical, we shall defeat our own good intentions....⁵⁷⁵

Similarly in a speech on the occasion of Constitution Day in 1961, the Shah distinguished between apparent and true democracy, arguing that the latter required education and intellectual maturity. He emphasised that freedom had its limits and that democracy did not imply the freedom to infringe the liberty of others. He was careful also to stress that he had been instrumental in the past twenty years in leading the country towards 'true' democracy.⁵⁷⁶ One may surmise from his speeches the view that the monarchy was indeed guarantor of democracy. Thus in the speech he noted that, "The principles of equality and civil liberties were proclaimed for the first time in the world by the first monarchs in Iran." Later he stressed, "All along this period I have protected the principles of democracy against internal and external dangers and against the enemies that have appeared in the guise of friendship. Just as the Constitution makes me the Guardian and symbol of democracy, I have strived, without any need to resort to pretense, to strengthen the spirit and nature of our Constitutional regime and lead my nation toward a stable and more lasting democracy...."⁵⁷⁷

On his message broadcast on Constitution Day in 1962 the Shah suggested that his vision

⁵⁷⁵ M R Pahlavi *op. cit.* pp 164 & 193.

⁵⁷⁶ FO 371 157610 EP 1015/233 dated 8 August 1961.

⁵⁷⁷ FO 371 157610 EP 1015/236 dated 10 August 1961.

of democracy might be different from what had been expected. According to a British embassy report: “.....the Shah himself was at pains to point out that there is more to democracy than a couple of legislative chambers; nor was democracy a commodity to be imported from abroad, but every nation must find its own system of government by and for the people.”⁵⁷⁸

Of course the Shah was able to argue subsequently that his referendum in which a suspicious 99% of the population voted in favour of the ‘White Revolution’, proved that he was a democrat. This he would argue, was true democracy in that the people had been canvassed for their opinion directly, although it was in stark contrast to his prevailing view that the people as yet had not reached the level of intellectual maturity required for democracy. It also contradicted earlier views, some might consider a Freudian slip, that such referenda were the habitual favourites of fascist and communist dictators. Thus only two years earlier he had written,

“Communist dictators resemble Fascist ones in that they enjoy holding elections. They hope to give the ordinary working man the idea that he has a voice in the Government of his country. But the Communist rulers allow only one political party; anybody who tries to start another, or who speaks against the ruling party, is likely to be liquidated. In the elections (if you can call them by that name), the voter has no choice, for the only candidates listed are those of the ruling party. *Purely as a matter of form, the citizen is urged or ordered to go and vote; the authorities then triumphantly announce that, let us say, 99.9% of the votes cast were for the ruling party. I wonder how many intelligent*

⁵⁷⁸ FO 371 164185 EP 1015/108 dated 13 August 1962.

people are fooled by that sort of thing.” [italics added]⁵⁷⁹

It seems that his inspiration for a referendum was Charles de Gaulle in France, and that his principal audience was Western public opinion, which seemed, curiously, to swallow the entire spectacle without visible concern.⁵⁸⁰ Congratulatory messages from foreign governments, including that of the US only served to convince the Shah of his own popularity. In responding to Kennedy’s message of congratulations, the Shah somewhat haughtily replied, “The result of the referendum does indeed reflect the wholehearted approval of my fundamental reforms by the well-nigh unanimous vote of the people of Iran.”⁵⁸¹

Towards Ideological Consolidation

The success of the referendum, if orchestrated⁵⁸², was nevertheless a public relations

⁵⁷⁹ M R Pahlavi *op.cit.* pg 162. Things were not to improve by 1970, when Prime Minister Hoveida commented that, “As the Shah has said, social democracy cannot exist without economic democracy, in my view most of those who talk about democracy are still limited in their concept to the schools of thought advocated by Plato, Montesquieu and others, whereas democracy today is conditioned by modern times. We do not believe democracy means anyone should be free to act against national interests and moral values and traditions. From our standpoint democracy means respecting human rights and individuals. The interesting question is whether such democracy exists in those countries which are preaching to us on democracy...” See BBC SWB ME/3562/D/1 dated 17th December 1970 - Hoveida’s speech to the Central Committee of the Iran Novin Party, dated 15th December 1970.

⁵⁸⁰ FO 371 170424 EP 1461/3 dated 6 February 1963.

⁵⁸¹ FO 371 170424 EP 1461/2 dated 2 February 1963.

⁵⁸² FO 371 170373 EP 1015/10 dated 24 January 1963. See also FO 371 170373 EP 1015/13 dated 28 January 1963; EP 1015/15 dated 25 January 1963; EP 1015/16 (continued...)

triumph, and most of the Iranian press concluded that the Shah had confounded both the reactionaries and the revolutionaries. One notable weekly cautioned against the triumphalism in the air, “..It was not until January 13 that a serious weekly magazine (Khandaniha) asked outright the question in the minds of many people; ‘Where is the Shah leading us?’, and, in effect, gave warning that, unless kept under control, a revolution, whether started by the Tudeh or by the Shah, could be dangerous.”⁵⁸³ Others also privately expressed concerns at how the referendum was transforming the Shah into a revolutionary leader with dangerous consequences: “..while favouring reforms, they are apprehensive of the power which the Shah appears to be putting into the hands of ignorant country men and industrial workers....and fearful that forces may one day be unchained by demagogic leadership which could threaten both throne and constitution, particularly if disillusionment with the material benefits of the new land tenure sets in after the first flush of reform.....”⁵⁸⁴

One hint of this demagogic leadership came in June 1963, when Ayatollah Khomeini was arrested for speaking out against the land reform, and women’s emancipation, leading to severe riots in Qom and Tehran and several other major cities. These riots were ruthlessly suppressed, though it was rumoured that much of the initiative for the ‘law and order’ operation came from Alam. By 1964, Khomeini had been forced into exile after having launched a vitriolic attack on the Shah following the announcement of legal exemptions

(...continued)
dated 25 January 1963.

⁵⁸³ FO 371 170373 EP 1015/8 dated 15 January 1963.

⁵⁸⁴ FO 371 170373 EP 1015/18 dated 29 January 1963.

for all US personnel working in Iran, a move, badly handled by the Prime Minister Mansur, and which with its overtones of 19th century 'capitulations', contradicted the myth of the Shah as nationalist champion and heir to Dr Mosaddeq. This event, along with the widespread belief in a CIA orchestrated coup in 1953 to restore the Shah to his throne were to prove the two great contradictions to the myth of the dynastic champion of Iranian nationalism which the Shah sought to appropriate and develop in a reciprocally dialectic relationship with both his political inheritance and prevalent environment.

The Shah had originally selected Mansur as the vehicle with which to create a technocratic elite loyal to his vision of modernity with monarchy firmly at the centre. Ironically, as the Shah sought to consolidate his ideological grip on the political affairs of the country practical opposition increased, and although economic growth masked the increasing divide between ideological construct and social reality, as the events surrounding the Premiership of Mansur were to prove, the ideological foundations of the Pahlavi state remained precarious. In particular, although the economic gains of the first decade of the White Revolution could disguise the growing tensions, as the Shah pursued his aims with increased vigour and ideological determination the contradictions between the various constructs became more explicit and polarised.

With the major 'reactionary' challenges to his reform package suppressed, the Shah felt confident enough to proceed with elections for the new Majlis. However, his decision to support the formation of a new group, unsurprisingly, if significantly, called the 'Progressive Centre'; a collection of technocrats, who were to form the core of the Iran Novin Party (New Iran Party), was not without difficulty. Iran Novin, led by Hasan Ali

Mansur, was to be the Shah's first real experiment with a one party state, though an official opposition (the Mardom party) was retained for the present. It was problematic because among other things:

"It is.... worth recording that some people believe that the idea of a one party system was the result of joint Iranian-American thinking culminating in an article by a University of Colorado professor, published in Iran in an English language review *The Echo of Iran* last February. Whatever the origin of the idea, Mr Hassan Ali Mansur's Progressive centre was chosen to implement it. This centre had been founded in 1961 as a study group rather than a political party."⁵⁸⁵

This apparently pervasive American connection, a reflection of the flawed success of the Cold War myth, was to resurface again within a year when it became apparent that the US State Department was seeking immunity from prosecution for all American personnel, diplomatic or otherwise living in Iran. The State Department, anxious not to antagonise Iranian public opinion had wanted the agreement to be informally ratified through an exchange of letters between the Iranian foreign ministry and the State Department. Mansur, however was adamant that this was a constitutional matter which needed to be ratified by the Majlis, which having been packed with supporters could be expected to be a push over. It is testament to the strength of prevailing nationalist feeling that despite this, of 130 deputies present, 60 deputies openly opposed the government. The American request had touched a raw nerve, "a situation which has brought to the surface the latent widespread criticism, in the press and among the public, of the grant of such privileges to

⁵⁸⁵ FO 371 175712 EP 1015/3 dated 8 February 1964, report by Sir Denis Wright.

foreigners - which is even talked of openly as a reversion to Capitulations....The Shah was extremely annoyed. Not only had Mansur's mishandling of the affair provided an opening for widespread criticism on an issue which can always be calculated to arouse public emotion.⁵⁸⁶ With the news that the Majlis had ratified a \$200m loan from the United States for the purchase of arms, the press, normally respectful, ventured to be critical, and it was noted that at least one local editor had suffered for his editorial. The Echo of Iran was closed down altogether.⁵⁸⁷

The most stinging criticism came from the recently released Khomeini, who argued that the \$200m loan was a pay-off from the US government in return for capitulations. Few believed Mansur's argument that the two pieces of legislation were unconnected. Khomeini's diatribe was now sufficient for the Shah to have him exiled. As Wright noted, "Khomeini's open hostility...expressed in terms, as you will see from the texts, go far beyond anything we have heard from him in recent years."⁵⁸⁸ Within three months, Mansur had been killed by an assassin.⁵⁸⁹

This however did not deter the Shah and, Mansur was replaced by Hoveida. Three months later the Shah outlined his impressions of developments; impressions which were to form part of his conviction and encapsulated his interpretation of events, his personal

⁵⁸⁶ FO 371 175712 EP 1015/27 dated 29 October 1964 - Wright.

⁵⁸⁷ FO 371 175712 EP 1015/29 dated 30 October 1964.

⁵⁸⁸ FO 371 175712 EP 1015/31 dated 7 November 1964.

⁵⁸⁹ FO 371 189781 EP 1015/2 dated 21 January 1965, also EP 1015/6 dated 26 January 1965.

rationalisation and narrativization of events:

“Several years ago when we embarked upon the January 22 Revolution, despite the great enthusiasm of the nation....and despite the great joy, there were some who did not believe that the fruits of the revolution would appear so soon in the country. Our White Revolution and the implementation of the six points have brought about a great transformation in the economic and social condition of the country....Class privileges have disappeared. Superiority is now based only on qualifications...and the country has embarked on progress...Literacy Corpsmen, who first went to the villages to teach, have no gained so much confidence and trust of the local inhabitants that villagers consult them on all their affairs. In fact they have become representatives of the revolution.....Of course this state of affairs is intolerable for the enemies of our homeland and the opponents of the revolution....These people are unaware of the will of God and the determination of the nation....poverty must gradually disappear from our midst. The word ‘poverty’ must be stricken from our dictionary....The Iran Novin Party, which was established at the time of *our* revolution, and which is the offspring and protector of the revolution; and also of all other parties which believe in the principles of the revolution, must spread the ideas of the revolution in such a way which it can become an un-penetrable political school of thought throughout the country..[italics added].”⁵⁹⁰

In this speech, the Shah described himself as “monarch and leader of the revolution,” indeed ‘our revolution’, thereby placing himself at the centre of political developments. There were three other significant points: his belief that somehow he had eradicated class privilege and implemented a meritocracy, with the additional note that he wished to eliminate the word ‘poverty’; these were clear attempts at dissimulation, and his

⁵⁹⁰ FO 371 189781 EP 1015/21 dated 27 April 1965.

suggestion that words could be eliminated from discourse though ostensibly benign, carried unfortunate implications if as was to happen with other concepts, it was actually carried out. Lastly, the Shah made it clear that the Iran Novin Party was to be the political vehicle for implementation of the 'revolution' - a clear fore-runner of the Rastakhiz party.

Indeed it can be argued that as early as 1965, the Shah had embarked in earnest on his personalisation of the ideology of dynastic nationalism and the characterisation of himself as the saviour of the country. An assassination attempt in the Marble palace by a disgruntled soldier, which provided the Shah with yet another miraculous escape, was exploited by SAVAK as proof of the multi-national conspiracy to de-rail the White Revolution, now for the first time termed 'the six point reform programme of the Shah and People' by attacking its leader.⁵⁹¹ The guardsmen who came to Shah's rescue and gave their lives in his defence, were significantly, 'martyred' in their defence of their apparently sacred monarch.⁵⁹²

Major celebrations were held in September 1965 to mark the Shah's silver jubilee and the Majlis and Senate 'unanimously' conferred the title 'Arya Mehr' (Light of the Aryans) on him. The public reception of the celebrations however indicated how little the Shah had managed to capture the imagination of his people:

"Apart from the habitual eulogisers of the regime, the reaction of most sophisticated Iranians in Tehran seem to have ranged from unenthusiastic to openly critical. Politicians

⁵⁹¹ FO 371 180804 EP 1942/31 dated 24 June 1965.

⁵⁹² FO 371 180804 EP 1942/6 dated 12 April 1965.

and officials were clearly feeling pretty exhausted after the first few days. Motorists became intensely irritated by the traffic jams, made worse than ever by the triumphal arches put up in places which are traffic bottlenecks at the best of times. They were not amused to find themselves stuck behind a procession of performing elephants on loan from a visiting Indian circus. The inadequate public transport system became even more inadequate when buses were taken off their routes to ferry 'celebrants' to mass functions. This cannot have been welcome to a lot of the poorer people; as one critic put it, a workman who earns 7/6 a day cannot afford to take taxis. Many people were critical of the lavish scale of the decorations and illuminations, on grounds of expense, of traffic congestion, and of the deleterious effect they had on Tehran's over-strained electricity supply. Others waxed sarcastic about the paeans of praise to the Shah put out by the government broadcasting network and the semi-controlled press. (To do the press justice there were also some mild criticism of the chaos caused by the celebrations, the blame being laid on the authorities responsible for administering them, not, of course, on the celebrations themselves).⁵⁹³

The more formulaic the ideology, the greater the potential for the social reality to be antagonistic, and consequently the greater the attempts by the security services to squeeze the reality unwillingly into the ideological strait-jacket.

"Uglier charges circulated by word of mouth. SAVAK...were widely accused of putting improper pressure on every form of organisation to contribute their quotas of money and men to the celebrations. (SAVAK are said to have been particularly busy dragooning people into attending a mass prayer rally in which an estimated 100,000 people participated, a few elderly reportedly dying of heart attacks). Worse still, gangs of thugs were said to have gone round extracting money by threats of violence from merchants who

⁵⁹³ FO 371 180804 EP 1942/49 dated 30th September 1965

were tardy in putting up decorations, while authority turned a blind eye...'⁵⁹⁴

Buoyed by healthy economic figures, the Shah pressed ahead and if anything, ideological construction became predictable and rigid. The Shah was increasingly less interested in appropriating ideas, but in consolidating his own preconceptions and conveying them to as wide an audience as possible. Any mechanics of reciprocation between agent and recipient could be said between the years 1965-67, to have effectively stagnated - the themes had been set, all that was needed was to stress and broadcast them, ideology was becoming increasingly polarised into political myth.

Thus by the time of the publication of his second major book, 'The White Revolution', published in 1966, the revolution had been renamed 'The Revolution of the Shah and the People', and the Shah was confidently describing 'our revolution', and providing a new meta-narrative of Iranian history.⁵⁹⁵ In this book the Shah emphasised his desire for progressive reform, the obstruction of the 'reactionaries' and the need for revolution, "The realisation came to me that Iran needed a deep and fundamental revolution that could, at the same time, put an end to all the social inequalities and all the factors which caused injustice, tyranny and exploitation, and all aspects of reaction which impeded progress and kept our society backward."⁵⁹⁶ The Shah used extensive examples from ancient Iranian and Islamic Iranian history to justify his land reform programme and lambasted his opponents as backward.

⁵⁹⁴ FO 371 180804 EP 1942/49 dated 30 September 1965.

⁵⁹⁵ M R Pahlavi The White Revolution Tehran 1966 pg 1.

⁵⁹⁶ *Ibid* pg 15.

He then went on to articulate the philosophy of the revolution, making it clear that it was firmly embedded in nationalism:

“What were the philosophy and spirit of this revolution? As already stated, this revolution was essentially an Iranian revolution, compatible with the spirit and tradition of the Iranian people. We had not delivered this revolution to the people as an imported item. For it would be beneath the dignity of a nation which had for several thousand years been the pioneer of thinking, philosophy and religion, to wear anything borrowed...In our noble revolution, the two sacred principles already mentioned, emphasis on spirit and religion and preservation of individual and social freedom, have been fully observed, as has the general principle that every kind of exploitation that benefited the interests of a limited group but acted to the detriment of the majority must be discarded.”⁵⁹⁷

This philosophy of the revolution was later to be re-named ‘Pahlavism’ providing an ideological shift between the revolutionary monarch who would sacrifice the monarchy in the interests of the nation, to a Divinely inspired leader, who was the very embodiment of the nation and essential to its survival. As Hoveida was to argue later, this was a quintessentially ‘Iranian’ revolution: “..Premier Hoveida stated that the secret of Iran’s economic and social success lay in the fact that it did not follow baseless schools of thought, nor was it inspired by East or West in its revolution - the revolution was inspired by national traditions and the Shah’s revolutionary ideals....”⁵⁹⁸

⁵⁹⁷ *Ibid* pg 17.

⁵⁹⁸ BBC SWB ME/3562/D/1 dated 17th December 1970 Hoveida’s speech to the Central Committee of the Iran Novin Party, dated 15 December 1970. See also BBC SWB ME/3568/D/1 dated 28th December 1970 - Hoveida’s statement to Iran Novin Party meeting, dated 22nd December 1970. It is here that the concept of ‘neither east nor west’
(continued...)

'Pahlavism'

The publication in 1966 of a book entitled 'Pahlavism' signified a shift in gear as the Shah no longer sought simply to symbolise an ideology such as nationalism (as his father had moved to do), or be seen as central to a conception of modernity; he and his dynasty were to effectively *embody* an ideology. That it was published in close proximity to his coronation cannot have been a coincidence, as both events marked a bold attempt to reify the Shah and his dynasty as unique to the salvation and progress of the country. Pahlavism and the coronation were the twin emblems of an attempt to sanctify the monarch, the symbolic and ideological tactics towards a strategy of hagiography. It is unclear how widely read 'Pahlavism' was and it may be fair to conjecture that it had little impact beyond the core supporters, and certainly did not enter the lexicon of Iranian political discourse, as may have been hoped. The phrases 'Shah-People Revolution' or White Revolution were much more widely used, and indeed there are few records of the term 'Pahlavism' being used. Nevertheless, the text unscholarly and shallow though it may have been ('St Augustine is transliterated 'S.T. Augustine for instance')⁵⁹⁹, remains unique in being the one attempt at a concise ideological record of the Pahlavi state and for this reason alone deserves special scrutiny.

(...continued)
emerges.

⁵⁹⁹ M Honarmand *Pahlavism - Maktab-e No* (Pahlavism: a new ideology) Ordibehesht 1345 / April/May 1966 Tehran pg 52.

The book, entitled Pahlavism: a new ideology and subtitled 'a political, social and economic philosophy', was published in 1345 [1966] by Manuchehr Honarmand, an author of whom little is known; indeed it may well have been a pen name. The book, or monograph comprised 126 pages in which the following topics were discussed: the history of political parties; the foundations of Pahlavism; Pahlavism as compared to other world ideologies; the economic philosophy of Pahlavism; the consequences of Pahlavi economics. Indeed, at least half of the text is devoted to economic issues. Several themes emerge from the text.

Firstly, as is characteristic of political myth, it is essentially an exercise in historical interpretation rather than philosophical justification; the emphasis is on providing historical examples to justify current policy, despite the fact that the historical analysis provided, though relatively copious, is of dubious quality, and essentially descriptive. Monarchy plays a central role, association with the great monarchs being frequently repeated, and in most sections, including the economic focus at the end, it is the rural peasantry who are portrayed as the heroes of the narrative. The work is revealing for what it misses out, in particular a lack of Islamic sources and an over-reliance on Western historical works, some of which were of a very general nature.

The introduction to the text makes it clear that monarchy is the centre-piece of the Iranian political system, and not surprisingly, the first sentence begins with the Achaemenids, noting that 2500 years ago they brought about largest monarchy in the world, and arguing that it was this monarchy which laid the foundations for Iranian culture and arts which has

allowed Iran to retain its identity throughout the turbulence of history.⁶⁰⁰ The emphasis in the introduction is on the cultural progressiveness and immense contributions of ancient Iran to the world, and this is quite clearly tied to the foundation of the monarchical system. The author even draws on Herodotus' dubious account of the discussion by several Persian noblemen on the virtues of various political systems, with Darius eventually succeeding to persuade everyone that monarchy is the best form. This hypothetical discussion has since been discredited by classical scholars as a creation of Herodotus himself; here it is presented as somewhat precarious justification for monarchy.⁶⁰¹ This story is indeed used to argue in a strategy of naturalisation, that every system of government eventually and naturally returns to monarchy. As Darius apparently says, Iranians must not 'trample' on the laws of their country - the implication here being 'natural' laws. To emphasise this point, it is even stressed that 'republicanism' was protected by the Achaemenids, using as an example Darius' removal of the 'tyrants' from the Ionian city states and permitting them to practice local republicanism, albeit under the suzerainty of the Shah. Here we begin to see the Shah's reasoning behind provincial, or local, democracy under the control of the central monarchy. The text does not seem to point out that the 'tyrants' had been placed there by the Persians, and that the Ionians had initially rebelled against this imposition.

This point aside the author then chooses to quote Will Durant to argue that the Achaemenids possessed a 'pure' ideology and adds that "The pages of history show that

⁶⁰⁰ *Ibid* pg 1.

⁶⁰¹ *Ibid* pg 3.

the Iranian nation has been offered other forms of government apart from monarchy, but that they always chose monarchy.’⁶⁰² This sentence which comes up frequently in the Shah’s speeches is a clear attempt at legitimisation through eternalisation. This over-riding philosophy, or culture has withstood the impact of conquerors and won them over, including the Seleucids and importantly the Arabs. The author then sidetracks to quote from Zoroastrian scriptures in praise of cultivators and labourers in a clear analogy of the Shah’s sympathies for the labourers and peasants who are meant to be the main benefactors of the White Revolution, before returning to lambast one of the main villains of the Pahlavi narrative, the Qajars. There is room for some modest praise of the progressive mullahs in favour of the Constitutional revolution and restoration of a healthy monarchy, before we get to the White Revolution itself.

The White Revolution is described as a ‘pure’ policy intended to get Iran in the most rapid way to the global civilisation and science of the world - all under the superior leadership of the Shahanshah. The author hopes that under this progressive ideology of a great king, Iran will rapidly approach a bright and prosperous future. Having attempted in a rather lacklustre way, and without reference to the many Islamic texts on kingship, to justify monarchy, the author then turns to debunking the notion that political parties can function in Iran. His argument is familiar. Essentially, parties from the time of the Constitution have lacked sound ideologies and have been too tied to individuals or to foreign powers to have been of any use. The emphasis here is on foreign powers, particularly in the post Reza Shah period when the Tudeh gained in strength with Soviet support, with the implication

⁶⁰² *Ibid* pg 7.

being that in current circumstance, political pluralism will lead to foreign penetration. It is nevertheless significant that the oil nationalisation is dealt with in some detail and Dr Mosaddeq and the National Front are discussed, though of course there is no suggestion that the cause of his downfall was a coup, rather his own political mismanagement. One of the problems with political parties, writes Honarmand, is that no leader has emerged with the right qualities, apart from a certain Dr Kasemi.⁶⁰³ The conclusion drawn is that the new party Iran Novin, will now become the ideological standard bearer of the White Revolution.

As to the ideological foundations of 'Pahlavism', it is indicative of its intellectual poverty, that this chapter, arguably the most important, covers no more than 5 pages, and that the 'political' principle amounts to no more than once sentence. The social and economic principles are marginally longer and are discussed but are little more than a recap of the principles of the White Revolution. Thus the political principle reads that: "The government of the people is based on a parliamentary constitutional monarchy with the reform of the electoral law."⁶⁰⁴ The rest deals with land reform, share-ownership of factories, and such policies as the campaign against illiteracy, all key points of the White Revolution. The section concludes with the Shah's statement that he has no pride in being king of a poor country. Given that there is so little on what Pahlavism (aside that it is comparable to the achievements of the Achaemenids) is as a philosophy as opposed to a programme for development, more may be gained by looking to see how the author

⁶⁰³ *Ibid* pg 36.

⁶⁰⁴ *Ibid* pg 42.

compared it to other more established ideologies.

The author argues unequivocally that:

“It is with considerable pride that one can say that in a world in which most of the countries are under the control of various ideologies which encompass five trends - feudalism, imperialism, liberalism, democracy and socialism - the Shahanshah has discovered a new doctrine which is ethically superior to socialism, has more freedom and rights than democracy, is more practical than liberalism.....there can be little doubt that this new political doctrine among the philosophical and political doctrines existing in the world, must be recognised in political cultures, as ‘Pahlavism’.”⁶⁰⁵

That this should be so, is because of the good works implicit in the White Revolution, and because the White Revolution was a bloodless political revolution. “Pahlavism, is a doctrine which in a short space of time can take a feudal society higher than social democratic parliamentarism.” Furthermore, “Pahlavism is a doctrine which can also take a nation with unprecedented speed away from a world of darkness, towards a bright future.” There is little detail on the practicalities of achieving this, other than the principles of the White Revolution, which as the Shah was at pains to point out, was an ‘Iranian’ revolution, tailored to Iranian needs. The author however here seems to be suggesting that Pahlavism will sort out the troubles of the third world, and indeed is a universally applicable philosophy. This may well serve the need to legitimise it, but there are obvious contradictions in how a locally devised and applicable ideology can be applied internationally.

⁶⁰⁵ *Ibid* pg 50.

Prior to launching into a comparative study of world ideologies the author diverts the readers attention into eulogy, and this is accorded in no uncertain terms and indicates that association and personalisation by proxy is no longer sufficient: "Thanks be to God that he has given us a Shahanshah more just than Anoushiravan, more diligent than Darius the Great and more intelligent than Cyrus the Great..."⁶⁰⁶ His comparative study is needless to say, shallow. Capitalism for instance, here interpreted as the exploitation of the workers by capitalists, has been answered with the implementation of workers shares in the factories in which they work. Democracy, is answered with the simple statement that Pahlavism recognises democracy to have both economic and political aspects and that the former must be achieved before the latter. As to socialism; this too is dealt a blow by share ownership and state welfare plans, which although socialistic in outlook are implemented more justly under Pahlavism. Having concluded his analysis of the political foundations of the new doctrine, the author then turns to explain the economic philosophy of Pahlavism.

The enormous attention given to economic aspects of the doctrine may in some way reflect a desire to legitimise the 'ideology' by injecting a healthy dose of economic thinking or justification, having acknowledged the fact that all over the world people are thinking about economics. He adds that the myriad theses on economics which have been produced are not applicable to Iran and that Pahlavism (despite itself being universal) is the only economic philosophy which can raise standards of living in Iran. However this discussion, much like the political one which preceded it, is in large part given over to a

⁶⁰⁶ *Ibid* pg 52

brief and extremely broad history of economic thought, and subsequently the economic development of Iran, once again from Achaemenid times, with little indication of how such a survey may be of relevance to modern Iranian economic development. The broad thrust of the argument is simply, the economic achievements of the Iranians, the plundering of foreigners, and how the ancients had achieved certain economic goals well before the Europeans.

Several themes stand out, in particular the relatively healthy state of the economic under the ancient dynasties, reflected in part in the attention devoted by the author to this period. Skating over the impact of the Umayyads and Abbasids on the Iranian economy, which was not by any means negative, the author then provides a textbook encapsulation of the Mongol conquests (5 lines), which were essentially a disaster, and in his discussion of Timur provides an opportunity for analogy when he argues that the rural peasantry at this stage really suffered, having on top of all their tribulations to pay 60% of their produce to their landlords. Honarmand then suggests the following rather contentious argument that since the Timurids had brought Islam with them (or were Islamic) they reduced the level of the tithe from 60% to 30%, thereby making a tenuous link between strong central government, the welfare of the peasantry and Islam.⁶⁰⁷ This is more clearly seen when compared to the 'feudalism' of the Aq Qyunlu.

The emphasis on the centralised state benefiting the economy is made again under the discussion on the Safavids when the economic condition of Iran is compared favourably

⁶⁰⁷ *Ibid* pg 106.

with Achaemenid times.⁶⁰⁸ Meanwhile the Qajars are criticised for selling out to foreigners and Reza Shah is praised for achieving in several years what many thought might take over a hundred. Significantly however, 'Pahlavi economics' emerges only with Mohammad Reza Shah, and the launch of the White Revolution, which it is emphasised is both in line with the teachings of Islam, and more progressive than socialist economics; a clear sign of where the Shah perceived his two main sources of criticism lay.⁶⁰⁹ The text concludes with discussion on how Pahlavi economics will deal with problems that arise, and indeed how it *should* deal with complications, in a manner more akin to a programmatic manifesto rather than a philosophy.

Concluding Remarks

The period of the White Revolution marked an important turning point in the ideological development of the Shah and provides a clearer framework of ideological development which the Shah intended to pursue. Henceforth, decreasing political plurality and an increasing unwillingness to listen or appropriate from critics meant that the parameters of ideological development would be extended rather than expanded. The polarisation of ideologies would become increasingly frequent, and the reaction they incurred would become equally polarised. The first indications of this process can be seen in the growing anti-Americanism within Iranian political culture which reflected the success of the Shah's integration within the Cold War narrative, but the failure of his particular interpretation

⁶⁰⁸ *Ibid* pg 107

⁶⁰⁹ *Ibid* pp 112-113.

of this narrative. It was an example of the rejuvenation of political myth and the process of reciprocal polarisation.

The development of the myth of the saviour would be emphasised and concomitant with this, there would be greater attention paid to the reconstruction of the past and the construction of the future. The Shah moved increasingly away from his characterisation as a democratic sovereign and identified more with his concept of a revolutionary leader. This shift is exemplified by the attempted construction of 'Pahlavism', a new more intense interpretation of dynastic nationalism which sought to develop the political myth of the Shah to a higher level. The Shah was not the personal manifestation of an ideology which the product of political forces outside his control, he was, in the best traditions of the Platonic philosopher-king, the initiator of ideology and thus less a personalisation and more of a personification and embodiment of a complex ideological synthesis. Whereas his father sought to make himself and the dynasty essential to national regeneration, Mohammad Reza Shah *was* the nation. As such he was not similar to Cyrus the Great, but increasingly his superior. The intensity of this construction would result in a high propensity for the development of political myth and its consequences, as a result of the tensions implicit in trying to fuse a diverse cocktail of ideological constructs within the person of the Shah.

Chapter 6

Towards the 'Great Civilisation' - The myth of Imperial Authority

*"There is nothing more dangerous for a man or for a nation than to be a prisoner of one's personal sentiments and a captive of one's egotism."*⁶¹⁰

*"One of the few mistakes my father made was to rely upon a narrowing circle of advisers. Fearing Reza Shah, they flattered him rather than telling him the truth; and I am sorry to say they were by no means always incorruptible. My system is entirely different...in lieu of advisers I obtain information from many quarters and then try to strike my own balance sincerely and solely in the light of the public interest. Let me add that in no way do I regard myself as the one true repository of knowledge and enlightenment..."*⁶¹¹

Introduction

The last ten years of the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi witness the apogee of his ideological and political myth development with the explicit purpose of institutionalising the imperial authority of the Pahlavi dynasty within Iranian political culture. The relative economic success of the first five years of the White Revolution combined with the tremendous boost in oil revenues following the Yom Kippur War meant that the Shah could consolidate his autocratic power, suppressing opposition and ignoring criticism,

⁶¹⁰ M R Pahlavi Mission for My Country. pg 126, 1961.

⁶¹¹ *Ibid* pg 322.

while indulging in increasingly extravagant symbolic ceremonies which gave mythic expression to his ideological convictions.

In terms of the development of ideological constructs and their transformation into political myth, this period represents one of growing, if sometime extreme polarisation rather than expansion, of reluctant, if somewhat magnanimous accommodation, rather than appropriation ⁶¹². In other words there is comparatively little development of the Shah's ideological convictions in this period, instead, greater clarification and emphasis on those parameters established in the previous years. In particular the move from personalisation towards emphatic personification in the guise of the myth of the saviour, witnessed in the previous chapter, becomes more apparent and more attention is given to the process of personalisation by proxy, highlighting the qualities of Cyrus the Great while at the same time emphasising Mohammad Reza Shah's superiority to his predecessor.

⁶¹² One of the most notable cases was that of Dariush Homyun, a left wing critic of the Shah who subsequently became his last Minister of Information. The regime's attempt to co-opt the intellectuals was commented on by the left wing Radio Courier: "...the current Iranian regime has taken various measures to enlist the services of intellectuals. These measures include establishing cultural centres such as the Pahlavi library, the Pahlavi cultural foundation and various cultural councils at the Royal Court, convening various congresses and conferences such as Poets and Writers Congress and the Arts festival held recently in which the Queen [Farah] took part, tight control of the Tehran, Tabriz, Shiraz, Meshed and Isfahan Universities through the trustees, control of the arts and culture ministry by Pahlbod, publishing newspapers and magazines, establishing a special transmitter for intellectuals, etc.... The regime has faced the Iranian intellectuals with two alternatives: either to capitulate and enjoy privileges such a good position, wealth, fame and luxury, or to resist and suffer poverty, obscurity and privation. If you go beyond simple disobedience you have the Savak torturers, prison and execution waiting for you. Iranian intellectuals now ask themselves: should they join the current regime and try to justify its acts secretly and openly, or refuse to do so?...." BBC SWB ME/2640/D 2 dated 7th December 1967, Radio Iran Courier dated 4th December 1967.

Domestic political developments seem to bear little direct relevance to the Shah's pursuit of his ideas as the Shah increasingly builds on his own preconceptions and becomes increasingly dismissive of domestic critics. As such, the consequent extreme polarisation of his ideological convictions into political myth becomes more explicit. This is particularly evident in the explicit use of symbolism, the emphatic association with historical sites, the construction of monuments, and the enormous efforts given to historical reconstruction and revisionism along with a utopian vision for the future.⁶¹³ The tensions and contradictions which contribute to the development of political myth come primarily from within, from the difficulty in providing a plausible synthesis of the Shah's ideological views, rather than from perceived political realities or the ideological challenges of opponents.

The Shah's increasing disregard for domestic political developments was in part a consequence of his growing interest in the international political arena. Indeed if one development characterises and distinguishes this period from those that preceded it, it is the increasing internationalisation of the Shah's political myth and his desire to expand his horizons beyond the traditional boundaries of Iranian political culture. The Cold War narrative, in which the Shah had sought to re-situate himself in order to support his ambitions within Iran, now seemed to dominate his thinking and to dictate his strategies. One of the more significant developments of this period is the changing nature of his ideological relationship with the West and the increasingly ambivalent and sometimes hostile attitude of the Western media who began to critically deconstruct the political myth

⁶¹³ M R Pahlavi *Be-Sooye Tamadun-e Bozorg* (Towards the Great Civilisation), Tehran 1978

they were confronted with.⁶¹⁴

Socio-Historical Context

The absence of political plurality combined with the increasing confidence of the Shah in dealing with domestic political affairs resulted in the appearance of political stability centred upon the actions of the Shah. Visible domestic politics for much of the period until the late 1970s, revolved around the edicts of a patrimonial Shah surrounded by politicians competing to be more deferential. Opposition existed, but was either underground, marginalised and exposed in a series of show-trials, or abroad, and indeed the chief source of criticism of the Shah and his policies comes from either opposition groups broadcasting from abroad, or the foreign media.

While the Shah increasingly dictated the political agenda⁶¹⁵ at home, many policies and ideological constructions were becoming increasingly influenced by developments abroad, and the Shah's desire to expand his horizons. As such, even domestic events were engineered with an eye to opinion overseas, arguably this aspect became an imperial priority. Television became an important medium in this respect. Thus while the coronation in 1967 was primarily an Iranian event, the celebration of 2500 years of Persian monarchy was quintessentially an international event to which many Iranians found their

⁶¹⁴ See for example the significantly titled R Graham Iran: the illusion of power London, Croom Helm, 1978.

⁶¹⁵ A Alam The Shah & I London, I B Tauris 1991, entry for 19th April 1972 pg 210.

access, beyond watching it on television, barred. This celebration, which occurred in 1971, also coincided with Britain's withdrawal 'east of Suez', allowing the Shah to exercise his political and military might as the 'policeman of the Gulf', as well as the Indo-Pakistan war which saw the formation of Bangladesh. This event in particular, and the fact that the United States was unable or unwilling to support her ally Pakistan which had resulted in her dismemberment, deeply concerned the Shah.⁶¹⁶ In 1973, the Yom Kippur war provided the catalyst for the Shah's quadrupling of oil prices, allowing an equivalent leap in the state budget and providing the Shah with an economic buffer between himself and his opposition. The potential for dramatic economic expansion silenced the critics, and allowed the Shah to pursue even more grand schemes for the establishment of imperial authority. Thus in 1975 the Shah finally removed any pretence of democracy by establishing a one party state in the form of the *Rastakhiz* party, which in ideological terms, allowed him to iron out the tensions inherent in his construction of the myth of the saviour.

Utilising the mass media

The machinery of the Pahlavi state expended great effort in seeking to disseminate the various myths of dynastic nationalism, especially through the new medium of television. The major celebrations of the period, the coronation, the commemoration of 2500 years of Persian Monarchy, the 50th anniversary of the Pahlavi dynasty were essentially visual pageants intended to impress upon ordinary people, the majesty and glory of the Shah, his

⁶¹⁶ J Bill *The Eagle & the Lion: The tragedy of American-Iranian relations* pg 199.

dynasty, and the Iranian monarchy. Indeed, given the growing isolation of the monarch, for security reasons among others, the televisual medium became disproportionately important in linking the monarch to his subjects. Television encouraged the development of a more succinct and symbolic visual political myth which allowed the Shah to reach a much wider captive audience than before, but also could expose the Shah and the regime to immediate rejuvenation and re-interpretation of myth. One particularly devastating example was the mishandled televised 'recantation' of the left-wing poet Khosrow Golsorkhi in early 1974, in which millions of Iranian witnessed a stubborn Golsorkhi condemn the regime, thus condemning himself to death.⁶¹⁷

Of course, traditional tools of dissemination were not neglected, and with increasing censorship, the radio and print media, books, journals and newspapers all became to varying degrees, uncritical media of expression for the Pahlavi state. Although we cannot measure with any quantitative accuracy what the radio audience or readership of particular print media was, their importance may be assessed by the continued existence of a number of foreign (sometimes opposition) radio stations broadcasting into Iran and challenged on occasion by Tehran radio; while the publication of the *Rastakhiz* party newspaper, and the catastrophic impact of the *Etela'at* commentary attacking Ayatollah Khomeini in January 1978, are testament to the perceived and very real influence of newspapers in late Pahlavi Iran.

In 1966, the year prior to the coronation, the Pahlavi regime began a concerted attempt

⁶¹⁷ *op.cit* pp 191-92

to produce a properly researched 'nationalistic' historical narrative of Iran, with proper emphasis on the central role of the Iranian monarchy. The 'Historical Research' magazine, which was published every two months by the Army General Staff, ran for 13 years and carried numerous articles of general and specific interest, but with an undeniable tendency to elevate nationalistic explanations of Iranian history. In 1976, to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the Pahlavi dynasty, the chief cultural ideologue of the Pahlavi dynasty, Shoja-ed Din Shafa,⁶¹⁸ published the official dynastic history in several volumes. The *Gah-Nameh-ye Panjah Sal-e Shahanshahi-e Pahlavi* was a chronicle of the Pahlavi dynasty, the 3159 pages, covering the history of the dynasty in minute, pedantic detail. This was the first official history of the dynasty and its style precluded any discussion or apparent interpretation of events; dates were simply provided with important developments in the dynasty's history.

Probably the most important text of this period for the purposes of ideological and mythic construction was the book, 'Towards the Great Civilisation', published in 1978. This was effectively a summation of the Shah's ultimate understanding of historical circumstance, the international system, and critically his vision for the future of Iran. Somewhat vague and ambiguous in its analysis, it nevertheless is a remarkable testament of the Shah's world-view, and in light of the Shah's illness and the very 'reflective' nature of the prose, it may be conjectured that he considered it at the time, to be his last 'message' to the people of Iran. Its main value lies in its emphasis on the myth of the saviour. Indeed, as

⁶¹⁸ Shoja-ed Din Shafa was head of the Pahlavi Library and chief adviser on cultural affairs to the Shah. A man of considerable intellect, he is the closest the regime had to a true ideologue and was thought to have been instrumental in promoting the concept of a 2500th commemoration of the Persian Monarchy.

will be seen, the parallels with Feuer's basic model of the 'Mosaic' myth of deliverance are quite explicit, although in a dynastic sense there are also similarities with what may be called the "West Iranian 'national' or 'royal' epic...."⁶¹⁹

Reconstructing the historical narrative:

The Coronation

As the Tudeh mouthpiece, *Mardom* noted, "The Shah's coronation late this month represents the Shah's efforts to stabilise monarchy in the Pahlavi dynasty."⁶²⁰ The coronation ceremony marked the first of a series of spectacular pageants aimed at impressing the majesty and pomp of monarchy upon the populace, most of whom watched the ceremony on television. Ironically, the ceremony owed little to Iranian monarchical tradition. Although Reza Shah had crowned himself, the ceremony clothed itself in the ethnic and cultural diversity of Iran. Mohammad Reza Shah however chose to distinguish himself further from his father by developing the ceremony along European lines (specifically British), even to the extent that his military escort wore strikingly similar uniforms to the British Life-Guards. Furthermore, the ceremony itself was but the

⁶¹⁹ R Frye *The Heritage of Persia* California, Mazda 1993, pg 87, Frye argues that the Mosaic myth and the various 'dynastic founder' stories share many commonalities. "The motif of the founder of a dynasty being raised by shepherds or poor people who do not know, or who conceal the true royal descent of the child, becomes part of the charisma of Persian royalty repeated under the Safavids and other rulers in Persian history. I term it the West Iranian 'national' or 'royal' epic as compared with the East Iranian 'religious' or 'heroic' epic series."

⁶²⁰ BBC SWB ME/2596/D/1 dated 17th October 1967, excerpts from the Tudeh Party monthly *Mardom*, dated 15 October 1967.

beginning of a series of celebrations and parties organised throughout the country to commemorate the event and no doubt to emphasise its importance. For the Shah, his coronation provided the visible manifestation of the institutionalisation of his monarchy and the continuation of his dynasty. Coronations are essentially vehicles of institutionalisation, and the act of coronation is in itself an ideological expression through the use of and identification with, familiar symbols. It is thus an expression of political myth.

One of the first problems the Shah had to deal with was why he had taken so long, 27 years, to organise a coronation ceremony. The resultant dissimulation was that he had no desire to be crowned king of a poor country, and that, he wished first to achieve some measure of socio-economic progress before acquiescing to a coronation.⁶²¹ The reality was probably more complex, and reflected the fact that the first 27 years of the Shah's reign had been years of political uncertainty and doubt. In essence the Shah wanted to feel moderately secure before holding the ceremony, and by 1967, he felt that five years of the White Revolution had provided him with this⁶²². Some measure of the Shah's confidence in the beginning of his 27th year as monarch can be seen in the fact that in addition to his coronation and the commemorations held to celebrate his silver jubilee in 1965, the Shah was now intent on celebrating 27 years on the throne.⁶²³ The increasing frequency of such

⁶²¹ *Rastakhiz* 3 Aban 2535 / October 1977; see also F Pahlavi *My Thousand and one days* London, W H Allen, 1978, pg 60.

⁶²² Of course, it should not be forgotten that an assassination attempt on the Shah was made in 1965.

⁶²³ BBC SWB ME/2580/D/1 dated 28th September 1967 - Tehran Radio dated 16 September 1967.

ceremonies can be regarded as an attempt to emphatically situate himself and his dynasty within the reconstructed narrative of Iranian monarchy and to emphasise his importance to national identity and progress.

The coronation ceremony itself was an interesting exercise in the symbolism of dynastic nationalism combining both overt traditionalism and nationalism (although much of these had been invented), with innovations which aimed to signify an attachment to modernity and progress. Thus for example, although intended to express and impress the link between the Shah and his predecessors, many of the subsequent festivities in particular the carriage journey with liveried footmen and mounted cuirassed cavalry were lifted directly from the British coronation ceremony. Indeed according to Sir Denis Wright, Sami'i from the Iranian Foreign Ministry was sent to London with express orders to discover how a coronation ceremony should be administered.⁶²⁴ In contrast to these covert attempts at symbolic appropriation, the Shah was at great pains to emphasise the essential Iranian-ness of the coronation ceremony. The Pahlavi crown, which had been constructed for Reza Shah was stated to have been modelled upon Sassanian models, though it is now known that each Sassanian Shah had a new crown made. The Shah sat on the Peacock throne and wore the Naderi sword as his father had done, and like his father he crowned himself. This last act, as well as the crowning of Farah as Empress was an innovation, and resembled the Napoleonic example rather than Iranian tradition. Indeed, the Qajars had been crowned by members of the ulema, thereby symbolically acknowledging the link between the monarchy and religion. It seems unlikely that the Shah would have been unaware of

⁶²⁴ Interview with Sir Denis Wright - October 1996

this practice, although the Pahlavi dislike for the preceding dynasty may have encouraged to Shah to disassociate himself from any tradition or practice connected to the Qajars. According to the Empress, the Shah's justification for this procedure was that since he represented the people of Iran, "Through my hands, it is they who crown me."⁶²⁵ As such it may be surmised that the Shah sought to use a traditional ceremony to impress his 'popular' credentials upon his subjects.

The crowning of Farah as 'Empress' may also be interpreted as an attempt to convey a sense of modernity. It fitted well with the Shah's notion that he had emancipated women during the initial stages of the 'White Revolution' by giving them the vote and Farah's coronation, along with the Constitutional amendments adopted to make her Regent in the event of the Shah's premature death⁶²⁶, were officially characterised as unique and progressive, despite the fact that the historical record notes that Iranian queens had ruled in Iran before.⁶²⁷ Interestingly, this seemingly progressive move was rationalised by resorting to tradition in that Farah was lauded as a *Seyyed*, a descendent of the Prophet through Imam Hasan; despite the fact that the title 'seyyed' cannot be transmitted through the female line. The tensions implicit in this symbolic act became increasingly apparent in interviews the Shah was to give in subsequent years, both to Oriana Fallaci, and importantly, the American anchor-woman, Barbara Walters, in which it became apparent

⁶²⁵ F Pahlavi My thousand and one days pg 62

⁶²⁶ BBC SWB ME/2589/D/1 dated 9th October 1967 - Tehran Radio 6th October 1967; Shah's speech from the throne on the occasion of the opening of the 5th Senate and 22nd Majlis.

⁶²⁷ Thus Farah recounts that, "I was very proud...to be the first Empress of Iran to be crowned for so many centuries of its history." F Pahlavi My thousand.. pg 63.

that there were stark contradictions between the Empress' role as potential 'regent' and the Shah's appreciation of the political aptitude of women.⁶²⁸

With respect to direct religious participation in the coronation ceremony, the Pahlavi monarchy differed from most of their predecessors, including the Sassanians and the Safavids, and indeed for both Pahlavi monarchs, the ulemas' participation was restricted to the brief recitation of passages from the Qoran. The Shah differed from his father in having a trumpet fanfare announce the beginning of the ceremony including "magnificent choirs singing."⁶²⁹ (Reza Shah had no music at all in order not to antagonise the ulema), and upon crowning himself, 101 gun salute was fired. In addition the military were represented by individual soldiers, and officers, a fly-past was conducted by the air force and the mosques began reciting prayers in favour of the monarch, while radio and television broadcast music for the health of the Shah.

In a book published to coincide with the coronation, entitled '60 centuries of history and coronations',⁶³⁰ the significance of the Shah's coronation was reflected in the historical context of 6000 years of history in a clear attempt to eternalise and naturalise the monarchy within the reconstructed historical narrative, while at the same time differentiating the Shah from his predecessors, who impressive as they were, were no

⁶²⁸ O Fallaci *Mosahebeh ba Tarikh* (Interview with History), Tehran, Amir Kabir, 1978. The original Italian was published earlier but was censored in Iran. The interview with the Shah was conducted in October 1973. In this interview, among other things he argued that although women may be equal under the law, they were not equal in ability. p 10.

⁶²⁹ F Pahlavi *ibid* pg 62

⁶³⁰ Khan Malek Yazdi *Shast Qarn-e Tarikh va Taj-Gozari* Tehran 1967.

match for the current incumbent. The author provided more or less detailed accounts of crowns and coronations since the mythical kings of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh, in an interesting attempt to blend myth with history.⁶³¹ Not surprisingly, the author notes that though it is up to the reader to ascertain which historic king was most deserving of a coronation and whose coronation was the most glorious, it must be obvious to all contemporary people, both in Iran and the world, that the coronation of HIM Shahanshah Aryamehr, and Farah, the Shahbanou⁶³² of Iran is the greatest and most glorious, because argues the author, we are witnesses to the ceremony, and everyone is aware of the tremendous achievements of the Shah.⁶³³ The text also promoted the myth of the 'popular sovereign' by describing the Shah as 'great' and also granting him the epithet of 'friend of the people'.

The author then argues that to understand the greatness of the Shah it is necessary to survey the first 26 years of his reign, which continues to provide the increasingly standardised and familiar historical narrative of the country; from Reza Shah's rescue of the country from backwardness, to the occupation of the country by the allies in World War II, which caused untold suffering for the people, to their penetration of the aristocracy (who then became tools of foreigners). The Shah is painted as a lone figure aware of the need to eliminate social oppression. His vision for the future of the country, later became the unprecedented reform which ensured that each person was rewarded

⁶³¹ This extended royal lineage was to be given full exposure in M Karanjia's Mind of a Monarch London, George Allen & Unwin, 1977.

⁶³² This historic title replaced 'malekeh' in March 1961; see FO 371 157601 EP 1015/55 dated 28 March 1961.

⁶³³ Khan Malek Yazdi Shast Qarn-e Tarikh va Taj-Gozari pg 263.

according to his or her own efforts.⁶³⁴ The epithets 'just' and 'people-loving' are emphasised in a probable effort to identify the Shah with the characteristics of rulers most often cherished by Iranians in their rulers.

Indeed, the author leaves the reader with little doubt as to the analogy, when having reminded the reader of his good fortune to be living at this time, and in Iran, following the path of progress, concludes with the note that in reality the only king that can be compared to the Shah is Cyrus the Great, who likewise eliminated oppression and was known to the different nations as a 'father.'⁶³⁵ The comparison, and ideological personalisation by proxy, with Cyrus does not stop there however. The reader is reminded that just as that king requested a trusted Persian officer to organise his coronation in Babylon, (and likewise Nader Shah) so the Shah instructed General Yazdanpanah to head a committee for the preparations. Unlike his predecessors though, since the Shah is a man of the people, his coronation is to be organised with the people in mind. As the author points out, this coronation is not simply for the aristocracy but for 26 million people, so celebrations must be organised throughout the country.⁶³⁶ In order to familiarise the world with Iran the Shah has instructed that special tourist facilities be established so that those who wish to come to Iran for the celebrations can do so with ease, thereby universalising the importance of the ceremony.

Beyond the coronation itself, a number of ceremonies and celebrations were held in

⁶³⁴ *Ibid* pg 264.

⁶³⁵ *Ibid* pg 266.

⁶³⁶ *Ibid* pg 269

honour of the Shah and to institutionalise the coronation ceremony and the dynasty within the popular memory. On the night of the coronation a special concert was held at Rudaki hall. The following day, in the afternoon a military parade was held, while in the evening a special dinner was held by the prime minister at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. On 6th Aban (28th October), two days after the coronation an athletic exhibition was held, while in the evening a dinner was held by the minister of court at the Hilton. On the 7th Aban (29th October) the Shah and empress visited the ministry of Finance and in the evening were guests at the officers' club, following this with another evening at the Rudaki Hall. Only on the 10th Aban (1st November), that is 6 days after the coronation, did the Shah visit Mashhad for a pilgrimage at the shrine of Imam Reza. Celebrations for the enjoyment of the general populace were held in Tehran and other major cities, including a photographic exhibition of the Shah's reign.⁶³⁷

The year 1967 also marked a dramatic upsurge in the number of statues of the Shah - the concrete personalisation of ideology - erected throughout the country. Prince Gholamreza unveiled a statue of the Shah in Twiserkan in September⁶³⁸, followed by another unveiling in Khoi (18th October); Kerman (23 October); Zahedan (26 October); Saveh (30 October), and Maku (11th November).⁶³⁹ Other ceremonies also continued, with the senate holding a thanksgiving service on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Shah's escape

⁶³⁷ BBC SWB ME/2616/D/1 dated 9th November 1967, Tehran Radio, dated 29 October 1967. See also ME/2610/D/1 dated 2nd November 1967.

⁶³⁸ BBC SWB ME/2580/D/1 dated 28th September 1967 - Tehran Radio, dated 16 September 1967.

⁶³⁹ BBC SWB ME/2604/D/1 dated 26th October 1967; ME/2610/D/1 dated 2nd November 1967; ME/2616/D/1 dated 9th November 1967; ME/2622/D/1 dated 16 November 1967 - Tehran Radio, dates as noted. This was just the first batch!

from assassination, coinciding with similar ceremonies held throughout the country.⁶⁴⁰ The Shah was increasingly described in messianic terms. In a speech to the Majlis, Hoveida described, ‘the Shah’s constant missionary struggle to secure the Iranian peoples’ rights is such that if revealed one day it will clearly show the extent to which the Shah’s single-minded determination has been decisive...’⁶⁴¹

In the book the ‘White Revolution’ published just before the coronation, the Shah explained his understanding of a king’s all-encompassing responsibilities to his people, ‘Christensen, the Danish orientalist, has rightly said that a real king in Iran is not so much a political head of a nation as a teacher and leader. He is not only a person who builds roads, bridges, dams and canals, but one who leads them in spirit, thought and heart.’⁶⁴² This book was to be studied as a textbook in schools,⁶⁴³ and in the following year seminars were inaugurated to study the text.⁶⁴⁴

Tensions & Contradictions

For many in opposition, the idea that the White Revolution justified the Shah and the

⁶⁴⁰ BBC SWB ME/2999/D/2 dated 13th February 1969 - Tehran Radio, dated 3 & 4th February 1969.

⁶⁴¹ BBC SWB ME/2713/D/1 dated 6th March 1968 - Tehran Radio, dated 29 February 1968.

⁶⁴² M R Pahlavi The White Revolution pg 1.

⁶⁴³ BBC SWB ME/2580/D/1 dated 28th September 1967 - Tehran Radio dated 17 September 1967.

⁶⁴⁴ BBC SWB ME/2672/D/1 dated 18th January 1968 - Tehran Radio dated 6 January 1968.

monarchy was treated with contempt: "The propagandists also argue that the Shah's monarchy is unique in that it has launched a so-called white revolution and that it has enabled Iran to make maximum progress. They say that the world is amazed at the Shah's sagacity, that the `entire world is studying and imitating what has been achieved through the Shah's genius, and that the Shah's era is the most brilliant era in Iran's history.' Shame!"⁶⁴⁵

Similarly, the central role that the Shah wished to claim for himself and the monarchy was also ridiculed. The Tudeh argued,

"The Shah and his propagandists claim that monarchy is a natural part of the Iranian culture. When a number of political prisoners were being tried, Masudi, the proprietor of *Etela'at* wrote: 'These people wanted to kill the Shah and began guerilla warfare in Iran. If the Shah were killed, there would be no Iran in which to conduct guerilla warfare.' Obviously this is incorrect. Many of the countries of the world have discarded monarchy. Even at its best - constitutional monarchy - this system of government is undemocratic. At its worst, the system is profoundly reactionary."

The article added that though many dictators throughout history have considered themselves indispensable to the universe, they usually proved to be inconsequential creatures. "The idea of omniscient, omnipotent leaders can only appeal to the imbecile.

⁶⁴⁵ BBC SWB ME/2596/D/1 dated 17th October 1967 - Excerpts from *Mardom* dated 15 October 1967.

It cannot deceive the wise.⁶⁴⁶

Special celebrations were held every year to commemorate the anniversary of the referendum which launched the Shah's White Revolution. In 1969, it included participation by a pan-Iranist group which seemed markedly different from that which had supported Dr Mosaddeq. Its appearance drew criticism from Iran's left wing opposition:

"...Stage managing demonstrations and organising shouting crowds are some of the Iranian regime's new tactics. The farcical ceremony the regime staged on 6th Bahman this year again proved the disgracefulness of this kind of operation...

To the worthless and ludicrous scenes of this years farce must be added the more disgusting and yet far more dangerous scenes staged by the Pan-Iranists. These self-styled fascists, with their paramilitary groups, parades and short and long hurrahs, wanted to prove their role as the regime's crack elements. The Pan-Iranist ring leaders....wanted to reaffirm their fascist role. Like their Hitlerite inspirers they employed all the tactics used by the Nazis. Like all fascists, the self-styled fascists' grey-uniformed and black-uniformed groups paraded. The leader of this gang has copied the Hitlerite eagle insignia. A banner with golden insignia is carried behind him.

This was the special insignia belonging to the self-styled Fuhrer. If the Shah can have his own imperial standard and a crown, why should the Fuhrer's caricature be deprived of his golden eagle banner to be held aloft wherever he stands. The Pan-Iranists so called disciplinary group wore uniforms exactly the same as those worn by the Hitlerite SA group....Their uniform, their caps and their armbands are identical to those worn by the Nazi SA assault gang. The black uniformed guards of the Pan-Iranists moved in military

⁶⁴⁶ *Ibid*

formation. Their own band, with their grey uniforms, black trousers and red lanyards were all reminiscent of the Hitlerite scenes which created so much misfortune.....⁶⁴⁷

There can be little doubt that the left wing opposition exaggerated the extent to which the regime was adopting the insignia of the Nazi party, but there can also be little doubt that the rhetoric of 'Aryanism' (the Shah was after all the 'Light of the Aryans') and the increasing research into the pre-Islamic past,⁶⁴⁸ along with the increasingly heavy hand of the government, opened the regime up to this charge, and allowed it to gain a measure of credibility. Thus the polarisation of ideological constructions and the development of political myth resulted in an equally extreme reaction and interpretation. Indeed, in student demonstrations which occurred in December 1970, among the slogans they adopted (in general criticising the very notion of a 'white' revolution) was one which noted that, "Only a Fascist regime needs such a police force."⁶⁴⁹

Accommodating the Opposition

In that year, the celebrations marking the referendum were marked with the publication of the Shah's speeches and books, as well as television programmes broadcasting the

⁶⁴⁷ BBC SWB ME/3010/D/1 dated 26th February 1969 - Radio Iran Courier dated 24 February 1969.

⁶⁴⁸ Historical Research Magazine, Mordad-Shahrivar 1351 (July-August 1972) published an article on Mithraic symbols with a focus on one symbol which bears a striking similarity to the swastika.

⁶⁴⁹ BBC SWB ME/3567/D/2 dated 23rd December 1970 - *Peygham-e Emruz* dated 21 December 1970.

'philosophy' of the revolution.⁶⁵⁰ Furthermore, the language to describe the Shah began to subtly shift. The Prime Minister, Hoveida, declared that he had been "inspired by the lofty views of the distinguished leader", while the press began to use similar language with increasing frequency.⁶⁵¹ The wisdom of the Shah's leadership was to be confirmed by the confession of a growing number of repentant prodigal sons such as Parsa Nezhad, a former member of the Tudeh Party. In an interview Nezhad acknowledged his mistakes and in the process emphasised two themes which the Shah would appreciate. Firstly that the reforms promoted by the left had been anticipated by the Shah - thus he was indeed revolutionary - and the fact that two farm corporations were named after Darius the Great and the Shah emphasised to listeners the favourable comparison that ought to be drawn - further personalisation by proxy.⁶⁵²

"...My studies on the country's economic growth led me to conclude that in fact some of our programmes on Iran's revolution and its economic, industrial, and social development were incongruous with Iran's realities, because the same government and regime had already implemented some of our programmes. Land reform has been carried out for example.....We did not believe that anyone except us could implement land reform. We

⁶⁵⁰ BBC SWB ME/3297/D/1 dated 5th February 1970 - Tehran Radio, dated 26 January 1970.

⁶⁵¹ BBC SWB ME/3301/D/1 dated 10th February 1970, Tehran Radio dated 8th February 1970. Hoveida praises the 'wise leadership' of the Shah, BBC SWB ME/4180/D/1 dated 29th December 1972, Hoveida's statements on the country's progress, Tehran Radio, dated 27th December 1972. See also BBC SWB ME/3504/D/1 dated 10th October 1970 - *Keyhan* dated 8 October 1970.

⁶⁵² There were 19 farm corporations in total of which only one was named after a previous king (Darius-e Kabir), four others after other members of the royal family, and two denoting 'justice'. See D R Denman The King's Vista Berkhamstead, Geographical Publications, pg 216.

did not believe the bourgeoisie could implement land reforms....I saw that land reform has actually been implemented in these areas - that is, the Iranian peasantry had received land, and the domination of feudalism had been abolished from the Iranian village.

I have seen an even more advanced phase of land reform, namely the farm corporations of Darius the Great and Aryamehr. These reflect a much higher phase of land reform...we thought that the abolition of feudalism and land reform implementation were empty propaganda. When I arrived here I saw for myself. The feelings of the peasants who talked to me were transferred to me. So I realised that the land reform we believed should take place following an armed uprising had been implemented without it....⁶⁵³

The association, in this case, with the Achaemenian King Darius, and the increasing identification of the Shah in the image of a latter day Cyrus the Great, just, benign patriarch of a grateful people, universally admired and revered,⁶⁵⁴ was to receive its most emphatic expression with the celebration of 2500 years of Persian Monarchy.

Reconstruction and Internationalisation

⁶⁵³ BBC SWB ME/3383/D/1 dated 20th May 1970 - Tehran Radio, dated 17 May 1970.

⁶⁵⁴ BBC SWB ME/3258/D/1 dated 18th December 1969, Tehran Radio, dated 7 December 1969, notes that the Shah was awarded the gold peace medal by the Grotius Association of Jurists, and on the occasion of the 21st anniversary of the declaration of human rights, draws comparisons with the Cyrus cylinder.

By 1971, the Shah was ready to commemorate an event which had been planned and repeatedly postponed for several years. This was the 2500th anniversary of the Persian monarchy. The idea had first been canvassed in the 1950s, and had originally been regarded as a showcase in which modern Iran could be introduced to the world. It was initially envisaged as a cultural event in which the historical record would be put straight and the cultural contribution of Iran to world civilisation be truly recognised. Although the cultural aspects of the celebrations were extensive, the main theme of the entire spectacle was the centrality of the monarchy within the Iranian political system. The aim of the event was to identify the Shah not only with Cyrus the Great but to associate him with the great historical monuments of Iran's past. It was the mythical exposition of the ideology of dynastic nationalism and it presented to the world a new interpretation of Iranian history in which the emphasis lay on kings and military might.

The tensions inherent in this enormous exercise in political myth were apparent from the start when few academics could agree on a precise date for the proceedings. Throughout the decade of the 50s, the Iranians had been urging foreign governments to participate in the celebrations, which most found peculiarly esoteric. By 1964, it was announced that the celebrations would be held on 23rd of October 1965, which would coincide with the Shah's birthday and possibly, it was argued, his coronation. As the British Embassy noted, "The Iranians are attaching great importance to these celebrations..."⁶⁵⁵ It had also not

⁶⁵⁵ FO 371 175743 EP 1961/8 dated 4 August 1964.

escaped anyone's attention that, "...The object of the celebration is clearly to emphasise both at home and abroad the continuing strength of the tradition of monarchy in this country...."⁶⁵⁶ However, one month after this announcement the celebrations were postponed again, this time until 1967.⁶⁵⁷

By early 1971, preparations for the celebrations were in earnest and the person of Cyrus the Great emerged as less of an historical and cultural icon and increasingly as a fundamental principle of government ideology. Indeed before the Shah could effectively identify with Cyrus, The Achaemenid king had to be introduced and familiarised to a wider general public. Indeed, Cyrus was even evoked in the prime minister's budget speech, "Since the beginning of its glorious history, our country has been famous for peace, friendship and humanity, and this can be clearly proved by studying the methods and measures of the great kings such as Cyrus the Great, whose efforts made possible our celebration next year of the 2500th anniversary of the Iranian monarchy...."⁶⁵⁸ In his New Year message, the Shah was in buoyant mood, declaring the new Persian year to be the year of Cyrus the Great:

"...The year now beginning is the year of the celebrations of the 2500th anniversary of the Iranian monarchy; I therefore proclaim this the Year of Cyrus the Great, as a token of the national respect to the founder of this monarchy. The best gift we can give to this immortal

⁶⁵⁶ FO 371 140887 EP 1961/1 dated 1 January 1959.

⁶⁵⁷ FO 371 175 743 EP 1961/21 dated 21 September 1964.

⁶⁵⁸ BBC SWB ME/3619/D/1 dated 25th February 1971 - Hoveida's budget speech dated 23 February 1971 - his reference to 'next year' implies the next Iranian year which begins on March 21st.

hero of Iranian history at the beginning of such a year is undoubtedly the existence of a proud, progressive, and developed Iran with an even brighter future ahead based on its vast past heritage, an Iran which follows the practice - made the basis of the Iranian monarchy by Cyrus of the Achaemenid dynasty - of continuing to defend the principles of humanity and to respect human rights and the eternal standards of justice and idealism in today's world. There is perhaps no other example in world history of a country which has been able to preserve to such a degree its spiritual integrity and idealistic entity...

The year that passed was one of the brightest years in Iranian history...The present activities to implement all aspects of the revolution clearly show that during this year and the years to follow, the Iranian revolution will be daily blooming and yielding successes.....The year which has just begun will undoubtedly have a special page in the 2500 years of Iranian Monarchy, since it begins in complete faith and trust. The Iranian nation, now more than ever, has faith in its national and world personality, in the eternal values of Iranian civilisation and culture, in the certainty of achieving the big and bright goals it has chosen for itself, and the importance of the mission which history has given this nation from the start....⁶⁵⁹

'Cyrus the Great year' was marked by special programmes on television and radio, articles in the press, "Schools, universities, factories, trade unions, women's and youth organisations have all prepared plans and set committees to ensure their playing proper part in the festivities."⁶⁶⁰ Literary magazines and journals published widely on the ancient

⁶⁵⁹ BBC SWB ME/3641/D/1 23rd March 1971 - Shah's Now Ruz speech dated 21 March 1971.

⁶⁶⁰ Facts about the Celebration of the 2500th anniversary of the founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great (1971) Committee of International Affairs, Tehran, July 1971.

period and the symbol adopted for the ceremonies was the Cyrus cylinder.⁶⁶¹

It was during this year, while reflecting on past glories that the model country of the future began to be described as the 'Great Civilisation'. Hoveida, in a policy statement to the Majlis argued, "...It is an honour that Iran's revolution has put an end to backwardness and has placed us on the course of a bright change to the realms of a great civilisation, the principles of which were submitted to the Iranian nation by the shahanshah. It is natural that only through faith in the principles of the revolution and by depending the firm idealistic and moral bases shall we be able to tread this road....."⁶⁶² However, as with the notion of a 'White Revolution' before it, it would appear to have been the Shah who provided definition (albeit ambiguous) for the concept. During a speech in the run-up to the celebrations, the Shah elucidated his vision of the Great Civilisation developing his new utopia on the back of his reconstructed historical narrative:

"I think that we can very firmly and with absolute certainty say that Iran will not only become an industrial nation but in my assessment in 12 years time enter what we say the era of the Great Civilisation. The era of the great civilisation for those interested to know means the kind of welfare state where everybody born, until he is dead, will enjoy every kind of social insurances to permit him to go into industry, to other jobs, to work and to die in peace and tranquillity. But also this welfare state doesn't mean that society will be completely undisciplined. It doesn't mean that our society will also sink into all the

⁶⁶¹ For a sampling see articles in the Historical Research Magazine for the year 1350 / 1971-72. Shoja ed Din Shafa's description of the cylinder as the first Bill of Rights (see above pp 219-20), a theme often reiterated, undoubtedly meant more to Americans than to Iranians.

⁶⁶² BBC SWB ME/3794/D/1 dated 23rd September 1971 - Hoveida's speech to the Majlis, dated 19 September 1971.

degradation that we can see in some places. Within the 12 year period illiteracy will be completely eradicated from this country...⁶⁶³

This speech was important not only for having introduced and elaborated upon the Great Civilisation, but significantly, for having provided a time-table. Arguably, one can see a replication of the Mosaic myth with the Shah leading his people to a tangible promised land of economic and technological progress within little more than a decade.

The trend towards internationalisation was evident in the fact that the immediate audience were to be visiting heads of state and the Shah's decision to follow 19th century protocol when it came to seating guests made a subtle point with respect to the importance of monarchs over republican leaders. Thus Emperor Haile Selassie was second to himself in the official rankings, while Presidents and vice-presidents came very near the bottom of the list. For this reason President Georges Pompidou of France refused to attend, sending his prime minister instead.⁶⁶⁴

The celebrations, physically and ideologically embedded in the Achaemenid capital at Persepolis had a heavy military bias⁶⁶⁵, and although there were conferences and seminars

⁶⁶³ BBC SWB ME/3818/D/3 dated 21 October 1971 - Press conference at Saadabad Palace, dated 18 October 1971.

⁶⁶⁴ See W Shawcross The Shah's Last Ride London, Chatto & Windus, 1989 pg 39. See also F Pahlavi *op.cit.* pg 90.

⁶⁶⁵ The strong association the Shah wished to emphasise with the military was exemplified by the publication of such books as Shah va Sepah, bar bonyad-e Shahnameh ye Ferdowsi (King and Army as explained in Ferdowsi's Shahnameh) Aligholi Etemad-Moghadam, published by the Ministry of Arts and Culture, Aban 1349 / October 1970.
(continued...)

to highlight Iran's cultural achievements, the centre-piece of the event was a vast military parade among the ruins of Persepolis, surveying Iran's military forces since the time of the Achaemenians. It culminated with a march past by Iran's modern armed forces, including the women's corps in order to stress the Shah's dedication to the emancipation of women. The soldiers who participated in this extravaganza had been ordered to grow beards months in advance and the parade, in the words of the official programme and in a clear acknowledgement of the the important of television for the propagation of myth, "will be televised and transmitted throughout the world by telstar satellite to allow millions all over the world to see it."⁶⁶⁶ Later it was to be claimed that some 2.4bn people joined Iran in the celebrations.⁶⁶⁷

Earlier the Shah had provided a eulogy at the tomb of Cyrus the Great which had been preceded by a 101 gun salute, again intended to popularly identify the Shah with Cyrus the Great:

"Cyrus, great king, king of kings. Achaemenian king, king of the land of Iran, from me, King of kings of Iran and from my nation, I send greetings.....you, the eternal hero of Iranian history, the founder of the oldest monarchy in the world, the great freedom giver of the world, the worthy son of mankind, we send greetings!....Cyrus, we have gathered here today at your eternal tomb to tell you: sleep in peace because we are awake and we

(...continued)

One may argue that this was the beginning of the relegation of 'militarism' within the umbrella of 'Pahlavism'.

⁶⁶⁶ Facts about..... Tehran July 1971, pg 28

⁶⁶⁷ *Rastakhiz* newspaper, dated 18th Mehr 1356 / 9th October 1977

will always be awake to look after our proud inheritance...."⁶⁶⁸

As one historian was to later comment: "A joke of the period claimed that an Iranian office worker was so enraptured by reading these words of the Shah in his newspaper that he went home unexpectedly early to tell his wife; there he found his wife and his neighbour Cyrus, asleep together in his bed. Overcome by the drama of the moment he raised his hand and said, "Sleep easily Cyrus, for we are awake."⁶⁶⁹ Indeed, it may be argued that with dissent suppressed within the country the safest form of rejuvenation was through ridicule and humour, arguably an extension of the semiological chain.

The concrete reification of the ideology of dynastic nationalism was familiarised in an entirely new symbolic construction (itself a sign of modernisation), the 'Shahyad Aryamehr' monument on the outskirts of Tehran, significantly in view of the desire to impress both a foreign and domestic audience, en route to the airport. Construction of this peculiar monument was initiated in 1967 - its name means 'remember the Shah Aryamehr'. It was presented as an apparent gift from a grateful nation to the Shah, and was opened on 17th October 1971 in the presence of international dignitaries,, following a visit to the mausoleum of Reza Shah.⁶⁷⁰ The young architect in charge of construction argued that the design was meant to incorporate Achaemenian, Sassanian, Safavid and modern Iranian influences, and was meant to symbolise the link between ancient and

⁶⁶⁸ *Rastakhiz* newspaper, dated 19 Mehr 1356 / 10th October 1977

⁶⁶⁹ R Mottahedeh The Mantle of the Prophet pg 327.

⁶⁷⁰ Facts about.... pg 29.

modern.⁶⁷¹ The lavish expense of the ceremonies had largely been dismissed by the Shah who explained to reporters that the event was both an excellent public relations exercise and that in any case many infrastructural projects would be completed.⁶⁷² Subsequently, explanations were felt necessary for the extensive purchase of foreign goods and food, which seemed to contradict the essential Iranian-ness of the festivities.⁶⁷³

Contradictions and Tensions

Criticism of the final nature of the celebrations, the expense as well as the pervasive security which meant that Iranians themselves had to watch the event through television came from some of the Shah's closest advisers. Ardashir Zahedi, the Shah's son-in-law, is reported to have urged the Shah to encourage the security services to be more lenient; others simply expressed private regret and refused to attend the ceremonies.⁶⁷⁴ The most virulent public criticism came from Najaf, where Ayatollah Khomeini used the occasion to declare his opposition to monarchy as a whole, a shift which reflected the continuing polarisation of ideological perspectives. While the Shah was praising the virtues of kingship, Khomeini was arguing that the 'goodness' of Iranian kings was relative, and

⁶⁷¹ *Rastakhiz* newspaper, dated 26 Mehr 1356 / 17th October 1977

⁶⁷² BBC SWB ME/3818/D/3 21st October 1971 - Press conference at Saadabad Palace, dated 18 October 1971. According to Charlotte Curtis of the New York Times, the Shah felt compelled to personally answer journalists who were questioning the wisdom of the expenditure. See Dorman & Farhang *The US Press & Iran* California 1987 pg 119.

⁶⁷³ See in particular F Pahlavi *My Thousand..* pp 87-97, which covers the festivities in detail and responds to the criticism over foreign purchases.

⁶⁷⁴ Ardashir Zahedi, transcript of interview for BBC2 documentary *Reputations*, April 1996.

even the best had been capable of atrocities against their own people. He added that, “the title of King of Kings, which is borne by the monarchs of Iran, is the most hated of all titles in the sight of God.” He concluded by declaring the festival un-Islamic and urged people, Iranian and foreign alike not to participate for, “to participate in it is to participate in the murder of the oppressed people of Iran.”⁶⁷⁵

Internationalisation

Some articles in the foreign press however tended to follow the official line, and a special supplement in *The Times* included material provided by the Iranian government which succinctly outlined the Shah’s political views to a foreign audience who must have wondered about the relevance of the material presented. The emphasis on the links between nationhood and monarchy were explicit as were comments about the relationship between the present Shah and his Achaemenian predecessor. Thus, *The Times* wrote on 25th September 1971 that,

“To the people of Iran, the Institution of Monarchy is not a mode of government but is rather a way of life which has become an essential part of the nation’s very existence. This is as it should be, for since the birth of their nationhood, the Iranians...have always considered monarchy and nationhood to be synonymous....the institution of monarchy has run like a connecting thread, even like a lifeline through twenty five centuries of eventful history, and has been the most effective factor in ensuring the Iranian people’s survival as

⁶⁷⁵ R Khomeini *Islam and Revolution* Trans by H Algar, Berkeley, Mizan Press, 1981. Declaration issued from Najaf on 31st October 1971 entitled The Incompatibility of Monarchy with Islam, pp 200-208.

a nation, with its own identity, characteristics, art and civilisation. It is often said that the Iranians owe the continuity of their nationhood...to their ability to adapt and to adopt.....The real secret of this continuity lies in the institution of monarchy, which since the founding of the Persian Empire, has stood for nationhood, independence and unity. This has given the Monarch a unique role in the nation's life, for he is not only the Head of State and the country's foremost citizen but also the spiritual leader, mentor and paragon of virtue. He provides guidance in all the nation's major activities and is the ultimate source of justice....In short he is looked upon as the supreme authority for ensuring the nation a happy prosperous life.”

Having explained the centrality of the monarchy, the article then turns to the unique contribution of the Shah:

“Since the foundation of the Persian Empire, the personality and ability of the monarch have been so closely linked to the nation's well-being that whenever a really great monarch has been on the Persian throne the nation has accomplished astonishing feats. There have been many examples of this in the nation's 2,500 year old history, the most impressive in recent centuries being the achievements of the White Revolution - a socio-economic reform programme conceived and spearheaded by the Shahanshah....”

Another article emphasised,

“...Within the short span of less than a decade, the Shahanshah has led his nation in a gigantic leap forward and created from a feudalistic society with a backward economy, a modern, thriving state that has already achieved much and seems certain to achieve even more in the immediate future....”

Then in a panegyric on Cyrus the Great, the point is made:

“...Twenty five centuries after Cyrus the Great history is repeating itself through another great King, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, whose nation has given him the title of ‘Aryamehr’ (Light of the Aryans) for his gallantry and farsighted efforts to revive the splendour of Persia, and to uphold a tradition of humanitarianism established by the founder of the Persian Empire.”⁶⁷⁶

Whatever the criticisms of Ayatollah Khomeini or the private reservations of his domestic allies⁶⁷⁷, the fact that US magazines and newspapers were focussing on the lavish spectacle with such titles as ‘Iran: Model Middle East State - Celebrating 2500th Anniversary’, and noting that Iran had ‘arrived’, can only have further confirmed the ideological convictions of the Shah, who in the absence of domestic opposition can only have been reassured by the foreign acceptance of his message.⁶⁷⁸

Developing the Myth of the Saviour

For many within Iran, foreign support for the Shah, as well as the apparent growth of his power and prestige on the international stage seemed to confirm that the image was not so far removed from reality. Although the economy was already encountering inflationary

⁶⁷⁶ The Times - special supplement, dated 25 September 1971.

⁶⁷⁷ Parviz Radjii, the Shah’s last ambassador in London, argues that it was difficult to confront the myth when foreign leaders were competing to praise the Shah; transcript from interview conducted for BBC2 documentary ‘Reputations’ April 1996.

⁶⁷⁸ Dorman & Farhang US Press & Iran Berkeley, University of California Press, pp 118-119.

pressures the overall impression appeared to be that of a healthy economy which was growing at a substantial rate. This impression could be confirmed by foreign assessments of the growth of the Iranian economy which suggested that Iran might be the next Japan and reflected the internationalisation of the semiological chain. Myth was thus constructed upon myth especially when the Shah quoted such figures to justify his policies and indeed his rule in general. The celebrations at Persepolis brought the myth of the saviour to the international stage and, confident of the favourable response, the Shah took every opportunity to pursue it. The withdrawal of British forces 'east of Suez' at the end of 1971 provided the Shah with an opportunity he needed to substantiate his image with action.

By acceding to the independence of Bahrain, the Shah was able to promote his image as a supporter of international justice⁶⁷⁹, while his subsequent very public military seizure of the three islands of Abu Musa and the two Tunbs (despite the intense private negotiations) in the aftermath of the Persepolis celebrations allowed him to portray himself as a nationalist champion of Iran's territorial rights.⁶⁸⁰ Although some criticised the loss of Bahrain, many more accepted that Bahrain had in practice been independent for many years, while the acquisition of the three islands, however small, seemed to signify that the period of decline and territorial losses inaugurated by the Qajars, was now at an end.

⁶⁷⁹ BBC SWB ME/3502/D/1 dated 18 October 1972 - Shah's speech at the opening of the Majlis and Senate 6th October 1970. See also BBC SWB ME/3710/D/1 dated 16th June 1971 - Tehran Radio dated 14th June 1971.

⁶⁸⁰ The Shah sought to maintain rights to Bahrain right up until the last minute; see BBC SWB ME/2968/D/1 dated 8th January 1969 - Tehran Radio dated 7th January 1969; ME/2975/D/1 dated 16th January 1969 - Tehran Radio dated 13th January 1969.

Ironically, by accepting to become the 'policeman of the Gulf', which in Persian was translated as 'Gendarme' (a term which has more servile connotations) the Shah inadvertently played into the hands of his opponents who argued that he was merely doing the West's dirty work. This charge would surface again when Iranian troops were sent to help suppress the Dhofar rebellion in Oman.

Domestically, the Shah moved to consolidate dynastic nationalism and remove the inconsistencies which persisted, especially in attempting to incorporate the 'democratic' aspect of modernisation. The Shah decided to redefine democracy and thereby eliminate the contradiction. Whereas he had previously argued that Iran was not ready for democracy, now the emphasis shifted to argue that Iran was indeed democratic but in its own peculiarly Iranian sense. At the end of 1970, Prime Minister Hoveida argued, 'the secret of Iran's economic and social success lay in the fact that it did not follow baseless schools of thought, nor was it inspired by East or West in its revolution - the revolution was inspired by national traditions and the Shah's revolutionary ideals....' He then continued with an attack on Western conceptions of democracy, alluding to a theme which would become increasingly virulent, that, such conceptions simply created social problems.

"As the Shah has said, social democracy cannot exist without economic democracy, in my view most of those who talk about democracy are still limited in their concept to the schools of thought advocated by Plato, Montesquieu and others, whereas democracy today is conditioned by modern times. We do not believe democracy means anyone should be free to act against national interests and moral values and traditions. From our standpoint democracy means respecting human rights and individuals. The interesting question is

whether such democracy exists in those countries which are preaching to us on
democracy...⁶⁸¹

This notion of neither 'East nor West' was repeated at an Iran Novin Party meeting one week later, "...We believe that we shall become one of the advanced countries in the near future. However....one of the original aspects of our revolution is that we are not inspired by exported ideologies. We are inflicted neither with Westernisation nor Easternisation..."⁶⁸² Hoveida impressed upon his listeners that the motivating ideology was Iranian, and that it was Iran's economic success which had attracted the criticism of foreigners.

Tensions & Contradictions

While Iranian opposition groups lampooned the elections of 1971 as 'tomfooleries' and 'fabricated'⁶⁸³, it was the emergent criticism of foreigners which appeared to generate the greatest response, indicating that the international deconstruction and reinterpretation of

⁶⁸¹ BBC SWB ME/3562/D/1 dated 17th December 1970 - Hoveida's speech to the Central Committee of the Iran Novin Party, dated 15th December 1970. 'National interests' can be safely defined as the monarchy, which as the Shah continually argued was the central manifestation of Iranian nationalism. Therefore in these speeches we see an exercise in trope as 'nationalism' and the Pahlavi monarchy become essentially interchangeable.

⁶⁸² BBC SWB ME/3568/D/1 dated 28th December 1970 - Hoveida's statement to Iran Novin Party meeting, dated 22nd December 1970. See also Hoveida's comments to students and staff at Tehran University, dated 26th April 1972, BBC SWB ME/3975/D/1 dated 28th April 1972.

⁶⁸³ BBC SWB ME/3733/D/1 dated 13th July 1971 - Radio Iran Courier dated 9 July 1971.

the Shah's political myths had begun, an unforeseen consequence of the Persepolis celebrations and an indication that integration into the Cold War narrative was not always beneficial, encouraging a policy of differentiation. The vitriolic response of the Iranian media to the foreign criticism reflected the extreme polarisation of ideological positions and the use of political myth is apparent. In one particular case the Persian daily *Keyhan* vented its fury upon the British newspaper, *The Daily Telegraph* for attacking the validity of the elections, "...The Conservative paper would do better to look at itself first and then try to explain democracy. The *Daily Telegraph* would see Britain as a country facing great economic, social and political difficulties. It would see the way military force is used in preserving a type of tranquillity in Northern Ireland....That type of democracy naturally does not exist in Iran, and no one wants to follow blindly the British style of life. What the Conservative's paper calls democracy is of no interest to us." The editorial then continued to characterise the British as 'imperialists' in a clear attempt to appropriate the ideological familiarisation used by Dr Mosaddeq.⁶⁸⁴

A significant contradiction in the mythic construction was that despite the increasingly chauvinistic nature of this strategy of differentiation, it was itself transformed into a tool of internationalism by arguing that the achievements of the Shah were applicable globally. This universalisation of the Shah's apparent domestic achievements was a continuation of the myth of the White Revolution.⁶⁸⁵ However, as argued above, increased confidence transformed a tendency to invite foreigners to learn from Iran, to one in which foreigners

⁶⁸⁴ BBC SWB ME/3739/D/1 dated 20th July 1971, *Keyhan* dated 15th July 1971.

⁶⁸⁵ One could even argue that the Shah wanted to 'export' his revolution.

were being rather abruptly lectured about their inadequacies and how they should learn from Iran and its leader. As Hoveida argued:

“... the great feats initiated in Iran under the Iranian leader’s initiative which have now assumed a global dimension. The great feat of the campaign against illiteracy and the formation of the legion to serve mankind are among them....This is yet another example of the great achievements initiated in Iran and which have rapidly assumed international dimensions...”⁶⁸⁶

The Shah’s increasing impatience and irritation with his officials indicates that the reforms inaugurated in the White Revolution were not yielding the results the Shah had hoped for, or indeed was boasting about⁶⁸⁷. This tangible failure was being ascribed to the lack of communication between the Shah and the implementors of the reform. Quite simply, it was argued that people either did not understand, or were unwilling to exert the effort required to maintain the momentum of the revolution. The Shah, increasingly convinced of his message, thus blamed the messenger.

Thus in addressing the new cabinet in September 1971, the Shah admonished them with the statement that, “...Your revolutionary spirit must not flag for even one moment. All this progress or, as foreigners say, all this miracle in Iran could not have been achieved by

⁶⁸⁶ BBC SWB ME/3635/D/1 dated 16th March 1971 - Speech to 2nd Worker’s Congress, dated 13 March 1971.

⁶⁸⁷ See A K S Lambton Persian Land Reform 1962-66 Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1969; BBC SWB ME/4419/D/1 dated 9th October 1973, Shah’s speech to Majlis dated 6th October 1973 in which he refers more attention to raise agricultural yields and measures to deal with over-pricing by ‘shop-keepers’; H Richards Land Reform & Agribusiness in Iran Merip 1975.

routine work. All this has been achieved through faith and conscious belief in the charter of the revolution. This revolutionary zeal must exist with the same intensity it had during its first days...” Then, in order to deal with the unsatisfactory ‘education’ the Shah proceeded to argue that, “...The people should adopt the revolutionary spirit, otherwise progress will not be made. It is the job of the Information ministry to acquaint the people with their duties...”⁶⁸⁸ This need to educate a generally receptive and willing public was combined with harsh words for those who simply would not cooperate. Thus Prime Minister Hoveida declared that, “Unless a man is patriotic there is no room for him in our society...”⁶⁸⁹

The emergent equation of critical opposition with treason, the tactic originally used against recalcitrant nationalists, was now applied to all those who opposed the Shah’s particular ideological conception. Thus at a press conference the Shah argued, “...I can tell you that the number of political prisoners in this country is exactly amounting to the number of traitors in this country...”⁶⁹⁰ Such ‘traitors’ were increasingly held responsible for all the ills that befell the country and gradually domestic traitors (the red and black) were linked to foreign imperialists thus unifying two hitherto distinct areas of ideological operation. In a curious radio commentary on a bank robbery, it is stated that, “...The colonial powers which have become accustomed to sucking the blood of nations can equip

⁶⁸⁸ BBC SWB ME/3788/D/1 dated 16th July 1971, Shah’s speech to the new cabinet, dated 13th September 1971.

⁶⁸⁹ BBC SWB ME/3796/D/1 dated 25th September 1971, Hoveida’s speech to the Majlis, dated 23rd September 1971.

⁶⁹⁰ BBC SWB ME/3818/D/1 dated 21st October 1971, Shah’s press conference at Saadabad Palace, dated 18th October 1971.

their devoted hirelings with money, as they have done. The Iranian nation, which has already seen the ugliness of colonialism reflected in the most infernal of faces and which has seen how rotten and abominable colonialism aims to mar the calm, creative and constructive atmosphere of Iranian life with disturbance and fear, no longer needs to ask why the devoted hirelings of colonialism kill two respectable Iranians for 47,000 rials. Their target and that of their masters and motivators is Iran's security and stability at this auspicious time....."⁶⁹¹ Or again, in responding to criticisms of Iran from abroad, Tehran radio argued that, "...National interest is the highest priority in Iran. This should be known by both the left and right reactionaries....Iran has chosen to tread an extremely clear and unequivocal road.Any step taken outside this main line will meet certain defeat.....The Iranian nation condemns any type of reaction and any type of colonialism, in whatever form or colour...."⁶⁹²

In effect as 'Pahlavism' subsumed all that was supposedly constructive within its totality, so the 'enemy' coagulated into its own polarised totality with the consequence that an increasingly ambiguous mythic construction was polarising into well defined parameters for action. At one end stood the promised land of the Great Civilisation, which required constant vigilance and effort against the unscrupulous sabotage and conspiracies of its enemies.⁶⁹³ This polarisation between a duality of good and evil, or light and darkness was

⁶⁹¹ BBC SWB ME/3887/D/1 dated 13th January 1972, Tehran radio dated 1st January 1972.

⁶⁹² BBC SWB ME/3929/D/1 dated 2nd March 1972, Tehran Radio dated 27 February 1972. See also BBC SWB ME/4056/D/1 dated 2nd August 1972, Tehran Radio condemns terrorism and associates it with colonialism, dated 30th July 1972.

⁶⁹³ BBC SWB ME/3936/D/1 dated 10th March 1972, Shah's press conference,
(continued...)

increasingly used to portray Iran as having been lifted out of 'darkness' through the wise leadership of the Shah and on the threshold of a bright future. Thus on a trip to Baluchestan, one of the least developed provinces of Iran, Hoveida told the locals that, "You young people will never see these dark and disastrous days."⁶⁹⁴ Or in a later speech he argued, "During the last ten years we have left behind us an era full of darkness and devoid of hope and have reached a world full of brightness and hope..."⁶⁹⁵ Something of the growing polarisation of interpretations can be gleaned from Radio Iran Courier's criticism of Hoveida's visit to Baluchestan:

"[Hoveida] informed the people that in the near future Iran will become a world military power and called on the people to pray for the Shah and the crown prince. Obviously all his remarks were utterly incomprehensible to the Sistan and Baluchestan people, who have never seen a factory chimney or a railway and who are being further impoverished every year by trying to put up with repeated droughts and cultivate their arid land. The first reaction of the people to Hoveida was undoubtedly the bewildered question: who is this man? Where has he come from? What is he trying to say?....."⁶⁹⁶

The Shah's speech on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the 'White Revolution' in 1973 nevertheless reflected a king generally confident of his own ideological convictions

(...continued)

dated 7th March 1972.

⁶⁹⁴ BBC SWB ME/4111/D/1 dated 6th October 1972, Iran Novin rally in Zahedan, dated 4th October 1972.

⁶⁹⁵ BBC SWB ME/4180/D/1 dated 29th December 1972, Hoveida's statements on the country's progress, Tehran Radio, dated 27th December 1972.

⁶⁹⁶ BBC SWB ME/4112/D/2 dated 7th October 1972, Radio Iran Courier, dated 5th October 1972.

and his personalisation if not personification of it, while at the same time, hinting at the persistent ideological friction involved in trying to integrate modernisation within dynastic nationalism:

“even though in our history the class gap...did not exist, and all the founders of dynasties of the different rulers of this country all rose from the nation. The founder of the last dynasty, my own, rose from a simple military rank [applause].....But nevertheless, the social principle of Iran was based on feudalism.....”

He then continues on the theme of differentiation, and uses this trope to associate himself with the nation,

“ Such a situation could not be altered without opposition....On 5th June black reaction, with the constant support of the stateless Tudehs, did something in Tehran the stain of which will never be erased. The burning of a bus full of girl students, the burning of a library, and other acts will always be remembered. But this last ditch action did not last until evening and was strangled. It was after that that Black reaction was demolished....Once Black reaction was demolished, others did not bother us in our work and many times helped Iran’s movement and progress and showed their nationalist fibre too. These savage attacks were in fact aimed at the Iranian nation, at the body of Iran....The head had to be attacked, and, on 10th April 1965, this attempt was made but it was not destined to succeed. In the same way that I thought from the first day of my life, God has given me a duty and so long as that duty is not accomplished nothing can stop me [applause].....”

This growing emphasis on his Divinely inspired duty and indeed destiny to succeed would

be increasingly used to appeal to traditionalists and to stress the sacral aspect of kingship.

“I would like to say that I personally believe...that all the material advances which will bring us to the frontier of a great civilisation will be worthless without spiritual life [applause]. This we already have at our disposal in the form of Islam [applause], Islam which was brought to us by the Prophet not the religion which was adulterated for self-seeking gains [applause]...All the principles of Iran’s revolution are based on the original Islamic principles [applause].”⁶⁹⁷

His use of Islamic terminology expressed a desire to reach a wider audience along with the traditionalists, but his suggestion of Divine Guidance with the implication that he was acting according to God’s Will drew fierce criticism. Following an interview on the BBC’s Panorama programme, Radio Iran Courier commented:

“...In touching upon internal issues the Shah truly gives himself away. The Shah...claims Divine inspiration. This is not the first time he has uttered such things. It is however, the first time he openly claims to be a prophet. But is not our country a constitutional one? Then how is it that a prophet is ruling it, a prophet ruling it through Divine inspirations?.....”⁶⁹⁸

The Oil Price Rises & the Implementation of a New Order

In his New Year message in March 1974, the Shah announced that his quadrupling of the

⁶⁹⁷ BBC SWB ME/4203/D/1 dated 25th January 1973 - Tehran Radio dated 23 January 1973. Continued in ME/4204/D/1 dated 26th January 1973.

⁶⁹⁸ BBC SWB ME/4423/D/2 dated 13th October 1973, Radio Iran Courier dated 5 October 1973.

oil price the previous December had, “introduced a new order more in line with the realities of the international community and the requirements of its development.”⁶⁹⁹ In the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War, and the Arab boycott of the West, the Shah was able to portray himself as a friend of the West, while at the same time demanding a significant change in the relationship between Iran and the oil consortium which had been operating in Iran since 1954. If the commemorations for the 2500th anniversary of the Persian monarchy had only raised a few criticisms in the Western media, this event, insofar that it led directly to economic difficulty in the Western industrialised world, resulted in much greater scrutiny of Iranian affairs and the government of Shah.

Initially however, the ideological tensions with the West seemed respectful. In the words of Time magazine, the Shah had become ‘The Emperor of Oil’ and the stern picture on the cover can have left few in doubt as to the Shah’s heightened international standing. The very real power the Shah exerted on Western economies through his control of oil prompted the Associate Editor of Time Spencer Davidson to argue that, “The Shah’s power is exploding and Americans would be wise to pay attention to his dreams.”⁷⁰⁰ Later, directly echoing the official Iranian line, he argued, “Mohammad Reza Pahlavi has brought Iran to a threshold of grandeur that is at least analogous to what Cyrus the Great achieved for ancient Persia.”⁷⁰¹

⁶⁹⁹ BBC SWB ME/4558/D/1 dated 23rd March 1974, Shah’s New Year Message, dated 21st March 1974.

⁷⁰⁰ Time Magazine, dated November 4th 1974, pp 28-38. The title says it all, Oil, Grandeur and a challenge to the West There are suggestions, as yet unverifiable, that the Shah effectively bought these articles in Time.

⁷⁰¹ Time, pg 28.

With such praise, it is not hard to see why the Shah became increasingly arrogant and confident in his discussions with foreign reporters, with the result that political prudence, which may have previously disguised his more extreme views, and contradictions, was left by the wayside as the Shah lectured people on his thoughts and their own inadequacies. Some of this was undoubtedly an exercise in political theatrics and helped confirm the image of the lofty imperial monarch both for foreigners and domestic audiences alike. Thus, when he announced the decision to raise the price of oil in a press conference relayed by Tehran Radio, the Shah declared that,

“as far as the industrial world is concerned...the era of extraordinary progress and income - and an even more extraordinary income - based on cheap oil has ended. They should find new energy resources and gradually tighten their belts, and eventually all the children of wealthy families who have plenty to eat, who have cars and who act almost like terrorists, planting bombs here and there, or choosing other ways will have to reconsider these aspects of this developed industrialised world. They will have to work harder...”

The Shah then pointed out that since Iran would soon join the industrialised club, she did not want to deliberately hurt the industrialised world, or indeed to ‘destroy’ it, but simply to remove ‘defects’; in other words, encourage an adjustment.⁷⁰² This theme was repeated again in an interview with *Il Corriere della Serra*, when he described the move as one of ‘self defence’. “We do not wish any harm either to the developing countries or to the industrial countries, particularly since our own country will soon become an industrial

⁷⁰² BBC SWB ME/4485/D/1 dated 28th December 1973 - Shah’s press conference dated 23rd December 1973.

nation.”⁷⁰³ In an interview with *Der Spiegel*, the Shah appeared to avoid any distinction between the state of Iran and himself when he remarked that, “I shall sell *my* oil in the form of petrochemical products..[italics added].”⁷⁰⁴

The extra revenue made available by the price rise meant that the 5th Development plan had to be reviewed, and the \$7bn originally allocated leapt to over \$21bn overnight. In 1975, the Finance Minister Hushang Ansari announced that economic growth was expected reach 41%!⁷⁰⁵ In the accompanying enthusiasm there was talk of making Tehran an Asian financial centre. Central Bank Governor Yeganeh, enthused, “that effective steps might be taken towards a grand [great] civilisation...that the constructive and critical role assigned to the Iranian economy in the international arena by the Iranian nation’s great leader, the Shahanshah Aryamehr, might be achieved in the shortest possible time....”⁷⁰⁶

As the utopian vision acquired an unprecedented air of possibility so the belief that Iran was about to cross the frontier into the Great Civilisation, and indeed overtake the West became voiced with increasing conviction. In an interview with *Al Ahrām*, the Shah argued that, “...In ten years Iran’s population will be equal to that of France and Britain today. Iran’s population, in other words, will not be less than 45m, but I can see Iran 25 years from now and we hope to be better off than France and Britain. Iran will have an

⁷⁰³ BBC SWB ME/4493/D/1 dated 7th January 1974, *Il Corriere della Serra* dated 5th January 1974.

⁷⁰⁴ BBC SWB ME/4494/D/1 dated 8th January 1974, Interview with *Der Spiegel*, dated 5th January 1974.

⁷⁰⁵ BBC SWB ME/4833/D/1 dated 18th February 1975, Tehran Radio, dated 15th February 1975.

⁷⁰⁶ BBC SWB ME/4498/D/1 dated 12th January 1974, Tehran Radio, dated 10th January 1974.

income that will probably be more than Britain's. ...⁷⁰⁷ The Shah also took the opportunity to reiterate the message that the White Revolution had rid the country of big feudalists, who were essentially a manifestation of 'foreign domination', thereby emphasising the singularity of foreign and domestic opposition.

In a famous interview with Peter Snow, the Shah was far more emphatic in elucidating these themes, and in particular, for lecturing the British, behaviour which must have been calculated to win him the support of nationalists, for whom Britain remained the villain.⁷⁰⁸

"...In 25 years Iran will be one of the world's five flourishing and prosperous nations...I think that in 10 year's time our country will be as you are now. I am not the only one who says this but, according to others, during the coming 25 years Iran will become one of the five most flourishing and prosperous nations of the world..." The motivation for attacking the British came not only from a desire to play to anti-British sentiment but also, as argued above, as a strategy of differentiation to distinguish Iran from the West, so that unfavourable comparisons over democratic rights could not be drawn. Thus when Peter Snow asked what the Shah's views were on the socio-political system in the West and Britain in particular, the Shah replied, "...I do not really oppose it but I should state my opinion on it for you. If you continue this unruly and in-disciplined social system, your country will explode.....You will go bankrupt, you do not work enough, you try and receive more money than necessary for what little you do and this situation cannot

⁷⁰⁷ BBC SWB ME/4515/D/1 dated 1st February 1974, interview in Al Ahran, dated 30th January 1974.

⁷⁰⁸ That this rhetoric may have had more impact among certain domestic constituents is exemplified by the fact during the Revolution of 1978-79, some urged the Shah to 'apologise' to the British for the harsh criticism he had unleashed.

continue; it can possibly continue for a few months or for a year or two but not forever....” When challenged over the issue of democratisation, the Shah was even more explicit, “Who says the people of Iran want to have the type of democracy that you have in Britain?” When it was emphasised that economic progress may lead to political democracy, the Shah finally laid to rest any hopes for political liberalisation which may have permeated his thoughts in the early 1960s. Democracy was replaced by a paternalistic monarch who knew what was best for his people,

“This is not necessarily the case because we Iranians have a custom which is exactly the opposite of this. The people and the Shah of Iran are so close to each other that they consider themselves to be members of one family. I think that the people of Iran respect their Shah in the same way that children of Iranian families respect their fathers.”⁷⁰⁹

The *Rastakhiz* (Resurrection) Party

The *Hezb-e Rastakhiz* (Resurrection Party) was the Shah’s solution to the contradictions implicit in promoting the myth of the saviour with the democratisation many expected would result from economic development. It was in effect an experiment in ‘democratic centralism’ in which competing views could be aired within the ideological umbrella of Pahlavism - now renamed the ‘philosophy of the revolution’. *Rastakhiz* was intended to become the ultimate tool of ideological dissemination and differentiation. Its membership would define loyalty to the Pahlavi system and members of the party could expect preferential treatment and patronage, while they would provide the raw material for the

⁷⁰⁹ BBC SWB ME/4514/D/1 dated 31st January 1974, Interview with Peter Snow for ITV, dated 29th January 1974.

political education of the masses, through lectures, rallies and the production of a party newspaper. With the foundation of Rastakhiz, the Shah definitively shattered any pretensions to multi-party politics and confirmed to many people including those well-disposed to sympathise with him, that the autocratic nature of government was likely to remain a feature of the Pahlavi. Rastakhiz was a remarkably bold initiative, in that it signalled the Shah's impatience with apathy and passivity - he was now demanding the active loyalty of the people. This forced many who would have tolerated his otherwise grandiose behaviour and rhetoric, to make a decision about their political position with often negative results for the Shah. As one student activist later recalled, the Shah was not interested in partial support; given a choice of being labelled friend or foe, many chose the latter.⁷¹⁰

In rationalising his decision to impose a one party system upon the country, the Shah made it clear that this was *his* decision, and that the strategy was one of differentiation, "I reached the conclusion - in view of the fact that we are again witnessing provocations with regard to oil, the country's astonishing progress on the international scene and other provocations in the country - that we should separate the ranks of Iranians clearly, properly and identifiably...Those who believe in the constitutional law, the monarchy regime and the 6th Bahman revolution will be on one side and those who do not believe in these on the other." Having explained that within this umbrella organisation, or 'movement' as it was later to be characterised, opinions could be freely aired, as long as they did not contravene [dynastic] national principles, the Shah concluded with a

⁷¹⁰ Abbas Abdi - transcript of interview for BBC2 documentary 'Reputations', April 1996.

statement that insulted the sensibilities of the professional educated classes whose support he arguably most needed to cultivate:

“Two alternatives are open to those who do not join this organisation or do not believe in these principles I have already mentioned. Such individuals either belong to an illegal organisation - that is, they are Tudeh Party members, as we call them; in other words, as we say, and with the force of evidence, stateless individuals. These belong in an Iranian gaol. Alternatively, they could be given passports tomorrow with the greatest of pleasure and without charging them any exit dues, so that they can go, if they so wish, to any country they choose. This is because they cannot be regarded as Iranians; they have no home country and their activity is illegal - the penalty for their activity having been already determined by law.”

He then prevaricated before confirming his initial viewpoint,

“On the other hand, those who may not be Tudeh Party supporters - or traitors to their country - and who, at the same time, do not believe in the above-mentioned principles - such individuals are free provided they officially and openly declare that they are not against the homeland. But backing both sides and wanting their cake and eat it is no longer acceptable. Everyone must clarify their position in this country like a man....So my point is that, from now, from tomorrow, everyone of voting age should establish their national position....”⁷¹¹

The philosophy of the Iranian revolution as encapsulated in the doctrine of the Rastakhiz Party was very much a repetition of the belief system outlined in Pahlavism some years

⁷¹¹ BBC SWB ME/4845/D/1 dated 4th March 1975, Shah’s press conference, dated 2nd March 1975.

earlier. The existence of the party and its organ, the newspaper *Rastakhiz* meant that this philosophy, or ideology could be more widely disseminated. Throughout, the centrality of the paternalistic and benign Shah is emphasised, quoting heavily from his own sayings and describing him as the *Farmandeh*, 'commander', possibly an allusion to the Islamic/Arabic *amir al-momenin* (commander of the faithful - usually ascribed to Imam Ali). Indeed, this is not only a distinctly Iranian revolution, but it was also quintessentially a 'spiritual' revolution, which aside from providing industrialisation and welfare, would also inaugurate a classless society.⁷¹²

Indeed, with the advent of *Rastakhiz*, the Shah's claims for his policies simply became more extravagant. Thus for example, in August 1975, the Shah decided to institute share ownership for factory workers as yet another principle in the 'Shah-People Revolution' which he argued, would pre-empt the development of 'industrial feudalism' transferring the myth of feudalism to industrial relations. This 'extortionate situation', which he described as, "the exploitation of man by man", would be eliminated by this policy.⁷¹³ He later made the extraordinary claim "that the word exploitation no longer figures in the Iranian revolution's new vocabulary," thereby implying that by eliminating the word, or ideological construct, one eliminated the problem.⁷¹⁴ In effect myth was being constructed on myth and the Shah became enmeshed in an increasingly complex reciprocating

⁷¹² *Falsafe-ye enghelab-e Iran* (The Philosophy of the Iranian Revolution) in *Rastakhiz* Newspaper no 452, Wednesday 5th Aban 2535 / 26th October 1976.

⁷¹³ BBC SWB ME/4976/A/2 dated 8 August 1975, Tehran Radio, dated 6 August 1975

⁷¹⁴ BBC SWB ME/5119/A/1 dated 28th January 1976 - Shah's speech at the 14th anniversary of the White Revolution, dated 26th January 1976.

semiological chain.

The Myth of Imperial Authority

During a speech from the throne at the opening of the new Majlis and Senate, the Shah made it clear that a main function of *Rastakhiz* was political education. “the true purpose of education is not only to teach lessons but also to train even more worthy individuals, imbued with the spirit of patriotism and nationality and moral and spiritual virtues; in other words, principles on which the future of Iranian society is based.... This is the responsibility of the Resurgence Party as the country’s leader in political education.”⁷¹⁵ This was a task that the newspaper *Rastakhiz* seemed to have embarked on with some vigour, more so in the Persian year 1355/2535 (1976-77) which marked the 50th anniversary of the dynasty.

A sampling of the articles in the party newspaper *Rastakhiz* exemplifies the mood in 1976.⁷¹⁶ There was for example, a renewed emphasis on reinforcing the Shah’s religious credentials in order to stress the sanctity and religious authority of the monarchy. Thus there were pictures of him on pilgrimage to Mashhad, as the protector of the shrine of Imam Reza, and mourning the death of Imam Hussein. Indeed, in general the language takes a decidedly religious tone, as a pilot shot down over Yemen (PDRY) is described as having been martyred. For the anniversary of the White revolution, some 300 mullahs

⁷¹⁵ BBC SWB ME/5332/A/5 dated 8th October 1976, Shah’s speech at the opening of the Majlis, dated 6th October 1976. See also BBC SWB ME/5348/A/4 dated 2⁷ October 1976 - interview with Amir Taheri, dated 25th October 1976

⁷¹⁶ Excerpts taken from *Rastakhiz*, dated 1355-56 / 1976-78

were drafted in to praise the Shah, and the Rastakhiz party hold a thanksgiving ceremony praying for the health of the Shah⁷¹⁷.

On 14th Mehr 2535/1355 [5th October 1976], it is pointed out that the Shah understands the centrality of religion to the nation.⁷¹⁸ On 26th Bahman,[14th February 1977] Dariush Homayun editorialises that the purpose of Rastakhiz is to mobilise the people for political and public life - the word he uses significantly enough is *basij*.⁷¹⁹ On 12th Esfand [2^d March 1977], Jamshid Amuzegar argues that the aim of the party is to create 'faith' among the people, ostensibly one would guess in the future of the country, but more probably in the person of the Shah.⁷²⁰

On the inauguration of the 15th anniversary of the White revolution, the centrality of the Shah was emphasised when a huge demonstration was held at the Shahyad monument with the participation of 150,000 people. Books were published, foreign reporters invited and newspapers hail the 'revolution' with headlines about the millions of Iranians in celebration, and the fact that the 'sun of the 6th Bahman (the Persian date of the referendum) rises'. At a Rastakhiz party commemoration, a huge portrait of the Shah was unveiled in the now familiar pose of the Shah in civilian clothes standing among the clouds

⁷¹⁷ *Rastakhiz* 6th Bahman 2535/1355 / 22nd January 1977 pg 1

⁷¹⁸ *Rastakhiz* 14th Mehr 1355/2535 / 5th October 1976 pp 13-14. This was reportedly first said in 1968.

⁷¹⁹ *Rastakhiz* 26th Bahman 1355/2535 / 14th February 1977 pg 4. The Islamic Republic was later to mobilise the masses - the *basijis*.

⁷²⁰ *Rastakhiz* 12th Esfand 1355/2535 / 2nd March 1977 pg 1

with his arm raised.⁷²¹

The cultivation of the myth of the saviour continued throughout the year. For example on the 2nd Dey [22nd December 1976] an article on leadership was published comparing the Shah, once again described as the *farmandeh* (commander) to such notables as Churchill, and the leaders of the USSR.⁷²² Churchill's foresight is constrained by Parliament, while the communist dictators lack foresight altogether. The Shah on the other hand was farsighted and wise, and if problems have arisen it is only because the Iranians have misunderstood him. For the first time, he is described, interestingly, as *rahbar-e enghelab-e melli* (the leader of the national revolution). As a great leader of course, the Shah enjoys the admiration of the world and throughout the paper compliments from world leaders are reprinted. Thus, even JFK is reported as having said, "The shahanshah of Iran is one of the best informed leaders of world."⁷²³ He is joined by a grateful Churchill for the Shah's role in World War II,⁷²⁴ and Ibn Saud, who had allegedly described the Shah as "one of the standard bearers of the Islamic movement in the 20th century world."⁷²⁵

Narrative reconstruction & the myth of the saviour

⁷²¹ *Rastakhiz* 6th Bahman 1355/2535 / 26th January 1978 pg 1

⁷²² *Rastakhiz* 2nd Dey 1355/2535 / 22nd December 1976 pg 8

⁷²³ *Rastakhiz* 15th Mehr 1355/2535 / 6th October 1976 pp 12-13

⁷²⁴ *Rastakhiz* 2nd Dey 1355/2535 / 22nd December 1976 pg 8

⁷²⁵ *Rastakhiz* 7th Mehr 1355/2535 / 28th September 1976; there is a complete list of admirers in this issue including: Churchill, Ibn Saud, Kennedy, Pope Paul VI, Padegomi, Hirohito, Ford, Nixon, Johnson, Roosevelt, King Badouin. US Presidents predominate.

The continuing development of the myth of the saviour would eventually impact on the reconstruction of the historical narrative needed to support it. On 23rd Esfand 1355 [13th March 1977], the eve of the anniversary of the birth of Reza Shah, the Shah's family lineage is reconstructed to show a solidly military line; a comprehensive genealogical reconstruction which received fruition the publication of M Karanjia's 'Mind of a Monarch'.⁷²⁶ By this stage the Shah seems to admit a belief in the mythical kings of Iran as real personages, thus extending the Persian monarchy not to Cyrus the Great but to Jamshid and Fereidoon. Having been flattered by Karanjia by the comment that he should write a new Shahnameh to record his own deeds, the Shah then discusses his family lineage in Mazandaran province, which he describes as one of the ancient homelands of the Aryan tribes. It was from a traditionally military family belonging to the hardy Bavand clan from the upper Mazandaran region of the Savadkuh which was part of the original homelands of the ancient Aryan races, that my father Reza Shah was happy and proud to trace his ancestry.⁷²⁷ This genealogy cannot but be a fabrication.⁷²⁸

The relationship between the myth of the saviour and the historical narrative is amply illustrated by the following re-construction of the historical narrative, Reza Khan is described as having been persuaded to choose monarchy over a republic by public

⁷²⁶ Karanjia The Mind of a Monarch London 1977.

⁷²⁷ *Ibid* pg 31

⁷²⁸ Few Iranian families would have been able to trace their ancestry beyond the early Qajars, documentation is scarce and normally non-existent, and since Reza Shah himself introduced surnames (including his own) and registration it is difficult to see how the lineage of the a lowly Cossack officer could be accurately traced more than a couple of generations.

acclamation, and to have been a religious man fond of visiting the holy shrine of Imam Reza in Mashhad.⁷²⁹ Furthermore, the Shah was sworn in as monarch in 1941 after huge public acclaim swayed the allies, but the British, never happy with him or his dynasty, fomented trouble against him, even going so far as playing the Qajar anthem at a reception in the embassy; though there is no record of any such anthem. His account of the liberation of Azerbaijan is a virtual fantasy, as Qavam is portrayed as treacherous, the Allies as only interested in the division of Iran (the Bevin Plan?), and the Shah being the only patriot willing to lead the army to re-take the province by force.

The theme of Divine guidance is again stressed in his description of the decision to march on Azerbaijan, which was,

“really inspired and decided by that mystical power to which I owe my career and its direction. It is this Divine intelligence that directs my actions, as also the timing of them, and assures their success...The fates have so arranged the course of events around me as to leave me in no doubt about the Divine hand guiding me to my destiny....this is the reason why I am more and more concerned everyday with my deep belief in this mystical life of mine and the mission ordained for me by higher powers.”⁷³⁰

The most significant attempt to reconstruct the Iranian historical narrative in the image of the Pahlavis was the publication in 1976, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Pahlavi Dynasty of a three volume chronicle of the Pahlavis, beginning with the coup

⁷²⁹ Karanjia *op. cit.* pp 39-42.

⁷³⁰ *Ibid* pp 89-90.

which brought Reza Khan to power in 1921 and continuing through to 1978.⁷³¹ It was obviously intended as a day by day chronicle and its abrupt termination in 1978 was a result of the political collapse of the regime. The three volumes total some 3159 pages, and incomplete as it is, it is indicative of the relative importance of the Shah to his father, that the latter occupies 200 pages, while the activities of the son take up pages 201-3159. Of these 800 pages cover the period up to 1956, another 1000 take the history up to 1967, while the last 1000 pages are devoted to ten years between 1967 and 1977.

The emphasis is quite clearly the dynasty with accounts of their holidays, visits as well as political activities; and spends considerable time highlighting the praise of the foreign diplomats and statesmen along with the media for the Pahlavis. Thus it is recorded that in 1962, the American television channel CBS made a film about the Shah which 'millions' of Americans watched.⁷³² Likewise, it is argued that the coronation was broadcast via satellite to 'millions' of people throughout the world.⁷³³

Key personages which may compete with the Pahlavi lustre were either ignored or belittled. For instance, in Reza Shah's reign the Minister of Court, Teymourdash barely gets a mention, while for Mohammad Reza Shah, the role of Qavam in the Azerbaijan crisis is secondary, and Mosaddeq is re-situated into the historical narrative as a man who behaved unconstitutionally. Other personages, such as Cyrus the Great, far too distant in

⁷³¹ Shoja ad Din Shafa *Gahnameh-ye Panjah Saleh-ye Shahanshahi-ye Pahlavi* (Chronicle of 50 years of the Pahlavi monarchy) Tehran 1978

⁷³² *Gahnameh* entry dated 19th April 1962 / 28th Farvardin 2521

⁷³³ *Gahnameh* entry dated 26th October 1967 / 4th Aban 2526

history to be of contemporary concern, were hailed as champions of 'humanity', in an attempt to universalise the Iranian monarchy.

The chronicle was dated in the new imperial calendar, read in this case retrospectively into recent Iranian history. The Shah's decision to suddenly impose a new calendar upon the country in 1976, on the 50th anniversary of the Pahlavi Dynasty, was the most blatant act of narrative reconstruction, changing overnight and without much consultation, the historical reference point with which most Iranians were familiar. It was arguably an explicit attack on the historical framework on which the myths sustained by Iranian popular culture were situated. This fourth calendar - the Imperial calendar - dated from the reign of Cyrus the Great. Overnight, Iranians who thought they were in the year 1355 (1976), found themselves in 2535. Hoveida congratulated the Majlis on ratifying the new calendar with the words, "Your decision is indeed a reflection of the historic fact that during this long period, there has been only one Iran and one monarchic system and that these two are so closely interwoven that they represent one concept."⁷³⁴ The year was harder to comprehend because a mere five years earlier the Shah had triumphantly announced the 2500th anniversary of the Persian Monarchy. The date was in actual fact correct if calculated from 559 BC, but it cannot have been lost on the Shah that this meant that the beginning of his reign coincided with the Imperial year 2500 (1941). Thus while Cyrus the Great spawned the first 2500 years of Iranian history, Mohammad Reza Shah would define the next 2500 years.

⁷³⁴ *Keyhan International*, March 15th 1975, quoted in Zonis Majestic Failure, p 82.

Towards the Great Civilisation

In an interview with the Iranian journalist Amir Taheri, the Shah was asked about the achievements of the Pahlavi dynasty during the first 50 years of their rule. After commenting on the poor state of the country prior to his father's accession and asking the people to judge for themselves the differences that had emerged since 1921, the Shah reflected that, "to tell the truth I no longer think of the past, for my thoughts are directed towards the future."⁷³⁵ The product of his reflection on the future, the promised to which he would lead his people, was his third and arguably final book⁷³⁶ 'Towards the Great Civilisation', which was published in 1977, and in the Shah's words, was intended to deal with the future, just as the first had dealt with the past and the second with the present. Much criticised in retrospect, by the intelligentsia, who mocked the simple analysis and somewhat vague if mystical self reflection which permeated the book, it was nonetheless, less the ramblings of a madman, than a last testament with probably more honest expression of personal belief than many would have liked. For his detractors, it was just another example of the Shah's detachment, and it is indicative of this huge divide from social reality that the book was treated with more derision than reverence.

Central to the book is the concept of sacral monarchy and the fact that the Shah believes himself to be Divinely-Guided, though there are hints of fatalism in this statement; and

⁷³⁵ BBC SWB ME/5350/A/1 dated 29th October 1976 - Shah's interview with Amir Taheri, Tehran Radio dated 25th October 1976.

⁷³⁶ His final book was in actual fact 'Answer to History' but this was written after his downfall.

characteristically, the Shah emphasises the paternal role of the Iranian monarch with respect to his people. Indeed for the first time the Shah explains what he understands by the term '*Shahanshahi*':

“An important point to note is the real meaning of the word *shahanshahi*, which cannot be explained in ordinary historical terms. When it is necessary to translate into a foreign language, it is normal to translate it as 'Imperial', but the meaning of the Western term Imperial is simply political and geographic, whereas from the Iranian perspective, the term *shahanshahi* has more than the normal meaning, it has a spiritual, philosophical, symbolic, and to a great extent, a sentimental aspect, in other words, just as it has a rational and thoughtful relevance, so too it has a moral and emotional dimension. In Iranian culture, the Iranian monarchy means the political and geographic unity of Iran in addition to the special national identity and all those unchangeable values which this national identity has brought forth. For this reason no fundamental change is possible in this country unless it is in tune with the fundamental principles of the monarchical system.”⁷³⁷

Monarchy, he stresses, is central to the Iranian identity, “Another manifestation of the eternal national values is the monarchical system of Iran. This is a system which from the very first day has been identified with the existence and identity of Iran and its durability....can be counted as one of the triumphs of history.”⁷³⁸

In this book the Shah moves more emphatically away from the West. Criticising the immoral lifestyle of the West, the Shah also attacks the unfair international system which

⁷³⁷ M R Pahlavi *Be Sooye Tamadun-e Bozorg* pg 244.

⁷³⁸ *Ibid* pg 243.

serves the industrialised world, in language which seems more appropriate to Marxist writings. In light of this he warns his people against become 'west-toxicated', actually using the phrase *gharbzadegi* which Jalal Ale Ahmad had made famous nearly twenty years previously, though he cautions that this should not be confused with anti-westernism.⁷³⁹ Iran will avoid the mistakes of the West and head towards a glorious future which according to the Shah, is unparalleled in Iranian history thereby confirming his importance in Iranian history:

"The Great Civilisation which we are advancing towards, is not just a chapter in our history, it is the greatest chapter in our history. It is the ideal destination of several thousand years of Iran's history and culture; an ideal which once attained becomes the starting point of a new era in our national life. And it is the dictat of history that of the many generations of Iranians, today's generation will be the one to witness the dawn of the most brilliant era in the history of our country."⁷⁴⁰

As for the Great Civilisation itself, the Shah describes this in vague utopian terms, which he nonetheless believes is achievable,

"In Iran during the era of the Great Civilisation, there will be nothing left of such age old and destructive factors such as: poverty, ignorance, illiteracy, corruption, exploitation, discrimination and the like. The widening activities of the health service will maximise the health and fitness, up to that which research allows, for each Iranian; and the spread of education will bring the maximum mental and intellectual well-being, up to available

⁷³⁹ *Ibid* pg 231.

⁷⁴⁰ *Ibid* pg 232

standards...⁷⁴¹

Essentially the Great Civilisation is a super welfare-state combining intellectual and political well-being with religious conviction and spirituality.

“A highly humanitarian and democratic social order will prevail in Iran during the era of the Great Civilisation, with individual freedoms, social justice, economic democracy, decentralisation, informed public participation in all affairs, and productive national culture.”⁷⁴²

Although in some areas the era of the Great Civilisation has already begun, the Shah appears to push the frontier further back as compared with earlier speeches. Nevertheless this frontier can be crossed:

“If all our efforts continue as at present, and if no foreseeable situation outside our control arises, we shall construct during the next 12 years a solid industrial, agricultural and technological substructure for the country’s development and will reach the present level of progress of Western Europe. At that time our country will have a population of 45 to 50 million, ie comparable to the population of larger countries of Europe, and the era of the ‘Great Civilisation’ will have begun...”⁷⁴³

Ironically, in light of the pivotal role they were to play in the events that were rapidly to

⁷⁴¹ *Ibid* pg 258.

⁷⁴² *Ibid* pg 279

⁷⁴³ *Ibid* pg 265

dis-entangle the complex weave of myths the Pahlavi's had spun about themselves, the heroes of the piece were the labouring masses, whom the Shah still believed he had championed, and who remained essentially loyal to him.

“Two groups occupy the first rank in reaping the advantages of the Revolution and of social justice: these are the two classes that constitute the pillars of Iran's society and economy, namely the workers and the farmers.”

Tensions

The Shah sought to eradicate the tensions, which even he appeared on occasion to acknowledge, within his attempted synthesis of ideological construction and inheritances into a reconstructed ideology of dynastic nationalism, through an emphatic concentration on developing the myth of the saviour. By personalising the ideology and seeking to become its personification and essential source, he aimed to eliminate the essential tension which exists when ideas are identified with individuals. Ironically this process only resulted in an increasing polarisation of ideology into more extreme and less flexible political myth. Although sustainable by a sycophantic court, the semiological chain this resulted in, insulated the Shah from the tensions which existed beyond the imperial entourage thus contributed to an inability to react effectively to external developments.

In early January 1978, following the latest in a series of inflammatory speeches from Najaf, the Shah decided to reply in kind to the Ayatollah Khomeini, one of the more outspoken members of 'Black reaction'. Instructions were sent for an article outlining the

Shah's beliefs, his conception of the historical narrative, the opposition of the 'red and the black', and the particularly wicked and reactionary role of the Ayatollah Khomeini, to be published in the newspaper *Etela'at*. This relatively short column entitled, 'Iran and the colonisation of the red and the black'⁷⁴⁴ was a concise summary of the imperial myth, and apart from the attack on Ayatollah Khomeini, consisted largely of repetitions of the myth of imperial authority.

For those within the increasingly insular and isolated cocoon known as the Court, the publication of the article was matter of routine;⁷⁴⁵ even opponents of the Shah could not have anticipated the negative reaction it would promote. Indeed the Shah's erratic reaction to the spiral of riots sparked by the article and the fatalism which he exhibited throughout 1978 suggests that he personally experienced a sudden reinterpretation of the political myth he had constructed, replacing certainty with doubt, belief in his legitimacy, with disbelief. His announcement in November 1978 that he acknowledged the 'Revolution of the Iranian people'⁷⁴⁶, and that he sought to make up for past mistakes, along with his failure to comprehend the opposition that manifested itself on the streets in the summer and autumn of 1978 only encouraged his opponents and hastened the fall of the regime. The year of the revolution revealed that the greatest essential tension of Mohammad Reza Shah's reign remained the Shah himself.

⁷⁴⁴ *Etela'at*, dated January 8th 1978.

⁷⁴⁵ Dariush Homayun, transcript of interview for BBC2 documentary *Reputations*, April 1996.

⁷⁴⁶ BBC SWB ME/5962/A/9 dated 7th November 1978 - Shah's speech to the nation, dated 6th November 1978

Conclusion

Two themes characterise the development of political myth during this period. Firstly this period witnessed the increasing internationalisation of the ideology of dynastic nationalism concomitant with the Shah's own increasing political activities on the international arena. The attempt to situate himself and Iran in the narrative of the Cold War which had begun in the 1950s as a strategy which would support and sustain his consolidation of power within in Iran now began to predominate and to influence his actions irrespective of domestic developments and considerations. The increased international scrutiny which resulted altered the relationship between the Shah and the West, from one of rather peripheral if essential support, to one of ideological antagonism. The reality of practical relations aside, ideologically the Shah was busy throughout the 1970s trying with mixed results, to extricate himself from associations which earlier had provided him with considerable legitimacy. As an increasingly critical foreign press urged democratic reforms, the Shah sought redefine 'democracy' and situate it firmly within his conception of dynastic nationalism and the vigorous development of the myth of the saviour.

Increasingly certain of his own ideological convictions, and proceeding in a political environment in which public dissent was limited, the Shah emphasised to a greater degree the reification of dynastic nationalism within his person, moving away from any personalisation by proxy and indeed arguing for his own superiority to the icons of the past. If anything, he now sought to identify himself with the Deity, so much so that to be a friend of the Shah (*Shah-doust*) was no longer sufficient, and instead loyalty was

measured in levels of *Shah-parast*, literally `worshipping the Shah.⁷⁴⁷ Indeed the polarisation of ideology approached new levels, with the development of *Rastakhiz* and its use as tool of mass differentiation.

This period was quintessentially one of historical reconstruction and utopian visions, as the Shah either unaware or dismissive of ideological frictions external to his world view, sought to further define and impose his interpretation. This definition was encouraged by internal frictions and contradictions which the Shah sought to remove and the semiological chain which emerged reflects the other major theme of this period - the reciprocity of mythic development. The more the Shah reconstructed the historical narrative, the more he developed the myth of the saviour, and as this self-perception became more defined, so more attention would be given to the historical narrative so that the relationship reflected a reciprocal dialectic, each feeding and developing off the other. Though the complex web of semiological chains insulated the Shah from external pressures, the increasingly polarised myth was itself subject as normal to re-interpretation and rejuvenation by his opponents and when the opportunity presented itself, the ideological reaction was equally polarised and bewildering to the Pahlavi regime.

⁷⁴⁷ I have found no written evidence for this term, though there is plenty oral evidence.

Conclusion

Writers such as al Ghazali and Nizam al Mulk attest to the fact that the charisma of Persian kings, the Divinely bestowed 'light of good fortune' (*Farr-e Izadi*) was something which was not inherent in kings but was acquired and importantly could be lost. It was a characteristic of kings which both reflected and depended upon their ability to govern.⁷⁴⁸ In other words aspirations to 'Divine right' had to be earned and maintained through practical application of political skill, and that application would in turn have a direct bearing on one's *de jure* authority to govern. With this in mind, it is worth remembering that whatever the essential tensions, contradictions and weaknesses in the construction of Pahlavi ideology, the dynasty did survive for nearly sixty years during a period of significant social and economic change which pre-dated their rise and ultimately outlived them. Compared to most post-Islamic dynasties, their period of rule was not unusually short. Indeed, it was Mohammad Reza Shah's longevity, despite difficult challenges, that encouraged some of his critics to soften their attitude and in some cases tentatively believe in his cause.

At the same time, this belief depended on the provision of a comprehensive ideological

⁷⁴⁸ This reciprocal relationship between the *de jure* and *de facto* sources of legitimacy was candidly summarised in a comment attributed to Ayatollah Beheshti following the fall of the Shah when he is reported to have said that, 'If the Shah was stupid enough to let us throw him out then he did not deserve to be Shah.' For further detail on the concept of *farr-e Izadi* see G Aneer Imam Ruhullah Khomeini, Šāh Muhammad Riza Pahlavi and the religious traditions of Iran Stockholm, Uppsala, 1985, pp 9-11, 64; see also A K S Lambton Theory & Practice in Medieval Persian Government. London, Varorium Reprints, 1980

construct centred on their persons which would provide the Pahlavis with consensual and popularly based legitimate authority, and since both Shahs suffered from a crisis of legitimacy originating from the role of foreign powers in their respective rise to power, the nature of this ideological construct became correspondingly more important. Indeed, it is significant that the Islamic Revolution has been described as above all a 'psychological' revolution, allowing the people to challenge and ultimately break hierarchical bonds they had previously considered sacrosanct.⁷⁴⁹ This is important, since it suggests that one of the key, possibly pivotal contests which has permeated Iranian political discourse in the twentieth century has been an ideological one, in which different factions have fought for the right to define Iranian history and contemporary development.

Indeed, one of the most striking aspects of Iranian political development during this period has been the parallel existence of a number of dynamic and conflicting historical narratives, each in their own way building upon valid interpretations of the past to serve their present needs, yet acutely flawed by their denial of the validity, or even existence of other interpretations. This thesis has focussed on the interpretation constructed by the monarchists, the ideological construction defined here as 'dynastic nationalism' and its identification with the person of the Shah. Insofar as other interpretations influenced or were appropriated by the monarchy, they have been touched upon here. But their incidental existence in relation to the construction of dynastic nationalism should not disguise the fact that they were comprehensive constructs in their own right, a reality

⁷⁴⁹ Interview with Abbas - photo-journalist for the agency 'Magnum', who photographed much of the Revolution in 1979; conducted for BBC 'Reputations' documentary, September 1995, Paris.

proven and plurality exposed, by the success of the Islamic Revolution in 1979.⁷⁵⁰ Underpinning all these interpretations however was the increasingly pervasive ideological credo of nationalism and central to the contest was the right to determine and define the meaning of 'Iran'.

As such, this was fundamentally a contest over meaning rather than structure and while structures may change, they were almost secondary to the intense semantic struggle for control over and identification with particular meanings which in some cases became extremely nuanced and subtle. While the adoption of the surname 'Pahlavi' could be considered an explicit attempt at historical appropriation and reconstruction, the different emphases given to the term *Shahanshah* implied pretensions to grandeur which were not always immediately obvious. Thus when Reza Shah insisted on its use a Foreign Office official noted that while it was a term which had a 'respectable pedigree', it had 'not been used in quite the same manner as at present'.⁷⁵¹ By emphasising the meaning of *Shahanshah* (king of kings) in terms of universal kingship (which might have validity in Achaemenian and even Sassanian Iran), and not in its other connotation as a king among kings, a sort of *primus inter pares* of the Parthian period, the Pahlavi's inadvertently invited both unfavourable comparison with their more illustrious predecessors and in some cases, ridicule.⁷⁵² As the official added, "we might ask them which kings is Reza king

⁷⁵⁰ As they had been similarly, though less emphatically, in 1941.

⁷⁵¹ FO 371 17890 E56 dated 6th December 1933.

⁷⁵² Titular grandiosity was of course not new but an interesting comparison can be made with Mardavij b. Ziyar, a petty king from Gilan in the 10th century who sought to restore Zoroastrianism, and the Persian empire, constructed a imperial genealogy and appropriated imperial titles but was widely ridiculed for his ambitious pretensions.

over...". More contentious was their promotion of a particular conception of 'Iran', a term which they inherited and sought to redefine and which remains essentially contested. While the Pahlavis promoted an industrial Iran which was exclusively 'Persian', nationalists sought to emphasise a more decentralised inclusivity. Others have sought to 'bring religion back in', to their definition of Iran, returning to a nineteenth century conception in which being 'Iranian' and being 'Shi'i, was considered one and the same⁷⁵³. At the same time, it is significant that none had chosen to return to the imperial plurality of the Qajar period in which the state was described as *Mamalik-e Mahruse-ye Iran* (the Guarded kingdoms of Iran⁷⁵⁴) in which immediate loyalties were for the majority of the population, regional and 'Iran' (and the Shah) represented a distant and probably vague political and cultural focus for a variety of differing identities.

This change which underpinned most subsequent interpretations of Iran can be in part attributed to Iran's integration into the global community and the technological advances in communication. Better communications within Iran and an awareness and appreciation of differing identities beyond the traditional frontiers encouraged the re-invention of Iran and of a specifically Iranian identity and this was developed and promoted enthusiastically by the competing political elites. The influence of communications and the emergence of the media should not be underestimated in the development of contemporary Iranian ideologies. In accelerating the production and magnifying the dissemination of ideological constructions, the modern media often had un-intentional effects on the impact of these

⁷⁵³ The Shi'is of Bahrain have often been called 'Persians' for the same reason.

⁷⁵⁴ *Mamalik* is often translated as 'countries' in modern usage, though the term 'kingdoms' is probably more appropriate to the 19th century usage.

constructions on the public. The notion of a un-interrupted monarchy of several thousand years duration was not an invention of the Pahlavis, neither was the association with ancient Iran.⁷⁵⁵ But the Pahlavis gave new emphasis to this association and inflicted the imagery through television, radio and print media with an unprecedented frequency and consistency, and with a direct, if mediated, accessibility to the public that previous rulers had not enjoyed. The Shah was no longer a distant and majestic figure but an immediate and omni-present one, for whom obedience was in practice continuous rather than periodic and occasional. The media facilitated the construction of the political myth and the development of a modern bureaucratic state brought the myth to life for many Iranians and importantly, forced them to make a choice about identity and loyalty which they otherwise would not have had to make.

The tendency towards ideological monopolisation which the Shah was able to pursue with unusual vigour because of this new technology and the means to exploit it, further intensified the semantic struggle such that, during the Islamic Revolution, all symbols of monarchy, (however remote), whether representative of the Pahlavis or not, were attacked. Similarly, the process of polarisation and rejuvenation resulted ironically in the Shah being characterised as the evil Pharaoh, while his nemesis, Ayatollah Khomeini was not only accorded the title 'Imam', but was characterised as a new Moses. Yet, paradoxically, probably the most explicit ideological representation of the Pahlavi monarchy, the *Shahyad* monument in Tehran was not destroyed. Instead it was re-

⁷⁵⁵ See A Amanat Pivot of the Universe: Nasir al Din Shah and the Iranian Monarchy 1831-1896 London, I B Tauris, 1997, pg 97. Monarchists under the leadership of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Massoud Khan Ansari in 1848, went so far as to argue that, "For five thousand years the Persian Monarchy has remained uninterrupted...."

interpreted, appropriated and incorporated into the new revolutionary narrative as the *Azadi* (freedom) monument, reflecting perhaps the importance of meaning over structure in the political life of modern Iran.

Theoretical conclusions

In arguing that political myth is the personalisation or familiarisation of ideological constructs, this thesis has suggested a theoretical framework through which the concept of political myth may be identified and applied for the purposes of political analysis both as a tool of ideational analysis within a state, and also as a tool of comparative analysis. Indeed while this study focussed on political myth construction in a developing society, the process of internationalisation suggested by the integration into the Cold War narrative, indicates opportunities for comparative analysis with both other developing societies and developed societies in the First world, where the 'mediation of modern culture' is much more advanced.

In focussing on the relationship between political myth development and the role of political leadership this thesis has chosen to highlight one particular mode of political myth construction which may be both easier to identify and hence to study. The definition is not intended to be exclusive and does not preclude the possibilities of other arguments of political myth construction and identification. At the same time, the difficulty in identifying myth and the potential extent of its social penetration and reach means that in the course of this study on Iran, only the most obvious and prominent political myths have been

identified.

Iran was chosen as a case study because of the potentialities of its political culture and the combination of profound socio-economic change with a political system which remained focussed throughout the period under review, on personalities. Its nuanced language and complex history contributed to a socio-political unit full of competing tensions and as such it facilitated an analysis of political myth. However, it is important to remember that Iran is not unique in witnessing the development of ideological constructions defined here as political myth, and that this phenomenon studied in the particular, may be applied universally. As such a number of conclusions about the characteristics of political myth highlighted in this particular study can be drawn for general application.

It must be remembered that political myth, although at times distinct, remains in essence, an aspect of ideological construction. As such in identifying political myth it is essential first to identify the ideological framework dominant within a given political group. The boundaries between political myth and its parent ideology remain inherently ambiguous and as a result it will remain difficult to distinguish and identify. Despite these difficulties however, the concept of political myth, its particular nature and characteristics of development, make it an important component of ideology to be distinguished since it sheds light on the processes of ideological development.

At the same time it is argued that one way in which the distinction can be facilitated is by arguing that political myth is the personalisation or familiarisation of ideology. This process often involves the use of concepts and social myths familiar to the political culture

in question and therefore requires a critical awareness of these concepts by the student of political myth. Personalisation may involve the association of ideological constructs with people, or more emphatically, with the individual leader. The framework of socio-historical analysis dictated by the methodology of critical hermeneutics as outlined in the first chapter is thus essential.

The personalisation of ideology can be defined as the reification of ideological constructions within the confines of the individual. The personalisation involved in the process of identifying an idea or complex of ideas with an individual provides a particularly accessible form of political myth development especially when the individual involved aspires to political leadership and seeks to promote a public image. The resultant political myth with respect to political leadership can be termed the 'myth of the saviour'. The process by which an ideological universal is identified with a physical particular is intrinsically contradictory and replete with tensions, thus encouraging political myth development.

The process of personalisation reaches its apogee with personification. In seeking to identify with an ideological construct a political leader aims to associate himself with ideas whose source and origin is external to his own being. In extreme circumstances however this process may be extended towards personification, by which it is meant the political leader seeks to become identified as one with the ideological construction and to appropriate rights of definition and explanation. The source and origin of the ideological construction is transferred to the political leader and a leader who achieves this may be characterised as enjoying charismatic authority. The tensions and polarisation

characterised by the process of personalisation is multiplied by personification.

The myth of the saviour is deconstructed through the de-personalisation of ideology. Just as political myth is a consequence of the personalisation of ideology so the resultant myth of the saviour may be deconstructed by de-personalising ideological constructs and divorcing them from any identification with the individual. This process may take several forms. An opponent may be associated with ideas and ideologies contrary to the views he identified with. This is a form of ideological rejuvenation. More emphatically, the identity of the opponent may be erased from any association with the ideological construct in question; and less dramatically, the opponent may be mentioned by name but not associated in any way with the ideology he identified with.

The process of personalisation may occur by proxy. A political leader may seek to identify with an ideological construction by association with another who has succeeded in this process of personalisation. This tends to happen with historical figures rather than contemporaries so as to minimise the possibilities for rivalry. Historical figures are in any case better suited because they are situated within an historical narrative and may have already acquired mythic characteristics in the popular imagination. Furthermore as details of historical personalities are frequently scarce, they are more amenable to historical manipulation by the political leader who wishes to appropriate their mystique. As such the process of personalisation by historical proxy involves a reciprocal dialectical relationship, in which the political leader magnifies, or even manufactures, those characteristics he wishes to associate with and emulate in the historical personality. The pattern of development is normally one of association, favourable comparison, and finally

supersession. Just as the myth of the saviour can be removed by depersonalisation, so too can this process be applied to proxies.

Ideological polarisation is characteristic of the process of personalisation or familiarisation. Ideology tends towards polarisation and simplification, a process which is accelerated by and characteristic of, the personalisation of ideology. In identifying the universal with the particular, the complex tends towards simplification. Political myth can therefore be further characterised as the simplification of ideology profoundly expressed.

This process of ideological polarisation encourages hegemonic monopolisation. The reduction of complex ideological constructions into relatively simple 'truths' encourages the socialisation or institutionalisation of those constructs into unchallenged beliefs. This becomes increasingly probable as semiological chains expand and multiply and, the potential for dissent is curtailed, insulating the semiological chains from external criticism. Dynamism and the frequency of construction are sacrificed in the interests of clarity and the establishment of authority, but taken to an extreme this process hastens rejuvenation.

The essential paradox of political myth development is that as it provides the concise summation of one ideological construct, so it opens the door to the possibilities of other diverse and sometimes contradictory interpretations. The leader, in personalising an ideology can thus be both praised as a saviour by his followers while at the same time, be demonised by his opponents. Political myth is therefore both the point of ideological consummation as well as interpretational departure; it is the point of ideational rejuvenation. These interpretations are often mirror images of each other with extreme

polarisation resulting in an equal if opposite reaction.

Rejuvenation is a dialectal and reciprocal process. The relationships which encourage the development of ideological constructions and political myth are basically threefold: ideologies out of their own inherent contradictions and tensions; through conflict with competing ideological constructs; and, through interaction with their socio-historical environment. These relationships are reciprocal and dialectic and encourage mythic reproduction.

Political myth encourages the reconstruction of historical narratives and the construction of utopias. This process is particularly explicit where political leadership is concerned. In identifying with an ideological construction the leader seeks to eliminate the tensions that result. Part of this process is to reinterpret and reconstruct the past in order to suit the image of the present. The most obvious examples are the 'discovery' and construction of genealogical pedigrees along with the reinterpretation of the past situating the leader firmly within the centre of the narrative. This reconstruction enjoys a reciprocal relationship with the development of the myth of the saviour and as with the process of rejuvenation a reciprocal dialectic may develop. The reconstruction of the past to suit the present will also encourage the development of a vision of the future to provide the ideological construction and the leader who personalises it, with a distinct purpose.

Political myth serves to institutionalise power and establish authority. If ideology is the use of meaning to sustain and support a particular relation of domination, political myth is the aspect of ideology which seeks to establish beyond question, the legitimate

foundations of that relation. While ideology sustains power, political myth anchors that power in legitimate authority. This authority is cultivated through the personalisation and familiarisation of ideology with traditional myths and icons which permeate all political cultures and groups. The disparity between a claim to authority and belief in authority is a critical tension in which political myth development is facilitated.⁷⁵⁶

Other tensions which contribute to political myth development may be external to the ideological constructions, in terms of socio-economic change, or internal, in terms of frictions between conflicting ideological constructions. This friction become most apparent when differing constructs are synthesised into a new construction thus making the implicit contradictions explicit. Another form of tension already alluded to above, results when ideological constructs are reified within the physical constraints of the individual. Often, such a process involves the reconstitution of differing ideological constructs into a new 'custom made' ideological construct, thus multiplying the propensity for tension.

Political myth is itself a cause and consequence of tension. Political myth is encouraged by the existence of tension, be they social (contradictions with and within perceived reality), ideological (friction between constructs) and procedural (in terms of the process of personalisation). However the process by which ideological constructs are simplified and polarised, in particular through personalisation, itself is a source of continued tension which results in historical reinterpretation and reconstruction, as well as a tendency

⁷⁵⁶ See P Ricoeur Lectures on Ideology & Utopia G Taylor (ed), New York, Columbia University Press, 1986, pg 13.

towards further political myth.

As such, political myths tend to become engulfed in 'semiological chains'. Mythic reproduction results in the growth and development of complex semiological chains in which complimentary and contradictory interpretations are constructed upon each other. Complimentary reproduction encourages further polarisation towards hegemonic monopolisation increasingly divorced from perceived reality and may contribute to an inability to respond effectively to political developments.

The advent of mass communications accelerates the production and dissemination of political myth, increasing the propensity for semiological chains. The emergence of the mass media, in particular the development of the radio and television has encouraged the popularisation of political discourse and widened the potential arena of political operation. An increasingly immediate access to a wider population has encouraged the simplification of ideological constructs for the purposes of mass consumption, while the emergence of television has encouraged a greater use of visual symbols. At the same time, since technology tends to centralise power, the mass media have also encouraged a greater popular focus on the political leader at the expense of political and administrative intermediaries. This will become increasingly important as television becomes increasingly ubiquitous. As technology centralises power, so it re-focuses attention away from the political party towards the political leader, thereby facilitating the personalisation of ideology. A technological development which was used by leaders to 'access' the public has been reversed to focus on the character of the leader.

Mass communications encourage the internationalisation of semiological chains. Mass communications not only allow the rapid dissemination of ideological constructions throughout a political culture in an immediate and accessible format, they also facilitate the extension of particular ideological constructs and political myths outside their traditional environment. A new reciprocal dialectic and semiological chain may be developed with the 'foreign' ideological constructions. Alternatively if two hegemonic ideological constructions replete with polarised political myths clash the consequence may be further polarisation and insular monopolisation, each construction consolidating and reconstructing through recourse to its own political culture.

It may be argued that the concept of political myth belongs to that particular category of political concepts which are regarded as essentially contested. Certainly, problems persist in defining, identifying and applying a concept whose essence is ambiguity and subjective, even emotive interpretation. This thesis has argued however, that a conception of political myth can be defined and usefully applied to political analyses, but more so, can help illuminate the processes by which ideas in general and ideologies in particular operate. By extension, it suggests that ideological operation and political myth development, though seen through the particular example of Pahlavi Iran, possess a number of characteristics which in differing measures, may be applied to all political groups and cultures.

Indeed, a global political environment in the throes of rapid socio-economic change, and the continuing growth of mass communications, which itself accelerates awareness of that change and provides immediate accessibility to political leaders, may be considered uniquely ripe for the polarisation and personalisation of ideological constructs. The

acceleration of ideological exchange, friction and appropriation, and the rapidity of the multitude of reciprocal dialectic relationships, encouraged by the growth and development of mass communications, may lead to semiological chains of bewildering complexity and these will need to be understood, and if possible, deconstructed. Ideological polarisation, insulation, and hegemonic tendencies are more apparent in the international sphere because the conflicting ideological constructs have been developed and consolidated predominantly in particular political cultures, and then extended into an unfamiliar global or particular environment. In such a situation, the potential for ideological and material conflict is magnified as the opposing state is anthropomorphised, personalised and occasionally de-humanised. This process of political myth development in particular, and the concept in general, deserves greater investigation.

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