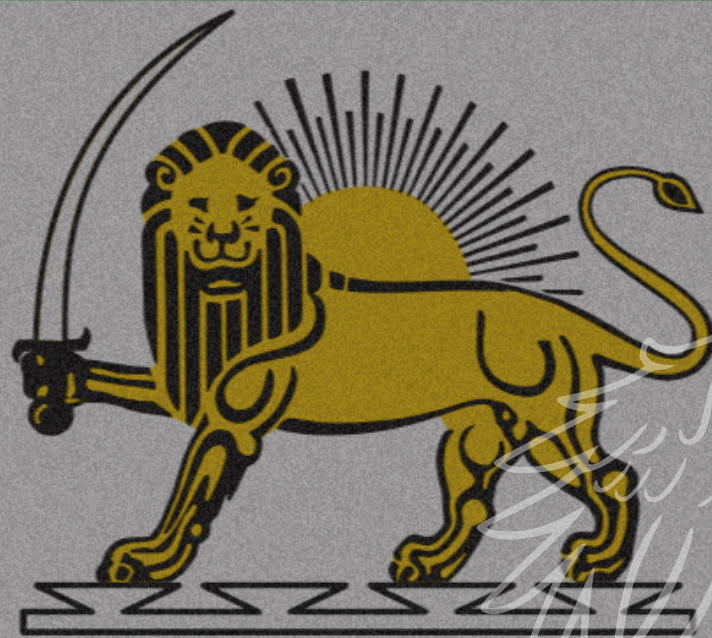


Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906

IRAN



MUNUC 35

Model United Nations of the University of Chicago

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CHAIR LETTER

Hello, delegates!

My name is Akshay Joglekar, and I will be the Chair for the Iranian Constitutional Convention. I am a third-year who is majoring in economics. I am looking forward to my seventh year doing MUN, having been active in the activity since the beginning of ninth grade. Outside of this activity and classwork, I spend my time learning about random parts of history, dabbling with linguistics, playing the piano, and practicing Taekwondo. That first point, especially, is what drew me to this particular topic for the committee. Ever since first exploring the early history of 20th Century Iranian characters, conflicts, and controversies from the past few centuries, I have been thrilled about the prospect of running this committee. From there, I have only grown more invested in unravelling the diversity of the region—in terms of not just demographics but also economic conditions and political movements.

I am excited to see whether you delegates can work together ideologically to build a new Iranian government and to protect it from both expansionist neighbors and internal crises—and to see which of your constitutions proves both sufficient and necessary for the furtherment of Iran's national interests.

I am very much looking forward to what your arcs turn out to be. These characters represent many of the primary viewpoints and ideologies which dominated the formative years of what would become modern Iran. I hope to see you all consider what makes your character stand out and how that can determine the governmental structure and the foreign policy of your nation.

Let me know if you have any questions!

Sincerely,

Akshay ; akshayjoglekar@uchicago.edu

CRISIS DIRECTOR LETTER

Hi everyone,

My name is Sarah Kress, and I will be the Crisis Director for the Iranian Constitutional Convention. I am a second-year chemistry major, and just like my study of chemical bonds, I hope to form some *bonds* with all of you over our shared love of history! This is my third year of MUNUC—I started out as a delegate, and I’m super excited to run my first committee as your Crisis Director! Outside of MUN, I spend most of my time in the lab, but I also love ice skating, and do swing dancing here at the University!

I’ve always been interested in history, especially in the establishment of new governments and nations—it really feels like you’re starting from scratch every time! I’m excited to see how you deal with how to keep the transition of power as stable as possible, and how your constitutions reflect your ideas about successful, resilient nations. Iran is an interesting place to explore these themes, especially in dealing with how to make a small nation, plagued by conflict with more powerful ones, stand the tests of time and invaders.

I’m looking forward to seeing how your arcs evolve during the committee—I know that you’ll be able to establish a constitution with a strong set of values that will withstand all of the chaos that I’ll be throwing at it!

Let me know if you have any questions!

SENSITIVITY NOTE

During the early 20th Century, as throughout much of the region's history, political figures similar to some of those whom you will be representing or who are from neighboring countries advocated for or committed atrocities against civilians of differing ethnic or religious backgrounds. The years soon following the start of this committee and around the time of the First World War in particular saw questions of national self-determination be construed as excuses for political assassinations and the formation of terrorist organizations.

Know that we will absolutely not tolerate any similar behavior whether in your private notes, in directives, or outside of official committee time. There is ample room to explore ideological differences between characters while still refraining from connecting your arc at all to your characters' or to civilians' ethnicities or religions. Even if your character is opposed to cooperation with foreign powers or otherwise antagonistic towards particular political groups, creating a modern Iranian identity and government does not necessitate violence against other identities.

While discrimination against minority groups was well-spread and accepted in many places during this time period, please keep in mind that we are running this committee in the 21st Century. Using historical "accuracy" as an excuse to be discriminatory towards other demographic groups will not be tolerated in this committee.

The dais is aware of the ongoing protests in Iran. Please keep in mind that this committee simulates the early 20th century, and the current situation should not be a topic for debate. This is also to make sure that everyone feels comfortable participating in the debate, as the events may be personal for some of you.

Keep this in mind as you craft your arcs.

COMMITTEE STRUCTURE AND MECHANICS

Overview

The members of the committee are prominent members of Persian society at the time of the revolution, including but not limited to clergymen, government officials, scholars, tribal leaders, and military officers. Most Committee members will be figures supportive of constitutional monarchy, but there will be some figures opposed to widespread democratization. The committee, taking place in 1906 after the Shah's surrender to the Constitutionalists, will be tasked with drafting Persia's new constitution and presenting it to the Shah for his approval, while simultaneously navigating various foreign and internal challenges, such as British and Russian intervention, tribal uprisings, economic difficulties, and potentially even a military coup or civil war. Committee members will also work behind the scenes to undermine or support the constitution and advance their own interests.

The first two sessions of committee will operate *like a General Assembly* committee, with delegates aiming to produce either two or three—depending on the flow of debate in committee—draft constitutions. During these two sessions, there will likely be *fewer crisis note runs*; however, backroom will regularly provide updates in order to provide delegates with insight on the issues impacting the Iranian people.

The remaining three sessions will involve the delegates attempting to prove to the Shah and to the people which of their constitutions is most capable of promoting Iranian foreign interests and tackling ongoing domestic crises. These sessions will operate *like a crisis* committee, with more regular note runs. Delegates will face crisis updates which will challenge the ideological differences highlighted in each of their constitutions, simultaneously attempting to resolve these issues while proving that their ideology is the most capable of sustaining the Iranian state.

In the final session of committee, one constitution will be chosen as the governing document for the nation.

TOPIC: IRANIAN CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION, 1906

History of the Problem

History of Iran

Iran after the Sassanids

Iran—known to its neighbors for much of history as “Persia”—has been a formidable force and global superpower throughout a large stretch of its existence. From the Achaemenids to the Sassanians, the ancient Iranian empires contended with behemoth rivals in Greece, Rome, and India as well as with nomadic groups in Central Asia and to its south. Throughout the ancient and classical periods, **it was recognized for both its military power and its renowned system of administration¹**—so much so that even during periods of subjugation by a foreign power, the conqueror would generally maintain the administrative system and adapt that of their own nation to it.



Figure 1: Map of Achaemenid Empire 500 BCE.²

At the crossroads of South and Central Asia and often stretching as far west as Africa and Europe, the nation has also been a **hub for trade** and a **central part of the Silk Road**. As a consequence, Iran

¹ “Tehrān - History.”

² Cattette. 2021. “Achaemenid Empire 500 BCE.” Wikimedia Commons.

maintained its status as a wealthy and economically influential state across the various dynasties which lay claim to its throne³.

While it is not possible to adequately summarize all of Iranian history, we will highlight some pivotal moments which contributed to the social, political, and economic ideological divisions which characterized it in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries.

In the early 7th Century, a new religion had begun to unite the tribes to Iran's south in the Arabian Peninsula—Islam. By 651, the Sassanian Empire had fallen to the Rashidun Caliphate, which **began the conversion of Iran to Islam**⁴. The traditional religion of the region, Zoroastrianism, began a long and gradual decline in practice, coming to be the predominant faith only in a handful of communities. While Farsi and its ancestors remained the language of court in much of the conquered territories and, like others before it, the Rashidun Caliphate adopted the administrative infrastructure of the Sassanids⁵, the Iranian cultural identity had been fundamentally altered. Regardless of which branch be dominant at any given time, **Islam would be a key factor in determining both the social fabric of Iran and the lens through which scholars and civilians viewed the government** from this point onwards, including during the Constitutional Revolution over a thousand years later.

It would be many centuries before Iran would again be ruled by a fully native Iranian dynasty. After the fall of the Umayyad Caliphate, the successor to the Rashidun Caliphate, it was governed by a series of Turkic or Mongolic empires which had migrated out of the Central Asian steppe. While it spent a number of these years divided in many different monarchies, it was wholly unified under a few successive dynasties: the Ghaznavids, then the Seljuks—one of whose feudatories later became their rival the Ottoman Empire—the Mongols and its successor the Ilkhanate, and finally the Timurids⁶. The constant shifting of power in the region from one Eurasian tribe to the next meant that Iran continued to transmit and receive some cultural influence from Central Asia during this time. **Iranian political influence in Anatolia and to the south would never be as significant as it**

³ *ibid.*

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ *ibid.*

once had⁷. Much of the expansion and soft diplomacy during these dynasties began to focus more on the Caucasus region as well as modern-day Afghanistan and Pakistan. The periods of disunity further meant that tribal groups, especially toward the end of the Timurid reign, began to exert **greater local autonomy** from the central government⁸.

The push for decentralization meant that the next large unifying dynasty, the Safavids, were born partly out of a push for religious change. The dynasty's founder, Ismail I Shah, was the descendant of a Sheikh of the Twelver branch of Shia Islam. Consequently, his first act when crowned emperor in 1501 was to **convert majority-Sunni Iran to Twelver Shia Islam**. This drastically changed the political landscape in the area, **isolating the country** as it was the only one of its neighbors whose state religion was Shia and not Sunni⁹. The dynasty's reign, though leading to religious isolation, is nevertheless known for economic expansion. Safavid Iran is considered **one of the wealthiest and most stable states of the early modern era**, due in no small part to the considerable headway made by its rulers in establishing and maintaining a **meritocratic system of government**¹⁰. It was not unheard of for individuals not born into aristocratic families to attain high-level positions in government. Alongside this aristocracy was an outstanding clergy, the *Ulema*, a class of religious scholars and leaders who held regional authority or advised the king. The Shah had the task of balancing these three groups—the tribal military officials, the Iranian administrative officials, and the religious officials—and of leveraging each for religious conversions, propaganda, military expeditions, or the general collection of taxes and maintenance of the empire. The precedent of this particular division of power, established under Ismail I, remained the accepted standard long after the eventual demise of the dynasty.

⁷ *ibid.*

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ Halm, *Shia Islam: From Religion to Revolution*.

¹⁰ "Tehrān - History."



Figure 2: Shah Ismail I.¹¹

Ismail I Shah's reign is also associated with **prosperity for Iran** on a level akin to that under Alexander the Great, Khosrow Anushirawan, and the mythical Jamshid Shah, to whom Ismail I Shah would compare himself in widely publicized poems. To liken this time period to the ancient and classical dynasties was not without reason. Safavid Iran proved itself capable of holding its ground and usually emerging victorious against various neighbors, including the emerging Russian and Ottoman Empires lying to the north and west, respectively. The region of modern Iraq alone swapped hands between the latter enemy and Iran several times in the following two centuries¹². Later Shahs, such as Tahmasp, would face civil war and foreign invasions simultaneously and manage to maintain the strength of the empire and reestablish their might regardless¹³.

Increased contact with Europe during this time also reflected the vitality of Iran's diplomatic reach under the Safavids. Unfortunately, this diplomatic reach would not be sufficient to protect Iran from growing foreign threats. Shah Abbas, the last independent ruler from the dynasty, was renowned like his predecessors in conducting great infrastructural projects and in defending the empire's

¹¹ dell'Altissimo, Cristofano. n.d. "Shah Ismail I." Wikimedia Commons.

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ *ibid.*

borders, but his eternal suspicion led him to execute many military officials—coming from the tribes—and administrative officials—coming from all walks of society—which left Iran further unprepared during incursions by their northern and western neighbors. After Shah Abbas's, subsequent rulers from the dynasty often acted as puppets to court officials who had garnered support in the military, administration, and clergy. Nevertheless, Iran was still capable of **taking land during the First Russo-Persian War**, emerging victorious in the **Treaty of Resht**, and subsequently coordinating an anti-Ottoman alliance with the Russian Empire through the **Treaty of Ganja** soon after¹⁴.

The illusion of these successes still belonging to the Safavid dynasty had dissipated by the mid-1700s, however. As **European trade companies began to use sea routes to circumvent the Ottoman Empire and Iran** in commerce with South and East Asia and uprisings by tribes living on the border became increasingly difficult to put down, the prestige of the Safavids finally collapsed—civil war and a fragmented Iran had returned.

The Rise & Stagnation of the Qajars

In the late 1700s, the Qajars, one of the first Oghuz Turkic tribes to have settled in Anatolia and a longtime ally of the Safavids, found an opportunity to become the foremost military might in Iran. Since the collapse of the Safavids, the majority of Iran had been ruled by a series of Turkic dynasties, most notable of whom were the Afsharids whose tribal base was in the northeast—in Khorasan—and the Zand dynasty whose tribal base was in the southwest. After the latter fell to family disputes and mismanagement of the nation, the Turkic tribal power in Iran shifted again, this time to the northwest. The Qajars seized upon the fractured country and in 1789 crowned themselves as monarchs of the Sublime State of Iran¹⁵.

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ *ibid.*



Figure 3: A portrait of Fath 'Ali Shah Qajar.¹⁶

The new dynasty's early days were marked by the resumption of Safavid-era governance structures and the reconquest of minor kingdoms which had broken away during the fracturing of the previous dynasties' power. Under Agha Mohammad Shah, the first Qajar Shah of Iran, the long-standing balance of power—**where both Turkic and Iranic tribes were employed as sources of localized military might and Iranian clergymen served in the national government**—was maintained out of what was considered a necessity in order to evade the internal divisions which had weakened the Qajars' predecessors. It was deemed crucial that the burgeoning Qajar force focus on rapidly subsuming neighboring territories which had once sworn fealty to the Shah¹⁷.

¹⁶ "An enameled portrait of Fath 'Ali Shah Qajar, signed (Muhammad) Baqir, Qajar Iran, late 18th - early 19th century." n.d. Wikimedia Commons.

¹⁷ Gustafson, *Qajar Ambitions in the Great Game: Notes on the Embassy of 'Abbas Qoli Khan to the Amir of Bokhara, 1844*.

After vanquishing and executing the last Zand shah and retaking Fars and the coast of the Persian Gulf, Agha Mohammad Shah turned his attention to the north. Within the notorious Caucasian mountain range stood various Azeri and Georgian kingdoms which had been granted land in centuries prior by his predecessors. Despite his eventual victory, the campaign is said to have exacted a heavy toll on the Iranian army¹⁸. After further military campaigns in Khorasan and the east, the Qajar dynasty's founder left an Iran which had been **fully unified for the first time in centuries** but whose **infrastructure and internal development had been left either ignored or unchanged** in its progress for a long period¹⁹.

The early reign of the Qajars also foreshadowed later conflicts with a formidable neighbor to the north. Agha Mohammad Shah's war against the Zand dynasty had also coincided with the Russian Empire's early attempts to establish trade routes through central Asia to the Indian subcontinent. During one incident in 1781, Russia sent the emissary Marko Ivanovich Voinovich to negotiate with Shah to allow the creation of a trading post in the city of Ashraf. Upon being refused, Voinovich attempted to establish a temporary trading post on a nearby island, only to find it soon raided and himself captured by the Iranian army. While he was eventually permitted to leave on the promise of abandoning the settlement, the tension with the Russian Empire would not prove itself ephemeral²⁰.

The brief Third Russo-Persian War in 1796 resulted in a stalemate between the two nations. In 1801, after the Iranian crown had passed to Fath Ali Khan, the local monarchs in Georgia rose up against the Tehrani government once more, managing to gain *de facto* independence for some years²¹. The Russian Empire subsequently annexed the Georgian territory as well as nearby Dagestan, an act which the Iranian government perceived as a threat to its sovereignty. Fath Ali Shah declared war against Tsar Paul I's empire, expecting an effective victory in light of his son **Abbas Mirza's recent efforts to modernize the army** and the fact of Russia being contemporaneously engaged in war against the French Empire far in the west. The Fourth Russo-Persian War lasted instead for nine years, with the Russian army, despite being smaller in size, proving nevertheless still **technologically**

¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ *ibid.*

superior to that of Iran²². In the Treaty of Gulistan in 1813, Iran formally ceded Georgia and Dagestan to the Russian Empire, never to own any part of those lands again²³.



Figure 4: A Scene from the Russo-Persian War.²⁴

Over the following fifty years, Iran managed to stabilize somewhat within its borders, but those borders continued to shrink. Despite support from both the French and British Empires, the Qajars faced continued humiliation, **ceding Armenia and northern Azerbaijan** in the **Treaty of Turkmenchay** in 1826 which followed the Fifth and final Russo-Persian War. Again, the Russian Empire occupied a breakaway state in the Caucasus; the Iranian government declared war, and the **military proved ineffective**. The treaty was not even signed through negotiation but through the promise that Tehran would otherwise be occupied by the end of the year. Halfway through the 19th Century, while its neighbors were expanding and consolidating economic power, **Iran found itself incapable of defending its stagnating country**²⁵.

²² *ibid.*

²³ *ibid.*

²⁴ "Live Bridge: A Scene from the Russo-Persian War (1804-1813)." 1897. Wikimedia Commons.

²⁵ Afary, "Iranian Revolution | Summary, Causes, Effects, & Facts."

The Great Game, Modernization, & the Tobacco Protest

Throughout the 1800s, Iran found itself stuck between the British Empire, who wanted to protect their rule over India using Central Asia as a buffer region between them and Russia, and Russia themselves, who wanted to expand their empire. This conflict was known as the Great Game, a Cold War-esque standoff between the two major powers²⁶. Russia pushed its influence using trade routes in northern Iran, and claimed to support the Qajar dynasty. In reality, their diplomats exercised control over the Persian monarchy that was becoming nothing more than a formality while pulling nomadic regions in the north under their domain, weakening the Qajars further.



“SAVE ME FROM MY FRIENDS!”

Figure 5: Great Game cartoon from 1878.²⁷

Even without the influence of larger European powers, the Qajars found themselves unable to establish a strong, centralized rule in Iran, destabilized by the power of smaller tribes²⁸. These tribes often refused to follow laws set by the central monarchy, which lacked a military—indeed, the monarchy relied on militia of these individual tribes, which emphasizes how little power they truly had. There were some attempts to modernize Iran at this time—Naser al-Din Shah, who ruled from 1848 to 1896, reformed the Iranian tax system, limited religious influence from the courts, build

²⁶ Yarshater, “The Qajar Era in the Mirror of Time,” 188.

²⁷ Tenniel, John. 1878. “Great Game cartoon from 1878.” Wikimedia Commons.

²⁸ Keddi, “Iranian Revolutions in Comparative Perspective,” 583.

military factories, and attempted to improve Iran's relationship with Britain and Russia, even traveling to Europe for a time. At this time, the first Iranian school for upper education, Dar ul-Funun, was established. But many of these reforms came with the price of even more outside influence. The new, centralized military was, in fact, trained and armed by Russians, and most of the city reforms were products of Western influence.

Furthermore, while al-Din managed to make some progress in modernization, he failed to move the central government away from the influence of small, religious tribes over the majority of Iranian people, who were unhappy with al-Din's heavy taxation and the unshaken power of the upper class²⁹. Widespread disapproval of al-Din's reforms among Iranian nobles led him to order the exile, and later assassination, of his prime minister Amir Kabir, the head of the reforms. Towards the end of the rule, Nasar al-Din refused to tolerate further demands for Iranian modernization, instead allowing foreign powers even more influence over a weakened Iran.

Nasar al-Din turned his attention towards Europe, or more accurately, European money, selling concessions to foreigners for Persian railways, irrigation, and, most importantly, tobacco. The right to grow, sell, and export tobacco was granted to Major G. F. Talbot in 1890, guaranteeing him a monopoly over one of Iran's most important products for fifty years³⁰. This forced Persian tobacco companies to surrender control to Talbot, putting over 200,000 Iranians out of work, sparking outrage among Iranian citizens. The Russian Empire, concerned with the amount of control over the tobacco industry that had been granted to a British power, also pressured the shah to cancel the deal, but al-Din pressed on, coveting the 15,000 pounds a year promised to him by Talbot. In 1891, mass protests against the concession broke out. The public, already fearful of foreign influence, was enraged at how much power over the economy was given to foreigners and anxious about the instability it brought to many of their jobs³¹. The protests shaped the opinion of the public beyond the tobacco industry, bringing Iranian nationalism front and center.

The Tobacco Protests also proved an opportunity for the ulema (religious leaders at the time) to flex their power by issuing a fatwa that declared the consumption and sale of tobacco haram, sparking a

²⁹ *ibid.*

³⁰ *ibid*, 584.

³¹ *ibid.*

widespread boycott of tobacco products in Iran³². Following the fatwa and the growing protests, the shah was forced to cancel the concession. But the damage had already been done. Iranian nationalism was on the rise, and increasing displeasure with al-Din's rule eventually led to his assassination in 1896³³.

The Constitutional Revolution

On May 1st, 1896³⁴, **Naser al-Din Shah**, one of the longest-ruling monarchs in Iranian history, died. Despite his long rule, his end was not peaceful. He was assassinated by a follower of the radical cleric Jamal al-Din Al-Afghani, a prominent critic of the Qajar government who accused Naser al-Din Shah of selling the country to foreign interests—a symbolic end to a reign rocked by pressures from inside and out.



Figure 6: Mozaffar ad-Din Shah Qajar portrait.³⁵

Naser al-Din Shah's successor was his son **Mozaffar ad-Din Shah**. Already over forty years old at the time of his accession to the throne, Mozaffar ad-Din Shah had spent his entire life in the shadow of

³² *ibid*, 585.

³³ *ibid*.

³⁴ 11 Ordibehesht, 1265 by the Solar Hijri calendar used in Iran

³⁵ Golestan Palace. n.d. "Mozaffar ad-Din Shah Qajar portrait." Wikimedia Commons.

his father, who excluded him from matters of state. Furthermore, unlike his father, Mozaffar al-Din Shah was weak, both physically and mentally³⁶—he was frequently ill, preferred the company of his harem, and lacked his father's penchant for political repression.

Initially, it appeared that the new Shah's weakness would allow reformers to take power again, and for a period this did occur, as Mozaffar al-Din Shah replaced Prime Minister Amin al-Soltan³⁷, his father's favorite, with the old reformist minister Amin ad-Dauleh³⁸. However, the Shah's desire for worldly pleasures soon eclipsed whatever reformist tendencies he may have had, and before long Amin al-Soltan was back, and tasked with negotiating a series of loans from the Russian government to pay for, among other things, three trips by the Shah and his courtiers to Europe.

The Iranian government's poor fiscal situation led to the imposition of humiliating terms by the Russians, who demanded large economic concessions, lower customs rates for Russian goods, and Russian permission for all further loans taken on by Iran³⁹. In a similar manner, Mozaffar al-Din handed over the oil rights to a vast swathe of Iranian territory for sixty years in the infamous **D'Arcy Concession**⁴⁰. In an echo of the discontent which caused the Tobacco Protest, opposition to Mozaffar al-Din's incompetence and extravagance began. In September 1904, Amin al-Soltan was soon sacked, but his replacement as Prime Minister, Ain ad-Dauleh⁴¹, was a reactionary equally unreceptive to public demands⁴².

Mozaffar al-Din's loans and concessions were not the only source of discontent. During his brief Premiership, Amin ad-Dauleh, seeking to modernize the customs system to increase tax revenue, had appointed Joseph Naus, a Belgian, to the post of Customs Minister. Over the years, Naus' power steadily grew, to the point where he effectively had control over the entire government's finances. Naus did in fact rationalize the tax system and increase revenues, but he was widely perceived as a foreign agent favoring foreign businesses over Iranian ones, creating the impression that the

³⁶ Keddie, "Iranian Politics 1900-1905: Background to Revolution," 3.

³⁷ Real name Mirza Ali Asghar Khan

³⁸ Real name Mirza Jahangir Khan

³⁹ Keddie, "Iranian Politics 1900-1905: Background to Revolution," 26.

⁴⁰ In return for the exclusive right to produce and sell petroleum in three quarters of Iran, the Shah received only £40,000 in cash and shares and 16% of future profits

⁴¹ Real name Abdol Majid Mirza

⁴² *ibid*, 3.

government had handed over the country to imperial interests and alienating the powerful *bazaari* (merchant) class. Ain ad-Dauleh's efforts to restore the government's control over the country by controlling the clergy and resolve the financial crisis by raising new taxes, as well as his own corruption, further discredited the government.

Opposition to the Shah was led primarily by members of the *bazaaris*, *ulema*, and **western-educated reformists**, through secret societies and subversive materials distributed from abroad. Tensions continued to rise. In November 1905, protests erupted in Tehran over the construction of a new building for a Russian bank on top of *waqf* land (land held in charitable trust for the *ulema*).

The breaking point came a month later, when two Tehran merchants were subjected to *bastinado* (caning of the feet) for the supposed crime of raising sugar prices too high. The merchants complained that the prices were beyond their control due to high customs duties (blaming Naus, the foreigner), and responded via a massive bazaar strike and *bast* (taking of sanctuary) on the grounds of the Royal Mosque⁴³.

The Shah cracked down further, driving the protestors from the Mosque, yet the protests simply moved to the shrine of Shah Abdol-Azim and grew, swelled by the involvement of prominent *ulema* like **Sayyed Mohammad Tabataba'i**. The initial demand of the protestors was that the power of the Shah be checked by the creation of an *adalatkhaneh* (house of justice), the details of which were left suitably vague. In January 1906, the Shah gave in, dismissed the Governor of Tehran, and accepted the demand for the *adalatkhaneh*. The protestors returned home in triumph.

However, the Shah reneged on his promise, and agitation against the government continued. On July 11th, a *sayyed* (descendant of the prophet) was killed by the police, sparking yet another massive wave of unrest. Large numbers of clerics left Tehran for the shrine city of Qom, while some fourteen thousand people (roughly a fifth of Tehran's population) took *bast* at the British Legation (the British provided tacit support for the protestors as a means of undermining the Russian-backed government)⁴⁴.

⁴³ *ibid*, 28.

⁴⁴ Keddie, "Iranian Revolutions in Comparative Perspective," 586.



Figure 7: Constitutional Revolution.⁴⁵

Here, the movement was joined en masse by western-educated scholars educated at the Dar al-Funun, one of Iran's only modern institutions of learning. These reformers channeled the dissatisfactions of the diverse crowd into a specific desire for a popularly elected assembly (the *majiles*) and a written constitution limiting the Shah's powers. On August 5th, 1906, unable to crack down and in ill health, Mozaffar al-Din Shah conceded to the demands of the protestors⁴⁶. The resulting **Persian Constitution of 1906** would be only the second in the Islamic world, after the short-lived Ottoman Constitution of 1876.

⁴⁵ "Constitutional Revolution, Iran 3." 1906. Wikimedia Commons.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*

Statement of the Problem

Current Situation

Economics

The 19th century was a period of great economic change in Iran. Like in many other non-Western countries, as exposure to world markets increased, Iran primarily became an exporter of raw materials and an importer of finished goods. Iranian agriculture shifted towards the production of cash crops like cotton and opium for export, in the process increasing economic inequality as smaller peasants were gobbled up by large landlords who had the capital to invest in production of export crops⁴⁷. Meanwhile, many domestic Iranian cottage industries, particularly the textile industry, were ravaged by imports of cheaper manufactured goods, though some traditional Iranian craft industries, by far the largest being Persian carpets, survived as niche export industries catering to Western consumer fads. This process was complemented by the vast number of concessions given out to foreigners. Agreements with foreign countries often gave foreigners preferential tax benefits or exclusive rights to involvement in certain industries, to the detriment of Iranians⁴⁸. While foreign involvement did genuinely introduce certain improvements to Iran, such as Iran's first national bank or the expansion of trade on the important Karun River, these improvements generally served foreign commercial interests.

Meanwhile, the Qajar government was both unable and unwilling to undertake economic development on its own. Political and military power in Iran was heavily decentralized—without a standing army, the government had little effective control outside of Tehran and relied on provincial governors, who often bought their positions from the Shah for the chance to skim off tax collection. Institutions like the Ulema (Islamic Clergy) also exerted considerable political power independent of the crown and often mobilized to oppose perceived importation of Western and un-Islamic ideas⁴⁹. Meanwhile, the successive governments of Naser Al-Din Shah and Mozaffar Al-Din Shah were more concerned with maintaining social stability and protecting established interests than making

⁴⁷ Keddie, "Iranian Revolutions in Comparative Perspective," 583.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, 584.

forward-thinking economic investments⁵⁰. What interested the two successive Shahs about the West was not technology but the vast array of luxury goods they could import to sustain the decadence of the upper class. A few reformist ministers managed to institute some minor reforms over the years, the most important being the establishment of the Dar Al-Funun, Iran's first modern secular school, but these reformists were invariably sacked sooner than later.

Throughout the 19th century, reformers in Iran faced a dilemma: should change come from within or from abroad? On the one hand, the Qajar government seemed too beholden to conservative interests like the aristocracy, clergy, and established merchant class to consider major reforms, and in any case was probably too weak and incompetent to execute them effectively. Foreigners, on the other hand, had the expertise to actually implement meaningful changes, but securing their services often required humiliating and economically damaging concessions⁵¹, which would lead to public backlash. None of the reformists who managed to (however briefly) gain power were able to find a politically sustainable way to promote economic development, and as a result Iran, unlike other non-Western countries like China and the Ottoman Empire, never developed a domestic "self-strengthening" movement to drive modernization from within⁵². In 1906, on the eve of the Constitutional Revolution, Iran was therefore highly underdeveloped.

Foreign Policy and Military

The diplomatic battle for economic and political influence in central Asia and the Middle East between the British and Russian Empires, or the **Great Game**, drastically unraveled existing power structures in the region over the course of the 19th Century. The Great Game is said to have begun in the 1830s when the British East India Company attempted to establish more favorable treaties of commerce with the Emirate of Bukhara, a nation occupying much of modern-day central Asia⁵³. The enterprise would have also required the development of transportation infrastructure through the Afghan Durrani Empire as well as a number of other small states standing between the two. As the Russian Empire had also been expanding its borders into the region at this time, a rivalry broke out

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

⁵¹ *ibid.*, 586.

⁵² *ibid.*, 581.

⁵³ Yarshatar, "The Qajar Era in the Mirror of Time," 188.

between the two European powers. In the eyes of the British government, the supreme aim would be to establish a string of nations separating the two empires such that they never bordered one another directly—the Ottomans, Iran, and Afghanistan would form the bulk of this line. These nations would, over the course of the century, see countless attempts at diplomatic, economic, or military pressure from the British and Russians to provide greater commercial benefits to one or the other.

For Iran, this meant both an opportunity to address some of the faults of the Qajar state through **foreign investments** into the nation and a **simultaneous surrender of much of its sovereignty**. Due to its border with central Asia's nomadic groups and proximity to Russia, the Tsar enjoyed a significant amount of influence over the Qajar monarchy following the Treaty of Turkmenchay in 1828⁵⁴. By the 1870s, efforts to modernize and reform the Iranian army under the supervision of Russian Imperial military officers had led to the development of foreign brigades bearing sizable sway over the rest of the army⁵⁵. The main foreign-influenced unit in the Qajar army was the **Cossack Brigade**, under the direct command of Russian Colonel **Vladimir Liakhov**. In a country otherwise without a professional military (the Qajars had long relied on Turkic tribal irregulars), the Cossack Brigade was a formidable force for the promotion of Russian interests in Iran.

As the Qajars had failed in this half of the century to also invest equally highly into infrastructural projects, its ever-shrinking military strength was the basis of much of the dynasty's prestige. Most of the **industrialization and development which did occur during this period was carried out by foreign companies**⁵⁶. Unfortunately for Iran, this also led to continuous attempts by each European power to persuade the Shah to provide exclusive development rights in particular regions of the nation, often leading to overlapping claims. Given the limited ability of the Shah to negotiate these offers, this frequently led to **long periods without any needed infrastructural growth**, particularly in the central regions of the nation. For one particularly devastating example, British and Russian railway and telegraph companies halted all transportation projects from the 1870s onwards⁵⁷, leading to **economic stagnation** as Iran failed to connect to wider and more efficient markets.

⁵⁴ *ibid*, 190.

⁵⁵ *ibid*.

⁵⁶ Keddie, "Iranian Politics 1900-1905: Background to Revolution," 8.

⁵⁷ *ibid*.

With much of the Shah's court being diplomats from Russia and much of its debt bought by British banks—and a total lack of needed economic growth in order to repay it—the facade of a respectable Qajar regime began to crumble. Iran's citizens grew more resentful of these foreign companies as well as of the monarchy which had bid them welcome. The aforementioned **Tobacco Protest**⁵⁸, held in 1890 by both merchants and members of the clergy against the signing of a treaty allowing the British Tobacco Régie sole rights to the industry and its profits, was the largest show of opposition to the dynasty since its foundation. As leaders of the protest such as **Zainab Pasha** began to move away from mere boycotting of tobacco to more militant actions such as attacking warehouses and damaging manufacturing equipment⁵⁹, Iranians became much more vocal about their opposition to the Shah. The Qajar mismanagement of the economy and concessions to foreign powers also led to a number of **bread shortages and famines**⁶⁰ in the final decade of the 19th Century. Unrest was now beyond quelling.

Yet despite foreign influence being a major driving force in the Constitutional Revolution of 1906, the surrender of the Shah did not dislodge Iran from the rock and the hard place. British and Russian influence remained strong, with the former known to have **provided financial support** to some factions of the movement due to the growing Russian influence over the Shah's court⁶¹. Though the latter would not ultimately provide military assistance to the Shah, its sway over some of the anti-constitutionalist members of the committee was felt nevertheless. The Great Game was not yet over.

Politics

Although Mozaffar al-Din Shah has conceded to the protesters and agreed to a constitution that will limit the power of the Shah, so much remains unclear. Iran's current leaders are anti-constitution, and clashing ideologies between powerful ulema, academics, and baazaris need to be resolved. Iran's Shahs have long struggled for power against the ulema⁶², and although the ulema helped to win the support of much of the Iranian people in the revolution (particularly in their condemnation of

⁵⁸ Abrahamian, "The Crowd in the Persian Revolution," 132.

⁵⁹ *ibid*, 141.

⁶⁰ Keddie, "Iranian Politics 1900-1905: Background to Revolution," 12.

⁶¹ Keddie and Yann, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*.

⁶² Keddie, "Iranian Revolutions in Comparative Perspective," 582.

the sale of Iran's tobacco industry to a British mercenary, bringing nearly universal support to the Tobacco Protests⁶³), it is important to maintain a balance of power with the religious leaders of the nation. Will Iran's constitution set the precedent for a secular nation, or will widespread support for the ulema give them a permanent place in the government?

Even without challenges from the ulema, Iran has struggled in the past to establish a strong central government that can enforce its rules and enact widespread change. With the military still under the control of the Russian military, Iran's government needs to find a way to independently keep its authority over the Iranian people. And after decades of watching territories conceded to the Russians, entire Iranian industries being sold abroad, and taxes raised without real change⁶⁴, the Iranian people are incredibly distrustful of their government. Previous attempts to modernize Iran have yielded little results, and in order for Iran to stay independent, it needs to keep up with the foreign powers threatening its sovereignty. A constitution that will balance the government's power with the needs of its people is essential to building a long-lasting nation.

Both Constitutionalist and Monarchist forces face continued instability from yet another source of factions. Common Iranian civilians have also begun to voice their interests in louder and often more violent fashion. Most of these civilians have been protesting for decades against economic conditions, particularly the diminished access to foreign markets and their lessened ability to participate in particular industries as a result of Shah-sponsored foreign monopolies. While many of these protests have been led by the ulema, there are some civilian leaders which have emerged, and the most prominent among these regularly turn out to be those who are willing to coordinate armed insurrection against the government⁶⁵. Between the attacks on the central government's weapons storage facilities during the Tobacco Protests and in the 1890s and the hostility shown towards foreign traders, it is clear that a balance will need to be met between maintaining the internal stability of the nation by granting the people their needs and maintaining Iran's foreign relations by avoiding a total closing off of the country's economy. The lack of representation of this class of people in most prior regimes in Iran's history has also been an often-mentioned issue on the streets of Tehran—yet this is limited more to those living in larger cities. Village and tribal civilians' lifestyles

⁶³ *ibid*, 584.

⁶⁴ *ibid*, 586.

⁶⁵ Abrahamian, 132.

encourage demands for autonomy which, if not met delicately, could hinder the ability of the new government to enhance national unity. To implement a longer-lasting, durable government, it will be crucial that the new constitution institute schemes which will allow for these goals to be achieved.

The other type of revolt against the central government by civilians may present an even greater challenge, in part due to the risk of foreign interference. Various separatist movements have emerged. In the Caucasus and on the southeast coast of the Caspian Sea, there has been active fighting against the Shah by Armenian, Azeri, and Turkic tribal groups, among others⁶⁶. For decades, many of these groups sought greater autonomy in the form of educational and economic reforms and freedoms on par with those of Iranians in the nation's heartland. To this, the Qajar dynasty often responded with slowly-implemented, underwhelming policies, if not outright antagonism⁶⁷. These forces can play a powerful role in the debates surrounding the constitution for a number of reasons.

First, although they were aligned specifically with the Constitutionalist side during the civil war, allowing the swift defeat of the Shah's forces, they also joined the Constitutionalist side due to the promise of autonomy for their own region, without making promises themselves to support the vision of a democratic Iran. As such, they are not wholly opposed to the continued existence of a monarchy, nor are they favorable to the Qajars⁶⁸. They are an as-of-yet undefined and disunited third side in this constitutional debate. Their considerable bargaining power is of great significance to any proposed draft constitution.

Second, they represent a large portion of the population which may not hesitate to break away from the constitution and shift their focus back to complete separatism. Their presence as a primed and readied military force enhances their bargaining power in the constitutional debate and should lend greater attention to how they can help or harm any attempts to reconsolidate power around the central government after the new constitution is ratified.

Finally, they have a history of collaboration with similar movements in neighboring countries as well as of receiving discrete support from foreign powers. Due to the economic and military influence of

⁶⁶ *ibid*, 143.

⁶⁷ Yarshatar, 190.

⁶⁸ Abrahamian, 143.

some of these powers in and around Iran, this leads to a potential for these separatist groups to be a means for foreign powers to sway the constitutional debate.

Character Biographies

Mirza Nasrullah Khan - Minister of Foreign Affairs

Mirza Nasrullah Khan He was appointed as the Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1898 after working his way up through the ranks of the Qajar's regime. He was born in 1840s Tehran into a family of religious leaders, and therefore held respect for the intertwinement of the Iranian people's religious beliefs and their government. He was married to the daughter of a wealthy merchant, and identified as an independent politician for his political career. In his 20s, he made a particular name for himself among the Qajars by managing to appease a delegation from the Ottoman Empire when traveling to Istanbul as an intern on a diplomatic mission. Since then, he has become increasingly involved in the nation's foreign affairs, winning several friendships abroad. With the inception of the Constitutional Revolution, he found himself at odds between supporting the regime which had aided him so heavily throughout his early life and supporting the clerical establishment which had promised to reestablish itself as the most powerful institution in Iran. As he watches events unfold in 1906, he must decide whether the Qajar political machine is compatible with a dominant clerical establishment in modern Iran.

Mirza Jahangir Khan - Founder & Editor of Sur-e Esrafil

Mirza Jahangir Khan was the editor of the progressive newspaper, *Sur-e Esrafil*, and supported the Iranian Revolution as an intellectual and avid writer. He was a zealous supporter of a constitutional government, and believed that it could liberate the Iranian people. Born into an impoverished family in Shiraz, he studied hard and eventually made his way to study modern sciences at Dar ul-Funun in Tehran. He made literal headlines when he printed details about the corruption of the Iranian government under the Qajar Shahs, even partaking in direct criticism of Mohammed Ali, the son of Mozaffar ad-Din Shah in his newspaper. Having studied traditional Persian philosophy and literature from a young age and immersed in western liberal philosophy in his 20s, he became a strong advocate for many liberal changes such as gender equality, the freedom to practice one's own religion, and the establishment of a permanent, democratically-elected Majles. Whether Mirza Jahangir Khan can frame his goals for Iran so as to not make them appear too radical for the rest of the Constitutional Convention will be a tough challenge to overcome.

Mirza Sayyed Mohammed Tabatabai - Grand Ayatollah and Constitutionalist

A strong supporter of a constitutional government and a democracy in Iran, Mirza Sayyed Mohammed Tabatabai played an important role in the revolution. From early on in his political career, he gave speeches urging movement away from the monarchy system, despite how much this polarized his audience. During the revolution, he helped the ulema to write a set of demands for the Shah that would eventually help develop Iran's Majles. A man of more than mere words, he also pushed heavily to create positions within the Majles for religious representatives from various religious minorities in Iran. He also created one of the first modern-style schools in the country, the Islamieh School, and appointed his brother to govern it and ensure that it taught mathematics, science, and liberal political philosophy to individuals regardless of their social status. Having experimented with several of these revolutionary ideas himself, Mirza Sayyed Mohammed Tabatabai would like nothing more than to see them spread throughout his nation, improving the lives of its citizens and the intellectual power of Iranian society. With the right structure of government, it may even be possible for the common people's power to be exercised at the level needed to return Iran to its former glory.

Mohammad-Kazem Khorasani - Important Pro-Constitutionalist Cleric

Mohammed-Kazem Khorasani was one of the most important clerical supporters of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution. A devout Shia juror, he worked towards a democratic government during the revolution by issuing fatwas banning products under foreign monopolies and demanding the resignation of Grand Vizier Eyn ed-Dowleh. However, he believed that the Iranian government should be secular, and believed in letting his work in social justice be governed by logic, not the Shia school of thought. He was a strong proponent in limiting the power of monarchies, specifically writing in 1902 to Muhammad Ali Mirza, the Crown Prince and the son of Mozaffar ad-Din Shah, that he strongly believed in the British model of a secular parliamentary monarchy and hoped that the Qajar dynasty would act in the best interests of the Iranian people in this regard. While he never received a response to his letter, he maintained his stance and continued to preach it during public sermons. Mohammad-Kazem Khorasani will likely be most satisfied with the Constitutional

Convention if these often-spoken words can finally be formally turned into a written, official constitution for his country.

Abdollah Behbahani - Important Pro-Constitutionalist Cleric

Born into a family of prominent Shia scholars, Abdollah Behbahani was highly educated and open about his political views. An influential member of the Majlis, he spoke out against the Tobacco Protests early in the revolution and was not afraid to express his political opinions, no matter how unpopular. He was best known as an eloquent orator, with his speeches being published in pamphlets and distributed throughout much of the country. For the many still illiterate masses, however, his original words were a great inspiration. Riling his followers into a frenzy at times, he manages to sway a large portion of the population toward his view that a presidential democracy, much like the kind used in the United States, was of greatest importance. He long held the view that separation of the legislative and executive branches was of utmost importance in any democracy, even stating once that "Britain and France have accomplished much in the way of progress for ordinary people, but that they still have a king—this is unacceptable." Curiously, however, Behbahani was a close friend of many members of the Qajar dynasty, believing strongly that, despite his opposition to the existence of a monarch, the Qajars had the expertise needed to start guiding an Iranian democracy in the right direction—if only their government were structured correctly for this end.

Mohammed Kazem Tabataba'i - Pro-Democracy Cleric

Mohammed Kazem Tabataba'i was born in a village near Qom to a family of horse breeders. He remained fond of horses for his entire life, famously keeping the horseshoe used by his favorite pony as a child with him for the entirety of his life. It was his elder sister and brother, however, who continued the family business, while he moved in 1874 to Tehran to begin formal theological studies. Though shy and not very outspoken, he became well-known for his insight on legal and judicial matters. He remained mostly neutral during the Iranian Constitutional Revolution. He never gave his full support to the Shahs, however, and seemed unopposed to the revolution as a whole. A prominent Shia scholar, his expertise was in his religious teachings. What he was sure of, however, was that those teachings pointed to the need for full participation of all a nation's citizens in

decisions surrounding the country. He pointed out that Iran had always been strongest when the Majles exercised greater power over the country, and if this could continue to be the case in a new Iranian constitution, he would be quite satisfied.

Sheikh Fazlollah bin Abbas Mazindarani - Anti-Constitutionalist Cleric

A rich court ruler who mostly handled marriages, the wills of wealthy men, and the collection of religious funds, Fazlollah bin Abbas Mazindarani originally supported a constitution for Iran. However, he changed his allegiance to Muhammed Ali Shah, and helped spread anti-constitutionalist propaganda. Though this change came in part from his theological background, it was mostly driven by an experience which he had when walking through the market one day. When picking up oranges from a farmer, who told him the total price, he quickly corrected the farmer, who had in fact multiplied the numbers incorrectly. The farmer responded by calling him a “nerd.” Sheikh Fazlollah was taken aback—he would never again believe that all people were equally deserving of the ability to make decisions for the nation. He began to make speeches against the spread of modern schools and believed that any changes to Iranian society needed to be made strictly from the top. His preachings took an extremely pro-monarchist turn when he also began to secretly receive funding from the Crown Prince, Muhammad Ali Mirza, to advocate for a stronger, more centralized government. If he cannot prevent the ratification of a constitution for his beloved nation, he will be happy only if it guarantees that no element of democracy will be found in Tehran.

Mirza Abutaleb Zanjani - Anti-Constitutionalist Cleric & Jurist

Mirza Abutaleb Zanjani was a prominent anti-constitutionalist and Shia scholar during the time of the Iranian Constitutional revolution. While he originally supported the revolution, he later spoke out against the creation of a constitutional government, believing a total democratic system to be too far. Although his teachings were strictly Shia, he maintained connections to many prominent European scholars. He was known to be a strong proponent of international unity, particularly among Iran’s geographically close neighbors. He believed that ordinary people were incapable of leading nations—that this was something strictly permissible for established monarchs. However, this also led him to believe that it was a monarch’s duty to form good relations with foreign powers such that the incompetent masses would not be driven to hatred of their neighbors. Mirza Abutaleb

Zanjani gave prominent speeches denouncing the Qajars' subservience to foreign powers but called for the Qajars and the clerical establishment to be strengthened such that this duty might be better fulfilled. He wants a constitution written solely to formalize Iran's refusal to have a democratically-elected legislative body.

Yeprem Khan - Leader of the ARF

An Armenian-born revolutionary, the Iranian Constitutional Revolution was not Yeprem Khan's first foray into resistance against a corrupt government. He protested the Ottoman Empire, was exiled to Siberia for his actions, and eventually returned to Persia in 1896, working for the Armenian Revolutionary Federation. He convinced the ARF to become involved in the Iranian Constitutional Revolution as its leader, and remained in support of a democratic government in Iran, and is still today considered a national hero there. He was born into a strongly military background, with his family frequently moving around to avoid detection from the governments against which they battled. However, while he bears no hatred for the people living under those governments, he is not fully convinced that supporting the Iranian Constitutional Revolution will guarantee the safety of his cause. Whether as an autonomous region or an independent nation, his sole desire is for Armenia to be recognized and supported by the new Iranian government. Though he presently aligns with the Constitutionalist side, he is more than willing—and militarily capable—of swinging to whichever side offers him the greatest promises of future security.

Stepan Zorian - Founder of the ARF

Born in what was at the time the Russian Empire, Stepan Zorian became a leader in the Armenian nationalist movement from a young age, eventually becoming a co-founder of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF). Expelled from higher education in Russia for his revolutionary activities, Zorian spent several decades in exile with his wife, Lisa Melik-Shahnazarian, organizing for the Armenian cause in Turkey, Russia, and Iran from abroad. Most of this time was spent in Switzerland or Bulgaria, but Zorian made occasional trips to Iran, often in disguise, to build up the ARF in that country. Now, as the Constitutional Revolution in Iran gains momentum, he has returned again to help the Constitutionalist Movement in the hopes of securing greater rights for Iran's Armenian community.

Arshak "Keri" Gavafian - General & Member of the ARF

Born in the Ottoman Empire, Arshak Gavafian, better known by his pseudonym "Keri," has been a lifelong fighter in service of the Armenian cause, a sort of early 20th century Ché. Keri has fought in several revolts against the Ottoman Turks with his fellow Armenian guerillas, and while none have been successful in securing the freedom of his people, Keri has made a reputation for himself as a fearless revolutionary. Now, he has joined many of his comrades in Iran as allies of the constitutionalist cause, in the hopes that overthrowing Qajar tyranny might bring about greater rights for Iran's Armenians and eventually even undermine Ottoman rule. It was in early 1905, however, that he had a life-changing experience. He had traveled home to see his family and was asking his children how their education had progressed. His eldest son, who was twelve at the time, told him that he had not been to school in three years. Arshak was devastated. While he remains willing to take up arms if absolutely necessary, he has come to feel that war has taken its toll on his people. He will do whatever it takes now to first make sure that there is a peaceful resolution to the conflict facing the Caucasus region and that his and other families can lead normal lives. Whether this means a democratic, monarchist, or any other specific kind of government in Iran is up to him to decide.

Allameh Ali Akbar Dehkhoda - Iranian Linguist & Lexicographer

Allameh Ali Akbar Dehkhoda was born in 1879, and like many well-off Iranians of his generation, received both a modern Western-style education and a traditional clerical education. Dehkhoda's two mentors as a youth were the clerics Borujerdi and Najmabadi, the latter of whom imparted his liberal thinking upon Dehkhoda in addition to the traditional knowledge of Islamic law. Starting in 1899, Dehkhoda studied at the Tehran School of Political Science (which, despite its name, was really more equivalent to a liberal arts college), learning French, history, economics, law, and literature. Because the school was sponsored by the Foreign Ministry, many graduates entered Iran's diplomatic corps, Dehkhoda included. This eventually allowed him to stay two years in Europe between 1903 and 1905, during which he studied French and acquainted himself with European liberal thought. Returning to his home country on the eve of the Constitutional Revolution, Dehkhoda has dedicated himself towards propagating his ideas through his satire column in the

progressive newspaper Sur-e Esrafil, in particular his passion for representative government and educational reform.

Sattar Khan - Azerbaijani General

Sattar Khan was born to an Azeri family of little importance. With few economic opportunities available to him, he spent much of his youth as either an outlaw or a mercenary, alternating between hiring himself out to the royal authorities as a guard and being a highway robber himself. However, after a pilgrimage to meet the famous cleric Mirza Shirazi, who was pivotal in the Tobacco Protest, Sattar Khan renounced his criminal ways and began turning his skills towards the defense of his community from brigands and state oppression. He is currently a prominent figure among the Constitutionalist rebels of his hometown of Tabriz. Hoping to represent and further the rights of tribal groups living throughout northern and eastern Iran, he has a challenging task ahead. He resents the childhood which he had to live and desires a peaceful change to the structures of government which prevented him from accessing resources available to the non-tribal citizens of Iran. Though he has provided pivotal support up until now for the Constitutionalist side, he has begun to recall his days as a royal guard and is willing to support whichever side will offer the best concessions and reforms to support the tribes.

Abolqassem Aref Qazvini - Iranian Poet, Lyricist, & Musician

Abolqassem Aref Qazvini was born in 1882 in the city of Qazvin in the vicinity of Tehran. Due to the wishes of his strict father, he initially received a clerical education, but in 1898 he eventually rebelled and traveled to the capital to pursue his dreams of becoming a poet and songwriter. There, his clerical education ironically proved helpful due to its focus on recitation and traditional grammar, though Qazvini was more interested in writing about politics than religion. His claim to fame remains his poetry, which he uses to celebrate the martyrs of the revolution and advocate for the Constitutional cause. The popularity of his work and his importance in shaping the revolutionary cause has led some to call him the voice of the people and even the unofficial national poet. Despite his limited direct influence in politics, he is extremely popular among many common Iranian citizens, and it is likely that he will be pivotal in convincing the people to support one constitution or the

other. What remains unclear is the role of individuals such as him—non-politicians, non-judges, non-lawyers—in this new government.

Sardar Assad - Chieftain of the Bakhtiari Tribe

Sardar Assad (born Ali-Gholi Khan) is a chieftain of the powerful Bakhtiari tribe, a large grouping of Luri nomads inhabiting Iran's Fars province, in the south of the country. When he was young, the Qajar governor of Fars executed his father, the chieftain at the time, and took Ali-Gholi as a hostage. While he nominally led a Bakhtiari guard contingent for the prime minister, in reality he was held as an effective prisoner to ensure the cooperation of his tribe, which had historically acted independently of the government due to their large numbers, strong military forces, land holdings, and connections with the British. However, after the assassination of Naser Al-Din Shah, Ali-Gholi was freed, and promptly traveled to Europe for several years, where he was introduced liberal Iranians in exile. His reformist ideals combined with his distaste for the despotism of the Qajars has made him a firm believer in popular constitutional government and a key supporter of the revolution. However, his other motives are unclear—it is rumored that he works closely with the British as their agent in Iran, and harbors ambitions for greater political power for himself and his tribe.

Şowlat al-Dowla - Ilkhan of the Qashqai Tribal Federation

Şowlat al-Dowla is the Ilkhan of the Qashqai Tribal Federation, a Turkic nomadic group primarily inhabiting Iran's Fars province. Like their neighbors and frequent rivals, the Bakhtiaris, the Qashqai are powerful and fiercely independent, and due to the decrepit state of Qajar governance have been largely free to do as they please in recent years. Unlike his contemporary Sardar Assad, Şowlat al-Dowla is no idealist. While he is currently a supporter of the constitutionalist cause, it is not due to progressive inclinations on his part—instead, his motivation is essentially cynical. The chief rival of the Qashqai, greater than even the Bakhtiaris, is the Qawāmi family of Shiraz, leaders of the rival Kamsa tribal confederation. While the Qawāmis are a British-aligned, urbanite, merchant clan with extensive business interests, the Qashqai are nomadic pastoralists who have routinely disrupted trade in the province with their raiding and extortion. Thus the two find themselves diametrically opposed. Due to a variety of circumstances, the Qawāmis have fallen out of favor among the

Constitutionalists and have become supporters of the Shah, and so Şowlat al-Dowla has taken the opportunity to pick the opposite side in the hopes of gaining supremacy over Fars.

Bibi Khanoom Astarabadi - Satirist & Founder of the School for Girls

Bibi Khanoom Astarabadi was born in 1859 to a family close to the Qajar court. Her mother was an educated woman and tutor to the children of Naser Al-Din Shah, allowing Bibi to receive an excellent education by the standards of the time. At the age of 22, she married a prominent military officer, with whom she had seven children, many of whom would become artists and literary figures in their own right, but her real passion in life was advancing the cause of women's rights in Iran through her writing. In 1895, she famously wrote a satirical response titled "The Imperfections of Men" illustrating the struggles faced by Iranian women in response to a misogynistic pamphlet. Her greatest hope is that women will someday be able to receive a formal education in Iran. With the Constitutional Revolution overthrowing many old norms and introducing new institutions, her dream may finally come to fruition.

Mohammed Mosaddeq - French-educated Legal Scholar

Mohammed Mossadeq was born to a privileged family of high officials. His father died when he was young, but Mossadeq continued to receive the favor of the royal family and at the age of fifteen was appointed chief tax collector of the province of Khorasan, an extraordinarily high position for such a young person. Due to his intense dedication and scholarly background, the young Mossadeq thrived as a bureaucrat. At the age of nineteen, he married a Qajar princess, making him a distant relative of the Shah himself. However, despite his close relationship to the royal family, Mossadeq, aged twenty-four, remains staunchly committed to his reformist and nationalist ideals and hopes for an Iran free of both royal despotism and foreign imperialism.

Abdol Majid Mirza Eyn-ed-Dowleh - Qajar Prince & Grand Vizier

Born into a subordinate branch of the Qajar royal family in 1845, Abdol Majid Mirza has lived through many of the dynasty's most trying moments. Yet never did he expect his family to fall to this nadir. As the Vizier to the Shah, he had for years been hinting at the possibility of more violent protest

against the family if particular measures were not taken. He had long desired to take more active action against the British and Russian foreign interference and to institute modern schools throughout the country, believing that a well-educated population could better support its monarch. Despite his radical ideas for reform, his need to remain loyal to the Qajar royal house has placed him in a challenging situation in 1906. In this time of vehement opposition to the Qajar reign, it may well be possible at last that his ideas about economic reform and drastic populist changes to the government budget be implemented without the simultaneous ratification of overly radical political reforms; if not, his family may never even set foot in Iran again.

Eskandar Khan Davidkhanian - Deputy Commander of the Cossack Brigade

Eskandar Khan Davidkhanian took an early liking to mathematics, chemistry, and physics. At the behest of his grandfather, who had served as Finance Minister for a prior Shah, he began a degree in economics in addition to his chemistry degree. When he lost interest in economics—and, subsequently, his grandfather's willingness to subsidize his education—he joined the new Cossack Brigade in the army, using his wages to pay for a doctorate degree in chemistry. He began as an engineer, but after participating in a battle against raiders in Khorasan, he quickly proved himself as capable of taking on a leadership role on the frontlines. As he rose in rank, however, he rapidly began to notice that his soldiers were not interested in fighting for Iran; rather, like him, they sought wealth, and most of them did not always make enough to support their family. Davidkhanian began to mingle with leaders of the Constitutionalist factions in Iran, believing them capable of reinvigorating his country—and his brothers-in-arms.

Hassan Pirnia - Founder of the Tehran School of Political Science

Despite the wishes of his father and grandfather, both of whom had been heavily involved with the royal family, Hassan Pirnia took an early interest in academics. His classmates in school would frequently taunt him by shouting, "Nerd!" despite his high performance in school. He spent a decade in university, studying all the history, linguistics, and political science that he could, taking a particular liking to the works of Al-Biruni. He began a career as a diplomat, serving in Moscow for some years, before returning to Iran to found the Tehran School of Political Science. He became an advocate for improving education standards, particularly in the social sciences. To Pirnia, informing

the populace about Iran's past was the best way to inform it about the kind of government which would be ideal for it in the future. As a socialist, he occasionally came under the scrutiny of the Qajar monarchy, yet he nevertheless managed to maintain his political significance, becoming one of the youngest members of the convention to draft the constitution.

Prince Abdol-Hossein Farman Farma - Iranian Aristocrat

Prince Farman Farma occupies a challenging role in Iranian society. Despite being a landed Qajar aristocrat, raised with an expensive education, it is his very education which introduced him to the political and economic ideas which had been brewing in northern Europe at the time. An avid consumer of literature on Scandinavian-style social democracy, he became convinced of the need for dramatic structural reform in Iranian society—particularly if Iran were to become self-sustaining and independent of foreign investment. At the same time, his religious and philosophical education compelled him to see a place for some aspects of the present structure in the Iran of the future. To Farman Farma, the monarchy and clergy were capable of serving the people in the most crucial way possible—ensuring regional representation. It is unclear whether he will sway more towards the Constitutionalist or towards the Royalist side as the fate of Iran is rewritten.

Sevkaretsi Sako - Armenian Revolutionary & Member of the ARF

Born in the Armenian province of the Russian Empire, Sevkaretsi was always proud of his heritage and his culture. His greatest source of pride, he would often say later in life, was in his ancestors' resilience in times of misfortune. For this reason, he felt compelled later in life to take up arms against all nations where Armenians lived—including Iran. In hopes of creating a free Armenia, he began a career of smuggling army supplies. As he came to be in charge of larger units of his own and made connections with other revolutionary leaders, he began to take violent action against the Shah's government. Collaborating with the Constitutionalist forces, who promised him greater autonomy for Caucasian provinces in Iran, he assisted in vanquishing the pro-monarchy forces during the revolution. It remains to be seen what degree of autonomy would truly appeal to him.

Ahmad Kasravi - Iranian Linguist, Historian, & Religious Reformer

Ahmad Kasravi was born into a Tehrani family in 1890. His father was a carpet-weaver, and though his family was not itself impoverished, it had to struggle and see its neighbors teeter through increasingly challenging domestic economic crises throughout his childhood. This led to Kasravi becoming very frugal and disapproving of the splurging habits of the Qajar monarchy. After his father's untimely demise, his family was supported by a local clergyman, who instructed him in ancient languages, history, philosophy, and religion. At the age of fourteen, Kasravi began to hear elders all around him speaking of revolution and creating a constitution. Eager to look back on the history of Iran to see what made great monarchs and greater wealth for the people, he began to come to odds with his instructor, an adamant anti-Constitutionalist. At only the age of sixteen, he became involved in the Constitutionalist movement. Though he is the youngest member of the convention, his rhetorical and writing ability is already heavily praised among the group.

Sayyid Jamal al-Din "Va'iz" Esfahani - Constitutionalist Cleric & Writer for Al Jamal

Despite his background as a member of the clergy, Va'iz stands out due to his adamant support of the Constitutionalist movement. As with a small number of his peers, he believed it his duty to educate the public on the virtues of democracy and of a written constitution to limit the state. In the 1890s, he began the *Al-Jamal* newspaper, hoping in particular to appeal to the hearts and minds of Iranian merchants by speaking of structural reforms which could allow Iran's economy to become more self-sustaining and independent of foreign interests. Though he strongly believed that foreign investment was necessary to promote his nation's economy, he disapproved of the restraints on Iranian traders and the concessions of monopolistic control to foreign investors. To Va'iz, the creation of an economically viable Iran was crucial for its future success.

Mirza Kuchak Khan - Luristani General

Born in 1880 to a merchant family from the Caspian Sea coast, Mirza Kuchak Khan was keenly aware of the suffering faced by his fellow Iranians as a result of the increasingly limited economic opportunities in his nation. As he grew older, his father began to instruct him in seafaring such that he might aid in sailing their merchant ship to and from ports in the Russian Empire. There, he

realized two things: first, just how tied his father's hands were, as he was unable to negotiate prices for certain goods due to treaties made by the Qajars and often operated at a loss; and second, that a new ideology had begun to spread in these Russian lands as their merchant class appeared to face the same hardships. That ideology, as he soon found out, was encapsulated in one very dense red-covered book. He devoured it, reading it every night. Even as Mirza became involved in local politics and later journeyed to Tehran to help write the constitution, he would always have on his bedside that book: Das Kapital.

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