

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,
IRVINE

From *Kulturarbeit* to *Gharbzadegi*:

A Genealogy of German Ideological Interaction with Iranian Nationalism

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in German Studies

by

Mohammad Rafi

Dissertation Committee:
Professor David Pan, Chair
Professor Nasrin Rahimieh
Professor John Smith
Professor Kai Evers

2016

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii-v
CURRICULUM VITAE	vi-ix
ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION	x-xii
INTRODUCTION	1-8
CHAPTER 1: <i>Kulturarbeit</i> and Ideology in the Great War: Germany's Role in the Formation of Iranian Nationalism	9-38
CHAPTER 2: The German-Iranian Discourse	39-68
CHAPTER 3: Ernst Jünger and Jalal Al-e Ahmad: Nihilism and <i>Gharbzadegi</i>	69-90
BIBLIOGRAPHY	91-95

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation would not have been possible without the contributions of a number of people and institutions. The research of this project was funded by generous support from the Institute for International, Comparative, and Area Studies at the University of California, San Diego and the Thyssen Foundation. In addition UC Irvine's Jordan Center for Persian Studies, the European Languages and Studies Department, and a generous fellowship from the Chancellors Club were vital for the writing of my dissertation. I also benefited from presenting parts of my research at Columbia University, New York University, University of California, Berkeley, and the University of Strasbourg.

UCLA and UC Irvine both provided me with generous intellectual communities that supported me throughout my graduate studies. Amongst others I want to thank: Alessandro Duranti, Todd Presner, Lisa Parkes, Wolfgang Nehring, Hans Wagner, Russell Berman and Chris Stevens. I am especially indebted to my brilliant doctoral committee. Martin Schwab, who helped form my original understanding of German philosophy. Kai Evers engagement with literature and criticism were eye opening. John Smith provided further guidance in German philosophy and enabled new avenues of thought that benefited my project. Nasrin Rahimieh's support and advice on Iranian literature/culture and tireless editing of my translations were indispensable to the success of this project, and I will always be indebted to her as a mentor and model of a scholar. David Pan, the chair of my dissertation committee proved to be a key to my intellectual development as a scholar. As a continuous supporter of my project, he also challenged me to become a better thinker with intellectual agility. He was exemplary in his role as an advisor and exceeded my hopes of what I could expect.

I would also like to acknowledge my fellow graduate students in the Department of Germanic Languages and Studies, the European Languages and Studies department, and the Comparative Literature Departments at both UCLA and UC Irvine, who throughout the years have not only been supportive of my project but also served as friends. I extend a warm thank you in no particular order: Kye Terrasi, Andre Schütze, Brenna Reinhart Byrd, Ivett Güntersdorfer, Aaron Benanav, Sina Rahmani, Kyle Wanberg, David Bennett, Emily Selove, Hassan Hussein, Hoda El Shakry, Mallory Ditchey, Stephanie Skier, Leah Feldmann, Shervin Emami, Aria Fani, George Lang, Sharareh Frouzesh, Shadee Malaklou, Jaime Roots, Henrik Sponsel, Patrick Carlson, Ankita Raturi, Ali Meghdadi, Phil Walsh, Sunny Karnani, Ian Jensen, and Brian Garcia.

After leaving UCLA in 2008 for Germany due to visa problems my return to the United States was not guaranteed. If it were not for the support of my family and attorney I would not have survived my time in Germany. My brothers Reza, Hamid, and Saeed were always supportive in my intellectual undertakings. I am thankful for their encouragement. I also want to thank my two friends Moein Zandi and Naseer Astanboos for their invaluable friendship in challenging times. My wonderful girlfriend Sahar Mandi who was by my side from the beginning of my Ph.D studies was my most loyal supporter who always believed in me and was patient throughout the very isolating process of writing a dissertation. Finally, a very special thanks to my parents, Massoud Rafi and Negar Alavi, without them this project would simply not have been possible.

I am fortunate to have parents who always had faith in me and never questioned my capabilities. My father's insight into the intellectual scene of the 1960 and 70s in Iran were indispensable to my success as a scholar. My mother's unconditional love allowed me to grow into a confident young man in a world that is as brutal as it is beautiful. It is only because of their sacrifices that I was able to achieve this grand task of finishing this dissertation.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Mohammad Rafi

University of California, Irvine (UC Irvine)

2010-2016 Ph.D. candidate in German with an emphasis in Critical Theory

Dissertation: *From Kulturarbeit to Gharbzadegi: A Genealogy of German Ideological Interaction with Iranian Nationalism*

Committee: David Pan (Chair), Nasrin Rahimieh, Kai Evers, John Smith

Spring 2012 Advancement to candidacy

University of California, Los Angeles (UC Los Angeles)

2008 M.A. in German Philosophy & Literature

2005 B.A. in Political Science (emphasis on International Relations) Minor In German

GRANTS, AWARDS AND APPOINTMENTS

2015-2016 Chancellor's Club Fellowship (\$10,000)

2015 Graduate Deans Dissertation Fellowship (honorable mention)

2015 Summer Dissertation Fellowship School of Humanities (\$5,000)

2014 Associated Graduate Student Travel Fund (UC Irvine)

2014 Graduate Student Research and Travel Award (UC Irvine)

2013 Zarrinkelk Fellowship (UCI Samuel Jordan Center for Persian Studies) (\$5,000)

2012 IICAS Thyssen Foundation Pre-Dissertation Fellowship (UC San Diego) (\$4,500)

2006-2008 UCLA Deans Humanities Fellowship

2007-2008 UCLA Vice-President German Student Association

2006-2007 UCLA Center for World Languages 'Certificate in Teaching Foreign/Heritage Languages to Graduate Students'

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

UC Irvine:

2013-2016 Teaching Associate: Humanities Core Course Topic: War

2012 (Winter) Team-taught German 130 Refugees in German Society

2011 (Fall) Teaching Associate: Humanities Core Course Topic: Religion

2010-2013 Teaching Assistant (Instructor of record) German 1a, 1b, 1c, 2a, 2b, 2c

UC Los Angeles:

2007 (Summer): Instructor for Intensive German language course (German 1-3)

2006-2008 Teaching Assistant (Instructor of record) German 1,2,3,4

PUBLICATIONS

Refereed Journal Articles

Die deutsche Kulturarbeit im Ersten Weltkrieg und ihr Einfluss auf den Iranischen Nationalismus. Persien im Spiegel deutschsprachiger Kulturen. Konstruktionsvarianten der Persien-Bilder vom 18. bis in das 20. Jahrhundert. Presses Universitaires de Strasbourg, Collection FAUSTUS/Etudes Germaniques 2016.

Edited Volumes

Kulturarbeit and Ideology in the Great War: Germany and Iranian Nationalism. Europe & The World: World War One as a Crisis of Universalism. Edited Vol. by David Pan & Kai Evers. New York, Telos Press 2016.

Web-Based Public Scholarship and Translations

Universal Ideology in the Great War: Germany's Role in the Formation of Iranian Nationalism. TELOS Scope, March 17th, 2015.

<http://www.telospress.com/author/rafi/>

Re-Working the Philosophy of Martin Heidegger: Iran's Revolution of 1979 and its Quest for Cultural Authenticity. TELOS Scope, April 19th, 2013. <http://www.telospress.com/author/rafi/>
(Translated into Norwegian and republished with *KULTURVERK* by Magne Stolpnessæter <http://www.kulturverk.com/2015/07/14/heidegger-og-den-iranske-revolusjonen/>)

An Old Predilection Based on an Aryan Myth and its Resurrection in Virtual Space: Iran's Historical Affinity for Germany. TELOS Scope, March 6th, 2012.

<http://www.telospress.com/author/rafi/>

(Translated into Persian and republished with *Radio Zamaneh* by Behnam Amini <http://archive.radiozamaneh.com/society/haftkoocheh/2012/04/19/13387>)

INVITED SPEAKER

“The Political Aryan: Nazi Germany's Pandering to the Iranian Bind.” Expanding Eurasia: New Approaches to Central Asian Studies. UCLA, April 28th, 2016.

“Germany and Iran: An Ideological Alliance Based on Cultural Affinity.” The Intercultural Discourse of the German Speaking Region and Persia. University of Strasbourg/Centre national de la Recherche scientifique Maison interuniversitaire des Sciences de l'Homme-Alsace (MIHSA). Strasbourg, France. June 11th-13th, 2014.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

“Confronting Nazi Racial Law and the Determination of Iranian National Identity.” *Conflicts of Interest: The Productive Power of Confrontation*. UCLA Department of Germanic Languages. Los Angeles, April 29th, 2016.

“The Precariousness of Aryan Belonging.” *Going Global: Transnational Issues in Interdisciplinary Applications*. UCLA International Institute. Los Angeles, April 22nd, 2016.

“*Kulturimperialismus* and Exceptionalism: Germany’s Function in the Development of Iranian National Ideology.” Thirty-Ninth Annual German Studies Association (GSA) Conference. Washington D.C. October 1-4, 2015.

“Universal Ideology in the Great War: Germany’s Role in the Formation of Iranian Nationalism.” The 2015 Telos Conference, *Universal History, Philosophical History, and the Fate of Humanity*. Deutsches Haus at New York University, New York, February 13-15, 2015.

“Germany and Iranian Exceptionalism: Defying the Dominant Geo-Political World Order.” UCLA International Institute. Los Angeles, May 16th, 2014.

“Culture and Ideology: Germany's Impact on the Formation of Iranian Nationalism and its Significance for the West.” *Capitals*. American Comparative Literature Association (ACLA). New York City (NYU), March 20-23, 2014.

“Heidegger’s Utopia in Iran: The Iranian Revolution of 1979 and its Insistence on Authenticity.” Thirty-Seventh Annual German Studies Association (GSA) Conference. Denver, Colorado. October 3-6, 2013.

“Re-working the Philosophy of Martin Heidegger: Iran’s Revolution of 1979 and its Quest for Cultural Authenticity.” The 2013 Telos Conference, *Religion and Politics in a Post-Secular World*. St. Francis College, New York. February 15-17, 2013.

“Modernity and the Aryan Myth: Repercussions of a Fertile Liaison between Germany and Iran.” *The World Elsewhere*. Interdisciplinary German Studies Conference. University of California, Berkeley. March 16-18, 2012.

“Ernst Jünger and Al-e Ahmad: Questions of Technology within Modernity.” *Sites of Modernity* 3rd Annual Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African (MESAA) Studies Graduate Conference Columbia University. March 1-2, 2012

“An Old Predilection Based on an Aryan Myth and its Resurrection in Virtual Space: Iran’s Historical Affinity for Germany.” The 2012 TELOS Conference, *Space: Virtuality, Territoriality, Relationality*. New York University. January 14-15 2012.

“Retracing Modernity to Technology: Iran’s Historical Affinity for Germany.” History Graduate Student Association: History and Theory Conference. University of California, Irvine. May 21st, 2011.

“Iran’s commitment to Germany.” ‘Commitment’ Conference at the University of California, Irvine Comparative Literature Graduate Conference. Newport Beach. April 29th, 2011.

“Constructing an Authentic Modernity in Iran through Germany.” Modernity at Large and its Imaginaries in Germany & Beyond. 10th Annual Columbia University German Graduate Student Conference. Deutsches Haus, New York. March 4-5 2011.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE & SERVICE TO PROFESSION

Nuclear Policy Working Group (NPWG) University of California, founding member

Assistant Book Review Editor *TELOS* 2015- 2016

Chair of Graduate Student Committee co-organizing the Conference: “Europe and the World: World War I as Crisis of Universalism.” University of California, Irvine, December 4-7, 2014.

Editorial Associate of the Graduate student journal: *Trans-Scripts* (UC Irvine) 2012-2013

Editorial Board of the Graduate student journal: *New German Review* (UCLA) 2006-2008

2006-2007 Research Assistant (paid) to Professor Alessandro Duranti; working on translating Edmund Husserl’s *Logical Investigations* (UCLA)

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Modern Language Association

German Studies Association

American Comparative Literature Association

Leibniz Institut für Globale und Regionale Studien

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

From *Kulturarbeit* to *Gharbzadegi*:

A Genealogy of German Ideological Interaction with Iranian Nationalism

By

Mohammad Rafi

Doctor of Philosophy in German Studies

University of California, Irvine, 2016

Professor David Pan, Chair

Germany's historic cultural and politico-economic ties with Iran are often mentioned to display a misconstrued closeness between the ideologies of Islam (ism) and fascism (Nazism). Selected interactions between Iran and Germany have in the last decades been highlighted to argue that Iran shares ideological roots with Nazism and has therefore internalized a fundamentalist national ideology. This creates not only an incomplete but also a false picture of a complex relation that is mainly grounded in geo-political strategy and a struggle for national autonomy.

This kind of narrative that merely highlights selected common fascist tendencies without the relevant historical context is largely politically motivated. A lack of context often leads to false conclusions about Islam at large, which serve to mischaracterize a religion, as an ideology grounded in fascism and fundamentally incompatible with the West. At a time when Islam is under continuous attack, it is important to provide a nuanced reading of Germany and Iran's ideological relationship that counters the existing alarmist literature on the topic while providing sufficient context for a more comprehensive and complex picture.

This dissertation uncovers a variety of mutually beneficial reasons for Germany's interactions with Iran. A genealogical study starting with Germany's efforts as part of World War One, traces a long lineage of cultural work (Kulturarbeit), and cultural transfer (Kulturtransfer), which unfolded throughout parts of the twentieth century. A German sponsored Persian-Committee was created in Berlin to concretize the favorable reputation of Germany in Iran, in contrast to Great Britain and Russia's imperialist ambitions as part of the Great Game. The power grab of the Nazis constituted an ideological highpoint in which a common Aryan identity was used by the Nazis to differentiate themselves racially from lower races. Iranians utilized a self-identification as Aryans, based on their pre-Islamic history, in order to create a renewed sense of historical importance.

Another ideological affinity between Iran and Germany can be traced to Martin Heidegger and Ernst Jünger's experimental critique of modernity, which was adapted into an anti-Western ideology in the service of political Islam. Parts of their work, critical of a nihilistic West, was misappropriated by Iranian intellectuals of the 1960 and 70s into a critique of colonialism and the destructive consequences of Western imperialism to Iranian nationhood and culture. This led to the coining of the term Gharbzadegi, most often translated as Westoxification or Weststruckness to indicate an inauthentic relationship between Iran and its Western counterparts.

This study of the convergences of thought between Iranians and Germans reveals that they were as much rooted in geopolitical as in ideological preoccupations. The chapters of this dissertation review and analyze the historical roots of affinities between the two nations and their transformation from the beginning of the twentieth century to the decades before the Iranian revolution. If at different historical junctures Germans attempted to carve out a favorable cultural

relationship with Iranians, Iranians in turn used and adapted German concepts in their own national self-configuration

INTRODUCTION

Encounters and exchanges between Iran and Germany have a long history that represents a wide range of shared interests in poetry, philosophy, and geopolitics. Scholarly studies of the cultural and political interactions between Iran and Germany have by and large reflected this diversity of common interests. An exception to this general scholarly trend is Matthias Küntzel's *Die Deutschen unter der Iran* (2009) which conflates Iranian anti-Western sentiments and Islamism by pointing to Iran's close ties with Nazi Germany and equates Iran's current political regime with fascism. My dissertation responds to Küntzel's work and presents a more complex history of relations between Germans and Iranians which, despite a brief period of close affinity between the Nazis and Reza Shah, cannot be represented as rooted in a convergence of Islam and fascism.

As I will demonstrate in the historical overview that follows, what drew Iranians and Germans together over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, was inflected by politics. But Iran was not merely a passive receiver of ideas and ideologies imported from Germany. In fact, Iranian intellectuals played a significant role in manipulating and adapting ideas to mobilize a distinctly Iranian form of nationalism and/or revolutionary discourse.

Whereas the first diplomatic contact between Germany and Iran (Persia) dates back to 1857, the cultural influences between the two nations go back as far as 1819, a prominent example being the publication of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's much celebrated *West-Östlicher Divan*.¹ Goethe's fascination with the Persian poet and the Orient as a whole set a precedent for the relationship between Germany and Iran (*Orientbegeisterung*). Goethe was drawn to the Orient as much for its mysteries as its proximity to the origins of language and poetry. This type of curiosity and longing for the Orient reached its zenith in

¹ Persia and Iran can be used interchangeably. The country name of Persia was changed to Iran in 1935 after a suggestion by the Iranian

German Romanticism (1802-1848). German Novellas of the late eighteenth century to the mid nineteenth century often included Oriental motifs that underscored escapism.² Beyond Goethe, prominent examples are Johann Gottfried Herder and Friedrich Schlegel, who were fascinated with the “spirit of the Orient.” Much of the fascination by German writers with the Orient drew inspiration through a distancing from Kantian rationalism. Herder’s writings about the language of the East and its powerful metaphors situated him as a cultural pluralist. In his *Spruch und Bild, insonderheit bei den Morgenlaendern* (1792) Herder delineates the contrast between rationally oriented language and the proverbs of the Orient, which for him constitute the treasure of a nation and hold an important position, in not only the development of language, but also as a form of true lawmaking and self-governing. Herder’s piece on the Orient can also be read as a critique of his own tradition, which he viewed as too stringent and infatuated with morality. According to Suzanne Marchand, “God’s symbolic way of speaking, he claimed was understood by all the peoples of the East—and Herder repeatedly refers to the ‘Spirit [Geist] of the Orient,’ characterizing it as childlike and poetic and juxtaposing it to the overly rational and stilted *Geist* of the modern world.”³

The fascination with the Orient (and Persia) was usually tied to the more general differences between the West’s mechanical thinking and a projected fantastic style of the East. Continuing into the 19th Century, the dialogue between Iran and Germany began to become more political. This was due to Iran’s predicament of being caught in the middle of the *Great Game* between Russia and England that dominated 18th and 19th century geo-politics. Iran actively courted Germany in order to recruit it as a “third force” in between the dominating world powers Russia and England. Once official diplomatic relations were established between Germany and

² For example: Novalis’ *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (1802) or E.T.A Hoffmann’s *Der goldene Topf* (1814).

³ Suzanne Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, race, and Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 45.

Iran, politics started to take a defining role in this alliance. According to Bedford Martin, “The German-Persian treaty of 1873 with its arbitration clause presented a serious effort by Nasir ad-Din Shah to secure help—from what he thought was a disinterested foreign state—against English and Russian interference.”⁴ Germany’s favorable position amongst Iranians can only be understood in relation to the actions of England and Russia, whose concessions were increasingly being viewed as twofold and exploitative by the Iranians.⁵ On the German side, Kaiser Wilhelm II’s famous claim for support to the Muslim world came in accordance with a change from a careful *Realpolitik* to a more offensive *Weltpolitik*. One goal of this new policy of assertive diplomacy consisted of securing “economic colonies” that would ensure a powerful Germany. In accordance with this new policy, Germany started paying closer attention to Iran, and a range of economic and cultural ties started taking shape. Martin maintains that around the turn of the century “Germany’s ‘cultural’ efforts in Iran had been widened by the establishment of a German school, and increased German prestige was evident.”⁶

With the beginning of the 20th Century German-Iranian relations intensified as Germany augmented its influence on various aspects of Iranian society. Germany’s political influence accompanied increasing investments in economic sectors. As an example of the trade relations, Ulrich Gehrke explains that it was the *Hamburg-Amerika-Linie*, a large shipping line, which from 1906 until the breakout of the First World War maintained a steady shipping service to the Persian Gulf. Consequently, Germany within only a few years became Iran’s fourth largest trading partner after Russia, England, and Turkey.⁷ Beyond the rapidly evolving political and

⁴ Bedford G. Martin, *German Persian Diplomatic Relations 1873-1912* (The Hague: Mouton & Co – ‘S-Gravenhage, 1959). Martin notes that before the treaty of 1873, “The first diplomatic contact between Germany and Persia took place in 1857. On June 25 of that year a treaty of commerce and friendship was signed at Paris by Farrukh Khan, Amin al-Mulk, Persian Ambassador to France, and Count Karl Franz von Hatzfeld-Wildenburg, on behalf of Prussia and the other states of the Zollverein”, 201.

⁵ Martin’s *German Persian Diplomatic Relations* and Yair P. Hirschfeld’s *Deutschland und Iran im Spielfeld der Mächte* are examples of this point.

⁶ Martin, *German Persian Diplomatic Relations*, 204.

⁷ Ulrich Gehrke, *Persien in der Deutschen Orientpolitik: während des Ersten Weltkrieges Bd.1-2* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1974), 4.

economic exchange, maybe most importantly, an image of the Germans as a friend of Iranians was being formed and stood in stark contrast to the dislike for the British and Russians. Martin depicts Germany as playing the “savior of the Persian nation—in the popular imagination—from the two hostile powers.”⁸ Iran’s efforts to involve Germany into the *Great Game* only heightened throughout the Anglo-Russian negotiations (1907). The Russo-German Convention represents a brief hiatus in the confidence of Iran in Germany, but those doubts were laid to rest with the beginning of the First World War. “By coming to terms with Russia, Germany forfeited the admiration of the of the Persian public, which it only regained during the First World War as the enemy of both Great Britain and Russia.”⁹ Iran was struggling to maintain its neutrality throughout the First World War; its claim to neutrality was rejected based on the stationing of Russian troops in Azerbaijan. Iranian efforts to remove the Russian troops from Azerbaijan and to remain neutral in the First World War were thwarted by the Russians. As Gehrke delineated, a declaration of neutrality could not be effective, as long as troops of the powers involved in the war were present on Persian grounds.¹⁰

Numerous scholars have written about the relationships between Iran and Germany. The most recent contribution is Rashid-Khatib-Shahidi’s 2013 *German Foreign Policy Towards Iran Before World War II*,¹¹ which gives an insightful overview of German foreign policy, while focusing on economic collaborations. Another valuable contribution comes from Ghazal Ahmadi’s 2011 *Iran als Spielball der Mächte?* She analyzes Iran’s foreign policy from 1921-41 and reaches the conclusion that Reza Shah’s modernized state was able to reposition itself within

⁸ Martin, *German Persian Diplomatic Relations*, 209.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 212.

¹⁰ See Gehrke, *Persien in der Deutschen Orientpolitik*, 18.

¹¹ Rashid Khatib-Shahidi, *German Foreign Policy Towards Iran Before World War II: Political Relations, Economic Influence and the National Bank of Persia* (New York: I.B Tauris, 2013).

the community of states.¹² As mentioned earlier, Matthias Küntzel's politically charged account presents some groundwork for the field, while taking an alarmist approach towards this historical relationship.¹³ Historian Jeffrey Herf's *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World* (2010) only briefly addresses Iran, yet his work is important for the context of the dissemination of German propaganda in the Middle East.¹⁴ Herf and Küntzel often aim to highlight a connection between Nazism and the rise of Islamism. Most of the literature on this topic is focused on the relations before the Second World War, with George Lenczowski's 1949 *Russia and The West in Iran 1918-1948*,¹⁵ and Miron Rezun's 1981 *The Soviet Union and Iran* being established readings for the field.¹⁶ The contributions that aim to look at Iran's relationship with Germany throughout the first part of the twentieth century—including during the National Socialist reign—have been sparse, though there are several dissertations in German.¹⁷ Two noteworthy exceptions to this are Djalal Madani's 1986 *Iranische Politik und Drittes Reich* and Ulrich Gehrke's two-volumes titled *Persien in der Deutschen Orientpolitik* published in 1974.¹⁸ The academic contributions of Ahmad Mahrad stand out in their volume, providing original sources and extensive analysis. Mahrad published numerous articles and books (in German) with a special emphasis on Reza Shah's reign (1925-1941) and its political and trading relationship to Germany. In the English-speaking world, the research of Mehrzad Boroujerdi and Ali Mirsepassi deals with Iran's reception of modernity—and discusses the treatment of Western anti-modernist thinkers and

¹² See Ghazal Ahmadi, *Iran als Spielball der Mächte?* (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 2011), 5.

¹³ Matthias Küntzel, *Die Deutschen und der Iran: Geschichte und Gegenwart einer verhängnisvollen Freundschaft* (Berlin: Wolf Jobst Siedler Verlag, 2009).

¹⁴ Jeffrey Herf, *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

¹⁵ George Lenczowski, *Russia and the West in Iran 1918-1948* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1968).

¹⁶ Miron Rezun, *The Soviet Union and Iran* (Genève: Sijthoff & Noordhoff Publisher, 1981).

¹⁷ Notable works include: N. Resai, „Die Beziehung zwischen Iran und Deutschland von der Reichsgründung bis zum Ausbruch des Ersten Weltkrieges“ (PhD diss., University of Heidelberg, 1958) and Yair P. Hirschfeld, *Deutschland und Iran im Spielfeld der Mächte-Internationale Beziehungen unter Reza Schah 1921-1941* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1979).

¹⁸ Djalal Madani, *Iranische Politik und Drittes Reich* (Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang Verlag, 1986) and Ulrich Gehrke, *Persien in der Deutschen Orientpolitik: während des Ersten Weltkrieges Bd.1-2* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1974).

their relationship to pre-1979 Iranian intellectuals.¹⁹ Mirsepassi's work has been especially important in pointing my research towards Iranian intellectuals and their indebtedness to the German anti-modernist tradition. Lastly, Suzanne Marchand's 2009 *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire* has been an indispensable contribution in contextualizing Germany's involvement and attitudes towards the Orient. Additionally, I have conducted research in two archives, Stanford University's Hoover Institute, and at the Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry in Berlin. Unfortunately, many documents in regards to Germany and Iran, especially throughout the Nazi reign have been destroyed, or are only partially available. Yet, many of the documents that I secured from the Political Archives in Berlin have not been accessed and addressed before. My hope is that these newly retrieved documents will shed light on some controversially debated aspects of the German-Iranian relationship.²⁰

The intervention I aim to make is to re-establish the importance of the historical context for the study of interactions between Germans and Iranians and to counteract the dangerous precedent of deploying partial history to demonize Iran. My attempt with this dissertation is to provide a genealogy of the ideological alliance between Germany and Iran that provides a greater context and allows my reader to understand why an ideological alignment between these two countries occurred throughout central moments of the 20th century. This genealogy traces a mutually beneficial relationship from World War One to the onset of the Islamic revolution of 1979. My contention is that a simplification of this charged relationship into a common fascist tendency not only overlooks key aspects of the relationship, as pointed out by others, but also is deceptive in a time when Islam as a religion is under continuous attack.

¹⁹ Mehrzad Boroujerdi, *Iranian Intellectuals and the West: the Tormented Triumph of Nativism* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996) and Ali Mirsepassi, *Political Islam, Iran, and the Enlightenment: Philosophies of Hope and Despair* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

²⁰ This research was made possible and funded by the Thyssen-Krupp Foundation and administered by the Institute for International, Comparative and Area Studies (IICAS) at the University of California, San Diego.

My argument is divided into three chapters. The first chapter of this dissertation will take a closer look at Germany's *Kulturarbeit* in Iran, with an emphasis on its propagandistic activities throughout the First World War. It aims to explain how Germany's efforts furthered the development of Iranian nationalism, which was insistent on its national sovereignty. This *Kulturarbeit* also set the foundation for the second chapter of this dissertation that deals with the Nazi relationship with Iran, based on the propagation of an Aryan myth. In this second chapter, the aim is to show how a cultural connectivity, established throughout World War One and the Weimar Republic, was foundational in creating a shared political nationalism. Nazi Germany's close ties with Iran can be viewed as the fulfillment of a long-term plan set out at the beginning of the twentieth century, with the goal to expand German influence globally. This idea has been depicted as *Kulturimperialismus*, a form of cultural imperialism that takes a subtle approach, particularly when compared to the unambiguous foreign policies of England and Russia. The third chapter moves towards the latter part of the twentieth century, depicting the importance of the *Gharbzadegi* (Westoxification) discourse that finds its roots in the German intellectual tradition via Martin Heidegger and Ernst Jünger. Iranian intellectual Jalal Al-e Ahmad, who popularized the expression *Gharbzadegi*, used the term to criticize the "cultural and economic influence of the West" and to depict an asymmetrical relationship between Iran and the West throughout the twentieth century, culminating in the Islamic Revolution of 1979.²¹ This final chapter will conclude Iran's quest towards cultural authenticity and national sovereignty, by tracing Al-e-Ahmad's indebtedness to Ernst Jünger and his central piece on nihilism, *Über die Linie* (Above the Line). Ernst Jünger's assessment of Nihilism was appropriated by Al-e-Ahmad into a critique of Colonialism, while demanding a distancing from a decadent West and a re-thinking of the role of technology. This discourse on nihilism is also a point of convergence

²¹ Homa Katouzian, *The Persians: Ancient, Mediaeval and Modern Iran*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 292.

between Iran and Germany that is displayed through their varying interpretations of this phenomenon. Modern Germany's turn towards a liberal democracy and Iran's theocracy can be linked to Jünger and Al-e-Ahmad's distinctive readings of nihilism.

CHAPTER 1: *Kulturarbeit* and Ideology in The Great War: Germany's Role in the Formation of Iranian Nationalism

I. Introduction

This chapter deals with the relationship between Germany and Iran while posing the following question: How did the German *Kulturarbeit* from the time of the First World War to the Weimar republic influence the development of Iranian nationalism? Before Germany it was Russia and England who established themselves in Iran as part of their imperial policies. A military expansion into Iranian territories was responsible for Russia's increased stronghold on the Iranian nation throughout the 18th and 19th Century, while England's contact with Iran was marked by its role in serving as a protective wall against Russian attempts to expand into India.²² An Anglo-Russian agreement of 1907 separated Iran into two halves: the northern side was declared a Russian sphere while the south of Iran was coordinated by England. In the period from before the First World War until the end of the 1920s, Germany attempted to push against this trend through an active economic and cultural outreach understood as *Kulturarbeit*. Whereas the main motivation for Germany's penetration of the Iranian public sphere was political, in accordance with their World War One objectives, it was the cultural influence that enabled an ideological connection with Iran, which posed a stark contrast to England's and Russia's unmistakable colonial aspirations in the Middle East.

The most extensive work on the ideological relationship throughout the first half of the twentieth century comes from Ahmad Mahrads, Ulrich Gehrke, Bradford G. Martin, and Yair P.

Hirschfield, while Ghazal Ahmadi, Keivandokht Ghahari, Rashid Khatib-Shahidi and Matthias

²² See Ahmadi, *Iran als Spielball der Mächte?*, 53.

Küntzel have also more recently contributed to this topic. This chapter argues that the German cultural policies for Iran were crucial in the formation of Iranian nationalism, representing a turning point for Iran that is closely linked to Germany. The German *Kulturarbeit* during the First World War through the financing of a *Persian Committee* and later umbrella Organization (*Deutsch-Persische Gesellschaft*), aided Iranian nationalists in exile and thus helped shape Iranian nationalism in the following decades—from which the National Socialists in Germany also profited.

When considering Germany's alliance with the Ottoman Empire in the First World War, often a link between the developments of fascist thought in connection with political Islam is indicated. Whereas most of the scholarly debates on the intersection of fascism and Islam have revolved around the Nazi involvement with the "Arab World" (Herf, Rubin & Schwanitz), Matthias Küntzel's book *Die Deutschen und der Iran* attempts to connect Germany's general efforts in Iran—starting with the First World War—to an ongoing Islamization of Iran. Küntzel makes the argument that Germany's utilization of Islam as a weapon against Russia and Britain is one aspect of German support for a form of "radical Islam," which he views as inimical to the "West." Küntzel's conjecture that Germany's role in Iran was rooted in strengthening extremists' religious factions within the country has to be challenged since it is a simplification of history. For this oversimplification to become visible a more comprehensive look at the cultural efforts of German *Kulturarbeit*, starting around the First World War, and thriving throughout the Weimar republic is required. It is my contention that Germany's early commitment to Iran was based on a shared distrust of British and Russian imperial politics. Their mutually beneficial alliance was grounded in Germany's interest in commercial trade with Iran, whilst for Iran the upholding of its autonomy stood at the center.

The rise in alarmist literature which draws an intrinsic bond between fascist thought (often associated with Nazi Germany) to an ongoing “Islamization” of “anti-Western” countries is dangerous and often leaves out many facts which are pertinent to the discussion. An example of this is one of Küntzel’s chapters, on Germany’s ties with Iran during the First World War, which omits any discourse on Iran’s struggle for autonomy from England and Russia, and instead decides to highlight Germany’s support for small Shi’ite factions that were paid off to fight against recurrent imperial occupation. In a 20th century which was marked by the colonial ambitions of the *Great Game* it is not only misleading but also dangerous to merely draw a superficial connection between fascism and Islam without providing sufficient facts on this laden topic.

II. Chapter Layout and Questions

The focus of this chapter will be on organizations central to Germany’s efforts in positively influencing Iranian public opinion. We will look at how Germany was responsible for the penning of articles in Iranian newspapers such as *Iran-e no*, *Sherg*, or *Khawar* which were produced in Iran but provided with articles written in Germany. Not all pro-German newspapers will be analyzed here but the focus will be on common stereotypes and “news” about Germany that helped propagate a favorable image of Germany in Iran. The process of producing pro-German articles in Iranian publications would usually entail the writing of “lead-articles” in German by specialists (Orientalists), which then would be translated into Persian to ensure authenticity of the information. Many of these expenditures were conducted as part of Germany’s goal to win over the “Orient” and Islamic world to fight on their side in World War One. At first this chapter will look at some of the nascent phases of Germany’s approach towards

Iran through the press. Secondly, the role of the German organized *Persian Committee* as a means to intensify the “propaganda” for Iran will be highlighted as playing a key role in the development of Iranian nationalism and its encounters with the West. Connected to the *Persian Committee* is the publication of the seminal journal *Kaweh* (1917-22). *Kaweh* served a double function, first, as a tool for spreading news about Germany to an Iranian audience, and also, in later decades, it became a vessel in the forming of Iranian national identity, which leads to the question as to how a journal (*Kaweh*) that was meant to raise Germany’s image in Iran ended up becoming so significant for the creation of Iranian identity. Thirdly, exploring the activities of the *Deutsch Persische Gesellschaft* (DPG) and its own publication pamphlet will help us connect the German efforts to expand its cooperation with Iranian industry to its organizing of cultural events that were significant in consolidating a strong relationship between Germany and Iran throughout the early decades of the twentieth century. This chapter gauges German activities from the time of Kaiser Wilhelm II (1909) up to the National Socialist take over (1933) as part of a larger work on the ideological efforts coming from Germany. These efforts have manifested themselves strongly in Iranian society, including the influencing of some of Iran’s central literary figures and intellectuals.

Some of the questions that are helpful to guide the reader towards the methods used by German officials in Iran are as follows: How did the Germans manage to draw a direct correlation between expanding their own influence in Iran while simultaneously assisting the cause of Iranian national independence? How did newspapers directly under German influence/control construct a lasting and favorable image of Germany in Iran? Why was there an instant rise in popularity of German support for Iran, when England and Russia had long led in manipulating the Iranian press to their favor? These are some questions that will be conducive in

evaluating how Germany raised its profile in the eyes of Iranians who were eagerly looking towards Germany as a “third power” that could release them from the tight grip of the powerhouses England and Russia.

III. Iran's Struggle with Autonomy

The often controversial and politically exploited relationship between Germany and Iran is best understood by looking at the beginning of the twentieth century. Before the First World War, Russia and Great Britain controlled much of Iran as part of their imperialist agenda. Kaiser Wilhelm II's offensively directed politics were accompanied by efforts to secure "economic allies" for Germany.²³ Germany's *Orientpolitik*, or its policy towards the East were connected to its general plan of engaging Turkey and India in order to agitate forces against England.²⁴ Further, Germany had observed that a vacuum of power had been created through Iran's shift away from czarist Russia in 1909, presenting itself as an opportunity to widen German influence. Mahrad points to Germany's strategic approach that linked its own industrial interests with Iran's desire for independence from Russia and Great Britain. In accordance with this policy, a statement was published in the pro-German Teheran newspaper *Iran-e no* (New Iran) on January 15th, 1910, declaring "Germany is not pursuing any political interests in Persia, but rather commercial interests, it therefore could never agree to the loss of Persian independence."²⁵ This announcement underlines Germany's attempt to take advantage of the situation after Mohammad Ali Shah Qajar (1907-09) was deposed. Germany attempted to establish its role as the "savior, protector, and helper of Iran" against Russian and British interests.²⁶

Iran, under Mozaffar-e-din-Shah Qajar's reign (1896-1907) was struggling to find a way towards a parliamentary democracy after numerous failed attempts. The historian Ali Gheissari identifies an "arbitrary structure of political power in Qajar Iran" as the main impediment to reform.²⁷ An unhappy Iranian population believed that their country was being sold out to Russia

²³ See Khatib-Shahidi, *German Foreign Policy Towards Iran*.

²⁴ See Roger Chickering, *Imperial Germany and The Great War, 1914-1918*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 3 Ed., 2014), 102.

²⁵ Ahmad Mahrad, *Die deutsche Penetration pacifique des iranischen Pressewesens 1909-1936* (Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 1983), 19.

²⁶ See Martin, *German-Persian Diplomatic Relations*.

²⁷ Ali Gheissari, *Iranian Intellectuals in the 20th Century* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), 25.

and England through long-term loans with unfavorable conditions. These economic concessions were in turn seen as blocking Iran's quest for political autonomy. These very conditions fueled the Constitutional Revolution that culminated on December 31st, 1906, in the formation of a legislative assembly with representation from among secular reformists as well as the *ulama* (Muslim scholars). Under Mozaffar-e-din-Shah Qajar the movement [against a despotic form of government] reached its first climax. The reigning monarch, Mozaffar e-din Shah, who reluctantly signed the decree for the creation of a representative assembly, like other individuals and groups invested in reverting to absolutist monarchy, looked to Russia and/or Britain for support. The "victory" of the constitutionalists and nationalists did not last long. Through the support of a "Russian led Persian Cossack Brigade the newly installed Mohammad Ali Shah ordered the destruction of the recently created Persian parliament on June 23rd, 1908, while simultaneously annulling the constitution."²⁸ Russia was seen as a supporter of an oppressive monarchy and suppressor of Iran's nationalists and democratic ambitions. This situation set up Germany's bid to find an opening within the Iranian public sphere by emphasizing both constitutionalism and support for Iranian nationalism.

IV. From War-propaganda to a 'spiritual affinity'

In an effort to catch up with Russian and especially British influence in Iran, Germany aimed to concretize its advantageous standing by utilizing newspapers, journals, and organizations with varying roles in their function of facilitating Germany's role as a friend and ally of Iran. In 1914, in line with Germany's World War One propaganda activities the *Nachrichtenstelle für den Orient (Nfo)*, a German intelligence organization, was created as an apparatus of the foreign ministry, led by Freiherr Max von Oppenheim (1860-1946). This

²⁸ Gehrke, *Persien in der deutschen Orientpolitik*, 8.

organization (*Nfo*) had a press office with its own printing press, and departments for Arabic, Turkish, Indian, and Russian affairs, including an Iranian subsection.²⁹ In the so-called *Persian Committee* various Persian-language publications ensured a positive picture of Germany in Iran, which remained intact for decades to follow. The consequences of this German *Kulturarbeit* went far beyond political calculation. In the time of the Weimar republic, Germany became Iran's third most important trading partner.³⁰ Yet, trade does not always remain trade and often paves the way for propaganda and *Kulturarbeit*. The interrelation of those aspects is decisive for my chapter. Therefore it would be helpful to point out the nuanced differences between propaganda and *Kulturarbeit*. The latter is capable of penetrating different layers of society, including those of the intellectual communities. Viewing Germany's efforts in a larger context will allow for a more comprehensive view of the German- Iranian relationship. For example, Mahrad emphasizes German initiatives throughout the Weimar republic, stating that after the First World War Germany became a center for the resurrection of Iranian art and culture.³¹

After Hitler's power grab in 1933 the political and thereby ideological efforts became central to Germany's campaign for Iran. An insightful occasion when discussing Iran's relation to Nazi Germany is the 1939 establishment of a scientific German library consisting of 7500 books in Tehran. The books were a gift from Nazi Germany as a building block in a continuing collaboration between Iran and Germany. This *Deutsche Wissenschaftliche Bibliothek* consisted of a variety of volumes ranging from the great German philosophers to technological insights. More telling than the choice of books provided is the introduction to the library ordered by one of the Nazi's chief racial ideologues, Alfred Rosenberg. In this text it is outlined that "National Socialist Germany is consciously devoted to the facilitation of Aryan culture and history and sees

²⁹ See Jürgen Klosterhuis, *Friedliche Imperialisten. Deutsche Auslandsvereine und auswärtige Kulturpolitik, 1906-1918*, (Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 1994), 103.

³⁰ See Ahmadi: *Iran als Spielball der Mächte?*, 69.

³¹ Ahmad Mahrad, *Die deutsch-persischen Beziehungen von 1918-1933* (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang Verlag, 1974), 405.

in Iran's efforts a striving towards mutual goals, that are to further the spiritual affinity of both nations" (*Vorwort*, DWB).³² This 'spiritual affinity' (*geistige Verwandtschaft*) has to be viewed as part of a continuation of successful German *Kulturarbeit* in Iran, which is precisely what needs to be explored to understand how this point was reached. The contextualization of Germany's durable cultural efforts in the earlier decades of the 1900s will help us understand the constructed common racial identity between Germany and Iran that will be dealt with at length in the second chapter.

Another point to consider is Germany's endorsement of Iranian independence, which has to be viewed as part of Germany's cultural work throughout the world. The idea of *Kulturarbeit* in regards to Germany's own colonial endeavors has been described as the "equivalent of the British and French civilizing mission."³³ Germany's cultural imperialism (*Kulturimperialismus*), in accordance with Kaiser Wilhelm II's *Weltpolitik*, established a strong basis for planting the notion of German support for Iranian nationalism.³⁴ Through various communication vessels the notion of implicit *Kulturarbeit*, which can often be distinguished from explicit propaganda, ensured a long lasting effect on the Iranian nation. The cultural seeds planted in Iran further resulted in ongoing intellectual discourses, hinting at the potency of Germany's *Kulturarbeit* in the early decades of the twentieth century. A carefully crafted cultural association between Germany and Iran, starting at the onset of the First World War, has to be considered as a first step in Germany's transitioning from cultural convergence and strategic support for Iranian national independence.

³² Booklet titled "*Deutsche Wissenschaftliche Bibliothek*" a present from Nazi-Germany to Iran, August 1939, Document Nr. 142557, Hoover Institute, Stanford University, Palo Alto, California.

³³ Itohan I. Osayimwese, "*Colonialism at the Center: German Colonial Architecture and the Design Reform Movement, 1828-1914*" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2008).

³⁴ See Khatib-Shahidi, *German Foreign Policy Towards Iran*.

The German *Kulturarbeit* used a series of instruments, of which the most important ones are analyzed in this chapter. An illustration is the formerly mentioned and especially pro-German newspaper published in Teheran named *Iran-e no*. This newspaper was created by Mohammad-Amin Rasolzadeh (1884-1954), one of the founders of the democratic party of Iran who also actively participated in the clashes over the reopening of the Iranian parliament. Many of the articles in this newspaper were pro-German in their views because Rasolzadeh had adapted to a set of pan-Turkish ideas.³⁵ Rasolzadeh's pro-German attitude was motivated by his desire to create an independent Iran with the assistance of Germany. *Iran-e no* is only one of the organs utilized by the Germans. More seminal to my argument is the role of the Persian language journal *Kaweh*. The German foreign ministry funded the publication of *Kaweh* as part of the *Persian Committee's* activities. Even though *Kaweh* was founded on the principle of promoting the German cause throughout the First World War its content added to important discourses on the development of Iranian nationalism and its road to sovereignty. Before turning towards further German sponsored publications, it will be useful to look at an alternative argument that has been made about Germany's involvement with Iran throughout the First World War.

V. Küntzel's Argument on Iran's "Jihad"

Matthias Küntzel summarizes Germany's relations with Iran up until the start of the First World War as being dependent on "enlightened and partially secular elites of Persia." He argues that the onset of World War One brought about new contacts. Here Küntzel maintains that whereas the first strain of German interaction with Iran was based on commercial trade, the second was based on power political interest (*Machtpolitisches interesse*) and a "romantic"

³⁵ See Keivandokht Ghahari, *Nationalismus und Modernismus in Iran in der Periode zwischen dem Zerfall der Qagaren-Dynastie und der Machtfestigung Reza Schahs* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2001), 119.

motive. He argues that the pre-modern world was idealized by Germany due to its “unaltered” state (*unverfälscht*) and potential alliance against an industrialized “West.” Küntzel ties Germany’s policy towards Iran into the larger Islam politics of the Kaiser. He presents them as a homogenous issue rather than discerning the important details that differentiate Germany’s alliance with the Ottoman empire and its careful *Kulturpolitik* for Iran. Küntzel is not wrong in drawing an alliance between Germany and Islam, as declared by the Kaiser. But he does not carefully take apart the different aspects of German *Kulturarbeit*. Rather, he pushes the point that a continuing Islamization of Iran developed into an ongoing alliance against the “West.”³⁶ He uses inflammatory quotes by Orientalist and diplomat Max Freiherr von Oppenheims’s “Jihad-campaign” to display the feelings of all Muslims throughout the region, not providing any details about the particularities of each nation.³⁷ Küntzel points to Oppeneheim, the director of the *Nachrichtenstelle für den Orient* while reducing Germany’s impact on Iran to the following: “Das Rezept, das Oppenheim dem Kaiser im Fall Persiens empfahl, baute auf dem schiitischen Glauben und auf dem Bedarf der Mullahs an Geldmünzen auf.”³⁸ Although this statement is not untrue, Küntzel, only considers the German efforts to activate Islamic forces in Iran, ignoring the more important and lasting effects of German support for Iran’s struggle for independence from Russia and Great Britain, albeit for their own benefit.

Küntzel conflates Germany’s varying efforts, to activate political Islam for War purposes, in order to make his own point that a politicization of Islam in various Muslim countries set a foundation for a Jihad that has been continued by the likes of Khomeini all the way to Osama Bin-Laden, drawing the picture of a linear history. He omits the creation and function of the central *Persian Committee* and its seminal publications; instead he opts to highlight the

³⁶ Küntzel, *Die Deutschen und der Iran*, 28.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 34.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

publication of a newspaper named *al-Gihad* as part of the function of the *Nachrichtenstelle für den Orient*. *al-Gihad*, which was not published in Persian but in Arabic—is not comparable to the wide influence of the nationalists of the *Persian Committee* and their publication of *Kaweh*. Küntzel’s decision to focus on *al-Gihad* is rather misleading in regards to Germany’s efforts towards Iran. If we are to follow Küntzel, we are left with the impression of a linear trajectory which suggests the following: Germany exploited Iran’s distrust of Great Britain and Russia, based on their imperial activities in the region, which resulted in the inception of an aggressive political Islam that has been continuously developing until today.

VI. Pro-German Newspapers and their functions

Having situated Küntzel’s contribution to Germany’s efforts towards Iran, we can now turn back to the particulars of my argument. Both Russia and England have long histories of cooperating with—but also utilizing native sources of other countries throughout the nineteenth and part of the twentieth century. In order to exert their influence both nations were also doctoring the Iranian press to influence public opinion. Upon the Qajar Dynasty’s turning away from Czarist Russia—whose support for Mohammad Ali Shah and his oppression of the Iranian press landscape came to an end with his abdication—Germany forcefully entered the Iranian press scene. This resulted in fifteen out of seventeen newspaper in Iran being under German influence.³⁹ Germany, as part of its own imperialistic actions, attempted to take advantage of its position by utilizing the fact that, as a foreign power with economic interests in Iran, it could serve as a stabilizer in Iran’s quest for national independence. In addition, Germany would facilitate the Iranian press to highlight its support for Muslim countries, by showing for example

³⁹ See Ahmad Mahrad, *Die deutsche Penetration pacifique*, 32.

how Turkey with the help of Germany maintained its independence while receiving a new constitution. This is displayed in a quote in the pro-German newspaper *Iran-e no*:

Daß Deutschland in letzter Zeit immer die Mohammedaner zu unterstützen versucht hat, kann nicht bezweifelt werden. So hat, zum Beispiel, die Türkei mit Hilfe Deutschland's unter Beibehaltung seiner vollständigen Unabhängigkeit die Verfassung erhalten.⁴⁰

Iran-e no is one of the most explicit examples of an Iranian newspaper endorsing Germany, motivated by its own cause of advancing Iran nationalism while viewing Germany's role as a guarantor against Iran becoming a pawn for the Russians and the British. In addition, *Iran-e no* published a declaration of intention (*Grundsatzerklärung*) by Iranian nationalists, which was exemplary for the usage of newspapers and their attempts at a revival of Iranian nationalism. The appeal in these newspapers was an attempt to persuade Iranian politicians to free themselves from a constricted relationship with Russia and Britain. Since the Anglo-Russian agreement of 1907 had devastated Iran's hope for autonomy, by dividing the country into two spheres of influence, the significance of Germany's role increased. In *Iran-e no* we can see how Germany's claim of not pursuing any political interests in Iran placates Iranian nationalists, who in turn stay united as a country resisting a forced division by Russian and England.

Iran-e no hielt eine Unabhängigkeit Irans durch Schutz des Deutschen Reiches gewährleistet, da die deutsche Seite angeblich 'dabei keine politischen Absichten' verfolgte, und da 'das Kaiserreich im Auge hat, die mohammedanischen Regierungen zu beschützen, kann es nicht zulassen, daß Persien geteilt wird.'⁴¹

Germany's verbal commitment to Iran convinced many nationalists that its independence could only be assured through German support, thereby winning over many Iranians that were untrusting of English and Russian actions. Having located a shift within the Iranian public

⁴⁰ Quoted in Mahrad, *Die deutsche Penetration pacifique*, 19. (Letter from the Kaiserlich Deutsche Gesandtschaft (Reichskanzler v. Bethmann-Hollweg) to Tehran/Iran, February 27, 1910, *Iran-e no* Nr.111 v. 15.1.1910.

⁴¹ Ibid.

opinion towards Germany, especially amongst nationalists, Germany aligned its strategic approach with its own preparations for the First World War. These efforts are comparable to its cooperation with the Ottoman Empire.

In 1910, an explication published by Germany in *Iran-e no* stated that Germany is indifferent as to whether Iran is an absolute or a constitutional monarchy and also has nothing to do with its neighbors' business with Iran (referring to England and Russia) as long as it does not involve the question of Iran's independence.⁴² Additionally, as pointed out by Mahrad, Russia and England engaged in predatory lending policies towards Iran as a tool to force them into concession.⁴³ On the contrary, Germany furthered its high standing in Iran by rejecting the usage of German military advisers in order to avoid creating a dependence on them, as had occurred with Russia at the end of the nineteenth century (Persian Cossack Brigade). Nevertheless, to the disappointment of the Iranians, Germany ended up coordinating its own strategic interest with Russia at the Potsdam Accord of 1910. Even though this came as a setback to Iran, the result of this accord did not prevent Germany from soliciting commercial efforts in Iran and continuing the building of a robust relationship.

Germany's positive reputation as the savior and helper of Iran was partially due to its savvy infiltration of the press landscape and its simultaneous cooperation with Iranian nationalists. Many Iranian nationalists were also intellectuals, who had started turning towards Germany in the hope of it being the key towards independence from England and Russia. Efforts by Russian government agencies were undertaken to undermine Germany's intentions in Iran. An example of that is how Russia skillfully used a French newspaper, *L'indépendance Persane*, as an outlet for their dissemination of information. Articles would be penned to damage

⁴² See Mahrad, *Die deutsche Penetration pacifique*, 22. (*Iran-e no* Nr. 111 15.1.1910)

⁴³ Ibid.

Germany's position in Iran. The Iranian newspaper, *Schergh* (Orient), would counter anti-German articles. The German mission in Tehran recognized the importance of the newspaper *Schergh* as a source to maintain a positive disposition towards Germany in Iran. This becomes evident in a quote from the German mission in Teheran to the German chancellor Dr. Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg in regards to the Iranian newspaper *Schergh*.

Sie dürfte das einzige Organ sein, das den Ausstreungen des oben genannten Blattes [L'INDEPENDENCE PERSAN] wirksam entgegenarbeiten könnte und imstande wäre, die bisherige dem deutschen Handel so auserordentlich günstige Stimmung der Bevölkerung neu zu befestigen. In Anbetracht der Wichtigkeit dieser Aufklärungsarbeit erscheint eine Unterstützung des 'Chargé' [*Schergh*] dringend geboten. Die geeignetste Form für diese Unterstützung wäre durch Abonnieung auf eine größere Anzahl von Exemplaren der gennanten Zeitung.⁴⁴

This report to the German chancellor underlines not only the importance of *Schergh* as a newspaper in order to maintain the generally positive atmosphere towards Germany within the Iranian population, but also advocates a large subscription to this newspaper. More importantly, in this text we have to notice the German word “*Aufklärungsarbeit*.” *Aufklärung* can be translated as “enlightenment” or a sort of “educational” work aimed at the population. Whereas in this note we can safely assume that “education” is meant in regards to the correcting of news spreads from the Russian side, it has an important connotation for the whole of this chapter, which argues Germany conducted a very successful campaign of *Kulturarbeit/Aufklärungsarbeit*, which ultimately led to a persistently positive image in Iran.

Germany's combined *Kulturimperialismus*, which was motivated by economic goals in the Middle East, mainly in Turkey and Iran, was successful because it was in accordance with Iran's own goals. Beyond influencing newspapers that were aimed at an Iranian audience (*Iran-e no, Schergh*), there was also a noticeable shift in the approach of German newspapers and their

⁴⁴ Quoted in Mahrad, *Die deutsche Penetration pacifique*, 25. Letter from the Kaiserlich Deutsche Gesellschaft to the Reichskanzler Dr. v. Bethmann-Hollweg, August 16, 1910.

attitude towards Iran. This new line can be directly tied to the emergence of a *Weltpolitik* that aimed to expand its functions throughout the world.⁴⁵ Bedford Martin provides an example of that through noticing a shift in tone:

Most striking is the change of tone in certain German newspaper, such as the *Kölnische Zeitung*, when discussing Persian affairs. Whereas previously this newspaper and many other German newspapers had written about Persia with a mixture of good-natured contempt and open amusement, stressing the exotic and ‘Arabian Nights’ aspects of Persian life, they now assumed a more interested, more acquisitive tone.⁴⁶

The transition from a light hearted to a more serious tone in Germany with regard to Iran is indicative of the forthcoming changes in Iran’s relation and dependence on other countries. For Iran, securing its national independence was directly tied to a reliance on the third power—Germany—in order to be played off against the other two. Nevertheless, Martin concludes that this plan “failed and made Persia’s position more precarious than ever between 1911 and 1919.”⁴⁷

Whereas Iran’s plan might have “failed” according to Martin, Germany’s reputation continued to increase its standing in Iran. This could be tied to some of the actions of Russia, which had engraved themselves in the collective memory of the Iranian people. Germany’s carefully calculated activities stood in stark contrast to Russia’s often-punitive actions against the Iranian population. Ulrich Gehrke points to a vivid example of Russian force in order to exert their control, by “purposefully destroying the Imam-Reza-Shrine in Mashhad, a center of Persian pilgrimages, as occurred on March 29th, 1912.”⁴⁸ The destruction of a very symbolic and religious shrine shows with which dedication the Russians wanted to display their brutal reign. In contrast, Martin confirms my contention that “Germany was the last power on the Persian scene

⁴⁵ See Otto Hammann, *Deutsche Weltpolitik, 1890-1912* (Berlin: R. Hobbing, 1925).

⁴⁶ Martin, *German-Persian Diplomatic Relations*, 202.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁴⁸ Gehrke, *Persien in der deutschen Orientpolitik*, 10.

and it was exactly fitted to play the role of savior of the Persian nation—in the popular imagination—from the two hostile powers.”⁴⁹

As a new power without excessive baggage and history with Iran it used its chance prudently through playing upon its most valued ambition, that of its national independence. The Russo-German Convention in 1911, viewed as a blow against the Iranians, did not hinder Germany from regaining the approval of the Iranian population by the time the First World War erupted. Whereas many in Iran were accepting their fate as part of the Russian and British *Great Game* in the Middle East, the emergence of a national-revolutionary segment of Iranian society found a strong voice against both Russia and Britain by leaning against Germany.⁵⁰ The establishment of a Persian Committee perpetuated the formalization of an Iranian nationalist sector that served a dual function, extending German impact in the region while furthering Iran’s quest towards autonomy.

VII. The Persian Committee and its Outreach

By the time the First World War broke out, Germany’s *Orientpolitik* progressed and became more sophisticated as a counter to the increasing control of the two colonial powers. While initially Iran had an intermediary function for Germany’s drive towards Afghanistan and India, its objectives were raised and efforts towards Iran were intensified to take advantage of an undeniable pro-German climate. Yet, Russia’s and Germany’s coordination of their policies towards Iran at the 1910 Potsdam Meeting was a big disappointment to Iran.⁵¹ Germany was the only viable hope towards achieving sovereignty for Iran, even after formally maintaining its neutrality throughout World War I. Germany continued to expand its efforts to influence the

⁴⁹ Martin, *German-Persian Diplomatic Relations*, 209.

⁵⁰ Gehrke: *Persien in der deutschen Orientpolitik*, 11.

⁵¹ See Martin, *German-Persian Diplomatic Relations*, 185-212.

influx of information into Iran. Its efforts were brought to a new level with the formation of the *Persian Committee* in Berlin in 1915. The necessity for such an undertaking was apparent especially because Germany's rivals, Russia and England, both had already established highly functional information transfer systems, which allowed them to more easily manipulate the events of the war.⁵² The goal of the *Persian Committee* was to largely influence the political organizations of Iranian nationalists abroad and to serve as an important transmitter of information on the War—through a seemingly Iranian source rather than a foreign (German) organization.

For this committee the influential Iranian politician and intellectual Sayyed Hassan Taqizadeh (1878-1970) was recruited to work closely with the German government “in developing a policy program for Persia,” opposing an Anglo-Russian intervention in Iran.⁵³ Responsible for Germany's Iran policy was Otto von Günther Wesendonk, a known Orientalist working for the *Nachrichtenstelle für den Orient*, and the German diplomat Rudolf Nadolny who later became chargé d'affaires in Iran; both invited Taqizadeh to come stay in Berlin. Upon acceptance it was Wesendonk, Nadolny, and Taqizadeh who were to organize German interests in Iran and vice versa, and Germany's assistance for Iranian nationalism, as far as Taqizadeh was concerned.⁵⁴

Part of the *Persian Committee's* role was to manage what information goes into Iran. For this reason, Iranian nationalists abroad were sent to various cities in small delegations to facilitate a pro-German climate. German-financed delegations in Teheran, Shiraz, Baghdad, and

⁵² See Firuz Kazemzadeh's, *Russia and Britain in Persia 1864-1914* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).

⁵³ Khatib-Shahidi, *German Foreign Policy Towards Iran*, 18.

⁵⁴ Bahman Nirumand & Gabriele Yonan, *Iraner in Berlin* (Berlin: Die Ausländerbeauftragte des Senats, 1994), 66.

Constantinople were to serve the pro-German cause.⁵⁵ Concurrently, the Iranians that entered the War on the side of the Germans were motivated by their own ambition towards national independence for their country. Even though the instigators of the *Persian Committee* were Germans, it was staffed with mostly Iranian intellectuals whose main purpose was to improve Iran's situation in a time of military occupation.⁵⁶ The agitation of German-sponsored military units, that were mostly unorganized and ineffective according to Itscherenska, have often been highlighted when discussing Germany's cooperation with largely Muslim nations (Jeffrey Herf, Matthias Küntzel). Beyond both Germany and Iran having different goals but mutual enemies, Itscherenska points out that the content of the program of the *Persian Committee*, written by Taqizadeh, idealized Germany's action of the past century. Germany is depicted as having displayed a "love for international justice" and has thereby also identified itself as an "enemy of an exploitative colonization," while not serving as an "aggressor towards Oriental and Muslim countries."⁵⁷ This glorification of Germany by the Iranians came with the hopes of moving closer towards releasing themselves from the fangs of Russian and British control. In order for Iran to become independent from foreign control, the coming together of various factions within Iran had to occur, as outlined by Taqizadeh in an eighteen-page report.⁵⁸ Taqizadeh imagined that all of the democratically inclined Iranians, patriots, and political and intellectual units would work together toward achieving a mutual goal. Further, he outlines that for all of this propaganda to capture the Iranian population it must not only encompass universities, bazars, and editorial offices of newspapers but additionally parliamentarians, and various ministries.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ See Ilse Itscherenska, „Heydar Han, Das Berliner Persische Komitee und die Deutsches. Interkulturelle Begegnungen im Ersten Weltkrieg,“ In Gerhard Höpp and Brigitte Reinwald's, *Fremdeinsätze. Afrikaner und Asianten in europäischen Kriegen, 1914-1945*. (Berlin: Verlag Das Arabische Buch 2000. Zentrum Moderner Orient. Studies 13), 58, accessed May 5th, 2014, <http://www.zmo.de/publikationen/studien13.pdf>

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Itscherenska, „Heydar Han, Das Berliner Persische Komitee und die Deutsches,“ 58.

⁵⁸ Taqizadeh Report, ID Nr. R21037, Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry, Berlin.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

The German foreign ministry financed the cost of the *Persian Committee* and its cooperation with various factions of Iranian society. Over one million marks were requested for the execution of the vast and ambitious program set out by its leader, Taqizadeh.⁶⁰ Nadolny approved the request for this enormous sum after being asked to deliver an opinion on Taqizadeh's program. For Nadolny, even though Taqizadeh's plan was ambitious, it was manageable and a successful propaganda effort would be worth more than the requested sum.

Doch ist eine erfolgreiche Propaganda in Persien mehr wert als der angeforderte Betrag. Daher empfiehlt sich, für Propagandazwecke in Persien Mittel bis zu 1 Million Mark zur Verfügung zu stellen, aber der Anforderungen nicht die Ausführungen des persischen Komitees zu Grunde zu legen, wenigstens nicht die programmatischen.⁶¹

VIII. The Journal *Kaweh*

The pinnacle of these efforts to raise Iranian nationalist sentiment is best exemplified in the publication of a Persian-language journal entitled *Kaweh*, a direct result of the *Persian Committee's* efforts. The journal *Kaweh* was created in 1917 upon the *Persian Committee's* request to the foreign ministry to establish a Persian-language paper for propaganda purposes. The journal continued to be published long after the First World War and had a profound influence in the realm of culture. Since most major European cities already had influential exile newspapers, it was feasible to plan for a platform that would widen German influence. Whereas in the first years of its publication *Kaweh* was mainly political, marked by its support for the German-Ottoman alliance against Russia and England, later editions included important literary contributions by prolific Iranian writers. *Kaweh* was to be published bi-weekly and coordinated by the *Persian Committee* with the Orientalist Dr. Oskar Mann. The content was to include one

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Taqizadeh Report, ID Nr. 21037, Paper 34, Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry.

or more leading articles about the political situation in Persia that would be censored by the foreign ministry, particularly with regard to Persia's relationship to the warring dominant powers.⁶² Additionally shorter articles composed in German and then translated into Persian would give an overview of the military position of the central powers, while other smaller notes would correct "false" information that had been spread about Germany by Anglo-Russian newspapers hostile towards Germany. Mahrad confirms that these smaller reports were meant to influence public opinion in order to veil the real circumstance.⁶³ Trying to direct the language of Persian newspapers had already been a common practice, as outlined in previous sections, but its organization and incisive editor made the *Persian Committee* stand out. Beyond its political function prepared in accordance with Germany, *Kaweh* took a central role through its provocative essays and articles addressing the roots of Iran's cultural stasis, influencing generations of Iranian intellectuals while shaping their discourse. Gholamreza Vatandoust describes the role of *Kaweh* and Taqizadeh's goals as threefold.

...first, to rid Iran of Russian and British influence by allying themselves with Germany; second, to educate Iranians by pointing out the social and political ailments of the country; third, to assist in bringing Iran to the threshold of the twentieth century by introducing the society to the advancements of European science, technology and civilization.⁶⁴

The journal *Kaweh* cannot be merely viewed as a propaganda tool of Germany, and it will always be inextricably tied to Hassan Taqizadeh. As the editor and to a large extent intellectual force behind *Kaweh*, he oversaw the two waves in which this journal was published. Overall there were 59 issues of *Kaweh* published, 35 issues from 1916 to 1919 and 24 issues from 1920 to 1921.⁶⁵ What Vatandoust calls the "War Series," was clearly political in its

⁶² See Mahrad, *Die deutsche Penetration pacifique*, 43.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁶⁴ Gholamreza Vatandoust, "Sayyid Hasan Taqizadeh & Kaveh: Modernism in Post-Constitutional Iran (1916-1921)" (PhD diss., University of Washington, 1977), 32.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 32-34.

descriptions while the second series of *Kaweh* was meant to “cultivate and educate the Iranian society.” An attempt to glorify Germany’s war efforts and simultaneously appeal to the Iranian people to stand up against the imperial powers, Russia and Britain, appeared to strike the right balance. The political nature of *Kaweh*’s first series manifested itself in the fact that there was a clear attempt to side with Germany while praising its actions. Further, the central powers, especially Germany, were represented as “peace-loving and strong nations, determined and fully able to win the War and willing to recognize and respect the independence and integrity of Iran.”⁶⁶ In contrast, there was a call to resistance against the Entente Powers (Russia, England, France) while Iran’s own woes were tied to the imperialistic actions of especially Britain and Russia. Given their history throughout the last decades, this seemed like a good strategy by Taqizadeh to take. Nonetheless, in the first series of *Kaweh*, Taqizadeh also insisted that in order for Iran to “arrive at the threshold of western civilization” it must subsequently “embrace the western civilization in order to enter the pathway of universal learning.”⁶⁷ Highly critical of many attempted reforms in Iran, Taqizadeh used the space and rising readership of *Kaweh* to make numerous appeals to Iranian nationalists. An example is the Persian language and its development in regards to encounters with European nations. Some negative experiences of other nations with European colonizers were depicted in order to warn Iran not to fall prey to the same fate. Especially interesting for this article is the first and second issue of *Kaweh*.⁶⁸ The first issue contained an article entitled “The Mutual Interests of Iran and the Ottoman Empire,” which depicted Germany as the “sincere friend of Islam.” In the second issue, *Kaweh* published a congratulatory letter to the Kaiser of Germany, which underlines the unreserved trust of the

⁶⁶ Vatandoust, “*Sayyid Hasan Taqizadeh & Kaveh*,” 36.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁶⁸ *Kaweh*, V.1-2, Nr.12,18/19 p.4 and p.16

Iranian intellectuals in Germany as the victor of the War, which would simultaneously ensure the sovereignty of Iran.

By the time the second series started being published in the 1920s, the concentration of the journal shifted towards important literary contributions, like that of the influential Iranian writer Bozorg Alavi (1904-1997) who spent the majority of his life in Berlin and would often reprimand Iranian society for an unproductive glorification of its past. According to Vatandoust, the second series had as its objective to “make Iranians realize that there were numerous fundamental reforms that were in fact more important than political and governmental reforms, such as ‘mass education.’”⁶⁹ In addition, Taqizadeh criticized his own people for having fallen behind Western Civilization. He asked Iranians to only retain their “racial identity, language, and history” while everything else should be “surrendering to Western Civilization” completely.⁷⁰ Whereas his appeal towards mass education was well received, Taqizadeh’s critique of his own society and the demand of an absolute emulation of Western Civilization caused opposition and debate amongst the religious and secular factions within Iran. Vatandoust suggests that Taqizadeh’s provocations were done deliberately throughout the first series (World War I) in which he would praise Iran’s glorious past in order to encourage his people to fight against British and Russian domination. In contrast, throughout the second series of *Kaweh*, Taqizadeh’s critique against the overestimation of the past by the Iranian population was done to encourage actual reforms and a call to action.⁷¹

In regards to Germany’s direct involvement with *Kaweh*, Mehrad’s description of German activities through this publication will be helpful. He described the creation of *Kaweh* to be in accordance with a cultural imperialistic master plan (*Kulturimperialistischen Gesamtplan*),

⁶⁹ Vatandoust, “Sayyid Hasan Taqizadeh & Kaveh,” 44.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 46-48.

⁷¹ Ibid., 52.

thereby suggesting an overall strategy that would encompass a strong footing for Germany in the Middle East. A testament to the interest in this kind of publication can be observed in the inquiries to the German foreign ministry. Before the publication of *Kaweh* the foreign ministry received notice that it has been garnering attention from at least 1.500 sources to which a journal like *Kaweh* would be distributed.⁷²

The seriousness with which the German campaign for Iran was being conducted is also reflected in the amount Germany invested for their political undertakings. By 1916, Germany was investing 3 Million *Reichsmark* a month on this endeavor.⁷³ According to Oskar Mann, the main motivation in assisting *Kaweh* for the Germans was to fight against the polemic from enemy states throughout World War I.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, it is more likely, as Kloosterhuis argues, that these efforts were part of the general propaganda work of the German intelligence organization (*Nachrichtenstelle für den Orient*), which had the goal of continuing its activities after the war in order to leave a favorable impression of Germany as an economic power and cultural giant to continue its cooperation.⁷⁵

The complex role of *Kaweh* as a journal and its influence on Iranian nationalism remains a topic of dispute, with some claiming its influence on the formation has been overstated while others, see a need for further research into this rich sphere of influence. For example, Afshin Marashi notes “In an important sense the history of Iranian nationalism began with the publication of *Kaweh*, which combined political commitment...with the promotion of an ‘organic’ cultural conception of Iranian identity.”⁷⁶ A telling illustration of the importance of *Kaweh* as a propaganda organ becomes apparent after the end of the First World War. A request

⁷² See Mahrad, *Die deutsche Penetration*, 43.

⁷³ Jürgen Kloosterhuis, *Friedliche Imperialisten: Deutsche Auslandsvereine und auswärtige Kulturpolitik, 1906-1918*, 2 Bde., (Frankfurt a.M: Peter Lang, 1994), 690.

⁷⁴ Letter from Oskar Mann to the German Foreign Ministry, December 12, 1915, R 19113, Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry, Berlin.

⁷⁵ Kloosterhuis, *Friedliche Imperialisten*, 169.

⁷⁶ Afshin Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran: Culture, Power, and the State, 1870-1940* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), 53.

by the publisher of *Kaweh*, Taqizadeh, to acquire a separate printing press and to move to Switzerland was halted by the German foreign ministry because of fears of losing direct control over its publication.⁷⁷ Even though the German foreign ministry and Taqizadeh collaborated closely, there were attempts on the part of the Iranian literati to achieve more independence from the German mandate as the Iranian nationalists in Germany were grappling with the foreign ministry to release themselves from German tutelage.⁷⁸ *Kaweh* had a strong readership in Switzerland due to the many Iranian students living there. A note from W. Haas from the *Deutsches Orient Institut* is very telling as to the intended long-term influence of the politically relevant *Kaweh*. In this report Haas elaborates on the continuation of *Kaweh* as a means for cultural political propaganda stating:

Through KAWEH we will have the opportunity to impact the increasing number of Persian students coming from important families to Switzerland who will later hold influential positions in Iran. Through KAWEH we have the opportunity to influence these young people in our own sense while conducting a cultural-political propaganda...with an observable effectiveness and whose success will not fail to appear.⁷⁹

IX. The *Deutsch Persische Gesellschaft* (DPG)

In addition to the *Persian Committee* and its publication of *Kaweh*, it is the *Deutsch Persische Gesellschaft* (DPG) created in Berlin towards the end of World War I in 1918 that has to be recognized as a central propagator of Germany's involvement with Iran. German diplomat Werner Otto v. Hentig was elected as the chairman of the organization. Wilhelm Litten, who led the German Consulate in Täbriz, was general secretary of the DPG, and responsible for publishing an instructive Memorandum (*Mitteilungsblatt*),⁸⁰ distributed amongst its members. In

⁷⁷ Mahrad, *Die deutsche Penetration pacifique*, 54.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁷⁹ Letter from W. Haas to the German Foreign Ministry, November 18, 1919, A 29855, Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry, Berlin.

⁸⁰ See Nirumand & Yonan, *Iraner in Berlin*, 71.

the first edition of “*Mitteilungen*” it is stated that in order to become a member of this society, a request has to be submitted to its board of its directors and be supported by two members.⁸¹ The official mission statement of the DPG cites the function of this organization to be the creation and promotion of a close economical and cultural relationship between Germany and the Persian Empire, while also fostering the general and personal relationships between both populations.⁸² This rather broad depiction of the DPG’s function hints at the multifaceted aspects of this organization that could be summed up in promoting anything related to the advancement of Germany’s involvement with Iran. Members included businessmen, diplomats, Iranists, and many former members of the *Persian Committee*.

In the first edition of the brochure published by the DPG, entitled *Mitteilungen* (Memorandum), there is an introduction, which outlines some important aspects as to the function and ideology of this organization. Here the publisher clarifies that this Memorandum serves to keep the members of this organization informed about the workings and the development of the DPG, adding that there will also be information available that is not suitable for the daily press or journals, and hence should be treated as confidential by its members.⁸³ More striking information is published on the second page of this first edition of the DPG’s Memorandum, entitled *Die Gründung der Deutsch-Persischen Gesellschaft* (The founding of the German- Persian society). This invocation has some important notions that are reoccurring and relevant.

In the first sentence, Iran is geographically situated while describing it as the “seat of Aryan folks” and its central location in the “middle of Asia.” Further, a glorious past is stressed, while it is being noted that Iran has fallen victim to the “imperial politics” of Russia and England. Here

⁸¹ See Mahrad, *Die deutsch-persischen Beziehungen*, 52.

⁸² See Mahrad, *Die deutsche Penetration pacifique*, 51.

⁸³ DPG publication pamphlet entitled, *Mitteilungen*, August 1, 1919, R 60447, Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry, Berlin.

the past enmity between Germany and Iran and Russia and England comes to the foreground again. In a later paragraph, the authors note that there is a need for the utilization of Iranian natural resources as a condition to regaining its old stature. Lastly, and most importantly, this writing declares that Iran will need “peace” and beyond that “moral and material” support, which it can expect foremost from Germany. Upon restating an old affinity between Germany and Iran, there is a clear message in this invocation to actively involve Germany in the internal affairs of Iran, in order to help it to its “old glory”.

Aufgabe dieser Gesellschaft soll es sein, das Verständnis des deutschen wie des persischen Volkes für die bezeichneten Gesichtspunkte erschließen und zu vertiefen, ein Volk das andere kennen und verstehen zu lehren, die Mittel zu studieren, durch die Persien unter deutscher Mitarbeit seine alte historische Stellung wiedergewinnen kann, und die Wege für solche Arbeit zu ebnen.⁸⁴

Additionally, in the same first issue of the DPG’s *Mitteilungen* there is a “Report on the operations of the German-Persian Society in the year 1918.” Here it is worth looking at some specific events organized by the DPG, to see the range of its impact on not only the trade relations between both nations but also the construction of a common cultural ground. The report states that on March 10th, 1918, the DPG hosted a dinner in the Continental Hotel for a “row of parliamentarians” that had come to Germany for the “purpose of study.” The memorandum of the DPG notes that the second secretary (*Legationsrat*), Rudolf Nadolny, was present as a representative for the German foreign ministry and Hussein Guli Khan Nawab as the diplomatic representative of Iran in Berlin. The report notes that this event led “the Iranian press to express itself in a positive or friendly manner about the DPG and its tasks.”⁸⁵ The organization was also involved in promoting ancient Iranian culture in Germany, as an example, a lavish Iranian New Year celebration-taking place at the Hotel Kaiserhof is mentioned. In another instance, the DPG

⁸⁴ DPG publication pamphlet entitled, *Mitteilungen*, August 1, 1919, R 60447, Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry, Berlin.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

sponsored a presentation by the renowned archeology Professor Ernst Herzfeld who gave a talk on his archeological research in Iran.

Funded by various German sources, the DPG was organized into five commissions that would serve different purposes. The five commissions had the following areas of specialty: economic-literary for members active in this field, historical-political which centered around the “newer history and politics of Persia,” traffic engineering which was to assist in regulating the “traffic conditions” and organize and test new traffic projects.⁸⁶ A press commission was tasked with making sure that the German press continuously deals with Iran in a larger context, while the education branch which was known as the *Beirat für die Erziehung persischer Schüler in Deutschland* assisted Iranian students living in Germany. According to the same issue of the DPG memorandum, exhibitions and Persian language classes were organized and carried out by the DPG as well.⁸⁷

Beyond the organization of various events and established commissions, the DPG’s Memorandum was useful to businessmen interested in the Iranian economy while also serving as a substitute for the state of extensive works on Persia implying its cultural character.⁸⁸ The rise in importance of the DPG as a central point of contact between Germany and Iran is reflected in its number of members that rose from 48 in 1918 to 321 in 1919 to 483 by 1921.⁸⁹ The DPG was successful in helping Germans expand their commercial efforts in Iran, while simultaneously honing its cultural ties. Whereas the focus of the Weimar republic was economic ties, by the time the Nazis took over there was a clear shift towards achieving political goals that were only possible due to Germany’s cultural efforts at the beginning of the twentieth century. An example of various economic ties being created between Germany and Iran throughout the Weimar

⁸⁶ DPG publication pamphlet entitled, *Mitteilungen*, August 1, 1919, R 60447, Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry, Berlin.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ See Mahrad, *Die deutsche Penetration pacifique*, 53.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

republic can be seen through the publication of the Memorandum by the DPG about the “foreign trade with Iran in the year 1927/8.”

Diese Publikationen waren von besonderem Wert für Wirtschaftskreise. Interesse an solchen Veröffentlichungen bestand nicht nur in Deutschland, sondern auch in Frankreich, der Tschechoslowakei, der Schweiz, Italien, Polen und den Niederlanden. Deutsche Firmen, die an der Wirtschaft Persiens besonders interessiert waren, erhielten von der DPG wichtige Daten, z.B. über Ausschreibungen- wie für den Eisenbahnbau, den Bau persischer Hocköfen etc. Die DPG erteilte außerdem Auskünfte auf Anfrage und Empfehlungen an Firmen.⁹⁰

The importance of the DPG rested on it being a central source for German industry to expand its commercial efforts in Iran. Additionally needed specialists and advisors were chosen by the DPG to work with the Iranian government. This highlights the wide reach of Germany, not only in cultural and political aspects as discussed in length above (*Persian Committee, Kaweh*) but also economic matters. The financing of this organization came from its members but large contributions were also made by German industry giants, such as AEG, Krupp AG, Petag, Siemens etc., leading to the conclusion that the DPG constituted a vital point of intersection between Germany and Iran.⁹¹

X. Conclusions

Recognizing Germany’s efforts in building a favorable reputation in Iran throughout the Great War by using newspapers, journals, and organizations to promote Germany’s role as a friend and ally of Iran, is integral to acquiring a more complete view of the German-Iranian relationship. This chapter is meant to supplement existing scholarship that looks at Germany’s campaigning to support Islamists within the Ottoman Empire and Iran and especially to address Küntzel’s work on the history of Germany and Iran. After the First World War, Germany became “the center of a renaissance of Persian culture” leaving lasting impressions on

⁹⁰ Mahrad, *Die deutsch-persische Beziehungen von 1918-1933*, 54.

⁹¹ See Mahrad, *Die deutsche Penetration pacifique*, 55.

generations of Iranians who had a favorable view of Germany.⁹² The consequences of German *Kulturarbeit* went far beyond it becoming Iran's third most important trading partner throughout the Weimar republic. After Hitler's seizure of power in 1933, the political and ideological efforts moved to the foreground. Germany's decade-long involvement in Iran assisted the resurrection of Iranian nationalism and pride after humiliating encounters with Russia and England. What might have been viewed as prosaic efforts to serve Germany's own interest resulted in a consistently favorable reputation in the eyes of Iranians.

Yet the Nazis' highlighting of a racial connection between Iran and Germany, which forced the National Socialist regime to reevaluate their definition of Aryans, was built on decades of prior German *Kulturarbeit*. Here we can again acknowledge the nuanced difference between propaganda and *Kulturarbeit*, the latter demonstrating the ability to enter and profoundly saturate various layers of society, including the intelligentsia.

The rise in Iranian nationalism and its relations to Germany has to be situated within the complex history of World War One that led to this point. A simplification of the history between Germany and Iran, such as put forth by Küntzel, is ultimately misleading for people interested in this unusual alliance. Germany's relationship with Iran cannot be discussed without considering it as a response to the colonial politics of England and Russia. The relationship between Germany and Iran has not only outlived various forms of government throughout the twentieth century, but has also incited intellectual discourses, precisely because of the ideological underpinnings that have shaped its contours.

⁹² See Mahrad, *Die deutsch-persische Beziehungen von 1918-1933*, 405.

CHAPTER 2: The German- Iranian Aryan Discourse

I. Introduction

This chapter investigates the politics of the Aryan discourse between Germany and Iran, which was set up by decades of prior German *Kulturarbeit* for Iran, as outlined in the first chapter. The development of an Aryan fraternity between the Nazis and Iran has led many to the assumption that Iranians were declared as de facto Aryans (Madani, Küntzel). However, the matter is much more complicated as this chapter intends to show; the discourse between the Nazis and Iran was representative of the conflict between geo-political strategy and the importance of ideology. Whereas for Iranians their identity as Aryans was a matter of national pride, separating themselves from the ‘Arabs,’ for Nazi Germany, Iran’s assertion on being the original Aryans (*Urariet*) was testing the limits of Nazi ideology and what it meant to be Aryan. The importance of the matter for Iran is displayed by the fact that Persia changed its name to Iran in 1935 to emphasize the Aryan origin of the country. The formalization of this idea through a decree by Reza Shah Pahlavi was “suggested by proto-Nazi officials to Iranian diplomats in Berlin.”⁹³

On the German side, the Nazis had to balance keeping a strategic ally in the Middle East content, while staying true to their fundamentally perverted racial ideology that seemed to alter in accordance with political needs. Although, in the case of “Iranians,” the Nazis showed serious considerations to appease their request of being officially recognized as Aryans, the case of Iranian Jews is especially instructive in pointing towards the importance of ideology for the Nazis. Attempts by an Iranian (and German) diplomat to include Jewish Iranians as part of the Aryan racial stock were decisively dismissed by senior Nazi authorities as attempts at subterfuge.

⁹³ Katouzian, *The Persians*, 218.

This, again, points to the difficulty for Nazi-Germany of weighing its foreign policy needs (towards Iran) with an attempt to stay pragmatic to their conceivably malleable ideology. It is my contention that Iranian appeals to be formally categorized as Aryans was related to their desire to regain old glory after humiliating encounters with England and Russia. A tactical alliance with the Nazis was to elevate Iran's geo-political status, but was not grounded in a shared fascist ideology with Nazi Germany. This argument challenges the alarmist literature depicting the Nazis relationship with Iran as an example of underlying fascist elements to Iranian national ideology. Iran's self-identification as Aryans under Reza Shah and return to its ancient origins was partly meant to create a distance between Iran and Islam, which speaks volumes to the falseness of the argument that Islam and Nazism are similar ideologies. When it comes to Germany, allying with Iran, after decades of fruitful *Kulturarbeit* throughout and after the First World War, allowed the Nazis to play up its often-outlandish propaganda that was meant to concretize an existing Aryan fraternity—for mainly geo-political reasons.

Building on prior decades of German *Kulturarbeit* that already hinted at a common ancestry between Germany and Iran, the Aryan association with the Nazis left discernable effects on the self-identification of Iranian nationalism and their role vis-à-vis the “West.”⁹⁴ My aim is to narrow down the Aryan discourse to the German-Iranian context, since an exhaustive study on all existing interchanges would go beyond the scope of this chapter. As outlined in the first chapter, Germany's active *Kulturarbeit* started with the onset of the First World War through German sponsored organizations, newspapers, and journals, influencing the reputation of Germany in Iran, while providing a space for Iranian nationalists to impact the development of their nationalistic endeavors in a pro-German environment. Germany's incisive cultural efforts

⁹⁴ For more on the self-identification of Iranians and their nationalism see Reza Zia-Ebrahimi, *The Emergence of Iranian Nationalism: Race and the Politics of Dislocation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

towards Iran continued throughout the Weimar years, allowing for an expansion in collaboration in peaceful times. By the time the Nazis came to power, a common ideological leaning had begun to emerge which was based on a constructed racial ideology, namely the existence of a distinct race of Aryans and their superiority. With the Nazi seizure of power, Germany's influence on Iran made a shift from cultural connectivity to a shared political nationalism derived from a presumed shared Aryan origin. Additionally, the Nazi regime's racial ideology not only affirmed Iran's self-identification as Aryans, but also elevated them into an alleged elite circle. Whereas a cultural commonality always stood in the foreground, consolidated by years of prior German *Kulturarbeit* in Iran, the Aryan discourse changed the landscape politically, leading to consequences for Iran's political self-understanding and its relationship with the West throughout the twentieth century.

Defining the term Aryan is not only difficult today due to confusion about the ancient term *ariya* and its modern political definition. Iran's classification by some Nazis as Aryan, or *Ur-ariier*, the purported original Aryans, had its origin in the early eighteenth century and became popularized not only in Germany but all over Europe. This chapter is interested in examining specifically the Aryan discourse, as it became a site of convergence between Germany and Iran. This discourse allowed (Nazi) Germany to consolidate its relationship with Iran through a racial kinship that forged an ideological common ground. Germany accentuated a supposed racial connection with Iran in order to gain political ground while strengthening its economic gains in the Middle East. Iran saw in Germany the potential to modulate the rivalry between England and Russia and to change the dynamics between itself and the world powers. Whereas England and Russia had a long history of imperial ambitions in Iran (and the Middle East), Germany's entry into the Iranian public sphere was not weighed down by similar goals. Further, Germany had

throughout the twentieth century, with small exceptions, valued Iran's quest for sovereignty,⁹⁵ and Germany was viewed by Iran as a friendly ally that could bring her back to the old glory lost during the Qajar era.⁹⁶ Germany played a fundamentally distinctive role in the imagery of the Iranian population, its intellectuals, and politicians, which was decisive in shaping an Aryan discourse that connected them to Germany and its rising aspirations.

The first section of this chapter will give an overview of the history of the term Aryan in regards to the German-Iranian relationship. It will trace its evolution from an idea into a recognized "scientific" concept separating Aryans from Semites. The second part of the chapter will examine the Nazis' struggle to define the term Aryan in order to assuage some of its allies in the Middle East (including Iran). The Nazis' efforts to categorize Iranians as Aryans came only after Teheran lobbied Germany, which demonstrates that for the Nazis the term Aryan was not as pure and scientific as they presented, but rather driven by political ideology. Thirdly, the special case of Jewish Iranians and efforts by diplomats to manipulate diplomatic language to include them as Aryans is part of this legacy and led to coining of the term "*Djuguten*." *Djuguten* was to designate Iranians who were "Aryan" by blood but embraced Judaism as a religion. Fourth, systematic German propaganda disseminated in Iran based on various fabricated historical parallels between both countries will be highlighted as it resulted in support for the Nazis by parts of the Iranian population. Lastly, this chapter will look at how the modern Aryan discourse influenced Iran's self-understanding vis-à-vis the West and became part of its national identity under Reza Shah Pahlavi.

II. Ancient *ariya* versus the Modern Political Concept of Aryans

⁹⁵ See Ahmadi, *Iran als Spielball der Mächte?*

⁹⁶ See Gheissari, *Iranian Intellectuals in the 20th Century*.

The first reference to the Aryan people is attributed to King Darius the Great, who described himself as “Darius the great king... a Persian, the son of a Persian, an Aryan, of Aryan lineage.”⁹⁷ It is crucial to note that the ancient term *ariya*, a term used for a designated ethnic group, even though related to the modern political concept of Aryanism that emerged in the eighteenth century, has to be held separate. It is this latter understanding that forms the focus of this chapter. Reza Zia Ebrahimi, referring to the ancient concept of Aryans, maintains that “it is clear that *ariya* in the Iranian sources refers to a group of people sharing a common cultural and linguistic heritage.”⁹⁸ Identifying as *ariya* was contrasted with non-*ariyas*. The categorization of *Ariyas* was not limited to Persians but included other people as well (Medes, Alans, Sakas). *Ariyas* encompassed not only Iranians, but also included Indians and Europeans, all categorized as one large racial group, while ascribing to them biological and psychological characteristics.⁹⁹ The amalgamation of the ancient term *ariya* and the modern idea of Aryan is partially responsible for the confusion between what is meant when talking about Aryans. It was not until the eighteenth century that Europeans rediscovered the term through an increasing interest in Iran. The French Orientalist, Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil du Perron (1731-1805) was first in identifying that the name Aryan was a designation for “the people of Iran.” Subsequently in 1777, German theologian Johann Friedrich Kleuker (1749-1827) translated Perron’s essay, which depicted the Iranian people as Aryan.¹⁰⁰

III. The Emergence of the “Aryan Myth”

⁹⁷ David Motadel, ed., *Perceptions of Iran: History, Myths and Nationalism From Medieval Persia to the Islamic Republic* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 119.

⁹⁸ See Reza Zia-Ebrahimi, “Self-Orientalization and Dislocation: The Uses and Abuses of the “Aryan” Discourse in Iran,” *Journal of The International Society for Iranian Studies* 44 (July 2011): 461.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ See Zia- Ebrahimi, “Self-Orientalization and Dislocation,” 120.

In 1786 famed philologist Sir William Jones (1746-1794) formulated a theory that posited Greek, Latin, Sanskrit and Persian as languages that had a common *origin*. Jones's postulations were foundational for future inquiries into comparative linguistics and served as a springboard for various other writers that were inspired to find a common genealogy between Europe and a mysterious East that often served as self-discovery for Oriental scholars. Friedrich Schlegel (1772-1828), one of the leading figures in German Romanticism, was central in the evolution and "Europeanization" of the term Aryan. He made a decisive transformation to the ancient term *ariya*, by proposing that the "Vedic and Avestan *ariya* are related to the German *Ehre* (honor), therefore related to 'concepts of honor and noble deeds.'"¹⁰¹ This alteration helped propagate the conversion from *ariyan* to Aryan as a racial category as we understand it today. In 1808, Schlegel went as far as to propose, "that the ancestors of the Germans were the ancient 'Persians.'¹⁰² Schlegel built on the already accumulated information concerning an inherent link between the Indo-Persian region and Germany by proclaiming ancient Indo-Europeans as "'primordial people' (*Urvolk*), which travelled...from Asia to Europe."¹⁰³ Even though Schlegel's postulations were essential to their popularization and adoption by the German academic communities, they had no biological connotations yet.

As the idea of a relation between Indo and European languages was strengthening throughout Europe, endorsed by a growing intellectual tradition, German linguist Franz Bopp (1791-1867) took it a step further by trying to find a structural, grammatical root of Sanskrit, in contrast to Greek, Latin, Persian, and Germanic languages. In 1816 Bopp gave a paper in Paris with the following title: "On the Conjugation System of Sanskrit in comparison with that of Greek, Latin, Persian, and Germanic." Bopp's paper marked another step in ascertaining a

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 448.

¹⁰² Motadel, *Perceptions of Iran*, 121.

¹⁰³ Motadel, *Perceptions of Iran*, 121.

connection between the Germanic languages and Persian (as well as Greek and Latin). Even though this association highlighted a linguistic relation it is often marked as an important point in the process of making the case for a racial superiority that took shape in the next century.

First references towards biological differences between Aryans and other races were advanced in the nineteenth century. The German Orientalist and Ethnologist, Gottlieb Wilhelm Leitner (1840-1899) “visited Ladakh (India) and [was] impressed by the natives’ physical features and clear eyes... [he] became convinced that he had discovered the ‘cradle of the Aryan race.’”¹⁰⁴ Moreover, Christian Lassen (1800-1876), a student of Friedrich Schlegel, started adding to the growing theories in the field, and began making a racial distinction between Aryans and other races.¹⁰⁵ Lassen’s references to the speech and “physical type” of the Aryans linked the Aryan Indians to the Caucasian race through their language and physical nature.¹⁰⁶ Arthur Comte de Gobineau (1816-1882) took up Lassen’s observations and was responsible for the popularization of an “Aryan Master Race” which he claimed travelled from the East to Europe. It is widely accepted that de Gobineau served as a chief proponent in taking what had emerged as a linguistic theory and turning it into a racial model that insisted on the superiority of an Aryan race.

In his *Essai sur l’inegalite des races humaines*, [de Gobineau] used the term Aryan to refer to a ‘primordial race’ which had been, in his opinion, the elite of ancient India and Persia, as well as contemporary nineteenth-century France... More generally, Gobineau saw the ‘Aryans’ and ‘Semites’ as part of a ‘white race’, which he distinguished from a ‘yellow’ and ‘black’ one.¹⁰⁷

Thus far we can deduce from the genealogy and rise of the Aryan myth that various efforts were undertaken to establish a linguistic connection between the Persian language as part

¹⁰⁴ See Zia- Ebrahimi, “Self-Orientalization and Dislocation,” 450.

¹⁰⁵ Stefan Arvidsson, *Aryan Idols: Indo-European Mythology as Ideology and Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 45.

¹⁰⁶ See Douglas T. McGetchin, *Indology, Indomania, and Orientalism: Ancient India’s Rebirth in Modern Germany*. (Danvers, MA: Rosemond Publishing, 2009), 64.

¹⁰⁷ Motadel, *Perceptions of Iran*, 123.

of an Indo-European group, including German, Greek, and Latin. These attempts at linguistic associations were gradually transformed from linguistics links to proposals towards racial hierarchies. Yet, the term Aryan had varied interpretations, such as German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche's use of the term Aryan as an example to describe Christianity as the "anti-Aryan religion par excellence."¹⁰⁸ However, it was the aforementioned linguists and scientists who laid the groundwork for the emergence of an Aryan myth and subsequent distinction between Aryans and Semites that would become imbued with a relationship of power and superiority. As aptly pointed out by Zia-Ebrahimi: "For many authors, this confusion of language and race was the Original Sin of the Aryan myth."¹⁰⁹

IV. The Nazis' Aryan Discourse

Having located the origins of the Aryan myth in the early eighteenth and nineteenth century, we can now move towards the twentieth century, where the Aryan discourse took further shape in its evolution towards a political ideology. Despite, or perhaps because of the ongoing changing characterization of Aryan(s), its definition continued to remain obscure and plastic. Influenced by the racial theories of de Gobineau, British Germanophile Houston S. Chamberlain (1855-1927) published his *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* in 1899, which so impressed the German Emperor Wilhelm II that he "gave orders to introduce Chamberlain's *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* as compulsory reading for school teachers in training."¹¹⁰ Chamberlain's treatise moved beyond ethno-linguistics and proposed that Aryans were a superior race, with the Teutonic and Nordic people at its apex.

¹⁰⁸ See Arvidsson's, *Aryan Idols*, 149.

¹⁰⁹ Zia-Ebrahimi, "Self-Orientalization and Dislocation," 450.

¹¹⁰ Motadel, *Perceptions of Iran*, 124.

By the time the Nazi regime began employing the term Aryan, its definition remained inconsistent. Often the term was used to describe the superiority of Germans, depicted as ‘Nordic’, ‘Germanic’, and ‘non-Jewish’. The term Aryan was deliberately vague so that it could be inflected for different ideological purposes. Moreover, the academic discourses that dealt with the Aryan issue soon became politicized and started permeating fields such as Iranian studies, Indiology, history and linguistics.¹¹¹ Amongst Orientalists who promoted the Aryan myth, Hans Heinrich Schäder (1896-1957) stood out for drawing parallels between Germany and Persia, and maintaining that Aryans (northern Europeans) had defended their “Nordic homeland against Asiatic hordes.”¹¹² The research conducted in academic fields such as Orientalism benefited from the prominence of the Aryan myth throughout the time of the National Socialists.

Schäder drew particular parallels between ancient Persians and Germans. Just as the Iranians laid out the historical foundation of the Middle East, the Germans formed the structure of Europe in the Middle Ages; ‘Aryan’ world history became the link between East and West.¹¹³

Arguably the most influential racial ideologue of the Nazis, Alfred Rosenberg (1893-1946), wrote his 1930 *The Myth of the Twentieth Century* as a sequel to Chamberlain’s *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*. Rosenberg, as the head of the Foreign Affairs Office of the Nazi Party (*Aussenpolitisches Amt der NSDAP*), proposed a racial hierarchy placing the “Germanic Nordic Aryan” kind at the top. Ancient Persia is also mentioned in Rosenberg’s *The Myth of the Twentieth Century* as having declined due to intermarriage with lower races. Rosenberg used his racial theories as a means to gain economic and political control, exemplified through the fact that “Rosenberg’s *Aussenpolitisches Amt* was the only Nazi organization with a definite, ominous policy towards Persia, advocating total economic control over the region.”¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Ibid., 127.

¹¹² Motadel, *Perceptions of Iran: History*, 127.

¹¹³ Ibid., 128.

¹¹⁴ Adrian O’Sullivan, *Nazi Secret Warfare in Persia (Iran): The Failure of the German Intelligence Services, 1939-1945* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 16.

But in order to ensure economic control over Iran, the Nazis had to deal with upcoming Iranian pleas to be declared as Aryans, as a matter of national pride. Given (Nazi) Germany's perpetuation of Iranians as ancient Aryans, with the publication of the 1935 Nuremberg Race laws, the matter of Aryan identification became more convoluted.

V. Iran's Insistence on its Aryan Classification

The significance of being classified as Aryan versus non-Aryan became more consequential as the Nuremberg Race laws were introduced in 1935 at the Nazi's annual party rally. The institutionalization of the Nazis' racial theories also raised the attention of Iran, as self-identified Aryans, for whom this designation was a matter of national pride while fueling its own nationalistic ambitions. When Reza Shah Pahlavi seized power in 1925, the Aryan myth became a central trope for the self-understanding of Iranians as an exceptional *Volk*. This identification as Aryan does not represent a sudden change but has to also be viewed as part of an evolution of the term Aryan in the Iranian context.¹¹⁵ Germany frequently employed the Aryan term when dealing with Iran in order to hone its economic and political relationship with Iran. "References to the 'Aryan' became a recurring topos in Germany's propaganda efforts directed towards the country."¹¹⁶ Even though the Nazis had already started using the term in diplomatic circles, problems started emerging for the Nazis in 1935 when the Nuremberg racial laws became public in the Middle East, leading to strong reactions amongst many of the member states.¹¹⁷ Egypt, Turkey, Iraq, and especially Iran were offended that their status as Aryans was not included in the Nuremberg racial laws. This posed an extraordinary problem for Iranians who claimed to be the "original" Aryans based on their (ancient) history.

¹¹⁵ Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani has been credited with the first mention of the term Aryan in modern Iranian writing around 1890.

¹¹⁶ Motadel, *Perceptions of Iran*, 129-30.

¹¹⁷ See Herf's, *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World*, 19 & 28.

A note written on August 30th and received on September 23th 1935 from German diplomat Vicco von Bülow-Schwante (1891-1970) to the German foreign ministry lays bare Iranian efforts to be designated as Aryans. The Iranians' argument, based on their ancient Aryan history is further strengthened through their already mentioned re-naming of Persia into Iran, also in 1935, after a decree by Reza Shah Pahlavi. This decree by the Shah instructed all foreign legations to start referring to Persia as Iran, underlining its Aryan heritage. In the aforementioned note, Bülow-Schwante reports that the legation secretary (*Legationssekretär*) of the Iranian embassy (Mr. Kaviani) came by and reported that he has been receiving requests by Iranian nationals that were looking for a certificate to validate their Aryan descent.¹¹⁸ This Aryan certificate was needed according to Kaviani, because Iranian citizens were being treated as non-Aryans in Germany. This designation as non-Aryan led to Iranians not finding jobs, getting fired from their current jobs, or prevented them from receiving unemployment compensation. Additionally Kaviani reported that German women, who had married Iranian men, were targeted for having married non-Aryans.

Secretary Kaviani argued that Iranians were already regarded as Aryans in Germany. He pointed to the fact that the re-designation of the country's name from Persia to Iran (in the same year) occurred amongst other reasons to document that ancient Persia was indeed the "cradle of Aryanism." Kaviani requested that the treatment of Iranian citizens and their Aryan ancestry should be clarified in a speedy manner to resolve a number of cases that hinged on this classification. Bülow-Schwante reported back to the foreign ministry that he reacted evasively to Kaviani's request and suggested that there should be a case- by-case ruling when dealing with these instances. The note from Bülow-Schwante concludes by asking the German foreign

¹¹⁸ German Dipomat Vicco v. Bülow-Schwante letter to the German Foreign Ministry, September 23, 1935, L 316537; L 316538; L 316539, Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry, Berlin.

ministry (Dr. Gross) for a “general statement” on this matter, while also alluding to the fact that this poses a highly delicate issue for the “self-esteem” of Iranians. A negative response, according to Bülow-Schwante could lead to “undesired repercussions” for the political and economic relations with Iran and particularly with the Shah himself. This insightful note from the German diplomat traced the importance for Iranians to be classified as Aryans, as a matter of national pride, while also displaying Iran’s economic and more importantly political and ideological relation between both countries.

The inquiries into the classification of Iranians started gaining more attention from the Nazis once reports about the exclusions of Iranians as Aryans started circulating in the Middle East. For example, in the newspaper “La Bourse Egyptienne” there were reports about a cable from Berlin that states inhabitants of Iran, Iraq, and Egypt have been declared as non-Aryans via the Nuremberg racial laws.¹¹⁹ In order to avoid a backlash from these reports, an express letter (*Schnellbrief*) dated June 20th, 1936, was written from the German foreign ministry to multiple recipients, amongst them the deputy of the Führer Herr Reichsminister Hess, the interior ministry, the ministry for Propaganda, the justice department, the ministry of economics, education, and national education, as well as the ‘*Rassenpolitisches Amt der NSDAP*.¹²⁰ The express letter communicates that the news being conveyed abroad maintains that the “residents of Egypt, Iran, and Iraq are non-Aryans, which has resulted in an uproar abroad.” Furthermore, it mentions that the envoys of Egypt and Iran have visited the foreign ministry in person. Subsequently, in the following month, on July 11^h, 1936, another note from the foreign ministry addressed to the German Embassy in Teheran alludes to a meeting that concluded, “the time had

¹¹⁹ Telegram titled: “Jüdische Zeitung” ‘La Bourse Egyptienne’, June 15, 1936, Document Nr. 000072, Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry, Berlin.

¹²⁰ Express Letter to multiple recipients, June 20, 1936, Document Nr. 00086, File R 99174 labeled: “*Zugehörigkeit der Ägypter, Iraker, Iraner Perser und Türken zur arabischen Rasse. Vom 1936 bis 1940*, Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry.

not come for an official explanation.”¹²¹ In regards to the inquiries by the Iranian envoy as to the rumors surrounding the classification of Iranians, it states that it was decided to “orally inform him of this decision through Dr. Walter Gross, the director of the *Rassenpolitisches Amt*.” Further, in this conversation the Iranian envoy had no objections against the German published “denial in the press and the equalization (*Gleichstellung*) of Iranian citizens in the case of marriage with citizens of any other country.” Yet in theory, the “Iranians wish to not be counted as part of the dissimilar people (*Artfremden Völkern*).” Interestingly, the note explains that the fact that Turkey has been “included into the circle of European people must be especially insulting, since the Turkish-Iranian eastern border is inhabited by the same type of people (*Menschentypen*) which are now supposedly dissimilar (*Artfremd*).” This according to the note is “inapplicable in regards to Iran, since Iranians are effectively the ancestors of the Aryan race.” Because of this the Iranian envoy seeks a solution that does not only speak of related people (*artverwandten Völkern*) and their descendants but as Iranians as “direct ancestors of the Aryan people.” The note from the foreign ministry to the German embassy in Teheran concludes by claiming to have assuaged the Iranian envoy by promising him “his wishes will be taken into consideration and possibly arranged for.”

Moreover, seven days after, another note dated July 18th, 1936, and titled “Iran and the Nuremberg laws” from the German embassy in Teheran is received by the German foreign ministry.¹²² This note from the German archives, which unfortunately is incomplete, asks the foreign ministry about “rumors, which have been circulating about a German law, which is to be published forbidding a marriage between Arabs, Egyptians, and Iranians with German

¹²¹ German Foreign Ministry letter to the German Embassy in Tehran, July 11, 1936, Document Nr. 000066, File R 99174, Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry, Berlin.

¹²² Letter from the German embassy in Tehran to the German Foreign Ministry, July 18, 1936, Unidentifiable Document Nr., File R 99174 case file, Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry.

nationals/citizens.” The note uses strong language to underline that “even though the press has not been mobilized” by the Iranians, there has been a “fierce verbalization (*grosser Schärfe ausgesprochen*)” stating that for a law like the one rumored to take place would be a “humiliation to the Iranian people, which is proud of its Aryan descent (*Arische Abstammung*) and will not let anyone contest this identity.” This strong statement recorded by the German embassy in Teheran speaks volumes about Iranians’ self-identification as Aryans.

VI. Jewish Iranian Aryans

A most fascinating and instructive case in regards to the classification of Iranians as Aryans is the situation of Jewish Iranians. The insistence of Iranians to be grouped as Aryans raised the question as to whether Jewish Iranians could be included in this categorization, while it also tested the limits of Nazi ideology. As the field of Aryan studies, in accordance with Oriental studies, was legitimized, various German research institutes were conducting research on the Aryan race. One important example is Walther Wüst (1901-1993), who in 1935 was a Professor in Munich for Aryan culture and philology later renamed to the “Seminar for Aryan Cultural and Linguistic Studies” and has been depicted as “the most powerful promoter of the Aryan legend in Nazi Germany.”¹²³ For the most part it has been recorded that the majority of Iranian Jews were treated just like other Jews by various public authorities.¹²⁴ The case of Jewish- Iranians and their classification again points to the ambiguity in the grouping of Aryans and the prevalence of Nazi Germany’s political ideology. In the same note from 1935 mentioned in the previous section, German diplomat Bülow-Schwante states in regards to the distinction

¹²³ See Motadel, *Perceptions of Iran*, 129.

¹²⁴ See Madani, *Iranische Politik*, 37.

between Jewish and non Jewish Iranians, that it is “theoretically not possible” to trace the lineage of individuals descending from Jewish parents and grandparents. Yet, he argues that because the families of Jewish Iranians or those of Jewish descent are usually well known in Iran, their identification should be possible. Therefore, it would suffice if two “well-regarded people” could attest to the non-Jewish ancestry of respective Iranians.

Due to the efforts of the Iranian embassy against an ongoing discrimination of Iranian Jews, the ministry of economics (*Reichswirtschaftministerium*) had notified the German foreign ministry that it would be willing to advise the appropriate public authorities to treat foreign Jews like Aryan natives.¹²⁵ These nascent efforts to deal with not only Iranians but also specifically Jewish Iranians was only the start of a long back and forth amongst various Nazi authorities that has only been partially documented. By the same token it was precisely this ambiguity that allowed well-meaning diplomats in Germany and France to manipulate the situation in favor of Jewish Iranians.

An example of that is the Iranian diplomat Abdol Hossein Sardari (1895-1981), who was in charge of Iranian consular affairs in Paris. He used creative diplomatic language to argue that Jewish Iranians were to be exempted from the Nazis’ racial policies.¹²⁶ In order to protect Jewish-Iranians from persecution, he insisted that they were connected to the “Aryan racial stock” as opposed to being Semites.¹²⁷ Sardari is credited with coining the term “*Djuguten*” to designate Iranian Jews that have Iranian blood yet are followers of the teachings of the prophet Moses.¹²⁸ These claims by Sardari in addition to consular inquiries led to further examinations on the question of how to categorize Jewish Iranians.

¹²⁵ Madani, *Iranische Politik*, 38.

¹²⁶ There is a popular Iranian television series made in 2007 with the translated title of *Zero Degree Turn* that is loosely based on Sardari and his life.

¹²⁷ See Fariborz Mokhtari, *In The Lion's Shadow: The Iranian Schindler and his Homeland in the Second World War*. (Stroud, Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2011), 13.

³⁷ Mokhtari, *In The Lion's Shadow*, 14.

Due to numerous inquiries as to the classification of Iranian Jews, especially through the Iranian diplomat Sardari, the Nazi-regime was forced to make a statement on this issue. Before any statement could be made, numerous German research institutions investigated the role of Iranian Jews. The three following institutions were charged with the question as to how to assign Iranian Jews.

Am 15.10.1942 wurde dem ‘Rassenpolitischen Amt’ in Berlin und dem ‘Institut für Erforschung der Geschichte des neuen Deutschland’ sowie dem in München ansässigen ‘Weltdienst’ und dem ‘Reichsinstitut zur Erforschung der Judenfrage’ in Frankfurt am Main die Frage gestellt, wem denn nun eigentlich die iranischen Juden zuzuordnen seien.¹²⁹

Ahmad Mahrad, the foremost expert on German-Iranian relations, explains that the responses from the above-mentioned German research institutions varied. In 1942, the *Weltdienst* institute in Munich was the first to respond to the inquiry. Four days later the *Reichsinstitut zur Erforschung der Judenfrage* in Frankfurt am Main answered that the question that has been raised is of “utter importance.” It also admitted to the difficulty raised by this question. Mahrad argues that the institute in Frankfurt was not as frivolous in the determination of its racial ideology as other competing research institutes like the one in Munich for example (*Weltdienst*). The answer provided by the research center in Frankfurt was an attempt to be scientific (*Wissenschaftlichen Anstrich*). Nonetheless, not surprisingly, the answers culminated in requests for more funding for advanced research.

In addition to the reactions from the designated racial institutes, an ideologically charged response to the question of how to classify Iranian Jews came from the head of the SS, Adolf Eichmann (1906-1962), in a letter to the foreign ministry dated December 8th, 1942. Eichmann

¹²⁹ Ahmad Mahrad, *Das Schicksal jüdischer Iraner in den vom nationalsozialistischen Deutschen Reich eroberten europäischen Gebieten* (Den Haag: Iranisches Jahrbuch, 1975/76).

dismissed the portrayal of Iranian Jews as part of an Aryan racial stock as “nothing else but the usual attempts of disguise and subterfuge.”¹³⁰ In addition he delivered the following explanation:

Da es im Iran infolge der rassischen und religiösen Struktur Vorderasiens vereinzelt Iraner mosaischer Konfession gebe, die rassisch nicht zum Judentum gehören, so haben die Juden, die vielfach nur aufgrund ihres religiösen Bekenntnisses als solche zu erkennen sind, aufgrund dieses Umstandes alleine noch keinen Anspruch darauf, allgemein Nicht-Juden gleichgestellt zu werden. Eine derartige Sonderstellung der iranischen Juden würde nur dann gerechtfertigt sein, wenn es im Iran niemals eine Judenfrage und niemals Juden, die rein rassig gesehen Juden sind, gegeben hätte.¹³¹

Eichmann excluded Iranians of Jewish faith from being categorized as Aryans and thereby not granting them an exceptional position (*Sonderstellung*). Even though there was no evidence of a Jewish heritage (blood) in Iranian Jews, Eichmann declared that their belief alone was sufficient to persecute Iranian Jews. For Eichmann it would only be viable to grant Iranian Jews this special position if there was never a ‘Jewish-question’ or full-blooded Jews in general in Iran. Mahrad confirms that Eichmann posits a “pseudo-historical” reasoning for his not including Jewish Iranians as part of Aryan racial stock. For Eichmann the question of the status of Jews in Iran has always been a historical one that was contingent on the political situation.¹³² He elaborates this point by explaining that 17th century Iran was marked by “constrictive actions taken against Jews” (*einschneidener Judenmaßnahmen*). Examples of these measures taken against Iranian-Jews included marking them through “red scarfs” while also imposing “curfews” on them. He credits the improvement of the situation of the Jews in Iran in the 19th century to an ongoing intervention of the “Alliance Israelites” and “Russian-Jewish finance capital, especially under Poljakoff.” As the initiation of the Iranian Constitutional revolution from 1911 to 1921

¹³⁰ Mahrad, *Das Schicksal jüdischer*, 16.

¹³¹ Quoted in Mahrad, *Ibid.*

¹³² See *Ibid.*

also marked Reza Shah's ascent to power, Eichmann argues that a "legal equalization (*rechtliche Gleichstellung*) occurred in Iran, allowing Iranian-Jews to enter government offices.¹³³

Since the designated Nazi research institutions in Berlin, Frankfurt, and Munich did not come to a conclusion and Eichmann did not grant exceptions to Jewish-Iranians, their situation remained as indefinite as the categorization of who is Aryan and who is not. Eichmann denied a "de facto" or "de jure" recognition of Jewish Iranians as a racial minority thereby refusing them a special standing. Nevertheless, the Nazis had to spare the lives of Jewish Iranians living in Iran enjoying the protection of the Iranian state. This did not guarantee the survival of (Jewish) Iranians that lived outside of Iran, in the German occupied areas. In Berlin the Nazis were moving towards a conclusion on the case of Jewish Iranians and their ancestry. A note from the *Reichskanzlei* maintained that "the Persian and Afghan Jews were racially different from the eastern Jews (Ostjuden)" yet also asserted that they "were generally no different from Jews since they did not have a "Caucasian touch of blood" (*europide Blutseinschläge*).¹³⁴ The director of the Nazi Office of Racial Policy (*Rassenpolitisches Amt der NSDAP*), Dr. Walter Gross (1904-1945) gave the final verdict on the case of Iranian (and Afghan) Jews:

Aus rassischen wie auch aus den oben angedeuteten Gründen sehe ich keinen Grund zu einer eventuellen Sonderbehandlung der persisch-afghanischen Juden. Sie sind meines Erachtens bei allen Maßnahmen der praktischen Rassenpolitik den übrigen Juden gleichzustellen.¹³⁵

Dr. Gross concluded that there is no reason for a "special treatment" of Iranian or Afghan Jews when considering what measures to take in accordance with Nazi racial policies, because they are on an equal footing with other Jews. Despite the Nazis' conclusion that Iranian Jews were not to be treated any differently than other Jews, there were attempts by a German diplomat

¹³³ Quoted in Mahrad, *Das Schicksal jüdischer Iraner*, 17.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹³⁵ Quoted in Mahrad, *Das Schicksal jüdischer Iraner*, 20.

to salvage the situation. Additional inquiries into the matter had reached the highest level of the German foreign ministry, who in turn contacted Friedrich Werner von der Schulenberg (1875-1944), who had concretized his expertise on Iran through serving as German Ambassador in Iran from 1922 to 1931. Schulenberg, like Sardari, it has been argued was trying to outwit the Nazis' racial policies in order to save lives.¹³⁶ It is interesting to note that Schulenberg was later executed for his involvement in a failed assassination attempt on Hitler's life on July 20th, 1944. Schulenberg's explanation and confirmation of Sardari's theory of the "Djuguten" as an Islamic faction is testament to the refined skills of this diplomat and deserves to be quoted in full length.

Soviel ich mich entsinne, sind die Djuguten eine Islamische Sekte, die im wesentlichen den mohammedanischen Gesetzen folgt und nur einige wenige Religionsätze dem mosaichen Glauben entnommen hat; blutmäßig sind sie Iraner und nicht Semiten. Es erscheint demnach sachlich nicht gerechtfertigt, die deutschen Judengesetze auf die Djuguten anzuwenden. Wir versuchen, trotz der gegenwärtigen schwierigen Lage Irans möglichst gute Beziehungen mit diesem Land aufrecht zu erhalten. Eine Diskriminierung der Djuguten würde diesen Bestrebungen Abbruch tun und von unseren Feinden propagandistisch zu unserem Schaden ausgewertet werden. Pol XIII schlägt daher vor, die Anwendung der deutschen Judengesetze auf die Djuguten zu unterlassen oder zum mindesten bis auf weiteres hinauszuschieben.¹³⁷

Schulenberg explains that the "Djuguten" are part of an Islamic sect, which essentially follows the Islamic rules adapting only a few aspects of the Mosaic religion. He makes the important statement that Iranians are not Semites by blood, he therefore deems it is not justified imposing the German Jewish laws (*Deutsche Judengesetze*) on the "Djuguten." He then cleverly indicates to his superiors that enemies could use a discrimination against the "Djuguten" as propaganda to hurt Germany. Therefore he suggests to refrain from applying the German Jewish laws on the "Djuguten" or to at least defer it.

According to Mokhtari and Djalal Madani, Iranian Ambassador to France, Sardari managed to exempt 2400 Jews from Nazi racial laws, which is higher than the number of Iranian

¹³⁶ See Ahmad Mahrad and Fariborz Mokhtari.

¹³⁷ Original document in Mahrad, *Das Schicksal jüdischer Iraner*, 25.

Jews living in France at the time. This suggests that Sardari not only helped Iranian Jews to escape from the Nazis but also other Jews. This was made possible because an Iranian passport did not indicate the holder's religion, which made it nearly impossible for German authorities to distinguish Iranian Jews from Iranian Muslims.

VII. Nazi ideological Propaganda in Iran and its Effects

The Nazis harmonization with Iran was a strategic move in order to secure a strong ally in the Middle East. In case of a possible War between Germany, Britain and the Soviet Union, Iran could serve as a strategic contact point. Beyond the geo-political advantage, some common proclivities between Nazi Germany and the Reza Shah's regime were hard to miss. Reza Shah was understood to be a predominantly anti-democratic and anti-communist leader whose worldview was in accordance with that of Hitler. The most essential commonality, though, was a mutual emphasis on nationalism whose political goals were ensured through the establishment of well-organized police apparatuses, which were able to silence most of the opposition.¹³⁸ Iran's nationalism rested on the grandiosity of its past that could only be resurrected through a strong monarchy.

A noted example of the Iranian political elites' embrace of Nazi politicians is the visit of Nazi youth leader Baldur von Schirach (1907-1974) from December 3rd-6th, 1937, in Tehran. Even though this was an unofficial visit, the Shah and the crown prince received the Nazi politician. After a positive review of this visit by the Iranian press, and a publication in the Nazi-friendly journal "Journal de Teheran," the Soviet Charge d'Affaires noted that the Iranian press displays strong tendencies against "democratic and other forces within the Soviet Union,

¹³⁸ See Madani. *Iranische Politik*, 44.

whereas totalitarian states are viewed rather favorably.”¹³⁹ As previously emphasized, Iran’s inclination towards Nazi Germany was rooted in a continuous interest in releasing itself from British and Soviet control that had shaped the nation throughout the last century. Furthermore, Iran was motivated by a strong desire for a new world order, which would designate a larger role for Iran, instead of being caught between the imperial ambitions of other countries. Germany’s revival as a world power did not threaten Iran’s position, quite on the contrary, Germany’s rise to power was an opportunity for Iran to release itself from British and Soviet guardianship.

The German foreign ministry agreed that a strong, independent Iran would also be a favorable solution for the German Reich, as exemplified by a note from 1938 in regards to Iran’s relationship with Germany.

Die Weiterentwicklung des Iran war nur möglich, wenn sowohl eine Erschütterung durch eine äußere Bedrohung vermieden als auch der Iran eine selbständige Position im Kräftespiel der Großmächte bewahren oder Erlangen konnte.¹⁴⁰

The German Ambassador in Tehran, Erwin Ettl (1895-1971), makes this point even more visible by stating “the interests of Nazi Germany are best preserved through a free, independent, militarily strong Iran that is intimately connected to Germany through political and economic collaborations.”¹⁴¹

Part of the political efforts to consolidate Iran as a pro-German ally came in the form of spreading wild theories tailored to their respective beliefs. This would often occur through the creation of myths that were especially targeted towards the lower classes of Iranian society. Iran, as a Shi’ite country, with its own peculiarities presented an opportunity for ample parallels between the Nazis and Iran. The Nazis exploited the uniqueness of Iranian society’s

¹³⁹ Ibid., 55.

¹⁴⁰ Note from Smend to German Foreign Ministry in regards to Iran’s Relationship to Germany, January 22, 1938, R 435771, Pol. VII, 8, Bd. 1, 435771, Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry, Berlin.

¹⁴¹ Erwin Ettl Note send to German Foreign Ministry from German Embassy in Tehran in regards to Iran’s relationship to Germany, May 19, 1949, R 435836, Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry.

receptiveness to mythology by tapping into the Iranians' Shi'ite identity. This juxtaposition with Iranians' religious identity established a direct organ to mainly the lower classes of the Iranian public. The German foreign ministry singled out the Iranian clerics as the conveyer of their messages because they possessed an "excellent news service," with headquarters in the major places for pilgrimages, such as Mashhad and Qom. The already established posts throughout the country raised the significance of the Nazi collaboration with the clerics in Iran.¹⁴² As maintained by Madani, the Shi'ite population was familiarized via clerics with the idea that Adolf Hitler was a precursor to the twelfth hidden Imam (a messianic figure who will return to earth to establish the rightful governance of Islam), and could even be viewed as an indication towards a new world order.¹⁴³

While these kinds of stories were partially appealing to some of the urban intelligentsia, it was the rural population, due to their receptiveness to folklore that was especially taken with this kind of legendary propaganda. The largest resonance to the idea that Hitler was the precursor to the hidden Imam came from the conservative Shi'ite clerics. It was reported that various clerics claimed to have dreamt about secret prophecies, which they interpreted to mean that God sent the twelfth Imam to earth in the shape of Adolf Hitler. It must be underlined that it was the Iranian clerics, inspired by the Nazis, who played a key role in spreading rumors that spoke about secret prophecies and visions. The Nazi idea behind conflating Hitler with Islam, especially Shi'ite Islam was to provide a solution to Iranian social problems that could be solved through the global leadership of Hitler.

¹⁴² Note on Iran, January 2, 1942, E 233101, special file labeled: Pol.Arch. kult. Pol-Geheim, Orient, Juden um Roosevelt 1941-42, Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry.

¹⁴³ See Madani, *Iranische Politik und Drittes Reich*, 252.

Viele Priester verbreiteten Reden von geheimnisvollen Weissagungen und Träumen, die dahingehend gedeutet wurden, daß in der Gestalt Adolf Hitlers der zwölfte Imam von Gott auf die Welt gesandt worden sei.¹⁴⁴

This kind of myth spreading was not done in accordance with the Iranian state as documents from the foreign ministry show. The Shah personally intervened in the dissemination of these myths, by issuing official prohibitions and arresting those clerics (Mullahs) that were too engaged with speeches about Hitler as a holy figure, who supposedly would release the Iranian population from all its sorrows.¹⁴⁵ The information about this kind of mythical propaganda comes from the German embassy in Iran, which collected material about the consequences of the Nazis spreading of mythical rumors in Iran. One example from the archives of the foreign ministry stands out in particular due to its optical appeal. A visual artist/publisher (*Bildverleger*) in Tehran manufactured a large picture of Ali, the first Imam, after the prophet Mohammed, and of utter importance to Iranians, and put this picture next to that of Adolf Hitler right at the door of his store. Those who came to observe this juxtaposition understood the implication that Ali is the first prophet and Hitler is the last.

Ein Teheraner Bildverleger hat in seinem Verlag Bilder des Führers wie auch Alis, des ersten Imams, hergestellt, monatelang hingen diese großen Bilder rechts und links in der Tür seines Geschäfts. Jeder Eingeweihte verstand diese Nebeneinanderstellung. Es bedeutete: Ali ist der erste, Adolf Hitler der letzte Imam.¹⁴⁶

These rumors, which were powerful due to their fusion of Islam with Nazi Germany, included the idea that Hitler had converted to Islam and that he loved Iran.¹⁴⁷

Many of these perfidious rumors were conveyed through a Persian language radio program that played an important part in distributing pro-German propaganda in Iran. Next to the familiar

¹⁴⁴ Note on Iran, January 8, 1942, E 233108, special file labeled: Pol.Arch. kult. Pol-Geheim, Orient, Juden um Roosevelt 1941-42, Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry, Berlin.

¹⁴⁵ See Madani, *Iranische Politik*, 252.

¹⁴⁶ Note on Iran, January 16, 1942, E 233108- E 233101, special file labeled: Pol.Arch. kult. Pol-Geheim, Orient, Juden um Roosevelt 1941-42, Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry, Berlin.

¹⁴⁷ See Madani, *Iranische Politik*, 253.

theories about Germany's and Iran's common Aryan ancestry, wild ideas about a kinship between Allah with the Germanic God were spread. The broadcasts, which declared Hitler the last (twelfth) Imam, even set the specific date of his return. This kind of "news" was broadcasted by the *Berliner Rundfunk* and was usually accompanied by the reading of the Quran. Often, Hitler and a powerful Germany were presented as a solution to the social problems of the Iranian population. Calculated promises were also made, for example the return of the Mosque in Karbala, Iraq, which is the largest Shi'ite sanctuary.

“Durch jeweilige Propaganda der Mullahs wurde die Landbevölkerung soweit gebracht, daß Hitler in ihrer Vorstellung ‘als Heiliger, der sie nicht nur von ihren schweren sozialen Sorgen befreit, sonder ihnen auch die Moschee in Karbala, das größte schiitische Heiligtum, allem irakischen Widerstand zum Trotz zurückgeben wird.”¹⁴⁸

The German propaganda through the spreading of fantastical rumors about Hitler as a religious phenomenon resonated with the Iranian population, which initiated the distribution of more information that linked Hitler with Islam. Prophet Mohammed's historical fight against the Jews was juxtaposed to that of Hitler's contemporary fight against the Jews. The cleverly constructed comparisons were tremendously successful and exceedingly effective, according to the notes between the German foreign ministry and its embassy in Tehran.¹⁴⁹ Due to the initial success of the German propaganda machinery in Iran, its efforts were expanded beyond the broadcast of the *Berliner Rundfunk* in Iran, and plans were made to further systematize their propaganda, especially with regards to the beginning of the Second World War, that brought about more urgency. This shameless propaganda by the Nazis, targeting mostly lower classes of Iranian society is indicative of the fact that even though the Nazis were reluctant in classifying

¹⁴⁸ Note on Iran, Jan 2, 1942, E 233100, special file labeled: Pol.Arch. kult. Pol-Geheim, Orient, Juden um Roosevelt 1941-42, Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry, Berlin.

¹⁴⁹ Note on Iran, Jan. 2, 1942, E 233102/3, special file labeled: Pol.Arch. kult. Pol-Geheim, Orient, Juden um Roosevelt 1941-42, Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry.

Iranians as Aryans, it did not prevent them from exploiting a purported Aryan fraternity in order to attune the population in favor of Germany.

VIII. Iranian Support of German Expansion and a New-Wave of War-Propaganda

Even before the beginning of World War Two, Iran was supportive of Nazi Germany's expansionary efforts. An example of Iran's approval of Germany's foreign policy is its reaction to the Nazi invasion of the Czech republic in 1939, which also ended appeasement. The invasion of the Czech republic was "spontaneously welcomed" by the Iranian foreign minister Mozaffar Alam (1882-1973). Alam proclaimed his satisfaction about the occurrence of events, claiming that Hitler's actions would lead to "ordered conditions". Additionally, Alam, also admired Austria's annexation or "reunification" with Germany as a "great feat of Hitler's." This is further confirmed by the German embassy in Iran, which documented the Iranian foreign minister speaking "affectionate words praising Germany's expansionary efforts" on the occasion of the Shah's birthday a day after Germany took over the Czech republic.¹⁵⁰ These comments on the side of the Iranian leadership reflected a certain satisfaction with the turn of events, which Iran hoped would end the tutelage of Britain and the Soviet Union over Iran.

With the beginning of the Second World War, Germany amplified its propaganda efforts in Iran, since it had gained in importance due to its central location. According to a note from the foreign ministry, the Nazis amped up their propaganda efforts by strategically settling one hundred Germans in Tehran and its surroundings. Approximately 1200 Germans, of which 900 were active Nazis, already lived permanently in Iran. This constituted an extensive network, which was responsible for influencing the local population and ensuring its pro-Nazi sentiments.

In Teheran waren von ca. 1.200 Deutschen, die dort ständig lebten, etwa 900 aktive Nazis, die vor allem über die UdSSR nach Teheran gelangt waren...Über diesen Kern wurde der Iran mit einem Netz von Propaganda-Stützpunkten überzogen. Jeder Propagandaträger hatte die ihm erreichbaren Einheimischen wie Ausländer zu beeinflussen...¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ Note on Iran labeled Political Relationship between Iran and Germany, 1939, B 395/39, File: Pol. VII, Bd.1, II 739, Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry, Berlin.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

The Nazis targeted not only Iranians in Iran but also other ethnic groups that either happened to live in Iran or were permanently employed there. According to a note from the archives in the foreign ministry, the following means were utilized for their propaganda efforts in Iran: the spread of word-of-mouth rumors that were packaged as facts, printed works would draw a favorable picture of Germany and its war efforts, pictures which highlighted German heroics, the showing of German movies, and radio broadcasts that repeated rumors in favor of Germany and diffused any anti-German sentiments. The assignments of the carriers of Propaganda (*Propagandaträger*) were divided into four different sections. The Germans who lived in Iran had the task to share German themed propaganda in conversation with people. They also handed out printed works with pro-Nazi messages, while inquiring about the reception of these activities. Lastly, Germans in Iran were tasked with observing the propaganda efforts of the enemy, which then would be countered through Germany's own extensive propaganda machinery.¹⁵²

In addition, the public relations office of the German embassy in Tehran was permitted to exert its influence on the Iranian press landscape.¹⁵³ The Iranian press often took over news reports from official German press agencies, which were well presented to ensure lasting impressions, resulting in its wide influence on the Iranian press and subsequently its population.¹⁵⁴ An example of the Nazi's influencing of the press landscape is the semi official Iranian newspaper *Ettellat* which printed 30.000 issues. According to a note for the German military attaché in Iran, this newspaper directly adapted various articles about the German version on the events of the War.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Note on Iran labeled Political Relationship between Iran and Germany, 1939, B 395/39, File: Pol. VII, Bd.1, II 739, Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry, Berlin.

¹⁵³ Note on Iran, Jan 2,1941-42, E 233108, special file labeled: Pol.Arch. kult. Pol-Geheim, Orient, Juden um Roosevelt 1941-42, Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry.

¹⁵⁴ Note on Iran labeled Political Relationship between Iran and Germany, August 29,1939, N.B 1309, File: Pol. VII, Bd.1, II 739, Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry.

¹⁵⁵ Note from German Military Attaché in Tehran, November 8, Mil. Arch. Wi/II A 6,5, Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry.

IX. Conclusion on Iranian Self-Understanding as Aryans and its Nationalism

The Aryan discussion, as we understand it, has its roots in the European Orientalist discourse, which emerged around the 18th Century. Reza Shah's reign is directly tied to the self-understanding of Iranians as Aryans, as part of its national identity. Motadel rightfully maintains that Iranian nationalists from outside of Europe embraced the idea of a racially superior group of people that shared a common Indo-European language.¹⁵⁶ Whereas an interest in the modern idea of Aryans came about during the Qajar years, Reza Shah's take over in 1925 established a constitutional monarchy which showed strong anti democratic and anti communist leanings. Reza Shah's sympathies for Hitler are well established and were further highlighted in this chapter. A large aspect of the inception of an ideological campaign by Reza Shah was its concentration on the expansion of Iranian nationalism. Part of this nationalism campaign was a disavowal of the Islamic period in Iranian history while simultaneously maintaining strong contempt for Arabs. An example of that is the 1936 attempt by Reza Shah to cleanse the Persian language of Arabic and Turkish words, which were to be replaced by "new and pure Persian expressions."¹⁵⁷ The link between Anti-Arabism and the Iranian self-identification cannot be underestimated, as maintained by Zia-Ebrahimi who describes the "pre-Islamic frenzy...[as] one of the founding pillars of ideological Iranian nationalism." These nationalistic currents continued on to the second Shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (1941-1979), who called himself *Aryamehr*, which can be translated as sun of the Aryans.

The essentialist view of Semites embedded in Aryanism (although targeting Jews more than Arabs), and the opposition between Aryan and Semite elevated to the status of a scientific principle, all fit perfectly into the anti-Arab aversion of ideological Iranian nationalism and its desire to free Iranians from any responsibility over their own decay.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ Motadel, *Perceptions of Iran*, 130.

¹⁵⁷ See Madani, *Iranische Politik*, 32.

¹⁵⁸ Zia-Ebrahimi, *Self-Orientalization and Dislocation*, 467-468.

Placing the blame of the situation of Iranian backwardness on a past Islamic (Arab) self was combined with a strong desire to be included as a world power, hence the emphasis on its glorious (pre-Islamic) past. The goal was not only liberation from colonial rule, as was the case with other countries, but rather there was a desire to catch up with Europeans to bring Iran back to its old glory. As accurately expressed by Motadel, whereas for Germany, the Jews posed the “Semitic other,” for Iranians and their nationalist Aryan discourse, the “Arabs or Islam” served as the antidote.¹⁵⁹ A prolific proponent of this constellation was Iranian literary critic Mirza Aqa Khan Kirmani (1854-1897) whose work is marked by an anti-Islam and Arab stance. Kirmani argued that in order to find Iran’s authentic identity one must look to pre-Islamic Iran. He contrasts the “noble Aryan nation” with the “savage lizard-eaters.”¹⁶⁰ Depicted as a nationalist author, it is widely argued that it was Kirmani who was first with the mention of the term Aryan in modern Iranian writing.¹⁶¹ As an Iranian intellectual and secular nationalist, his views were influential on many others who would emulate his stance.

The myth of a superior Aryan race was most notably disseminated throughout Reza Pahlavi’s reign, in the form of historical textbooks that made an argument for a racial differentiation between Aryans and other “races”, distinguished through colors. Four time Prime minister of Iran (1918-24), Hassan Pirnia (1872-1935) propagated the idea of a white Aryan population based on the Indo-European theory. While he played a role in the Persian constitution of 1906, in 1928 he published the textbook *Iran-I Qadim* the “official history textbook of the Pahlavi period [which] became a standard text for middle school students.”¹⁶² This was surely important for shaping the ideological inclinations and racial understanding of Iranians for many generations’ to come. It at least influenced the self-understanding of Iranians vis-à-vis the West,

¹⁵⁹ Motadel, *Perceptions of Iran*, 130.

¹⁶⁰ Encyclopedia Iranica. Aqa Khan Kermani. <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/aqa-khan-kermani-iranian-writer-and-intellectual-d-1896>.

¹⁶¹ See Zia-Ebrahimi, *Self-Orientalization and Dislocation*, 454.

¹⁶² Motadel, *Perceptions of Iran*, 131.

as not necessarily the same as white people or all Aryans but certainly in possession of some key common attributes that are based on race.

Iran's sometimes-despairing attempts to be classified as Aryans by the Nazis in order to validate their identity must be understood as a political maneuver to free themselves from British and Russian control. Being part of a superior race, closely tied to Nazi Germany, in the minds of the Iranian leadership ensured a place under the sun, and underlines a desired transformation from victim of Imperial ambitions to the a global power player with superregional aspirations. Too often, this strategic relationship of Iran with Nazi Germany is mentioned as proof for an inherently fascistic undertone in Iran's desired autonomy from the West. Yet, it is crucial to contextualize Iran's dangerous alliance with the Nazis as a means towards its own liberation from the Great Game between England and Russia, which not only predicated the future of Weimar Germany, but also geared the development of Iranian nationalism, with an insistence on an authentic identity.

CHAPTER 3: Ernst Jünger and Jalal Al-e-Ahmad: Nihilism and *Gharbzadegi*

I. Introduction

This chapter will explore the work of a key Iranian intellectual of the pre-1979 revolution, Jalal Al-e Ahmad (1923-1969), and its engagement with Ernst Jünger's (1895-1998) post-war writing. The political landscape had changed drastically in Iran and Germany, situating the Iranian and the German intellectual in two divergent worldviews. In the wake of Germany's sobering experiences in World War Two, Jünger's work distanced itself from the nationalistic fervor of the Weimar republic. Iran in the 1960s was caught up in an official discourse of modernization and Westernization undercut by anxieties about the resultant loss of "authenticity." It is against this backdrop that Al-e Ahmad's seminal work *Gharbzadegi* (Westruckedness) became a rallying cry against Iran's blind emulation of the West.

While Al-e Ahmad's work has been duly acknowledged for its role in fueling opposition to the ruling monarch, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, its indebtedness to Ernst Jünger's concept of *nihilism* has not been adequately studied.¹⁶³ This chapter traces the convergence of ideas that drew Al-e Ahmad to Jünger's *Über die Linie* (Above the Line/Crossing the Line), published in 1950, in his attempt to pinpoint the roots of a nihilism he believed had engulfed Iran. I will first examine Jünger's definition of nihilism in *Über die Linie* before turning to Al-e-Ahmad's appropriation of Jünger's ideas in his *Gharbzadegi*. I will conclude with an analysis of the implications of Al-e-Ahmad's fascination with Jünger's ideas and its applicability to the Iranian context.

II. Jünger's Nihilism and Historical Nations

¹⁶³ Boroujerdi's *Iranian Intellectuals and the West* and Mirsepassi's *Political Islam* are primary examples of this point. Most recently, Hamid Dabashi has also addressed the indebtedness of Iranian intellectuals to the German tradition (2016).

Before analyzing Jünger's definition of nihilism, it is important to note that his writings took a turn after the Second World War. Throughout the Weimar Republic and even at the onset of the Second World War Jünger embraced a culturally conservative legacy that might be seen as endorsing a hierarchical system that stands in opposition to a democratic structure.¹⁶⁴ Jünger's earlier writings have been depicted as hyper-modernist characterized by his championing of individual sovereignty, while those after the Second World War, are characterized by a hyper-traditionalism that is less absolute.

In order to contextualize Jünger's take on nihilism and its broader cultural and historical significance, it will be helpful to turn towards historian Shane Weller, who maintains that in order to isolate a certain point in the history of nihilism, when trust towards the highest societal values does not exist anymore, those values will void themselves which presents a "nineteenth-century phenomenon, or... modernity's experience of self-disillusionment."¹⁶⁵ Moreover, Roger Griffin's 2007 study on *Modernism and Fascism* similarly argues that a turning point away from modernity occurred after the French and Industrial Revolutions, which exposed the "myth of progress" as grounded in an obsession with reason.¹⁶⁶

In 1930, Jünger explained his own thoughts on reason and progress in "The Total Mobilization" (*Die Totale Mobilmachung*), in which he questions the reality of the notion of progress since the Enlightenment. Moreover, he ascribed a more sinister meaning to the notion of progress, as secretive and of another kind (*andersartig*), hiding under the seemingly well-arranged mask of reason.¹⁶⁷ Jünger therefore asserts that the events of a World War, which turned industrial states into blacksmiths' shops (*Schmiederwerkstätten*), consequently initiated

¹⁶⁴ For an authoritative account on the Conservative Revolutionaries see Armin Mohler & Karlheinz Weissmann, *Die Konservative Revolution in Deutschland 1918-1932* (Graz: Ares Verlag, 2005).

¹⁶⁵ Shane Weller, *Modernism and Nihilism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 31.

¹⁶⁶ Griffin, Roger, *Modernism and Fascism*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

¹⁶⁷ Ernst Jünger, *Politische Publizistik 1919 Bis 1933* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2001), 122. This and subsequent texts from the original German have been translated by the author.

the onset of the era of the worker (*der Anbruch des Arbeitszeitalters*), which surpasses the French Revolution in importance.¹⁶⁸ Jünger's pointed critique of Enlightenment ideals and its obsession with reason can already be found in his earlier works before the Second World War. He later furthered this argument on the emergence of a new era in 1932 through his seminal book *Der Arbeiter* (The Worker). In *Der Arbeiter*, Jünger proposed a new reality (*neue Wirklichkeit*) in which the state needs to be dominated by a type of "technologized" worker that distances itself from a focus on the individual in the democratic liberal sense. For Jünger, Enlightenment values, since the French Revolution, are nihilistic values, which have to be replaced by new values.¹⁶⁹ In other words, as stated by the Jünger biographer Helmuth Kiesel, the archetype of *Der Arbeiter* is for Jünger the "human realization of a new principle of organization in History."¹⁷⁰

A new constellation of society is imaginable for Jünger, if nihilism is perceived as a historical *phase*. He acknowledges the difficulty of defining a term such as nihilism due to its many iterations since the age of Enlightenment. He had deemed nihilism as the "innermost source of evil" (*tiefste Quelle des Übels*) in his 1945 monograph *Der Friede* and demanded a "new theology" in order to abate it.¹⁷¹ Jünger does not provide a clear definition of nihilism in *Über die Linie* but views it as part of a comprehensive phase in a spiritual/intellectual process. (*Phase eines ihn umfassenden geistigen Vorgangs*).¹⁷² The state and its public officers, as well as the technological order (*technische Ordnung*) are cited as examples of nihilism functionality.¹⁷³ For Jünger nihilism as "a phase" has to be viewed as a destiny and essential power (*Grundmacht*) whose influence one cannot escape.¹⁷⁴ He further argues that a phase of nihilism also carries with

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 126.

¹⁶⁹ See Weller, *Modernism and Nihilism*, 44.

¹⁷⁰ Helmuth Kiesel, *Ernst Jünger Die Biographie* (München: Pantheon, 2009), 388.

¹⁷¹ See Ernst Jünger, *Der Friede* (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag, 1965).

¹⁷² Ernst Jünger, *Über die Linie*, in: *Anteile, Martin Heidegger zum 60 Geburtstag* (Frankfurt a.M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1950), 239.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 248.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 244.

it either reliance on past moralities or what is yet to emerge.¹⁷⁵ As we will see in the Iranian context, the question of morality particularly understood in the religious (Shi'ite) context is of paramount importance in the confrontation with a nihilistic modernity.

Even though Jünger dissociated himself from the Nietzschean notion of *Will to Power* after World War Two, his thought still had shaped Jünger's own understanding of nihilism, as is visible in *Über die Linie*. Jünger follows Nietzsche in describing nihilism as an expression of the devaluation of the highest values (*Ausdruck der Entwertung der höchsten Werte*) that subsequently leads to the *Nullpunkt* (the value of nil). Vital for Jünger's definition of nihilism after its overcoming as a historical phase, is its transformative character. It is this transformation that can be interpreted as the passing of the *Nullpunkt*, through a reduction of values, indicating the overcoming of nihilism as a phase. Consistent with Nietzsche's *leitmotif* in his writings, Jünger identifies Christian values as decadent and argues that they lead to pessimism. This pessimism, according to Jünger, turns into nihilism through a reordering of values. The leading values are destroyed by the strongest values, which are the only values that continually move forward. Subsequently, Jünger concludes that nihilism can be regarded as a sign of strength or weakness.¹⁷⁶ Jünger's account appears to view nihilism as a necessity for any society, whether as a phase or a perpetual state of functionality.

In *Über die Linie*, Jünger experiments with the applicability of nihilism by comparing nihilism's compatibility with newly emerging societies versus older societies that have a vast history and tradition. Since nihilism is not an end, but rather a phase in an all-encompassing thinking process, it has to be overcome.¹⁷⁷ An insightful turn in Jünger's definition of nihilism occurred from the Weimar years to the Second World War an event that undoubtedly did not

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 244-245.

¹⁷⁶ Jünger, *Über die Linie*, 245.

¹⁷⁷ Jünger, *Über die Linie*, 239.

leave him unaffected. According to Weller, “whereas it is bourgeoisie liberalism that is defined as nihilist in *The Worker*, in a diary entry of 16 October 1943 Jünger refers to high-ranking Nazi Reinhard Heydrich as the ‘nihilist-in-chief’ responsible for the killing of the Jews in the Lodz ghetto.”¹⁷⁸ The destructive potentiality of technology and ideology made Jünger’s political writings after the Second World War more reflective and less inflammatory when compared to pieces written before and throughout the Weimar years. Kiesel maintains that the essays written in the 1950s are not only less “apodictic” than the ones written in the 1930s, but are also more relaxed in their tone.¹⁷⁹ Nouvelle Droite (New Right) founder Alain de Benoist views Jünger’s nihilism as “transforming society from a ‘moral community to a mechanical conglomeration’” since it “marries fanaticism, the complete absence of moral sentiment, and the ‘perfection’ of technical organization.”¹⁸⁰

In *Über die Linie*, Jünger connects the automatization of society directly to nihilism.¹⁸¹ In his account a nihilistically organized society is arranged according to its functionality and as a result moves quickly, as a clinging to old values would threaten the rapid advancement of nihilism.¹⁸² Further, chaos is not the main characteristic of nihilism. Jünger actually argues the contrary, namely that nihilism is indeed compatible with an organized society. Organization is depicted as an underlying layer (*Substratum*) of nihilism, useful towards reaching its goals.¹⁸³ A differentiation is made between a state of chaos and nothingness (*nichts*). Jünger maintains that nihilism harmonizes with organized systems (*ausgedehnten Ordnungssystemen*), and names labor unions, enterprises, health insurance companies, and other groups that value functionality as examples of organized systems. He relates this development of the state and its organizations

¹⁷⁸ Weller, *Modernism and Nihilism*, 47.

¹⁷⁹ Kiesel, Ernst Jünger-Die Biographie, 599.

¹⁸⁰ Alain de Benoist, “Jünger, Heidegger, & Nihilism,” *Counter Currents Publishing*, July 5, 2010, <http://www.counter-currents.com/2010/07/junger-heidegger-nihilism/>

¹⁸¹ Jünger, *Über die Linie*, 248.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 249.

into a “nihilistic object” with the appearance of urban mass-parties (*großstädtischer Massenparteien*) that are depicted as passionate and rational.¹⁸⁴ Jünger continues that technology can assist in increasing organization and functionality of these systems.¹⁸⁵ Thus technological ordering plays a key role in the re-organizations of society, as technology in Jünger’s account is an empty canvas that can be given any content.¹⁸⁶

Now, the important question that arises for Jünger, is which kind of societies and nations are more susceptible to nihilism and therefore more likely to harmonize with it. Jünger already argued that nihilism is compatible with a perfectly well organized society, thereby demystifying the notion that chaos is a main constituent for the functionality of nihilism. The question then is whether nihilism is most compatible with a society that has a vast history versus “primitive and uncultivated” nations. Jünger himself designates the topic of nihilism to be *the* issue of the century—whether it is considered actively or passively.¹⁸⁷

In a section crucial for my discussion, Jünger argues that the primitive, centralized (*ungesonderte*), and un-cultivated society is taken more forcefully by nihilism than a society that has history, tradition, and critical ability. (*Das Primitive, das Ungesonderte, Unkultivierte erfaßt er [Nihilismus] mächtiger als die mit Geschichte, mit Tradition und kritischem Vermögen begabte Welt*).¹⁸⁸ This paradigm could be tied to various nations, yet Jünger maintains that the nihilism once adopted by “fresh tribes” asserts itself more forcefully—which is a notable point for the analysis of nihilism and Al-e Ahmad’s interpretation of this text. (*Auf jungen und frischen Stämmen wird er [Nihilismus], falls einmal angenommen, sich stärker durchsetzen*).¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁴ Jünger, *Über die Linie*, 248.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 249.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 252.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 254.

¹⁸⁹ Jünger, *Über die Linie*, 254.

His depiction of *frischen Stämmen* (fresh tribes) could apply to small individual ethnic groups, or larger nations like the United States that have a comparatively short history when put next to nations like Germany— or Iran. For Jünger, once they have come to terms with machine technology, those “primitive” nations will also come to apprehend the nihilistic theory with much zeal or fervor. Moreover, he maintains that an acceptance of machine technology and nihilism operates as a substitute for religion, which has hitherto served as the dominant value system. “*Man wird daher gerade dort auf eine Art von Inbrunst stoßen, mit welcher nicht nur die Maschinentchnik, sondern auch die nihilistische Theorie ergriffen wird. Sie wird zum Religionsersatz.*”¹⁹⁰

Nihilism becoming a substitute for religion is a crucial point for Al-e-Ahmad (and many other Islamic-revivalists), who saw religion as a key component for the mobilization of the masses against the reigning nihilism of Iranians emulating the West. Even though no Western nation is explicitly defined as an example of a “primitive” nation, Jünger’s categories are applicable to various Western countries and their enthusiastic acceptance of technology while coming to terms with nihilism. On the other hand, Jünger sees nations with vast histories and traditions that are much more difficult to automatize.¹⁹¹ The essential issue arises here in how Jünger’s argument on nihilism and its compatibility with various societies was appropriated by Al-e-Ahmad, and how he saw Jünger validating the idea of *Gharbzadegi* for a country like Iran with a long historical and ideological tradition.

In *Gharbzadegi*, Al-e Ahmad argued that the systematic exploitation of Iranian resources had led to the state of technological backwardness in Iran. In contrast, the United States for example constantly furthered its advancement of production technology in order to profit from

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Jünger, *Über die Linie*, 254.

these findings. Iran, as a mere consumer under the reign of the second Shah (1941-79) allowed the United States to use their resources under the deceitful blanket of a liberal tradition and modernity. In the following section I will discuss the *Gharbzadegi* (1962) discourse and its close relation to Jünger's *Über die Linie*. Before setting the stage for Al-e-Ahmad's association with Jünger's work, it will be helpful to note that the notion of *Gharbzadegi*, Weststruckness is described by Iranian studies scholar Hamid Dabashi as the "cornerstone of the eventual Islamist takeover of the of the polyvocal Iranian political discourse in the 1960s, which ultimately resulted in the violent over-Islamization of the 1979 Revolution."¹⁹² Whereas Jünger had no known relation to Islam, his work on nihilism was appropriated by Al-e-Ahmad, which points to the versatility of Jünger's text.

III. The *Gharbzadegi* Discourse and Al-e Ahmad's debt to Ernst Jünger

As mentioned earlier, Al-e Ahmad's critique of Iranian society takes aim at the country's rapid westernization. After the first Pahlavi monarch, Reza Shah (1925-1941), was forced to abdicate in 1941 because of his pro-Nazi sentiments, his son, Mohammad Reza Shah, assumed the throne and attempted to impose his own program of modernization. Debates about the perils of modernization have long been underway. Ahmad Kasravi (1890-1946), "one of the first modern critics of the rise of Europeanism and modernism in Iran"¹⁹³ had written in the 1920s about the palpable loss of religion and morality as a direct consequence of the adoption of modern technology and secularism.¹⁹⁴ But by the beginning of the second Pahlavi's reign there has emerged religious reformists who believed that modernization was possible without a full endorsement of Western values. They maintained that "Islam was fully compatible with

¹⁹² Hamid Dabashi, *Being a Muslim in the World* (Palgrave Macmillan: 2013, New York), 116.

¹⁹³ Katouzian, *The Persians*, 294.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

modernity, science and technology,” and that the use of technology did not necessitate the imitation of “European modes of ethics and social behavior for the sake of modernization and development.”¹⁹⁵

The pace of modernization was increased considerably after a CIA-led coup in 1953 had restored Mohammad Reza Pahlavi to power; apparently securing his position against popular uprisings such as those that surrounded the nationalization of Iranian Oil in 1953. The rapid modernization program of the 1960s and 70s had social and political consequences, such as those described by Farhang Rajaee: “the political landscape of Iran...destroyed its social structure...polarized Iranian society, and encouraged a zero-sum battle of worldviews.”¹⁹⁶

Recognizing the inherent contradictions of the Shah’s system, when Al-e Ahmad was commissioned by the Ministry of Education to write a report on the Iranian education system, he went well beyond the scope of his report and addressed Iran’s near complete surrender to the West.¹⁹⁷ Preceding Edward Said’s influential *Orientalism* by sixteen years, *Gharbzadegi*, argues that Iran has been infected with Western materialism. As poignantly maintained by Iranian studies scholar Mehrzad Boroujerdi, “Al-e Ahmad purported that the West was not just an imperialist entity but also the heart of technological development, which was to be viewed not as mere instrument but as a mode of thought.”¹⁹⁸ It is in the nexus of the relationship between technology and the consequences of its uncritical adoption in Iran that Al-e Ahmad’s understanding and adaptation of Jünger’s ideas can be located.

In his preface to *Gharbzadegi* Al-e-Ahmad refers explicitly to Jünger:

I would like to thank Dr. Mahamud Human, who urged me to see one of the works of the German, Ernst Jünger, a work on nihilism entitled *Über die Linie*. As Dr. Human pointed out,

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Farhang Rajaee, *Islamism and Modernism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007), 93.

¹⁹⁷ See Boroujerdi, *Iranian Intellectuals and the West*, 66.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 70.

Jünger and I were both exploring more or less the same subject, but from two viewpoints. We were addressing the same question, but in two languages.¹⁹⁹

In 1967 with the assistance of Dr. Mahmud Human, Al-e Ahmad translated Jünger's *Über die Linie*. The translation includes a preface in which Al-e Ahmad tackles the following question: "Who is Ernst Jünger?" He states that after translating Jünger's work he saw his work *Gharbzadegi* validated and discovered nihilism to be a complex universal issue.

In my personal opinion, the main point about this book is: all that I had grasped from various sources through my own sharp instinct and perhaps through recollection that had manifested itself in *Gharbzadegi* became very clear to me in this book. I mean that through this book I came to understand that if there is an illness (issue), it is universal, not local, although our variety is of a cancerous nature and is by its very nature philosophical and not emotional. All those who diagnose it are writers who helped me realize that this disease is political and social, not individual.

I should add that my familiarity with Frantz Fanon and other members of this tribe came later. Let me state it more clearly: what was hidden even to me in the kernel of the idea that appeared in *Gharbzadegi* was revealed to me after the translation of this book came to light. If I agreed to its publication it is because I felt reassured by reading this book.

I saw in *Obour Az Khat (Über die Linie)* all the denial of values, discrediting of cultures, and rootlessness of the individual—with all their consequences, all the hope they engender and that in accordance with the law of internal paradoxes of phenomena that dictate that like water in a fountain, whatever goes up must come down—ten times more painfully illustrated in *Obour az Khat*²⁰⁰

Linking his own metaphor of disease to ideas propounded by Jünger and Fanon, Al-e Ahmad aligns himself with movements of ideas in which he places his own contribution. Concerned about identifying with thinkers with tainted reputations, he is quick to point out: "In 1933 he [Jünger] was appointed as a member of the German Academy of Language and Literature which he declined to accept, because he did not wish to cooperate with the Nazi regime."²⁰¹

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 25.

²⁰⁰ Original Document *Obour-az-Khat* is in possession of the author. The translation has also been done by the author in collaboration with Prof. Nasrin Rahimieh (University of California, Irvine), 14-15.

²⁰¹ *Obour-az-Khat*, 17.

The first chapter of the translation is entitled “Forecast,” and includes the first four sections of Jünger’s essay. Interestingly, Al-e Ahmad took the liberty of dividing Jünger’s text into three different chapters. Jointly translated by Al-e Ahmad and Dr. Human, the first two chapters were published in the influential Iranian newspaper *Keyhan*. The second chapter “Identification”, includes sections five to seven of Jünger’s essay. Dr. Human was the sole translator of the third chapter, “Treatment,” that encompassed sections five to seven of Jünger’s essay. Because *Keyhan* had stopped their translation, this chapter did not appear in the daily. The very re-organization of the original chapters indicates Al-e Ahmad’s role in selecting how Jünger’s work is presented in Persian.

Although Al-e Ahmad and Human’s translation of Jünger’s text remains mostly faithful to the original German, it introduces differences in their respective understandings of nihilism. For example, in section seven of Jünger’s original text, he declares organization in an abstract form as a useful basis for the transformation of Nihilism towards its goals.

Vorausgesetzt wird lediglich, daß die Ordnung abstrakt sei und also geistig—hierher gehört in erster Linie der durchgebildete Staat mit seinen Beamten und Apparturen, und das vor allem zu einem Zeitpunkt, an dem die tragenden Ideen mit ihrem Nomos und Ethos verloren gegangen oder in Verfall geraten sind, obwohl sie vielleicht in Vordergrunde in erhöhter Sichtbarkeit fortleben.²⁰²

Jünger builds on the argument of the compatibility of nihilism with abstractly organized systems and lists their conditions. He includes a trained state with all its functions whose ideology and ethical dimensions are lost at some point. Yet, the state, and its “ideals” continue to remain at the forefront at an increased visibility. And at that point, Jünger argues, journalists further ensure the upholding of this process as a form of depicting history (*Geschichtsbeschreibung*). Later, Jünger specifically asserts that nations with shorter histories and less tradition are more susceptible to

²⁰² Jünger, *Über die Linie*, 247-248.

the absolute reign of nihilism. It is interesting to note how differently Al-e-Ahmad and Human interpret this section. Their translation reads:

In the first place, it should be said that an established government with all its employees and expenditures serves as a sort of an individual extensive system. With characteristics that are formed during the time when the ideals that moved society, regardless of their contents, are gone or are driven to corruption. Although all these ideals are showing up as lively and robust.²⁰³

Al-e-Ahmad and Human use Jünger's notion about the abstraction of order to bring home a point very dear to Al-e Ahmad, namely the consistent exploitation of third world countries by powerful and automatized nations characteristic of capitalist economies that disguise their exploitation of the Third World as a civilizing mission. What is even more telling in this regard is an interpolation that he adds to this section. He writes: "Let us give an example: a colonial government which is based on private interests of companies and despite all its claims for humanistic, civilized, and religious aims is above all concerned about its company shares in the market."²⁰⁴ Al-e-Ahmad argues here that governments work under a false mantle of pretensions made possible by the fact that the organization entailed in nihilistic societies are abstract. This abstraction makes it possible to carry out official policy while pursuing a different set of goals at the same time. The characteristics of this sort of government are malleable and are driven to corruption even though they might show up as robust and lively on the outside.

This vivid example of Al-e-Ahmad's appropriation of Jünger's text is illuminating in terms of his fascination with Jünger's analysis of nihilism. Whereas there are undeniable similarities between Al-e-Ahmad's depiction of Westoxication and Jünger's portrayal of nihilism there are substantial differences as well. It is probable that Al-e-Ahmad wanted to force his own concept of *Gharbzadegi* to be in accordance with Jünger's depiction of nihilism. Another point of interest to both authors is the vehemence with which nihilism is capable of taking over a

²⁰³ *Obour-az-Khat*, 40-41.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 42.

country. As previously mentioned, Jünger argues that nations with shorter histories are taken more forcefully by nihilism while Al-e Ahmad readily concurs that newly formed states are the primary recipient of this phenomenon. The final section of this chapter will address Iran's search for an alternative to the rapid emergence of technology by looking towards an authentic solution towards reconciliation.

IV. Iran's quest for an *authentic* alternative to the "new God" of technology

Al-e-Ahmad was concerned with the exploitation of third world nations by fully automatized Western countries. Therefore one of the questions that came to the foreground was how to consolidate technology with the national ethos of his country. According to Bouroujerdi, "Al-e-Ahmad maintained that technology did not allow for an equal exchange among nations because some were exporters of it while others were its importers; some were producers of machinery while others were mere consumer of it."²⁰⁵ Consequently, for Al-e-Ahmad it is Islam, and specifically Shi'ism that held the key to transforming Iranian society back to its authentic state while negotiating with technology. Vital to Al-e-Ahmad's depiction of a decaying Western-influenced Iranian society was the loss of national identity. Like Jünger, Al-e Ahmad was most critical of an alienation from core values, resulting in the disintegration of all values and "follow[ing] Western procedures to solve every problem."²⁰⁶ Iranian studies scholar Behrooz G. Tabrizi reminds us that Al-e-Ahmad "presented the concept of *gharbzadegi* in relation to the destruction wrought by colonialism."²⁰⁷ The result of an increased Westernization or colonialism was a continuous isolation from core national values. The estrangement from core national

²⁰⁵ Bouroujerdi, *Iranian Intellectuals and the West*, 70.

²⁰⁶ Al-e Ahmad, *Weststruckness [Gharbzadegi]*, 59.

²⁰⁷ Behrooz Ghamari-Tabrizi, *Islam & Dissent in Postrevolutionary Iran* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2008), 181.

values demanded a rethinking of the relationship between man and technology for both Al-e Ahmad and Jünger.

At this point I would like to follow another major point of Jünger's argument as laid out in *Über die Linie* for the Iranian framework by considering Al-e Ahmad's translation. I am suggesting an alternative reasoning for Iran's rejection of an imported modernity based on Al-e Ahmad's interpretation of Jünger's text. Al-e Ahmad, maintains that the nihilism that took over some countries with relatively short histories, was incompatible for Iran due to its long history and tradition. Could core Iranian values (Shi'ism) gradually be replaced by an alternative (nihilism) in the process of modernization? Ninety percent of Iranians identify with Shi'ism, making it a crucial segment of the Iranian values system. Considering the overwhelmingly religious nature of the Iranian Revolution it is fair to assume that a devaluation of all values as defined by Jünger was interrupted by the Islamic revolution?

Al-e-Ahmad, attempting to explain the discordancy between technology and ideology and tradition declared "at the beginning of the Constitutional Revolution (1905-07) that the god of technology...could no longer tolerate any other god..."²⁰⁸ The new god of technology was threatening to replace the religious god. But did the god of technology, which Al-e Ahmad saw as so closely tied to the West, also succeed in automatizing Iran? The Iranian Shi'ite value system was strongly tied to the spiritual ethos of the nation, refusing a devaluation of all values in the Nietzschean sense. Nietzsche's connection to Islam is limited to his own interpretation of various aspects of the religion; yet the focus on Nietzsche's devaluation of all values relates to nihilism and Jünger's reading thereof. This refusal of a reduction of Shi'ite values meant that the new god of technology was reprovved in Iran—at least for the time being. We can therefore assert

²⁰⁸ Al-e Ahmad, *Weststruckness* [Gharbzadegi], 61.

that a rapidly developing modernity threatened all gradients of Iranian tradition and culture, and was redirected by an explicitly religious revolution.

According to Al-e Ahmad, his text was equal to Jünger's in that they both explored the same larger topic, namely how one can overcome a phase of nihilism, as well as how to consolidate this overcoming. How to overcome, while struggling with technology's frighteningly rapid pace? Al-e-Ahmad was realistic in depicting *Gharbzadegi's* position in regards to Iranian history, as the "characteristic of a period of our history when we have not yet conquered the machine and do not understand the secrets of its configuration and structure."²⁰⁹ The main reason for this being that Iranians at the time were only consumers of technology instead of producers. As consumers, Iranians were slaves to technology and could not engage with it as demanded by Jünger. Jünger's *Über die Linie* suggested that countries with vast histories could not be as forcefully taken by nihilism. Could the vastness of Iranian history and culture serve as a clue behind the asymmetrical relationship to technology? Technology was viewed as a Western tool for Iranian exploitation, instead of being realized as a new order of organization, as in Jünger's view.

Al-e-Ahmad did recognize that a takeover by technology was unstoppable, rightfully affirming that the "inundation of the world by machines is a historical inevitability."²¹⁰ Yet, he emphasizes the importance of the Iranian reaction to this inevitable omnipresence of machines. Al-e-Ahmad blamed Iran's distorted relationship with technology on its close association with Western modernity, arguing " [t]hese things, of themselves, make it necessary for us to adapt ourselves, our government, our culture, and our daily lives to the pattern of machines," thus

²⁰⁹ Farzin Vahdat, "Return to Which Self? Jalal Al-e-Ahmad and the Discourse of Modernity." *Journal of Iranian Research and Analysis* 16.2 (2000), 62.

²¹⁰ See Lloyd Ridgeon, *Religion and Politics in Modern Iran* (New York: I.B Tauris, 2005), 169.

looking towards a solution that involved a re-thinking of technology.²¹¹ While he asked for a consolidation with technology, Iran's rejection of certain Western ideals imposed by the Shah should be discarded, and people who emulated this decadent Western style were *Gharbzadeh* or Westernstruck, according to Al-e Ahmad. Even though Al-e Ahmad acknowledges technology's coming position as the "new God" he concretely rejects this idea for Iran, with its vast history and culture. Al-e Ahmad does not want Iran to stand in for the spread of colonialism that is closely tied to Christianity and be open for "the Western industry's search for markets."²¹²

Another footnote in Al-e-Ahmad's translation of *Über die Linie* gives us more insight as to his appropriation of Jünger's text and his reading thereof. Al-e-Ahmad states: "Nihilism in countries with old histories are bound to end. This is a matter of joy that in case of Iran this will finally take place."²¹³ Is Al-e-Ahmad foreboding the end of nihilism in Iran that is so closely associated with the West? Whereas we cannot say for certain if this is what he was pointing to, we can assert that Al-e-Ahmad viewed Jünger's description of fresher nations being more forcefully taken by nihilism and a related automatization to not apply to Iran.

The main characteristic of nihilism, a reduction of all values until a zero-point is reached (and eventually surpassed) did not occur in Iran. The reduction of all values that seemed to have happened organically in parts of the Western world, initiated a call to halt by Iranian intellectuals who feared Iran's gradient of history and culture would be robbed by the direction the nation was taking. The "new God" of technology was too closely associated with the West as its producer, leading to a categorical rejection by Iranians who were increasingly becoming aware of the exploitative nature of the Western world and its nihilistic core. Since a reduction of all values did not occur in Iran, because Islamic values and traditions were too deeply embedded into the

²¹¹ See Lloyd Ridgeon, *Religion and Politics in Modern Iran*, 169.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 172.

²¹³ *Obour-az-Khat*, 58.

countries foundation, a blossoming of nihilism in Iran was hindered by its history. Al-e-Ahmad wanted technology but he wanted it to exist in congruence with the Iranian spirit, as widely removed from the Western instruction handbook on technology as possible in order to confront modernity *authentically*.

Germany and Iran represent different historical cases, but there are many commonalities to be drawn from identifying a mutual enemy in the form of a nihilistic West. An aspirational cultural authenticity in both nations was also closely associated with a desire for self-determination from the *West*. Not only was the West and its liberalism seen as a threat towards the cultural gradients of both respective nations, there was also a fear that the West could prescribe the cultural development of two nations with great histories. Of course the West cannot be reduced to nihilism and technology, yet the treatment of technology serves as an excellent indicator in understanding both Germany and Iran's relationship with the West.

Gharbzadegi articulated Iran's political, economic, social, and cultural dependence on the West and, even more importantly, questioned Iranians' willing surrender of their own traditions and cultural practices in favor of their Western counterparts. Ali Mirsepassi puts the importance of the *Gharbazadegi* discourse as the following: "It rearticulated the dilemma of Iranian intellectuals...in terms of an essential choice between cultural authenticity, or 'return to the self', and subservience to the West, or 'rootlessness'."²¹⁴ A reworking of Martin Heidegger's philosophy played an important part in the construction of the notion of *Gharbzadegi*. Heidegger's ideas were mainly conveyed to both Al-e Ahmad and other Iranian intellectuals through the divisive character of Ahmad Fardid (1909-1994).

²¹⁴ Ibid.,120.

Fardid has been credited with coining the term *Gharbzadegi* and communicating it to Al-e Ahmad. Educated in both Iran and Europe, Fardid soon established himself as an influential authority on Heidegger in Iran while teaching philosophy at the University of Tehran. He rarely published anything and instead had organized a group of “Iranian Heideggerians” in the 1970s. According to one of its prominent participants, Dariush Shayegan, the group met to explore “conflicts between modernity and tradition, absolutism and democracy, liberalism and communism.”²¹⁵ More importantly, Shayegan argues that Fardid would use Heidegger’s ideas “to serve his own interest and draw far-fetched conclusions.”²¹⁶ Despite Fardid’s own interpretation of Heidegger, his philosophical framework stayed faithful to Heidegger’s account of a decline of the West, although being entangled in the “Western” tradition himself. While Heidegger looked towards the Greeks for a re-evaluation of one’s *being*, Fardid insists that the origin of humanities authentic spiritual experience is only to be found in the Orient (Islam). Iranian scholar Ali Mirsepassi points out that “Fardid’s modifications transfer the role of the ‘spiritual nation in the middle’ from Germany to Iran.”²¹⁷ Fardid essentially transferred the Heideggerian framework of an inauthentic West over to the Orient, in order to strengthen his argument that Iran has to find its own authentic resolution in dealing with a dysfunctional West.

Gharbzadegi was not only widely discussed within Iranian intellectual circles but was also used as a pejorative term to criticize imported Western culture.²¹⁸ Nevertheless, it was Al-e Ahmad that popularized this term with his etiological treatise. Al-e Ahmad’s thesis in *Gharbzadegi* argues “we’ve [Iranians] not been able to retain our own cultural/historical

²¹⁵ Dariush Shayegan, “Heidegger en Iran,” *Le Portique*, June 15, 2009, <http://leportique.revues.org/index817.html>. Translated from French into English by Sonia Suvelor Sabardin.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Mirsepassi, *Political Islam*, 119.

²¹⁸ According to Homa Katouzian, “the term *gharbzadegi* which Al-e-Ahmad had used to attack the cultural and politico-economic influence of the West, became everyday words used by members of virtually all classes to denounce state projects and decisions as well as anyone or anything they did not like” *The Persians*, 292.

personality during our encounter with machines and in the face of their inevitable assault.”²¹⁹ Al-e Ahmad was mainly attached to a tradition of Islamic revivalism, and Third Worldism (via Frantz Fanon) that critiques the gap in development between First and the Third World.

²¹⁹ Al-e Ahmad, *Gharbzadegi*, 16.

V. Concluding remarks on Jünger and Al-e-Ahmad

The goal of this chapter was to show the intellectual indebtedness of Al-e Ahmad to Jünger, mainly by tracing the appropriation of Jünger's text, in the context of nihilism and its relation to the West. The common atmosphere of a refusal to be part of a larger Western ideology was a shared point of critique for both authors in two opposite sites in the world. Jünger's ideas after the First World War were often in favor of a mobilization of the nation toward a *Volk* ethos that was not destined to follow the path of the victors of the Great War, but to go its own (third) way. The pre-World War Two Jünger was notably different in his views on the West and the inescapable nihilism attached to its "progress." Al-e Ahmad, who was aware of Jünger's other writings as indicated in his chapter on "Who is Ernst Jünger", chose to translate the essay *Über die Linie* because he felt his own seminal *Gharbzadegi* was validated by Jünger's words. Al-e-Ahmad might have been too quick to correlate Iran's complex relationship to the West by engaging Jünger's essay, which was likely addressing Germany's post-World War Two struggles rather than attempting to construct a universal paradigm on nihilism. Nevertheless, *Über die Linie* was pregnant enough for Al-e-Ahmad to draw the conclusion that the automatization of nations and a surface functionality are means to cover a continuous exploitation of third world countries. Yet for Jünger it was certain that the automatization of nations was related to the fact that chaos is not a primary characteristic of nihilistic governments, rather they function well on the surface despite their moral decay. It is not surprising that Al-e Ahmad interpreted this section of Jünger's essay so as to justify his correlation of nihilism with the exploitative practices of Western nations in third world countries. Both authors were skeptical towards the Western tradition originating with the Enlightenment era that took a catastrophic turn in World War Two. But their interpretations of nihilism must have been different. Where Jünger was searching for a

more philosophical definition of nihilism and its consequences, Al-e Ahmad's' rigorous attempts at finding a culprit for the ails of Iran made him point the finger at a nihilistic West.

Nevertheless, Jünger's proposed paradigm that nations with shorter histories will be taken more forcefully by nihilism than countries with longer traditions poses a conundrum. If we follow De Benoist's argument that Jünger was likely referring to Nazi Germany when addressing nihilism and its potential for organization, then this would not be in accordance with Jünger's own description of nihilism overtaking nations with shorter traditions more forcefully.

Germany's long history would not qualify as an uncultivated (*Unkultiviert*) nation, as depicted by Jünger. This difficulty might point towards the universality of Jünger's central text on nihilism, which could be read in various ways. For Al-e Ahmad, the decadence of the West and its rootlessness were too dominant to gauge another totalitarian aspect in Jünger's writing on nihilism. He only knew that a country like Iran with its history should not emulate a Western culture that appeared so foreign to a nation that ultimately proved to be more religious at its core than ready to whole heartedly embrace a Western culture so desperately sought by the Pahlavi dynasty.

Besides identifying the West and its liberal democratic façade as the boogeyman for the Germans before the Second World War, and Iranians in the decades before the Islamic Revolution of 1979, the quest for an *authentic* alternative is what connected both nations. Germany's experimentation with authentic nationalism as an alternative to liberalism led to a totalitarian Nazi state, one that changed modern history. Iran's authentic road led them back to political Islam (Shi'ism), arguably the dominant spiritual kernel of its nation's history and culture. The *leitmotif* of the Iranian revolution and its theological-nationalist theme, in contrast to a liberal cosmopolitan western society, constitutes the overwhelming grand narrative of the 21st

Century. The quest for an alternative to the dominant liberal-democratic politics of the Western world will continue to animate nations insisting on an authentic form of futurity.

Bibliography

- Ahmadi, Ghazal. *Iran als Spielball der Mächte?* (Frankfurt a.M: Peter Lang, 2011).
- Al-e-Ahmad, Jalal. Original Document *Obour-az-Khat* is in possession of the author. The translation has also been done by the author in collaboration with Prof. Nasrin Rahimieh (University of California, Irvine)
- Arvidsson, Stefan. *Aryan Idols: Indo-European Mythology as Ideology and Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).
- Boroujerdi, Mehrzad. *Iranian Intellectuals and the West: the Tormented Triumph of Nativism* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996).
- Chickering, Roger. *Imperial Germany and The Great War, 1914-1918*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 3 Ed., 2014).
- Dabashi, Hamid. *Being a Muslim in the World* (Palgrave Macmillan: 2013, New York).
- de Benoist, Alain. "Jünger, Heidegger, &Nihilism," *Counter Currents Publishing*, July 5, 2010, <http://www.counter-currents.com/2010/07/junger-heidegger-nihilism/>
- Gehrke, Ulrich. *Persien in der Deutschen Orientpolitik: während des Ersten Weltkrieges Bd.1-2* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1974).
- Ghahari, Keivandokht. *Nationalismus und Modernismus in Iran in der Periode zwischen dem Zerfall der Qagaren-Dynastie und der Machtfestigung Reza Schahs* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2001)
- Ghamari-Tabrizi, Behrooz. *Islam & Dissent in Postrevolutionary Iran* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2008).
- Gheissari, Ali. *Iranian Intellectuals in the 20th Century* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998)
- Griffin, Roger, *Modernism and Fascism*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).
- Hamann, Otto. *Deutsche Weltpolitik, 1890-1912* (Berlin: R. Hobbing, 1925).
- Herf, Jeffrey. *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).
- Hirschfeld, Yair P. *Deutschland und Iran im Spielfeld der Mächte-Internationale Beziehungen unter Reza Schah 1921-1941* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1979).
- Itscherenska, Ilse. „Heydar Han, Das Berliner Persische Komitee und die Deutsches. *Interkulturelle Begegnungen im Ersten Weltkrieg*,“ In Gerhard Höpp and Brigitte Reinwald's, *Fremdeinsätze. Afrikaner und Asianten in europäischen Kriegen, 1914-1945*. (Berlin: Verlag

Das Arabische Buch 2000. Zentrum Moderner Orient. Studies 13), 58, accessed May 5th, 2014, <http://www.zmo.de/publikationen/studien13.pdf>

Jünger, Ernst. *Der Friede* (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag, 1965).

Jünger, Ernst. *Politische Publizistik 1919 Bis 1933* (Stuttgart: Kletta-Cotta, 2001).

Jünger, Ernst. *Über die Linie, in: Anteile, Martin Heidegger zum 60 Geburtstag* (Frankfurt a.M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1950).

Katouzian, Homa. *The Persians: Ancient, Mediaeval and Modern Iran*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009)

Kazemzadeh's, Firuz. *Russia and Britain in Persia 1864-1914* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968)

Kermani, Aqa Khan. Encyclopedia Iranica. <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/aqa-khan-kermani-iranian-writer-and-intellectual-d-1896>.

Khatib-Shahidi, Rashid. *German Foreign Policy Towards Iran Before World War II: Political Relations, Economic Influence and the National Bank of Persia* (New York: I.B Tauris, 2013).

Kiesel, Helmuth. *Ernst Jünger Die Biographie* (München: Pantheon, 2009).

Klosterhuis, Jürgen. *Friedliche Imperialisten. Deutsche Auslandsvereine und auswärtige Kulturpolitik, 1906-1918, 2 Bde.* (Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 1994)

Küntzel, Matthias. *Die Deutschen und der Iran: Geschichte und Gegenwart einer verhängnisvollen Freundschaft* (Berlin: Wolf Jobst Siedler Verlag, 2009).

Lenczowski, George. *Russia and the West in Iran 1918-1948* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1968).

Madani, Djalal. *Iranische Politik und Drittes Reich* (Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang Verlag, 1986).

Mahrad, Ahmad. *Das Schicksal jüdischer Iraner in den vom nationalsozialistischen Deutschen Reich eroberten europäischen Gebieten* (Den Haag: Iranisches Jahrbuch, 1975/76).

Mahrad, Ahmad. *Die deutsche Penetration pacifique des iranischen Pressewesens 1909-1936* (Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 1983)

Mahrad, Ahmad. *Die deutsch-persischen Beziehungen von 1918-1933* (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang Verlag, 1974)

Afshin Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran: Culture, Power, and the State, 1870-1940* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008).

- Marchand, Suzanne. *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, race, and Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
- Martin, Bedford. G. *German Persian Diplomatic Relations 1873-1912* (The Hague: Mouton & Co – 'S-Gravenhage, 1959).
- McGetchin, Douglas T. *Indology, Indomania, and Orientalism: Ancient India's Rebirth in Modern Germany*. (Danvers, MA: Rosemond Publishing, 2009).
- Mirsepasi, Ali. *Political Islam, Iran, and the Enlightenment: Philosophies of Hope and Despair* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
- Mohler, Armin. & Weissmann, Karlheinz. *Die Konservative Revolution in Deutschland 1918-1932* (Graz: Ares Verlag, 2005).
- Mokhtari, Fariborz. *In The Lion's Shadow: The Iranian Schindler and his Homeland in the Second World War*. (Stroud, Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2011).
- Motadel, David. ed., *Perceptions of Iran: History, Myths and Nationalism From Medieval Persia to the Islamic Republic* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2014).
- Nirumand, Bahman & Yonan, Gabriele. *Iraner in Berlin* (Berlin: Die Ausländerbeauftragte des Senats, 1994).
- O'Sullivan, Adrian. *Nazi Secret Warfare in Persia (Iran): The Failure of the German Intelligence Services, 1939-1945* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014).
- Osayimwese, Itohan I. "Colonialism at the Center: German Colonial Architecture and the Design Reform Movement, 1828-1914" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2008).
- Rajaei, Farhang. *Islamism and Modernism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007).
- Rezun, Miron. *The Soviet Union and Iran* (Genève: Sijthoff & Noordhoff Publisher, 1981).
- Ridgeon, Lloyd. *Religion and Politics in Modern Iran* (New York: I.B Tauris, 2005).
- Shayegan, Daryush. "Heidegger en Iran," *Le Portique*, June 15, 2009, <http://leportique.revues.org/index817.html>. Translated from French into English by Sonia Suvelor Sabardin
- Weller, Shane. *Modernism and Nihilism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011)
- Vahdat, Farzin. "Return to Which Self? Jalal Al-e-Ahmad and the Discourse of Modernity." *Journal of Iranian Research and Analysis* 16.2 (2000).

Vatandoust, Gholamreza. “*Sayyid Hasan Taqizadeh & Kaveh: Modernism in Post-Constitutional Iran (1916-1921)*” (PhD diss., University of Washington, 1977).

Zia-Ebrahimi, Reza. *The Emergence of Iranian Nationalism: Race and the Politics of Dislocation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

Zia-Ebrahimi, Reza. “Self-Orientalization and Dislocation: The Uses and Abuses of the “Aryan” Discourse in Iran,” *Journal of The International Society for Iranian Studies* 44 (July 2011): 461.

Stanford Hoover Institute and German Foreign Ministry Archival Documents

Deutsche Wissenschaftliche Bibliothek” a present from Nazi-Germany to Iran, August 1939, Document Nr. 142557, Hoover Institute, Stanford University, Palo Alto, California.

Taqizadeh Report, ID Nr. R21037, Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry, Berlin

Letter from Oskar Mann to the German Foreign Ministry, December 12, 1915, R 19113, Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry, Berlin.

Letter from W. Haas to the German Foreign Ministry, November 18, 1919, A 29855, Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry, Berlin.

DPG publication pamphlet entitled, *Mitteilungen*, August 1, 1919, R 60447, Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry, Berlin.

German Dipomat Vicco v. Bülow-Schwante letter to the German Foreign Ministry, September 23, 1935, L 316537; L 316538; L 316539, Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry, Berlin.

Telegram titled: “Jüdische Zeitung” ‘La Bourse Egyptienne’, June 15, 1936, Document Nr. 000072, Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry, Berlin.

Express Letter to multiple recipients, June 20, 1936, Document Nr. 00086, File R 99174 labeled: “*Zugehörigkeit der Ägypter, Iraker, Iraner Perser und Türken zur arabischen Rasse. Vom 1936 bis 1940*, Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry

German Foreign Ministry letter to the German Embassy in Tehran, July 11, 1936, Document Nr. 000066, File R 99174, Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry, Berlin.

Letter from the German embassy in Tehran to the German Foreign Ministry, July 18, 1936, Unidentifiable Document Nr., File R 99174 case file, Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry.

Note from Smend to German Foreign Ministry in regards to Iran’s Relationship to Germany, January 22, 1938, R 435771, Pol. VII, 8, Bd. 1, 435771, Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry, Berlin

Erwin Ettel Note send to German Foreign Ministry from German Embassy in Tehran in regards to Iran's relationship to Germany, May 19, 1949, R 435836, Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry.

Note on Iran, January 2, 1942, E 233101, special file labeled: Pol.Arch. kult. Pol-Geheim, Orient, Juden um Roosevelt 1941-42, Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry, Berlin.

Note on Iran, January 8, 1942, E 233108, special file labeled: Pol.Arch. kult. Pol-Geheim, Orient, Juden um Roosevelt 1941-42, Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry, Berlin.

Note on Iran, January 16, 1942, E 233108- E 233101, special file labeled: Pol.Arch. kult. Pol-Geheim, Orient, Juden um Roosevelt 1941-42, Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry, Berlin

Note on Iran, Jan 2,1942, E 233100, special file labeled: Pol.Arch. kult. Pol-Geheim, Orient, Juden um Roosevelt 1941-42, Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry, Berlin.

Note on Iran, Jan. 2, 1942, E 233102/3, special file labeled: Pol.Arch. kult. Pol-Geheim, Orient, Juden um Roosevelt 1941-42, Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry

Note on Iran labeled Political Relationship between Iran and Germany, 1939, B 395/39, File: Pol. VII, Bd.1, II 739, Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry, Berlin.

Note on Iran labeled Political Relationship between Iran and Germany, 1939, B 395/39, File: Pol. VII, Bd.1, II 739, Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry, Berlin.

Note on Iran, Jan 2,1941-42, E 233108, special file labeled: Pol.Arch. kult. Pol-Geheim, Orient, Juden um Roosevelt 1941-42, Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry.

Note on Iran labeled Political Relationship between Iran and Germany, August 29,1939, N.B 1309, File: Pol. VII, Bd.1, II 739, Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry.

Note from German Military Attaché in Tehran, November 8, Mil. Arch. Wi/II A 6,5, Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry.

From *Kulturarbeit* to *Gharbzadegi*: A Genealogy of German Ideological Interaction with Iranian Nationalism in the 20th Century