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## **The Austrian Decade in Persia: An evaluation of Austro-Hungarian influence in Qajar Persia in the late 19th century**

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# THE AUSTRIAN DECADE IN PERSIA

AN EVALUATION OF AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN INFLUENCE IN  
QAJAR PERSIA IN THE LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

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Für Mama, Papa, Philipp, Anton und Saint für eure ständige Unterstützung und unablässige Ermunterung.

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## Qajar Persia and Austria

When the Qajar Shahs in Persia eventually got dethroned at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, they left a country in turmoil and uncertainty. Much like the state of the government, the army needed to improve. There were only remnants left of what was intended to become one of the most powerful armies in the Middle East and an army able to fend off Russian and British pressure or aggression; some of these remnants were about 60 Uchatius and 30 Schneider-Creusot guns manufactured in Austria in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup> Even though this seemingly irrelevant army equipment relied on confiscation of public horses to be operated and was in a petty state, those guns were amongst the last surviving signs of big Persian and Austro-Hungarian alliance plans in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the previous Austro-Hungarian try to become a significant player in the Great Game of the Middle East. They were sold to Persia in 1878 as part of a more substantial deal that was aimed towards modernisation of the Imperial army, which also included the deployment of Austrian officers and soldiers to train Persian regiments and to strengthen Persia's ability to defend itself against the growing pressure of Imperial powers in its vicinity. The Austrians didn't only send a military mission to Persia. Still, they tried to reform the Persian post and coinage system, but much like the military mission the Austrians sent to Persia, despite being supported by Shah Nasr ad-Din Shah, hit many roadblocks like internal quarrels and court intrigues against them in Teheran but also cultural differences they couldn't surpass.<sup>2</sup> Despite these, in the end, unsuccessful tries, it has to be said that Austria-Hungary enjoyed a great deal of influence in Persia in the years between 1870 and 1890, partly because there were so many intergovernmental treaties signed and Austria invested quite some resources in making Persia more resilient during this time, but also because many Austrian individuals enjoyed great respect in Persia and some even worked for the Shah but also had close links to the Austrian government in Vienna, like the explorer and first European to be named Khan, Albert Gasteiger, or the personal doctor of Shah Nasr ad-Din Jacob Eduard Polak.

In modern historical science, this period of Austrian presence in Persia is often overlooked, which most certainly is a result of the very young research on external Austrian colonialism and the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Austria-Hungary, and its successor states were generally seen as

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<sup>1</sup> G. H. Arfa, *Under Five Shahs* (London, 1965), 50.

<sup>2</sup> Helmut Slaby, *Bindenschild und Sonnenlöwe: Die Geschichte der Österreichisch-iranischen Beziehungen bis zur Gegenwart*. Sitzungsberichte / Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse Veröffentlichungen zur Iranistik 42 (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2010), 112–206.

free from colonial guilt, since the monarchy had never owned extensive territorial possessions overseas like many other European powers at the time did. A lasting clash between interior problems in a multiethnic state, political unwillingness and essentially no support for individual explorers and colonisers resulted in a few unsuccessful, partly purely private, tries to obtain areas around the world and participate in the age of colonisation. A notable example of this would be the foundation of the Trieste company, a mercantile company in the style of the Dutch VOC, in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, which was dissolved only a few years later or the occupation of a few Andaman Islands for a brief period in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. For the better part of the 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century, Austrian colonialism stayed a mere anecdote in historiography, a topic seen as not worth looking into more; this narrative was embraced after the Second World War by the newly formed 2<sup>nd</sup> Austrian Republic, which didn't want any connections to a colonial past and all the potential troubles that could come with it.<sup>3</sup> Research hence focused on other topics, mainly the multi-ethnic empire and possible internal colonialism and, interestingly, on the potential role of the Condominium of Bosnia – Herzegovina as the “only” Habsburg colony, but this also means research on Austrian colonial efforts outside of Europe is scarce and very much incomplete. A notable exemption is Alexander Randa's book “Österreich in Übersee” from 1966, which can be seen as the first spark of interest in how Austria acted outside of Europe in its history. Unfortunately, the book is short and lacks a deeper analysis of Austria's role in colonialism.

From the year 2000 on, things changed. Austrian historians began to look at a potential colonial past, a leading role in this plays Walter Sauer of the University of Vienna published an article about the need to look at Austria-Hungary's behaviour in colonial questions again and argues that simply not having territorial colonies doesn't necessarily exempt a country from acting as a colonial power by for example exerting force in foreign regions.<sup>4</sup> Even though research nowadays still seems to focus more on “internal colonialism” in Austria, a trend has begun to show itself in Europe that appears to acclaim that research on colonialism is also justified in and about countries that never owned territorial colonies, as one can see in the Swiss publication ‘Colonialism without Colonies’” by Purtschert, Falk and Lüthi.<sup>5</sup> It seems evident that we are at the doorstep of a new chapter in research on colonialism in Austria.

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<sup>3</sup> Walter Sauer, “Habsburg Colonial: Austria-Hungary's Role in European Overseas Expansion Reconsidered,” *Austrian Studies* 20 (2012), 5, here 5–7.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Barbara Lüthi, Francesca Falk, and Patricia Purtschert, “Colonialism without colonies: examining blank spaces in colonial studies,” *National Identities* 18, no. 1 (2016), 1–9.

This thesis aims to add to this very young but blossoming research by connecting the ties between the extensive Austrian presence in Persia in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and possible colonial or hegemonical motives behind this, and that the Imperial government and the Austrians in Persia at the time did add to this in their ways. Earlier publications about the international relations between Austria and Persia, like Helmut Slaby's "Bindenschild und Sonnenlöwe" from 1982, imply that Austrian researchers and diplomats were the most neutral, humane, and generous among the European great powers. In contrast, the others fought for influence and diplomatic importance in the country; this view can be seen as outdated and needs to be put into perspective. It has to be noted that besides Slaby's work, there's one more chapter about Austro-Persian relations in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that uses the example of the extensive Austrian influence in Persia to showcase an account of the possible inefficiency of European led reform movements in influenced territories but also the wishes of local leaders to import progress. This chapter showcases the problems the reforms encountered and eventually led to a subpar outcome of modernisation attempts.<sup>6</sup>

To prove that the Austro-Hungarian empire tried to and to some extent did influence the Persian politics of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in many areas like militaristic-diplomatic politics, cultural-institutional and also in modernisation and reorganisation this thesis will examine the documents on Persia of the Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv from 1878 to 1885, which signify the bulk of essential diplomatic correspondence between the 1873 founded Imperial embassy in Teheran and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Vienna. Additionally, sources like the correspondence of Albert Gasteiger Khan, an Austrian diplomat and at the same time close advisor to the Persian Shah and singular reports concerning Austrian soldiers of the military mission like Blasius Schemua<sup>7</sup> will be looked at as much as the accounts of the Persian Shah Nasr-ad Din Shah and his diary from 1873. This correspondence, as well as the edited personal accounts of Austrian officials in Persia, will enable us to see connections between the Austrian presence in Persia and the usage of power in a colonial way and add a case study to Wolfgang Sauer's thoughts about a re-evaluation of colonial thinking in and about Austria and hopefully spark more interest in the research on possible colonial powers without territorial colonies.

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<sup>6</sup> Karl Kadletz, "Staatlichkeit und Soziale Transformation. Reformwünsche und Reformwirklichkeit: Modernisierungsversuche Persiens mit österreichischer Hilfe durch Nāṣer od-Dīn Šāh," in *Europäisierung der Erde?: Studien zur Einwirkung Europas auf die aussereuropäische Welt / herausgegeben von Grete Klingenstein, Heinrich Lutz, Gerald Stourzh*, ed. Grete Klingenstein, Heinrich Lutz, and Gerald Stourzh. Wiener Beiträge zur Geschichte der Neuzeit Bd.7 (Wien: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik, 1980), 147–173.

<sup>7</sup> Karin Kren, ""Aber ich versichere Ihnen, das war ein großer Sieg" Der Kriegszug des Persischen Reiches gegen Scheich 'Ubaidallāh im Jahre 1880 — nach dem Operations journal des österreichischen Leutnants Blasius Schemua," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 87 (1997), 111–152.

## The definition of Colonialism and its ties to Austria-Hungary

Colonialism is very present in modern society. We ought to deal with origins, different concepts, and their realisations, most of all with the impact of Colonialism itself on our modern world to better understand the consequences. Before we deal with the modernisation and essentially the expansion into a non-territorial context of the definition of the term “Colonialism”, regarding Austria, in this thesis, it is essential to understand currently accepted definitions of the distinct concepts of colony and colonisation. There are many ways to define and work with colonialism, but a significant difference is whether territorial control should be a part of the definition. Jürgen Osterhammel’s book “Kolonialismus. Geschichte, Formen, Folgen” is a fantastic first step into this debate, which delivers a sophisticated introduction and currently accepted definitions of colonialism. Looking at Osterhammel’s definition of colonialism helps us understand how he develops this idea and what he wants to tell us about it.<sup>8</sup>

*“Kolonialismus ist eine Herrschaftsform zwischen Kollektiven, bei welcher die fundamentalen Entscheidungen über die Lebensführung der Kolonisierten durch eine kulturell andersartige und kaum anpassungswillige Minderheit von Kolonialherren unter vorrangiger Berücksichtigung externer Interessen getroffen und tatsächlich durchgesetzt werden. Damit verbinden sich in der Regel sendungsideologische Rechtfertigungsdoktrinen, die auf der Überzeugung der Kolonialherren von ihrer eigene kulturellen Höherwertigkeit beruhen.”<sup>9</sup>*

This definition is based on three core elements of colonialism. The first one is that colonialism is not merely a simple master-servant relationship but that there has to be a severe if not complete foreign influence on a society’s development in which the interest of the alien overlord is placed in the foreground. Secondly, the differences between the dominator and the dominated are critical since none of the “modern” colonialist nations was reluctant to syncretise with the dominated cultures. Still, they instead worked towards converting the cultures of the dominated into a culture that resembles their own. This is also related to the third pillar of this definition, which reasons that ideology and superiority led to the assumption of supremacy of the own culture over almost any other culture, something Osterhammel describes by using Mason’s wording of bringing people under a “spiritual yoke”.<sup>10</sup> As apparent, this definition doesn’t mention territory, which means that the concept of colonialism and colony can be defined independently and essentially represent different things but are usually tightly connected. In general, it can be stated that a colony is

<sup>8</sup> Jürgen Osterhammel and Jan C. Jansen, *Kolonialismus: Geschichte, Formen, Folgen*. C.H. Beck Wissen 2002 (München: C.H. Beck, 2017).

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, 22.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, 17–21.



directly bound to a territorial place, a spot on the map where the actual reality is happening. In contrast, colonialism can have a purely ideological mindset that could be exercised without possessing “peripheral” territory.

The exciting part of Osterhammel’s definition of colonialism is that it already defines a spectrum of extremes regarding the different shapes and forms colonialism can take, which range from the extremes of “colonialism without colonies”, like the essentially purely white English colonies of New England in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century to “colonialism without colonies”. Osterhammel establishes this concept but defines it as equal or very similar to internal colonialism, which happened inside Great Britain and Austria-Hungary in the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>11</sup>. This other concept basically tries to explain the domination of other ethnicities in the "home state" of the coloniser. He ends his definition by opening the debate about the viability of these “extreme” forms of colonialism in this regard, hence if this definition doesn't go too far.

Osterhammel’s definition of colonialism additionally provides three different degrees of applying power towards minor states or “little brothers”, as he calls them. “Formal Empire” is the classical colonial rule in which officials from the coloniser replace local officials. In this case, the former political order often ceases to exist, and the coloniser takes control over areas such as justice, military, and taxation. The second form, “informal empire”, is a more indirect way of influencing the target country by forcing unequal treaties upon the colonised, who, in this case, is defined as the weaker state. No extensive colonial administration is present, but some institutional influence still exists on local politics. The sovereignty of the colonised state is still severely limited since the colonising state had usually pressured regional regimes into submission by forcing unequal treaties and similar legally binding documents onto them. Military force could be used as well. This usually happens in a restrained way to react to urgent problems. More common was the use of “gunboat diplomacy”, the use of threats and diplomatic pressure to make a weaker country give in to demands. “Nichtkolonialer “bestimmender” Einfluss is how Osterhammel names the third major theory for colonial influence. It is, however, slightly contradictory that he defines a category of colonial power usage with words like “non-colonial” or defines the category as being without any colonial ruling. What he means by this is that the imbalance of power in the relation between states can also lead to political influence that other “normal” countries do not have.<sup>12</sup> Osterhammel’s definition of colonialism is, at least in the Germanophone world, generally accepted as one of the standard ways to think

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<sup>11</sup> Werner Telesko, “Colonialism without Colonies: The Civilizing Missions in the Habsburg Empire,” in *Cultural Heritage as Civilizing Mission*, ed. Michael Falser. Transcultural Research – Heidelberg Studies on Asia and Europe in a Global Context (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2015), 35–48.

<sup>12</sup> Osterhammel and Jansen, 25–30.

about colonial matters.<sup>13</sup> At the same time, it gives us a theoretical framework that allows us to place different cases on a scale ranging from colonialism without colonies to colonies without colonialism. This is an extensive range, but it also allows us to look for a special case that would otherwise not fit any model. It is possible to be critical of the openness of this definition because it does indeed stretch the idea of colonialism very far from the common thought of establishing a set physical colony in a faraway place. The first version of Osterhammel's definition was published in the 1990s and remains unchanged despite editing the book a few times. The new millennium has given us many reasons to re-evaluate the role, shape, effects, and base concept of colonialism. It must, however, be pointed out that Osterhammel's definition is already more progressive and inclusive towards "colonialism without colonies" than even more classical definitions by acknowledging that there is a type of colonialism that goes beyond territorial possession.<sup>14</sup>

The basic concept of how we understand colonialism, empire, and different regional forms of them is being questioned foremost by Ann Laura Stoler, Carole McGranahan and Peter Perdue in 2007. It pointed out the limitations of our modern view of colonialism and imperialism and how it restrains research. The "ambiguity" of the term colony holds back overall research on the topic, and it is argued that the only proper form of colonialism is European.<sup>15</sup> Building on this rejection of the classical definitions of colonialism are Barbara Lüthi, Francesca Falk and Patricia Purtschert in their essay "Colonialism without colonies: examining blank spaces in colonial studies". The paper has several core interests. It examines countries that aren't traditionally seen as colonies, like Iceland, or as colonial powers, like Switzerland. Furthermore, it examines whether and when a country can be seen as a colony and looks at non-classical colonies like Liberia, which was technically an independent country since its foundation. The essay argues that countries usually seen as outside the colonialist realm still participated in the "colonial project". Even though this project focuses on postcolonial and relatively modern cases, it can also be retrospectively applied to other cases that happened during the actual age of colonialism.

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<sup>13</sup> Gunnar F. Schuppert (ed.), *Von Staat zu Staatlichkeit: Beiträge zu einer multidisziplinären Staatlichkeitswissenschaft*. Staatsverständnisse 134 (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft mbH & Co. KG, 2019), 185; Jonas Hübner, "Der Kolonie-Begriff zwischen Kolonisation und Kolonialismus. Zur historischen Semantik der europäischen Expansion in der deutschen Politischen Ökonomie (1650-1800)," *z weltgeschichte* 20, no. 2 (2020), 431–457.

<sup>14</sup> Lüthi, Falk and Purtschert, 5.

<sup>15</sup> Ann L. Stoler, Carole McGranahan, and Peter C. Perdue, *Imperial formations*. School for Advanced Research advanced seminar series (Santa Fe, N.M., Oxford [U.K.]: School for Advanced Research Press; James Currey, 2007), 1–7.

Wolfgang Sauer's essay about handling the Habsburg Empire's colonial past (or rather the forgetting thereof) would tie nicely into the arguments and definitions presented. He states that the Austrian and Austro-Hungarian colonial history hasn't been researched how it should have been; he describes it as being a non-factor in colonial politics according to conventional wisdom. The traditional literature on colonialism until the new millennium literature barely mentions Austria(-Hungary). In Sauer's opinion, this stems from the Austrian official as well as the general widespread national attitude towards Austria's involvement in colonialism, which almost, until today, is a widespread belief in non-involvement in colonial affairs.<sup>16</sup> Even newer research on colonialism without colonies focuses more on intra-Austrian colonialism, mainly affecting parts of the Doppelmonarchie, like Bosnia & Herzegovina<sup>17</sup> or Transylvania, than on colonialism abroad<sup>18</sup>. Suppose one uses the popular definitions of colonialism by Jürgen Osterhammel, who already mentions that colonialism can be non-territorial, and Lüthi's idea of non-territorial colonialism, which builds upon Osterhammel's concept. In that case, it becomes inherently clear that Austria's favoured status as a non-colonial power doesn't seem very credible.

Many countries that deny having a colonial past reason this in the lack of controlled territory, but the newer research could spark a debate about the issue. The stance of Austria's academic old guard towards the relation of their country towards colonialism becomes clear if one examines the lack of older literature in general about Austrian colonialism. Very few books have been published about Austrian colonialism, and many focus on the limited Austrian tries to establish a territorial colony from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards<sup>19</sup>. Some older books that examine Austrian foreign relations outright deny Austrian involvement in colonialist activities.

*„Zusammenfassend kann gesagt werden, daß neben Engländern und Russen in den 80er Jahren des vergangenen Jahrhunderts fast nur die Österreicher die naturwissenschaftliche Erforschung Persiens betrieben, wobei es ihnen, im Gegensatz zu den beiden anderen Nationen, die politische Absichten damit verbanden, ausschließlich um die wissenschaftliche Erkenntnis ging.“<sup>20</sup>*

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<sup>16</sup> see Sauer.

<sup>17</sup> Clemens Ruthner, "Habsburg's Only Colony? Bosnia-Herzegovina and Austria-Hungary, 1878-1918," *SEEU Review* 13, no. 1 (2018), 2–14.

<sup>18</sup> cf. note 11.

<sup>19</sup> Alexander Randa, *Österreich in Übersee* (München, Wien: Herold-Verlag, 1966).

<sup>20</sup> Slaby, 206.

Using these words, Helmut Slaby's piece on Austria-Persia relations exemplifies this stance since he claims that Austrian interest in influence in Persia was minimal and that its scientists were the only ones simply striving for knowledge and not for political interest. This isn't very certain once one examines the ambivalent positions that scientists like Albert Khan Gasteiger, an Austrian diplomat, scientist, and Persian Khan<sup>21</sup>, and Jakob Eduard Polak, the personal doctor of the Shah and reformer of Persian medicine<sup>22</sup>, took on during diplomatic occasions. A prominent example would be their official role during the first Vienna visit of Shah Nasr-ad din Shah Qajar in 1873, after which closer diplomatic relations were established.

Looking at the development of new colonialism definitions, the changing stance towards a colonial past in Austria and the lack of literature on the topic, it can be said that Austria's ties to its colonialist past must be re-evaluated. The case of the Austrian-Persian relations is instrumental in looking at during this time since Helmut Slaby has already identified a spike in Austrian activity in Persia. He called the time from 1878 to 1888 the "Austrian decade" in Persia, which hints at extensive influence in Persian politics, culture, military, and further fields.

Source situation & research material in the "Haus-, Hof und Staatsarchiv" in Vienna

The very rich source situation makes the case of Austria's presence in Persia during the 1880s a very researchable case as well. The "Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (HHSta)" in Vienna still possesses an extensive assortment of diplomatic reports sent to Vienna from Tehran. 1873 marks the beginning or, considering the medieval relations, the re-establishment of official diplomatic relations between Austria and Persia, and it also marks the foundation date of the Austro-Hungarian embassy in Tehran. From there, one correspondence was sent to Vienna quite frequently. The rough summaries are kept in thick books that consist of two sections, each divided into three columns. The left side notes concerning rapports are noted and divided into a date, objet du rapport and observation. Most of the subjects are very briefly explained, but some years do have many more pages than others.<sup>A</sup> 1874 consists of only four pages of notes on diplomatic correspondence and occurrences, whereas 1885 has 37 pages. This does not necessarily mean that there was more intense diplomatic activity during these times, it could just depend on the person writing the article, but it can give us hints in that direction. On the right side, depeches are listed. This side of the book is completely empty for most years, but

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<sup>21</sup> Reinhard Pohanka and Ingrid Thurner, *Der Khan aus Tirol: Albert Joseph Gasteiger, Freiherr von Ravenstein und Kobach, Diplomat, Ingenieur und Forschungsreisender am persischen Hof (1823-1890)* (Wien: Österreichischer Bundesverlag, 1988).

<sup>22</sup> Afsaneh Gächter, *Der Leibarzt des Schahs. Jacob E. Polak 1818-1891. Eine west-östliche Lebensgeschichte* (Wien: New Academic Press, 2018).

A) Pictures can be found in the appendix under B

the occasional entries usually mark urgent and important happenings and are valuable milestones in the relations.<sup>23</sup>

More fruitful than the somewhat summarised accounts in the bigger “Perse” books are the general rapports sent to Vienna.<sup>B</sup> The rapports became more common during the Austrian decade and are very detailed descriptions of the happenings in Persia. They usually report around a few weeks up to a month, except for special urgent reports. The main body of the rapports is generally written in very formal official language and describes the state of things as neutrally as possible. An example is the rapport of the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February 1880, in which Baron Haymerle describes the Perso-British negotiations about the occupation of Herat for five pages.<sup>24</sup> He does this in a very neutral manner avoiding giving any opinion. This writing style makes the reports less interesting for the research on colonialism due to the lack of personal statements. They, of course, portray imperialist and colonialist thought, but it is often hidden between the lines. More interesting than the actual reports are the official blue envelopes.<sup>C</sup> They, most of the time, are embedded in. Not only does the envelope provide a short summary of its contents it is also filled with the personal thoughts of the author. Since these authors, most of the time were the official ambassadors of the Double Monarchy, it can give us deep insights into the stance the Austrian state sought to pursue towards Persia, but also into more personal thoughts and the mindset of the time. These unique insights are relatively rare in diplomatic correspondence and valuable in understanding the diplomats' motives and gaining knowledge about things that were purposefully left out of official diplomatic post, which is very well the case with many direct political happenings in Persia at the time.

Especially interesting in the lot are special subfolders that contain documents related to the Austrian military expedition to Persia in the late 1870s and early 1880s and those which have the official inquiries of the Shah of Persia for an Austrian or German neutrality guarantee against Britain and Russia<sup>25</sup>, which were heavily involved in the Great Game in Central Asia at the time. The two great powers intensely fought for control and land in the region, which depending on definition, either contained Persia as a whole or at least the parts of Persia nowadays known as Fara-rud, which Persia still actively tried to claim and reincorporate into their Empire during the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>26</sup>. The inquiry for Austrian protection<sup>27</sup> is fascinating since

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<sup>23</sup> HHStA Wien, *Perse 1880 - 1890*; HHStA Wien, *Perse 1873 - 1879*.

<sup>24</sup> Haymerle, *Les négociations enter l'Angleterre et la Perse au sujet de l'occupation de Hérat*.

<sup>25</sup> Heinrich von Haymerle and Karl G. von Zaluski, *Wünsche des Shah bzgl. Neutralisierung Persiens*, AT-OeSTA/HHStA PA XXVIII 9-6 / Varia 1885 (Vienna, Teheran, 1879 - 1884).

<sup>26</sup> Peter Hopkirk, *The great game: On secret service in high Asia* (London: John Murray, 2016), 175 et seq.

<sup>27</sup> Haymerle and Zaluski.

it would have given the monarchy legitimation to engage in the region even more actively, but this will be elaborated upon in a later chapter. These two subfolders are so full of useful source material that they will provide the foundation for the two main chapters of this thesis. Further interesting sources contributing to this thesis are isolated unique documents found in the archives that cannot be categorised into one of the categories. An example of this would be the official contract of an Austrian weapon delivery to Iran made during one of the Europe visits of this Shah<sup>28</sup>, as well as the official diary of Nasr-ad Din Shah Qajar<sup>29</sup> and the partly edited accounts of Austrians with diplomatic ties to the region like Gasteiger Khan's letters to Austria<sup>30</sup>. Another exciting individual for this thesis would have been Adalbert Schönowsky von Schönwiese. Unfortunately, his accounts are currently unavailable in the Austrian state archives due to their evaluation and edition by the Institute for Iranian Studies of the University of Vienna. It would be interesting to incorporate the edited correspondence of someone as important as the leader of the Austrian military mission into this thesis or a work building on this thesis later. It must be added that Persian sources regarding this case would also be fascinating to examine. Yet, they are scarcely available in Western Europe, and the National archives in Teheran are challenging to access. Some odd singular documents (occasionally in Persian) can be found in the archives of Vienna, and the diary of Nasr-ad din Shah Qajar is, of course, of great value. Still, most Persian official documents remain in the National Archives in Teheran and are not digitalised. Thereby it is complicated to access it, and even though documents with another perspective could shed new light on many things and help us understand the Persian strategy at this time better, they are essentially unavailable and, unfortunately, won't be a significant part of this thesis. Despite this there are many descriptions of Persian reactions and actions in the Austrian documents that help us gain insight into the Persian strategy

It can generally be said that there is plenty of source material available regarding the Austrian presence in Persia in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century that has never been evaluated in this regard. This thesis will shine light upon these untouched sources and try to connect the evidence for Austrian non-territorial colonial activity we find in the references to the definition by Jürgen Osterhammel and the general advances made in the field of Austrian colonialism.

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B) Pictures can be found in the appendix under E

C) Pictures can be found in the appendix under C

<sup>28</sup> Johann E. von Brenneis, Arthur G. zu Bylandt-Rheidt, and Mirza H. Khan, *Treaty over the purchase of weapons by Persia from Austria-Hungary*, IB, Zahl 2009 - 2323 (Vienna, 1878).

<sup>29</sup> Naser Al-Din Shah Qajar, *A Summarized Translation, With Verbatim Extracts, of the Diary of H. M. The Shah of Persia, During His Tour Through Europe in A. D. 1873* (Forgotten Books, 2018).

<sup>30</sup> Hieronymus Praxmarer, *Albert Gasteiger Khan (1823-1890): Reisebriefe aus Persien nach Tirol*. Schlern-Schriften 359 (Innsbruck: Wagner, 2013).

## The Austro-Hungarian military mission in Persia

Having defined the framework to work with, it is now necessary to structure and analyse the part of this thesis that works with the sources from the archives in Vienna. Quotations from the sources will mostly not be translated into English, due them being either French or German and foremost to preserve the original tonality of the messages, if the tonality is not of any importance like in a treaty, sources may be translated. This is a challenging task, and there are multiple logical options to structure the material. Since the documents span from the mid-1870s to the end of the 1880s, one of the possibilities is to approach the matter chronologically and go through the diplomatic correspondence by year. However, this feels like it wouldn't make this thesis very enjoyable to read since it doesn't allow the reader to focus on the focal points drawn out over this decade. This is why this thesis will follow a thematic approach and divide the subject into three more extensive chapters, each with its own subchapters. The chapters will examine how Austria-Hungary exercised its power in Persia during the Austrian decade. These are the direct influence Austria exercised on Persia in the form of the military mission of 1878 to 1881 and the diplomatic reports about its influence and presence, especially the attitude of the respective Austrian ambassador towards the court. The second overarching chapter will analyse the role Austria played in the Persian struggle during the Great Game by Russia and Great Britain and how Austria tried to play a part in this global diplomatic affair by using Persian desperation. Still, this chapter will also explain how Persia attempted to use the Austrian strive for more considerable foreign influence on its advantage.

The third significant chapter will look at the influence Austrian individuals in Persian services had on the relations between the two states and the cultural, scientific, and institutional influence Austrian individuals with close state links had on the Perso-Austrian relations of the time. The two individuals with the most focus on them will be Albert Gasteiger Khan and Dr Jacob Polak since they acquired extremely high positions in the Persian court and had direct contact with Nasr-ad Din Shah Qajar. Still, other researchers and cases will be mentioned to enrich further and validate the general point that Austrian science in Persia was not apolitical. The institutional parts will track the Austrian tries to establish Austrian-inspired and organised institutions like mints and post systems in Persia. This reform aid was also politically driven, and the chapter will elaborate on why this was the case. The last subchapter will then be a short chapter that assesses the Austrian influence in Persia in the context of nonterritorial colonialism, tying together the gained knowledge into a coherent picture.

The decision to send an Austrian mission was made in July 1878 after the Shah's second visit to Vienna.<sup>31</sup> Despite the intense struggle of the Austrian group, consisting of non-existing infrastructure and sickness, the group eventually reached Tehran in January 1879. The route led the mission out of the east of the Austro-Hungarian empire towards the shores of the Black Sea in the then-Russian city of Odesa, the port that connected this part of the world to the Caucasus. Travelling through the Caucasus, the group and their Persian companions encountered many Russian officials. To the anger of the Austrian mission, it became clear that the Shah had not only contracted the Austrians as military advisors for the modernisation of the Army, but he had also contracted a Russian military mission during his journey home. The Austrian group felt betrayed by this, leading to the mission almost being cancelled altogether. En route, the Austrian delegation encountered some of the weapons the Shah had purchased in Vienna one and a half years ago, which were supposed to be part of the modernisation of the army. Unfortunately, the rugged terrain in northern Persia made transporting heavier guns, like the purchased Uchatius-guns, difficult, so it took the Persian workers months to transport these guns over the mountains in Mazandaran.<sup>32</sup>

The mission comprised 14 Austro-Hungarian officers, accompanied by Albert Gasteiger Khan, who reached the Persian capital of Tehran. The mission would later be joined by 30 more officers and was led by Adalbert Schönowsky zu Schönwiese.<sup>33</sup> To understand what a mission of highly trained Austrian was doing far from home in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, one has to go back to the Europe visits of the Persian Shah Nasr-ad Din Qajar in 1873 and 1878. During both of these tours, he visited Vienna. He was impressed by the hospitality of the Austrians, especially the Austrian government, who treated him as more of an equal than many other European states he visited. The Shah understood that his formerly, at least regionally, dominant empire had become a state that lacked the technological, diplomatic and military capabilities to defend its territory against the global territorial expansion of the great Western powers. He was very impressed by the railway and other technology he experienced in Austria<sup>34</sup>. This led to the Austrian mission being very welcomed upon arrival on the 5<sup>th</sup> of January, 1879. The key figures present for the reception of the army were regiments of the Persian cavalry, delegates of the Persian minister of war and the Austrian delegation to Tehran. Gasteiger Khans' role as a part of the military mission could come to an end since his official task ended by bringing the

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<sup>31</sup> Slaby, 146–148.

<sup>32</sup> Praxmarer, 182–183.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Naser Al-Din Shah Qajar, 164–165.



Austrian mission to Tehran. But on the 8<sup>th</sup> of January, the Shah invited not only the Austrian ambassador Count Zaluski and legation-secretary von Kuczinski but also Gasteiger Khan, who was welcomed back very warmly in Tehran.<sup>35</sup>

### Westernising the Persian army

The Austrian mission set up its camp in Tehran in 1879 and started training the first Persian corps. The first months were used to set up the corps and train the Persian army. At the same time, the Shah himself visited the unit a few times, and in May of 1879, the Austrian delegation reported to Vienna in the diplomatically usual short style:

*“Befriedigung des Shahs über Leistungen der Instruktionsofficiere u. jenen des Polizei-Chefs Lorde di Montforte”*<sup>36</sup>

This tells us that the Shah was initially more than pleased with the progression of the Austrian mission’s efforts and that Austrian officers could reach high-ranking positions in the Persian state rather quickly. Events like these are described quickly and concisely, whereas the debate about British and Russian presence takes up much more space than the positive news about early Austrian successes. The described Count Montforte is a more nebulous character in this affair. George Curzon describes him as an Italian who retired to Austria and “was passed on either by the Emperor of that country or, more probably, by himself, to the service of the Shah”<sup>37</sup>, so it is indeed likely that he had some ties to the Austrian state, but it is not necessarily like that. Nevertheless, his position as police commander does imply an influence on the Persian court.

However, the general focus of diplomatic correspondence in the year 1879 is more focused on the general diplomatic problems the Persian Empire encountered with the expansion of British and Russian power in the region. Almost every single entry of the year 1879 is related to the struggle of the Persians, British and Russians for power and influence in Central Asia, most notably the city of Herat. Interestingly, this supersedes the progress of the Austrian military mission in the region. This hints towards the Austrian interest in the conflict and their general interest to partially prepare and use the tools they have to interfere in the conflict and at least contain Russian ambition. The Russian-Austrian relationship has at this time been severely strained due to disputes with Russia itself and Serbia about the occupation of Bosnia since

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<sup>35</sup> Praxmarer, 184.

<sup>36</sup> 31.5.1879 in HHStA Wien, *Perse 1873 - 1879*.

<sup>37</sup> Curzon of Kedleston, George Nathaniel Curzon, *Persia and the Persian question* (London, New York: Longmans, Green & co., 1892), 332.

1878<sup>38</sup>, and possibly the Austrians sought to either win a potential Russophobe ally in Central Asia or at least create a foothold in a region with high Russian interest.

Since the Shah also sought more autonomy and especially more ability to resist the growing British and Russian presence on his borders, the political interest of Austria and Persia converged here. The Austrian mission was thereby tasked not only to modernise a Persian corps but also to incentivise and enable the complete and total reorganisation of the Persian army.<sup>39</sup> The officials tasked with that were delegation head Schönowsky and the other officers. Still, even though Gasteiger was not a part of the official mission, he started to work on reorganising the army in early 1880. Gasteiger Khan's advantage over the Austrian officials was that he was very well connected in the Persian court due to his prior time in the empire and his high rank as a Persian Khan.<sup>40</sup> This meant that he was the ideal individual to, at least in the beginning, steer the reorganisation of the Persian army after Austrian standards. So, it was Gasteiger Khan who recruited the first corps of 7000 men. He categorised the corps after Western standards into fusiliers, infantry, artillery, and pioneers and equipped them.<sup>41</sup> The equipment used was almost exclusively Austrian, e.g. the standard rifle of the corps became the Austrian Werndl rifle, mainly stemming from the arms delivery contract closed between the Ministry of War and the representatives of the Shah in Vienna during the Shah's Europe visit in 1879.<sup>42</sup> After the initial phase of organising the corps and equipping it, Gasteiger Khan was ordered by the Shah to lead a diplomatic-military expedition, not including the Austrian corps, towards the Eastern border of the Empire in Baluchistan, which means that he wasn't available for the Austrians in Teheran anymore.

The mission initially stayed a prestigious project of the Shah, and the Austrian officers proceeded with training the corps. The year 1879 progresses in this spirit, and the low number of sources mentioning the Austrian corps in the HHStA during 1879 and early 1880 speaks for a generally uneventful time, except for occasional visits by the Shah, who seemed to be generally pleased with the progress of the mission. However, it is certainly possible and likely that the state of the Persian army at this time is described in more detail in another folder of the HHStA, which did not resurface during my research. Just like this, the folder about the actual

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<sup>38</sup> L. A. Gerd, "Russian Policy in the Balkans, 1878-1914," in *Russian Policy in the Orthodox East: The Patriarchate of Constantinople (1878-1914)*, ed. Lora Gerd (De Gruyter Open, 2014), 1–19.

<sup>39</sup> Praxmarer, 186.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid*; Pohanka and Thurner.

<sup>41</sup> Praxmarer.

<sup>42</sup> Roxane Farmanfarmanian, *War and peace in Qajar Persia: Implications past and present*. History and society in the Islamic world (New York, London: Routledge, 2008), 63.

arrival of the Austrian mission in Persia did not show up. Therefore, information about these years is mainly drawn from secondary literature or the reports of Albert Gasteiger Khan.

The mission and retraining and reequipping the Persian army were urgently necessary since the Persian government wanted to be able to compete in the Great Game fought between Russia and Great Britain at their border and even attempted to actively engage in the conflict by trying to reconquer parts of their formerly much larger empire and especially the city of Herat, which the Afghans occupied in the late 1870s and early 1880s. The war effort for Herat was supported by the Russian government, which had its own interest in the region and used the Persian initiative to counter British influence on the Afghans. The course of this conflict, which is also heavily discussed and described in the Austrian diplomatic correspondence<sup>43</sup>, shows that the Persian army could not operate successfully on its own anymore. Mainly comprised of “ad-hoc forces, which were assembled when needed and consisted largely of members of Iranian tribal groups formed into provincial militias and tribal cavalry” and a small core of “standing forces, which consisted of the Shahs bodyguard and the artillery corps”.<sup>44</sup> In the eyes of Rabin and Ter-Oganov, this, amongst other factors, made the Qajar army an irregular army that had little state control over it and yet was, through services like tax collection provided for the Shah, essential for the survival of the Qajar dynasty as a ruling force in Iran. Its composition of members of the many tribes of Persia could and was also used by the Shah, through directed conscription, to destroy possible uprisings and minimise the chance of being overthrown by too powerful tribes.<sup>45</sup> Another way of keeping the powerful Iranian tribes in check and avoiding a revolt practised since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was establishing the first permanent units in the Persian army that were only loyal to the Shah himself. These units can’t be seen as irregulars anymore but as the first part of the Persian army reform of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The Austrian’s good relations with the peacock throne and high-ranking Austrians in the Shah’s service, especially Gasteiger Khan and Dr Jacob Polak, might have influenced Shah’s decision to give the task to the Austrians finally. Still, it might as well have been how the Austrians treated the Shah during his tour of Europe in 1873, where he seemed to be content with his treatment by the Austrians and impressed by Austria and especially the Austrian army and the “Hungarian Hussars”<sup>46</sup>. The Shah felt treated as an equal in Austria and liked the country during

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<sup>43</sup> e.g. 19 April 1881 HHStA Wien, *Perse 1880 - 1890*.

<sup>44</sup> Uzi Rabi and Nugzar Ter-Oganov, “The Military of Qajar Iran: The Features of an Irregular Army from the Eighteenth to the Early Twentieth Century,” *Iranian stud.* 45, no. 3 (2012), 333–354, here 334.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*, 353–354.

<sup>46</sup> Naser Al-Din Shah Qajar, 160–161.

his first visit in 1873.<sup>47</sup> It may have been in the Shah's consideration that Austria had no interest in territorial expansion around Persia or, in general, overseas. This possibly made the Austrians more trustworthy, but this remains speculation and may not be accurate. Tasking the Russian army to send a mission to train the Persian cavalry on the way back from Europe in 1879<sup>48</sup> speaks against this theory since Russia was very interested in the region and territorial expansion. Nevertheless, it was considered a Persian ally against Britain in the Herat matter.

#### The economic interest and impact of the Austrian mission: Equipping the Persian army with Austrian material

The army corps the Austrian delegation erected and trained had to be reequipped by Western standards as well. Since Gasteiger Khan was well connected in Austria, and the order of military cloth for the whole corps went to the Austrian industry, this also meant the goal was to equip the entire Persian army in Austrian military uniforms. He also ordered 20 additional guns, which meant even more orders for the Austrian arms industry after the big contract closed after the Shah visited Vienna a few years prior. These orders were quite big and a possible sign of closer economic ties with Persia, which didn't stay unnoticed in Austria and resulted in the award of the order of the iron crown for merit for the Austrian economy to Gasteiger Khan.<sup>49</sup> It is out of the question that the Persian state had the economic and factual capabilities at the time to produce 7000 new uniforms for their army themselves given their production of textile goods.<sup>50</sup> Still, it was economically more advantageous for Austria to supply their uniforms to the Persians. What might have played a role in the decision of Gasteiger Khan, and the Shah is the growing belief in the superiority of Western equipment. While this might be less relevant for the new uniforms of the Persian army, it can be said that the Austrian weapons delivered to Persia were a severe technological upgrade for the army previously was mainly equipped with outdated rifles, swords and other equipment that, at this time had minimal use against a modern Western army.<sup>51</sup>

Seeing the necessity of upgrading this, Persia decided to buy Austrian weapons and signed a treaty in Vienna on the 13<sup>th</sup> of July 1878.<sup>D</sup> The treaty's signatories were the Persian ambassador to Austria, Mirza Houssein Khan, the representative of the Austrian war ministry Arthur Comte

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<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*, 156–159; Slaby, 150.

<sup>48</sup> Slaby, 156.

<sup>49</sup> Gasteiger, *General Gasteiger-Khan*, 5.

<sup>50</sup> Gasteiger, *Die Handelsverhältnisse Persiens in Bezug auf die Absatzfähigkeit österreichischer Waren*.

<sup>51</sup> Jacob C. Hurewitz, "The Beginnings of Military Modernization in the Middle East: A Comparative Analysis," *Middle East Journal* 22, no. 2 (1968), 144–158, here 153 et seq. .

D) Pictures of the treaty can be found in the appendix under A

Byland-Rheydt and the director of export control, Johann Edler von Brenneis.<sup>a</sup> The order consisted of:

***Infantry arms***

*10.000 “Werndl”-rifles, 5000 cavalry carabines, 1500 revolvers*

***Ammunition***

*3.000.000 cartouches of 11mm rifle ammunition, 1.000.000 cartouches of 11mm carbine ammunition, 500.000 cartouches of 11mm revolver ammunition*

***Cannons & equipment***

*18 Uchatius-cannons with all necessary accessories, 18 artillery drawer units with all necessary accessories, 3600 artillery shells*

*3 Montagny-mitrailleuses with 300.000 cartouches of ammunition*

*3 bronze mortars with 3 fitting carriages and 300 mortar shells<sup>52</sup>*

As can be seen in the details above, this was by no means a small contract but provided enough equipment to modernise at least parts of the Persian army of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which, as can be seen above, consisted mostly of irregulars and tribe members that were armed with their own, usually outdated, weapons. These weapons were meant for the standing corps of the Qajar army, hence the Shah’s troops. The weapon sale, of course, had a geopolitical dimension for the Austrian government as well since it was a way in which the Austrian government could, on the one hand, oppose the Russian Czar and the British Crown and, on the other, not directly get involved in the region. This indirect application of force in the way of strengthening and training an army had not only political advantages for Austria-Hungary but also financial and economic advantages. By being active in the country, the Austrians could sell Austrian-made equipment to Persia, which was not cheap and led to extra income for the state. However, the equipment Austria delivered was state-of-the-art technology and immediately would have made the Persian army more effective if used correctly. It is, however, unclear to what degree the Austrian military knew of the lacklustre infrastructure and difficult terrain in Persia that made the use and transportation of the heavy Uchatius-guns almost impossible.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> translated from Johann E. von Brenneis, *Waffenkaufvertrag*, Treaty concerning weapon sales from Austria-Hungary to Persia, AT-OeSTA/HHStA MdÄ IB Akten 100 (Informationsbüro des Min. d. Äußern, 1878).

<sup>53</sup> Praxmarer, 182–183.

It is also possible to place closer relations with Persia in the grand strategy of Austria-Hungary and its economy. While the Austrian economy rose to power in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and looked for new markets to sell its products<sup>54</sup> and whereas most of the other European great powers had colonial or otherwise dependent markets that allowed for de-facto monopolies and economic extortion of specific areas, Austria-Hungary didn't possess any colonies. The lack of a monopoly market made seeking influence in other regions that could act as another market more critical. As of now, it is unclear to what degree the Austrian economy missed a colonial market, but there are arguments for and against the need for one. Theoretically seen, a colonial market would have been very beneficial for the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and so there was much thought about establishing a colony in Borneo<sup>55</sup> in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, but just like Tessner argues in his publication on the Austro-Hungarian economy of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century only under ideal and stable conditions<sup>56</sup>, which was a very unrealistic scenario given the troubles other countries had with their colonial possessions. In the end, this made it possibly more lucrative to look for established partners overseas. The Austrian military mission as a foothold in Persia thereby was also a sign of these intensified economic contacts. Generally, there were intensifying general economic relations between Austria and Persia also increased in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which is documented by the diplomatic correspondence treating the complaints of traders and merchants.<sup>57</sup> However, this is not directly related to the presence of the Austrian military corps itself. The small size of the military corps itself also limited the impact the corps itself directly, apart from military trades, had. The officers were quite wealthy, and their pay to stay in Persia was three times as high as they would have received in Austria.<sup>58</sup> Still, being only a handful of people their numbers were just too small to have an impact on the local economy.

#### 1880 – 1881: The Kurdish insurgence and the Austrian corps

Despite its limited economic impact, the corps became a significant factor in inner-Persian politics for the first time during the Kurdish insurgence in 1880. As mentioned before, in the political construct of Persia in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the reigning Qajar dynasty relied on a balance of power between the different powerful tribes and ethnicities and the central government in Teheran. The tribes made up a large part of the Persian army and could pose a

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<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*, 186–187; Slaby, 150–151.

<sup>55</sup> Randa, 121 et seq.

<sup>56</sup> Magnus Tessner, *Der Aussenhandel Österreich-Ungarns von 1867 bis 1913*. Wirtschafts- und Rechtsgeschichte Bd. 15 (Köln: Müller Botermann, 1989), 110–113.

<sup>57</sup> J. Mayer, *Demand for payment to Comte di Montforte* (1882).

<sup>58</sup> Slaby, 153–154.

severe threat to the stability of the Empire in case of a well-equipped, planned, and inter-regional uprising.<sup>59</sup> Usually, these revolts were locally concentrated, and the insurgents were poorly equipped, so they didn't pose a significant threat to the Empire. Sheik Ubeydullah's Kurdish revolt in 1880 and 1881 was more severe than a small insurgency. He was an early Kurdish nationalist who vouched for a Kurdish national state and self-rule. He used the Ottoman Empires' weakness after their war against Russia in 1877 and 1878 to establish a de-facto-independent Kurdish state on the Ottoman-Qajar border. He was well-equipped with Russian and Turkish arms that had fallen into his hands during the Russo-Turkish war and well-established in the region as a local leader of the powerful *Şemdinan* family. He commanded tens of thousands of soldiers in a region that had become a political vacuum after the war.<sup>60</sup> Ubeydullah started to revolt in Turkey and disregarded the Ottoman government. Still, his uprising soon failed, and the Sheikh had to rekindle relations with the Ottoman government, which reacted very forthcoming. After an independent state in Turkey had become impossible, the Sheikh switched his interest to the areas in Qajar Persia he already controlled. Those were areas with a large Kurdish population around Lake Urmia and assembled a large army that attacked Persia in the later Summer of 1880.<sup>61</sup>

The Persian Shah had to react to this potentially dangerous uprising by requesting support from Russia and Great Britain. Russia reacted by enforcing the border at Nakhichevan with troops ready to intervene on Persian soil. Usually, dealing with eventual insurgencies was the task of the standing and regular units of the Qajar army to which the Austrian corps now belonged. After such a short time "*Le Capitaine Wagner de Wetterstadt avait été nommé par le Chah commandant de l'artillerie d'Ourmiahi*"<sup>62</sup> which meant that the Austrian army was now a direct part of the Persian war effort.

The correspondence on the Austrian involvement in this conflict started in December 1880, with reports of the Austrian ambassador Karl Graf Zaluski sent to the Austrian Ministry of War in Vienna. The first of these reports, sent on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December 1880, briefly describes the situation in the eyes of the Great Powers and the current state of the battlefield but also comes to an affair that proved challenging for Austria. When the Austrian officers, originally only supposed to be instruction officers, assumed command of their own units detached from the Kurdish insurgence, they found their units and themselves accused of committing war crimes

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<sup>59</sup> Rabi and Ter-Oganov.

<sup>60</sup> Mehmet F. Kılıç, *Sheikh Ubeydullah's Movement*, M.A (Turkey, 2003), 10–18.

<sup>61</sup> Dzhaliile Dzhaliil, *1880 Şeyh Ubeydullah Nehri Kürt ayaklanması* (Istanbul: Pêrî, 1998).

<sup>62</sup> Zaluski, *Report of Zaluski on the situation and involvement of the Austrian corps in the Kurdish uprising*.

in the war zone by Persian General Hissam-od-Dasulch.<sup>63</sup> The following section of the paper will chronologically go through the Austrian involvement in the war and how it is possible to make sense of the reports sent to Vienna regarding the relations and geopolitical goals between Austria-Hungary, the Persian Empire and potentially third parties, like Russia.

This section is going to rely heavily on direct quotations from the reports sent back and forth between Ambassador Karl Graf Zaluski in Teheran and the Baron Haymerle of the Austrian Ministry of foreign affairs in Vienna or, in questions of war, Graf Byland-Rheydt of the Austrian war ministry in Vienna. It is essential for this thesis to not only understand the topic and the general tone of the conversation but to closely look at certain vital parts of the conversations that can give us hints about the power dynamics that are essential here and if they give away a specific relationship between Austria-Hungary and Persia that can be considered non-territorial colonialism. Karl Graf Zaluski started in late 1880 to report news from the front and mainly describes the war zone and the general happenings like advancing troops but already in his first report to Vienna, traces of the looming problems in the army can be found.

The initial phase of the war and the standing of Austrian officers with Persian generals It starts with the first report of December 1880, describing the happenings of earlier phases of the ongoing war since messages between the war zone in Urmia and Tehran couldn't be transmitted very fast.

*“Mr. Le Colonel de Schemel ayant sécu des rapports du Capitaine Wagner de Wetterstaedt dont il résulté que le Général Hissam-od-Dasulch chercherait à rendre les officiers-instructeurs austro-hongrois, envoyés sur le champ d'action, responsables des actés de rapine et de meurtre commis par des troupes ne se trouvant pas placées sous leurs ordres, je fus prie par le Colonel, au nom de ces officiers, dé demander leur rappel immédiat. Toute en m'engageant aussitôt à protester énergiquement contre de calomnieuses insinuations tendant à discréditer des officiers de l'armée Impériale et Royale aux yeux du Gouvernement de Sa Majesté le Chah”* <sup>64</sup>

When the report reached Vienna, it made clear that the Austrian corps had to struggle with severe accusations by Persian General Hissam-od-Dasulch of war crimes being committed by the Austrian corps and at least be tolerated by the Austrian officers leading the corps. Given the devastation the region around Urmia suffered in the war, it is entirely possible that Austrian-

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<sup>63</sup> Zaluski, *L'insurrection des Kurdes et ses conséquences*.

<sup>64</sup> *ibid.*



Hungarian-commanded troops were involved in war crimes. Zaluski, however, states with absolute certainty that Austrian-commanded troops are not involved in any war crimes happening in the region and immediately protests the alleged defamation of the Imperial and Royal officers by the Persians. This not only shows severe rifts in the Persian military but also gives us first hints about the significant influence Austrians had in the Persian military, making it clear that they had internal rivals. Not only were they commanding a foreign army in a war that might prove to be significantly threatening for Persia, but they were also internally protected by their embassy despite officially being in the service of the Persian Shah. The reports only tell us with certainty that there have been war crimes happening in the zone around Urumia, but it indeed becomes challenging to decipher what happened.

The Austrian officers around General Wetterstädt deny any responsibility for the crimes, and Ambassador Zaluski promptly protests to the government about the accusations against his “*nationaux*” and states he “*ne saurait rester indifférente à une tentative de compromettre l'honneur*”<sup>65</sup> of the subjects of the Austro-Hungarian army. This is a complex matter to discuss since the Persian Shah officially employed the officers. However, Zaluski voiced that despite this, he still sees them as representatives of the Austrian army. This, of course, points out how the diplomatic corps in Persia saw the standing and the role of their officers in this conflict and the Persian army in general as a subordinate and less valuable army. Their own officers were acquitted (in most cases) of any wrongdoing without an investigation. Despite their official service in the Persian army, the Austrian government and diplomatic mission retained a strong interest and control over the destiny of the military expedition going as far as intervening at the Persian court on their behalf. Regarding the war crimes and their truthfulness, it remains challenging to find out what exactly happened in the region and to what extent the accusations by Persian generals and Princes and their unwillingness to take the matter seriously at the royal court are to be considered intrigue. It can be said that the Persian court was an extremely challenging environment for diplomacy due to the frequent change in ministerial positions, who all had individual preferences and relations to different governments and due to the constant change of intrigues happening.<sup>66</sup> This intergovernmental minefield eventually led to the failure of the Austrian tries to reform the Persian coinage and postage system and almost doomed the military expedition due to the general distrust in the army that became obvious when analysing the reports, the employment of Russian instructors before the arrival of the Austrian delegation.

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<sup>65</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> Ervand Abrahamian, “Oriental Despotism: The Case of Qajar Iran,” *Int. J. Middle East Stud.* 5, no. 1 (1974), 3–31, here 26–27.

## Militarily counterbalancing Russia

Central Asia and the states bordering it were especially contested between the British and Russian Empire and by other nations like Germany and France.<sup>67</sup> The region offered plenty of potential for conflict due to its history, location, and importance. Historically much of Central Asia was a part of the Persian Empire, and even though Afghanistan was de-facto independent since the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, it was still claimed by Persia.<sup>68</sup> The region became increasingly tumultuous when Britain and Russia got involved to secure their respective goals. In this thoroughly studied Great Game, Persia plays a very decisive role due to its location and status as a regional power influence in Persia was very advantageous for securing the region. This may also explain the intense diplomatic presence of both states in Persia during the time. The Austrian military mission, on the other hand, is also explainable by looking at their goal and their activities in Persia during this time. As stated above, the goal of the Austro-Hungarian mission was to westernise and modernise the Persian army.

This effort worked very well in the beginning, as Ambassador Zaluski reports:

*„Prinz Raib es Saltanel sprach sich für die weitere Ausbildung des persischen Heeres durch österreichische Offiziere und die Gewinnung einer noch größeren Anzahl derselben aus; die übrigen Minister behielten sich ihre Meinungsäußerung für eine zweiten Sitzung vor. Ich ergriff den Anlaß, um Mirsa Said Khan die Dringlichkeit einer Entschließung, seitens der zaristischen Regierung klar zu machen, [...]“<sup>69</sup>*

The Persians were very willing to employ more than just the few Austrians that followed their call to Teheran. Zaluski even states that this should be done quickly regarding the czarist government and their position as a rival for influence in Persia. This statement not only underlines the impact of the Austrian mission in Iran but also gives us a hint about another reason for its presence. The old Austro-Russian rivalry was also played out in the Persian court. The Austrians and Russia fought for influence in the Balkans in Europe<sup>70</sup> and tried to counteract each other in Persia. The consequence was that Austria got (at least indirectly) involved in the Great Game, where Russia came increasingly close to Persia's de-facto border and had already

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<sup>67</sup> Kaveh Farrokh, *Iran at war, 1500-1988* (Oxford, Long Island City, NY: Osprey Publishing, 2011), 529–532 in the electronic version .

<sup>68</sup> Pirouz Mojtahed-Zadeh, *Small players of the Great Game: The settlement of Iran's eastern borderlands and the creation of Afghanistan* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), 8 et seq.

<sup>69</sup> Zaluski, *Die Mission der kuk Instruktionsoffiziere betreffend*.

<sup>70</sup> Jürgen Gundolf, *Die österreichisch-russischen Beziehungen von Peter dem Großen bis Joseph II* (Hamburg: Diplom.de, 2003); István Diószegi, *Die Aussenpolitik der Österreich-Ungarischen Monarchie: 1871-1877* (Wien: Böhlau, (1985)); F.R Bridge, *From Sadowa to Sarajevo: The Foreign Policy of Austria-Hungary, 1866-1914* (London: Routledge, 1972).

conquered Persian historical territory.<sup>71</sup> Even though the Austrian military wasn't directly present, its direct involvement in the Kurdish uprising seemed to threaten Russia's interest in a weak Persian state. The sources tell this rather directly:

*Hierzu gehören die in demselben Sinne gehaltenen und von politischen und von humanitären Rücksichten vorgegebenen Äußerungen des Herrn russischen Gesandten, der seine Anschauungsweise auch beim Minister des Äußern zur Geltung brachte, worauf ihm Mirza Said Khan versicherte, die Regierung hätte gar nicht die Absicht, den österreichischen Offizier, der sich auf dem ihm anvertrauten Posten alle Sympathien erworben und allgemein beliebt gemacht hat, in einem Augenblicke abuberufen, wo die Kurden neue Einfälle vorbereiten.*<sup>72</sup>

This means that the Russians directly tried to avoid the expansion of Austrian influence in the Persian army and higher but initially failed to do so, which was indeed a result of the great success the Austrian-led armies enjoyed in the Kurdish uprising and the Shah's unwillingness to give up the results the Austrian instructors had accomplished. This Austrian effort can be seen as counterbalancing Russian interests in Persia to either distract Russia from the Balkan issues or to increase the pressure on Russia on multiple fronts.

## Austria-Hungary and Persia's struggle for neutrality

Central Asia in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was an important strategic region that was crucial for trade and for control of the wider region, especially in the 1870s for the Great Game. The Qajar Empire had long surpassed the maximum of its political might in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and European Empires had technically surpassed it and exerted more extensive leverage on it. This was the case for many countries or state-like entities in and around Central Asia, and for most of them, it would mean that they would cease to exist. Persia had already lost control over large parts of Transoxiana centuries ago, and independent central Asian states established themselves in the area. The most important were the Emirate of Bukhara and the Khanate of Khiva. In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, both came under severe pressure from the Russian Empire. The Russian Empire strived southwards and overran the three states that had "no military organisation" over the course of the century.<sup>73</sup> Most of this happened in the 1850s and 1860s, shortly before official Austro-Hungarian-Persian diplomatic contacts with the Persian Empire were established. For example, the formerly Persian city of Samarkand was occupied and annexed by the Russians in

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<sup>71</sup> Elena Andreeva, *Russia and Iran in the great game: Travelogues and Orientalism*. Routledge studies in Middle Eastern history 8 (London, New York: Routledge, 2007).

<sup>72</sup> Zaluski, *In Angelegenheiten der k.k. Instruktions-Offiziere*.

<sup>73</sup> John Ayde, *Indian frontier policy: an historical sketch* (London: Smith, Elder, & Co, 1897), 17–20.

1868.<sup>74</sup> The struggle of the Central Asian armies against the expanding Czarist Empire was indeed a reason for the Shah to worry since the Russian Empire's expansion had reached the borders of the Persian Empire in the early 1870s<sup>75</sup>. The Russians and the British came worryingly close to the Persian Empire. Great Britain expanded from the British Raj into Central Asia since it was worried that the Russian expansion there could threaten British India and the trade routes in the Indian Ocean.<sup>76</sup> Hence the British reacted by trying to avoid Russian access to the sea. The longer the "Great Game" was "played", the more this impacted the people and states in the region. The two most important ones being Persia and Afghanistan. In 1841/42, the British tried to subjugate Afghanistan but suffered a defeat that, in British eyes, was "disastrous" and a "waste"<sup>77</sup>. The defeat the British suffered didn't slow the efforts in the area, so the diplomatic plays continued in the region, which then developed into what is today commonly known as the Great Game.

The Persians themselves were concerned that this Russian-British expansion/quarrel would lead to the Persian state directly being affected. The country was no stranger to threats from both countries.<sup>78</sup> In 1856 Persia made efforts to reconquer the city of Herat that, despite formerly being Persian, was controlled by Afghanistan. The British saw their interest in Afghanistan and their efforts to block the Russian access to the sea in the region threatened and intervened by declaring war against Persia due to the more friendly relations of Persia with Russia. The British won the war quickly and decisively within five months and forced the Persians to give up the city of Herat to the Afghans and agreed in the Treaty of Paris not to threaten the city again.<sup>79</sup> The Russians, on the other hand, tried and succeeded in increasing their influence not only in Central Asia but also in the Caucasus. Qajar Persia fought two bloody wars against the Russian Empire from 1804 to 1813 and 1826 to 1828<sup>80</sup>. Ultimately, the Persian Empire lost large areas on its Northeastern border that are now part of Turkey, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. This resulted in Persian distrust towards both significant players in the region. England and Russia had

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<sup>74</sup> Svatopluk Soucek, *A short history of inner Asia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 198.

<sup>75</sup> Ayde, 17–20.

<sup>76</sup> Martin Ewans, Henry Pottinger, John M. Kinneir, Robert Wilson, Nikolai N. Murav'ev, Georg von Meyendorf, George D. L. Evans, John MacNeill, and Vasilii Perovskii, *The great game: Britain and Russia in Central Asia* (London: Routledge, 2004), 1 et seq.

<sup>77</sup> Ayde, 15–16.

<sup>78</sup> Nigar Gozalova, "Qajar Iran at the centre of British–Russian confrontation in the 1820s," *The Maghreb Review* 48, no. 1 (2023), 89–99.

<sup>79</sup> Steven R. Ward, *Immortal: A Military History of Iran and Its Armed Forces* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 80.

<sup>80</sup> see Farrokh Chapter 21.

proven to be willing to interfere with Persian matters in the region actively and even to attack Persia directly.

The Persian situation and the choice of Austria as supporter

The Persians felt severely cornered in this situation. They were actively seeking support from other Western powers to protect the integrity of the Empire but also to modernise their own Empire and their army. It was clear that the country in question of supporting the Qajar Empire had to be a modern Western nation that was capable of these tasks and that, in the best case, had no geopolitical interest in the region, which ruled out Great Britain and the Russian Empire. The Ottoman Empire was not only geopolitically interested in the region but also currently in the process of demise and faced severe foreign policy crises, like independence movements across the Empire. It was no secret that “the sick man on the Balkans” was neither capable nor interested in strengthening the Persian role in the Great Game. Of the major European powers, the Persians were left with France, Germany and Austria-Hungary.

France traditionally had good relations with Persia, profoundly influenced Persian culture, and a Franco-Persian alliance existed in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>81</sup> Much like the Austrians, the French had a sizeable presence in Tehran and were priorly more involved in the country than the Austrians at the time. The French also sent three military missions until 1867 that could change very few having to leave the country “with no real achievements”.<sup>82</sup> The French could have been a viable option, as well. Still, their recent defeat against Germany, their unsuccessful military mission and the Shah’s personal preference are likely to have given the edge to the Austrians. Investigating the decision making of the Persian government further would only be possible by accessing their diplomatic sources in the archives in Teheran.

Shah Nasr-ad-Din never stopped looking amongst European countries for further assistance. Despite having low trust in Russia, the UK and France<sup>83</sup>, the Shah Nasr-ad-Din offered them another contract for a military mission in 1870, but the British declined it. A new partner had to be found, and the Shah contacted both the Austrians and the Russians during his tour of Europe in 1878.<sup>84</sup> The Austrians and the Germans were a very pragmatic solution to ensure the future independence of Persia. They both had Western, strong, and modern militaries, especially Germany. Germany had recently won the war of 1871 against France, which was a fact that

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<sup>81</sup> Iradj Amini, “Napoleon and Persia,” *Iran* 37 (1999), 109–122, here 109 et seq. .

<sup>82</sup> Stephanie Cronin, “Importing Modernity: European Military Missions to Qajar Iran,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 50, no. 1 (2008), 197–226, here 210.

<sup>83</sup> *ibid.*, 209.

<sup>84</sup> *ibid.*, 210.

certainly impressed the Shah and Austria, on the other hand, seemed like an ideal candidate since it had very low territorial ambition and no overseas colonies. It also rivalled Russian politics in Europe and was interested in the containment of Russian power.

Hence Austria and Germany were the ideal candidates for the Persian Empire to ask for further support in safeguarding at least the status quo in the Middle East. This is precisely what the Shah did, and it has been deemed necessary enough to receive its own separate folder in the collection of the Imperial diplomatic correspondence between Tehran and Vienna. This folder contains the reports of the Austrian ambassadors sent to Vienna to brief the Ministry of foreign affairs on Persia in interest in a “neutralisation of the country”.

### The Austro-Persian effort to neutralise Persia

The folder cover is titled “Wünsche des Shah bzgl. Neutralisierung Persiens. 1879 – 1884” and already gives us the timespan for the Persian efforts.<sup>E</sup> Even though this folder only starts in 1879, it has to be made clear that the struggle for Persia to keep started long before that. Interestingly the bulk of diplomatic notes on the Austrian correspondence with Persia, in general, stems from 1879 or later, which makes it entirely possible that earlier notes exist but aren’t present or remain hidden in the archives in Vienna. The trigger for the Persian fears in the Great Game seems to be directly connected to the Russian and British impact on the region.

The folder starts with a report on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November 1879 by Karl Graf von Zaluski sent to Baron Haymerle, Austrian minister of foreign affairs from 1879 to 1881, a diplomatic expert for the Middle East and responsible for keeping peace and stability in the region.<sup>85</sup> Zaluski describes the perilous situation Persia finds itself in due to the Russian and British activity in the region and the Shah’s growing concern about the dangers of his antagonism against Persia itself. There seemed to be little doubt that “*La Majesté désire sincèrement conserver à son royaume les bienfaits de la paix*”.<sup>86</sup> This first page of the report already visualises several critical features of the following debate. Firstly, the issue of Persia seems to have been a serious matter in the Austro-Hungarian Ministry of foreign affairs. Not only is the report marked as confidential, but it is also directly sent to and discussed with Imre Széchenyi, the Austro-Hungarian ambassador in Berlin. Haymerle’s presence in Persian matters alone also underlines the importance of the issue due to his status as a the currently highest-ranking and seasoned

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<sup>85</sup> “Haymerle,” in *Meyers Konversationslexikon*, ed. Herrmann J. Meyer, 4th edn. (Leipzig, Wien: Verlag des Bibliographischen Instituts, 1885-1892), 8, 249.

<sup>86</sup> Zaluski, *Report of Zaluski describing the danger the Persian Shah and his state is in and his thoughts on required Austrian action*.

E) Pictures can be found in the appendix under D

diplomat that was at the same time working on the Triple Alliance between the German Empire, Austria-Hungary and Italy. His history as a Middle Eastern peacekeeper, thereby indeed is a hint towards the importance of the region for the monarchy in Vienna.

This first letter sent to Berlin immediately makes clear what Persia asked from Germany and Austria or at least how it was understood.

*“Dans la pensée du Shah l’Autriche-Hongrie et l’Allemagne, qui viennent d’affirmer si heureusement leurs entente politique pourraient entreprendre avec le plus d’autorité des démarches ultérieures à Londres et à St Pétersbourg, dans le but d’obtenir, par un accord unanime des Puissances, la reconnaissance officielle de la neutralisation de la territoire de la Perse.”*<sup>87</sup>

This statement is highlighted and essential because it describes the actual intention of the Shah and, thereby, not only the political perception thereof by the Austrians but also the political intentions of the Persian Empire at the time. Throughout the first report, it is not only explained how Persia seeks to gain an international status of neutrality but also how Russian troop movements on the Caspian Sea are observed and evaluated. All of this is again connected to the importance of the city of Herat for the Persians, that deem the lost city as absolutely crucial for the safety of the Empire. This evaluation might hold due to the geographical situation of Herat and the fact that the Persians had been fighting over the city for almost a century at that time.<sup>88</sup> Herat is located between the Afghan mountains and almost impassable terrain to the East and the Caspian Sea or the Turkmen Desert to the West; this made Herat essential for any civilisation wanting to control Central Asia. The British were so set on avoiding Iranian control of the city that they even led a war against Iran, which had recently occupied the city in 1857.

After the initial pages, Zaluski dives into his opinion about the role the Austrian state should pursue in the Persian dilemma of 1879/80. *“Je me suis permis de faire ressortir, à une autre occasion, l’importance qu’en cas de guerre entre la Grande Bretagne et la Russie chacune d’elles attacherait à la coopération armée de la Perse.”*<sup>89</sup> is how he expresses his concern about the Persian army being dragged into a possible escalation of the Great Game in Central

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<sup>87</sup> *ibid.*, 3.

<sup>88</sup> Christine Noelle-Karimi, *The pearl in its midst: Herat and the mapping of Khurasan (15th-19th centuries)* / Christine Noelle-Karimi. Veröffentlichungen zur Iranistik Nr. 74 (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2014); Peter Avery, J. A. Boyle, W. B. Fisher, Richard N. Frye, I. E. Gershevitch, Gavin Hambly, Peter Jackson, Laurence Lockhart, C. P. Melville, and Ehsan Yarshater, *Cambridge history of Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968-1991), 394–395.

<sup>89</sup> Zaluski, *Report of Zaluski describing the danger the Persian Shah and his state is in and his thoughts on required Austrian action*, 6.

Asia. This was not unrealistic since the borders in the northeast of Persia weren't set, and there were later confusions about which territories belonged to whom. This matter was only settled later, on the 21<sup>st</sup> of September 1881, with the official Russian-Persian border treaty of Akhal-Khorasan.<sup>90</sup> A Persian involvement in a possible war or even skirmish would have not only destroyed the Shah's hope for neutralisation but also endangered the Austrian mission in Persia. Furthermore, it would likely have finally linked Persia to one of the sides in the Great Game and possibly escalated it.

Even though Zaluski strategised towards a possible escalation, it is unclear to what degree he thought it would happen. Still, in a later report, he states that it is unlikely to happen. In late 1879, his report sounded more pessimistic due to the actual evaluation of Russian troops in the area. In the report, he also states that he does indeed think that a Russian attack on the fertile areas of Mazandaran and Gilan may severely hit the Persian Empire and that this is an old Russian plan that aims to connect the areas around the Caspian Sea under Russian rule. On the other hand he evaluates « *que le débarquement de troupes anglaises sur les côtes arides du golfe persique, ne serait exercer d'influence aussi décisive et ne ferait qu'accélérer le démembrement du pays* » and this means that Zaluski himself saw the the Russians and their sizeable, superior army as a far bigger threat for the Persian Empire than the English.<sup>91</sup> This may be related to the recent Russian success in Central Asia and the country's rapid expansion through Central Asia. In contrast, the British have struggled with Afghanistan in the past, but it can also be linked to the effective troops the Russians have stationed on the border, whereas the British would have to bring their army over the sea. Despite these, the main reason Zaluski evaluates a Russian effort as more successful is the angle of attack a British naval invasion would target “*cotes arides*”<sup>92</sup> whereas a Russian land attack would occupy “*fertiles provinces*”<sup>93</sup> and thereby threaten food supply in the Empire. Zaluski thereby claims that *La neutralisation de la Perse est donc nécessaire à l'équilibre militaire des deux Puissances rivales en Asie.*<sup>94</sup> This means that at least the Austrian government officials also saw a necessity for diplomatic interference in the country. It also may be harsh to call it an interference since this kind of effort was precisely what the Shah of Persia sought. Zaluski had a very high opinion of an Austro-Hungarian intervention in this feat since he thought that the Shah's idea of a neutral

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<sup>90</sup> Curzon of Kedleston, George Nathaniel Curzon, 170.

<sup>91</sup> Zaluski, *Report of Zaluski describing the danger the Persian Shah and his state is in and his thoughts on required Austrian action*, 6–7.

<sup>92</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> *ibid.*



Persia guaranteed by Austria-Hungary and Germany « *a par conséquent une incontestable valeur politique et humanitaire d'un caractère plus général* »<sup>95</sup> and he thought that “*L'Autriche-Hongrie [...] verrait grandir dans cet antique royaume, auquel elle aurait rendre un service aussi éminent, cette haute influence morale quelle est appelé à y exercer.*”<sup>96</sup> Hence it becomes clear that at least the Austrian ambassador in Teheran was significantly interested in intervening in the Great Game, with the sole goal of reaping prestige by saving such an ancient empire from a threatening situation.

Furthermore, Zaluski argues that Austria-Hungary “*ne poursuit en Perse ni des intérêts matériels, ni des buts politiques particulières*”<sup>97</sup> and thereby supposedly is in an ideal situation of aiding Persia due to the projected selflessness. It is likely that Zaluski believed in this due to the confidential character of the conversation with the ministry in Vienna. Still, it is simply a wrongful statement of Zaluski to argue that Austria-Hungary didn't pursue any material or political interests in Persia. The effort of Zaluski himself shows the interest Austria-Hungary has in the politicisation of the situation of the Persian state as an object of counteracting Russian interest in the region. The only thing keeping Austria-Hungary from following through with this idea is the global context of the time and the lack of inner European support. Zaluski's report with recommendations of a political effort was forwarded to the Imperial ambassador in Berlin, Imre Szechnyi, who answered on the 8<sup>th</sup> of January 1880 with negative news due to the German's unwillingness to use political capital Austria-Hungary may not have had a direct pursuit for control or territory in Persia as Zaluski argues. Still, the ongoing quarrels in Teheran and the slow escalation of the Great Game were of great interest and potential to the Austrians.

The exchange of documents between the embassy in Teheran and Vienna continues into January 1880. Zaluski again emphasizes the importance « *qu'en cas de guerre entre la Grande Bretagne et la Russie chacune d'elles attacherait à la coopération armée de la Perse.* »<sup>98</sup> and deems all of this as being important for keeping Russian and British power in the region at the same level or as he calls in in “*à l'équilibre militaire*”<sup>99</sup> In January the focus of the correspondence shifts towards the situation of Herat, which was recently occupied by the British. Graf Zaluski reports on the Persian efforts regarding the situation of Herat. According to the correspondence between him and Baron Haymerle in Vienna, they both deem British

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<sup>95</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> *ibid.*

India and Russia to be in a better position than recently, which may make them capable of operating further in the area. Generally, Persia is credited with great success during its negotiations with both Russia and Great Britain and *„Das Ergebnis ist ein sehr befriedigendes gewesen da sowohl der rußische Gesandte den Dank seiner Regierung bei zwei verschiedenen Gelegenheiten ausgedrückt, als auch das englische [...] mit seine Anerkennung zu erkennen gegeben hat.“*<sup>100</sup> This shows that Austria-Hungary was also very interested in the independent Persian efforts to neutralise and keep the balance between pro-Russian and pro-British diplomacy. In January 1880, the Austrian credited the Persian negotiators with great success in these efforts, which effectively meant that the Persians successfully balanced the counterintuitive interests and secured their independence in the conflict for the time being. Zaluski and Haymerle express great understanding for the Persian way of diplomatic action stating that *„Es scheint mir übrigens ganz begreiflich daß, in ihrer heiklen Lage, die persische Regierung sich alle Mühe giebt, um es mit beiden aufeinander eifersüchtigen Mächten möglichst gut zu halten“.*<sup>101</sup> The Persian Position in this conflict seemed to stabilise in this phase, and Graf Zaluski didn't see the immediate danger of escalation anymore. Despite the further Russian insecurity about the British occupation of Herat and the Austrian knowledge about Russian troop movements on the Russo-Persian border, Zaluski states he rates the infrastructure as too bad and the problems the Russians have with the “Turcomans” in the region as too grave to expect anything more than a Russian advance into the city of Merv. Zaluski thereby still thinks *„Rußland sei zwar bestrebt, mit Zuhilfenahme leicht geopferter Bundesgenossen der englischen Herrschaft in Asien den größtmöglichen Schaden zuzufügen, aber keineswegs entschloßen, den gefährlichen politischen Gegner zum entscheidenden Zweikampfe herauszufordern“.*<sup>102</sup> This essentially also means that Austria-Hungary, at this moment in time, had very few reasons to engage in the region actively. Zaluski at this point in time seems to be far more in favor of active engagement in the region than the ministry in Vienna, but even he believed that *„Rußland sei zwar bestrebt, mit Zuhilfenahme leicht geopferter Bundesgenossen der englischen Herrschaft in Asien den größtmöglichen Schaden zuzufügen, aber keineswegs entschloßen, den gefährlichen politischen Gegner zum entscheidenden Zweikampfe herauszufordern“*<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Zaluski, *Report regarding the Persian efforts to balance Russian and British influence in Teheran.*

<sup>101</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> *ibid.*

This assessment proved correct since no further escalation involving Persia could be observed in January. And the rest of the diplomatic correspondence for January stays surprisingly calm, except for a Persian request for a German-Austrian answer on the 16<sup>th</sup> of January. A day later the answer from Vienna makes clear that Zaluski's ideas are not in the official interest of Austria-Hungary as Baron Haymerle asks him "*de ne pas encourager les idées [de] votre lettre du 4 novembre, puisqu'el nous serait difficile de les appuyer*"<sup>104</sup>. This is a clear answer regarding the strategy of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, but Zaluski forwarded a different message to the Shah. As it was already apparent in January due to Szechnyi's message from Berlin, it was unlikely that Germany would aid Austria-Hungary in an effort to neutralise the country. Despite this, Zaluski and the Austrian detachment to Persia decided to avoid any clear statement regarding the Austrian-German position on the matter and effectively told the responsible Persian minister that the German and Austrian cabinets had not yet discussed the issue. Furthermore, Zaluski still tried to convince the Shah of the goodwill of the Austrian government in Vienna and its interest in aiding the Persian efforts. In contrast, no real political will to act without German assistance was expectable. This was mitigated by the Austrian tactic of delaying clear statements until more favourable results were realistic. In this case, the message to the Persians was postponed until a definite answer from the German government in Berlin would reach Vienna. In the meantime, Zaluski tried to convince the Shah's court of the importance and difficulty of the matter.

The decisive message from Vienna came on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 1880. „*Deutschland zeigt keine Neigung sich zum Organe des von Seiner Majestät dem Schah ausgesprochenen Wunsches zu machen. So dankbar wir für das Vertrauen können wir unter solchen Verhältnissen von weiterem Betreiben der Sache keinen Erfolg erwarten*"<sup>105</sup>, this essentially meant that without any further support from Germany Austria didn't see itself in a position to pursue the issue by itself. This is interesting for a couple of reasons. Given the Austrian behaviour in this issue, it becomes clear that the country was interested in acting in the situation but saw itself out of position. Arguably Austria had more considerable influence in Persia than the Germans at the time. Still, the Austrian withdrawal from this effort highlights the limited operational capabilities of Austria outside of Europe during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It simply wouldn't have been taken very seriously by two states with a serious foothold in the region had Austria alone guaranteed Persia with simply a military mission and a few government officials in Persia. It is

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<sup>104</sup> Heinrich von Haymerle and Imre Széchenyi, *Austro-Hungarian answer regarding Zaluski's request*, AT-OeSTA/HHStA PA XXVIII 9-6 / Varia 1885 (Vienna, 1880).

<sup>105</sup> Haymerle, *Final Austro-Hungarian answer regarding neutralisation of Persia*.

unclear to what degree a German-Austrian declaration would have been taken serious, but it can indeed be said that a joint declaration would at least have raised the weight of the declaration itself.

Surprisingly Persia didn't react very negatively to the Austro-German rejection of a guarantee and showed understanding for the Austrian decision to not be able to guarantee Persia by itself. The reasons Baron Haymerle in Vienna sent to Teheran were credible, but it was interestingly clarified that Germany and not Austria brought forward these reasons, which may have been an attempt at putting eventual blame for the failure of the effort on Germany. He states that the „*Regierung von Deutschband [...] den triftigen Einwand erlassen, daß Persien der Sphäre unsers thatsächlichen direkten Einflusses zu ferne liege als daß wir und Deutschband es übernehmen könnten, seine Neutralität nicht nur zu befürworten, sondern auch wirksam zu garantiren*”<sup>106</sup>. Essentially this means that the Austro-Hungarian government wanted to signal their will to help the Persians, but that it was impossible to act due to Germany.

Despite the understanding of the Persian government, the first signals of understanding the situation in the Great Game changed with the Russian occupation of Merv and the resulting incidents on the Persian border (that later resulted in the Akhal-Khorasan border treaty). This renewed and enforced the Shah's demand for diplomatic aid, and he requested further assistance from Austria-Hungary and Germany. Nasr ad-Din Shah asked for a diplomatic solution, stated that the reason, as mentioned earlier, was that geographical distance doesn't matter and demanded the forwarding of his claims to Berlin.<sup>107</sup> Consequently, this was done, and the answer of Ambassador Imre Széchenyi constated Shah's demand and the current state of negotiations. Instead of a full guarantee, the idea was now to create an arbitral tribunal headed by Austria and to use Austria-Hungary and Russia as guaranteed powers for the tribunal and that these two powers “*im Falle einer Bedrohung Persiens des Schiedsrichteramt übernehmen möchten*”<sup>108</sup>.

Despite these fewer demanding claims, Austria again rejected the idea claiming that an arbitral tribunal solely led by Austria-Hungary would not have any credibility or diplomatic weight on the global playing field. This seemed to be the stance of the Austrian government from the beginning. The Austro-Hungarian response to these issues can be considered very friendly in open as Haymerle stated that Austria is generally willing to act as a mediator in cases of internal

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<sup>106</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> Imre Széchenyi, *Letter of the Austrian ambassador in Berlin to Vienna regarding the new demands of the Shah*, AT-OeSTA/HHStA PA XXVIII 9-6 / Varia 1885 (Vienna, 1880).

<sup>108</sup> *ibid.*

quarrels in Persia, but also stated “*daß ein Schiedsgericht nicht auf einseitigen Begehren, sondern nur den eingreifen kann, wenn es von zwei oder mehreren streitenden Theilen angerufen [wird]*”.<sup>109</sup> The general Austrian openness to this issue, albeit trying to avoid clear statements, shows their willingness to use their influence and high reputation in Teheran to alter the Persian situation. The Austrians' final rejection of the Shah's demands in August of 1880 doesn't play a significant role in this assessment. Austria-Hungary knew that it wasn't in a global position to push into any direction diplomatically alone, thereby they waited for a better situation and opportunity in either Russia or Germany, but they didn't want to lose their considerable influence on the Shah, who saw them more as a tool of keeping his country stable between Russia and Great Britain. The relationship between Persia and Austria-Hungary can thereby be described as one of careful, limited mutual benefit, where the Austrians saw an opportunity to act internationally by spending minimal resources by using Persia as a tool for gaining an international reputation and the Shah, who indeed had a very high opinion of Austria-Hungary, was desperate for allies that weighted the global playing field.

## The Influence of Austrians in Persian Service

This next chapter is the only one that doesn't fully draw its sources from the diplomatic correspondence between the Austrian embassy in Teheran and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Vienna. This is because the people presented in this chapter were, for different reasons, e.g., being in the service of the Shah, not prominently featured in the correspondence that majorly focused on diplomatic proceedings. Despite their striking absence from the primary source material of this thesis, it is essential to mention them due to their function as a significant linkage between Persia and Austria at the time. Both Albert Gasteiger Khan and Jakob Eduard Polak were highly respected by the Shah and his court. They were decorated people and ranked among the Shah's highest servants. As mentioned before, both have been written about before but from entirely different viewpoints; in Polak's case, the newest study is about his influence on the development and import of Western medicine in Persia<sup>110</sup>, whereas Gasteiger Khan has a few books<sup>111</sup> written about his deeds. As of 2013, there is also an edition of his letters between Persia and Tyrol.<sup>112</sup> Interestingly, two of the three most important pieces about Gasteiger were written by his descendants, who also possess his letters. This is not implicating that the scientific credibility of these works is any lower. However, it shows that these two influential individuals

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<sup>109</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> Gächter.

<sup>111</sup> Gasteiger, *General Gasteiger-Khan*; Pohanka and Thurner.

<sup>112</sup> Praxmarer.

are still overgone, mainly from the viewpoint of historical-diplomatic science. This chapter combines the primary and secondary sources available about Polak and Gasteiger Khan into a coherent picture of the influence they could and might have had on the Shah and Austro-Persian relations during the “Austrian decade”. This would also indicate the limited perspective Slaby portrays in his evaluation of the Austrian-Persian relations during the Qajar times.

### Albert Gasteiger Khan

Gasteiger Khan is often portrayed as a travelling researcher, but they filled many more roles than this.<sup>113</sup> Gasteiger Khan was recruited by the Persian officials in 1859 with a program that wanted to conscript young Austrians with good education to Persia. In Persia, these young people were mainly used to improve the country's infrastructure or teach at the Academy of Science “Dar al-Fonun”. In the following years, Gasteiger learned Persian and travelled to Teheran to enter the service of the Shah. Gasteiger never was a thoroughly Persian official and always kept his contacts in Austria-Hungary. The primary evidence is the many diplomatic reports Gasteiger Khan sent to Austria. Some of these reports and studies are important for assessing his work in Persia. Exemplary of this is a report he sent to Vienna published in a newspaper and as a brochure in 1862 that evaluated the economic potential of Austrian goods in Persia. The intention of this brochure and the preceding and following correspondence was clearly to bolster the Austrian economy and to assess the viability of an Austrian economic foothold in Persia. Gasteiger himself assesses a plethora of goods and their potential in Persia and evaluates the financial activities of other countries in Persia. According to him the Austrian industry has to „*daher vor Allem Handelsbeziehungen mit Energie [anzubahnen] und diese mit Raschheit [zu verfolgen]*“<sup>114</sup>. All in all, Gasteiger evaluates the potential for successful Austrian trade Austria with Persia as extraordinarily good, the field of potential trade areas as “*ausserordentlich weit, ehrenvoll und gewinnreich*”<sup>115</sup> and to be soon conquered by the Austrians if they show “*Energie, Ausdauer, entschiedene[s] Auftreten und jene Solidarität, die unseren Handelsstand besonders auszeichnet*”<sup>116</sup>. He also considers the relative geographical proximity of Austria-Hungary to Persia in comparison with the other European states as advantageous.<sup>117</sup> This doesn't only show us that Gasteiger Khan saw potential in the Austro-

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<sup>113</sup> Slaby.

<sup>114</sup> Gasteiger, *Die Handelsverhältnisse Persiens in Bezug auf die Absatzfähigkeit österreichischer Waren* VIII.

<sup>115</sup> *ibid.* XV.

<sup>116</sup> *ibid.* XV.

<sup>117</sup> *ibid.*, 48.

Persian trade but also that he aimed at strengthening the Austrian foothold in Persia and in his conclusion, he states:

*“Die Vorliebe für Pracht, Luxus und Comfort ist in Persien immer mehr im Steigen begriffen, das Volk immer begieriger, sich mit den Erzeugnissen eines Landes zu umgeben, das durch seine geistige Ueberlegenheit, seine industriellen Fortschritte ihm solche Reichthümer zugänglich macht und stets mehr dessen Bewunderung erwirbt.”*<sup>118</sup>

This statement underlines the, at the time reasonably normal, superiority Gasteiger felt towards the Persians and that he thought the Persian population longed for Austrian goods and Austria would gain the “admiration” of the Persians and thereby actively vouched for gaining economic influence in Persia. The brochure is signed with “Albert Ritter v. Gasteiger”, k. persischer Genie-Director, Honorär-Correspondent der Wiener Handels- und Gewerbekammer<sup>119</sup>, which means that Gasteiger already had a high rank in Persia, albeit not being Khan yet, and indeed information and influence on the Persian court lower ranked people didn’t have. This behaviour exemplifies Gasteiger’s actions during his first period in Persian service, lasting from 1860 to 1874. This can be seen as the actions of a recently arrived Gasteiger who still has close connections to his home country. Still, as aforementioned, this never changed over many decades in Persian service. Gasteiger’s expertise proved invaluable to the Shah, and he quickly rose to the ranks at the Imperial court in Teheran. His most important task was to improve the infrastructure of the country.

His “masterpiece” in infrastructural modernisation of the Persian Empire was the Mazandaran street that crossed rugged terrain in northern Persia and significantly eased the travel from Teheran to the Caspian Sea.<sup>120</sup> This difficult feat granted him his rank as a Persian Khan, a rare and very high decoration comparable to the Turkish Pasha.<sup>121</sup> As the first European to be awarded the status of Khan, Gasteiger automatically assumed a very high position in the Persian court and was even more respected. It is essential to evaluate this title, the accompanying honours, and what it meant for Austro-Persian relations in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Firstly it elevated Gasteiger Khan over all other European representatives in Teheran and gave his voice particular weight, and gave his influence a potential high weight.<sup>122</sup> Another indicator of his increased importance on the Persian court after this event in 1868 is that he had more direct contact with

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<sup>118</sup> *ibid.*, 50.

<sup>119</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> Praxmarer, 79–97.

<sup>121</sup> *ibid.*, 93.

<sup>122</sup> Gasteiger, *General Gasteiger-Khan*, 26.

the Shah after he was named a Khan, like accompanying the monarch on his Persia tour in 1870 and his pilgrimage to Kerbala in 1870/71.<sup>123</sup>

This shows the real importance of the Shah's tour of Europe in 1873, which marked Gasteiger's first return to Austria since 1860. The World's Fair in Vienna was a perfect opportunity for the Shah to show Persia's goods. Gasteiger Khan and the Shah's personal doctor Eduard Polak were welcome diplomats during the Shah's visit to Austria. He was still a correspondent of the „Wiener Handels- und Gewerbekammer“ but was also responsible for creating part of the Persian brochure for the World Fair. It is unclear to what degree the Gasteiger influenced this, but the Shah left Austria highly impressed by the Austrians.<sup>124</sup> Gasteiger Khan stayed behind in Austria until 1879 and thereby lost his direct impact on the Shah's opinion during this time, but his personal invitation by the Shah to return to Persia in 1878 and his warm welcome after his return accompanying the military mission shows the reputation he had on the Persian court.<sup>125</sup> During the following decade in Persian service, Gasteiger not only led the Austrian military mission to Persia but also undertook scientific expeditions and diplomatic missions for the Shah.<sup>126</sup> Gasteiger's diplomatic activity related to Austrian interests in this decade seems more limited than before, which may be reasoned by his distant relation to the Austrian military mission.<sup>127</sup> Gasteiger Khan's very high position on the Persian court suffered from intrigues and bad relations with the Europeans on the Persian court in the second half of the 1880s, which eventually led to his return to Austria.<sup>128</sup> Conclusively, Albert Gasteiger, later Khan, was highly respected in the Persian court and by the Shah. His successful career on the Persian court gave him significant influence and a close relationship with the Shah himself. During the first 13 years of his service in Persia, Gasteiger also used his knowledge and power in Persia to benefit the Austro-Hungarian crown by promoting economic growth and trade between Austria and Persia. According to his assessment, this trade would have been highly beneficial for Austria-Hungary<sup>129</sup>, but it is unlikely that the same would have been confirmed for Persia. This kind of trade would have likely had and, to some degree, factually had<sup>130</sup> similarities to the colonial trade deals of other great powers. As described in the chapter about the Austrian military mission Gasteiger Khan had a significant influence on some trade deals closed between Austria-

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<sup>123</sup> Praxmarer, 98–142.

<sup>124</sup> *ibid.*, 155.

<sup>125</sup> *ibid.*, 178.

<sup>126</sup> *ibid.*, 179–214.

<sup>127</sup> Pohanka and Thurner, 181–184.

<sup>128</sup> Praxmarer, 214–215.

<sup>129</sup> Gasteiger, *Die Handelsverhältnisse Persiens in Bezug auf die Absatzfähigkeit österreichischer Waren*.

<sup>130</sup> Brenneis, Bylandt-Rheidt and Khan.



Hungary and Persia and even got ennobled by Emperor Francis Joseph II for his part in strengthening the Austrian economy. Gasteiger was far more than just a scientist like Slaby described them. Still, the case of Gasteiger Khan shows that even semi-private (Gasteiger was honorary consul in Teheran during a part of the 1860s)<sup>131</sup> Austrians were interested and did influence the relations and politics between Persia and Austria.

### Jakob Eduard Polak

Gasteiger was not the only Austrian of high rank in the Persian court since Jakob Eduard Polak had already risen to the position of personal doctor of the Shah since his arrival in Teheran 1850/51. Contrary to the call of Gasteiger to Teheran, which mostly looked for engineers and technical experts, the Persian government had begun recruiting doctors a decade earlier, aiming to modernise Persia.<sup>132</sup> Polak is chosen as a further example of individual Austrian influence on the Persian court due to his very high position, the long time spent in Persia and his, much like Gasteiger, multidimensional roles in Persia and between Austria and Persia. First and foremost, Polak was a trained doctor and was employed as such in Persia. He is generally seen as the scientist, who brought Western medicine to Persia, but was also active as a botanist, geologist, (unofficial) diplomat and geographer.<sup>133</sup> This portrait of Polak is supposed to show Polak's political influence in Persia and will do this by presenting, if available, primary sources written by Polak himself. Much like Gasteiger, he is not featured extensively in diplomatic correspondence because much of his time in Persia was spent earlier than the 1870s and 1880s, hence the reliance on his work. In Afsaneh Gächter's book, there is a chapter present<sup>134</sup> that does come close to an evaluation of what this chapter intends to do and assesses the situation of Polak in between science and trade policy. Still, there is more to be found about this topic in Polak's sources, and Polak's actual influence on Austrian influence in Persia deserves to be looked at from a diplomatic-historical angle as well. The first decade of Polak's presence in Persia was initially shaped by his presence as a doctor in Persia. Still, he also briefly served as the unofficial Austrian representation in Teheran due to the country's lack of an official Austrian office at the time. This lack of relations would only change with the naming of Gasteiger as honorary consul in 1866 and the formalisation of diplomatic relations in 1873.

Polak's return to Austria in 1860 didn't cut his ties to Persia, but he continued to function as an "intermediary" between the two countries. The style and content of his publications that

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<sup>131</sup> Gächter, 200.

<sup>132</sup> *ibid.*, 60–63.

<sup>133</sup> *ibid.*, 145–181.

<sup>134</sup> *ibid.*, 197–218.

describe Austro-Persian relations give us further insight into his thinking about Persia and its people. This gets especially interesting when he is acting in an official role of either Persia or Austria. More than Gasteiger Polak was involved in Persia's exhibition at the World Fair in Vienna in 1873, and the official catalogue he comprised<sup>135</sup> is very revealing about his take on Austro-Persian relations; more than this, there is also an official presentation about the Austrians in Persia from 1876.<sup>136</sup> It generally can be said that Polak is a representative of the contemporary school of thought that saw European development as superior to any other culture. Nowadays, his descriptions of Persia and the Persians could be seen as arrogant or condescending, but it was generally understood as a good deed to enlighten others. In this context, Polak described the Austrian presence in Persia and the relationship of Austrians and Persian with each other as a teacher-learner relationship, as he states, contrary to African natives, the Persian *“hat Talent zu Allem, selbst – zur Ehrlichkeit”*.<sup>137</sup> Statements like these, the title alone but especially the content of his presentation *“Die österreichischen Lehrer in Persien”*, are entirely written in the colonial and racist mindset of Persians being more advanced than others but still uncivilised. Polak's presentation seems to show the success of the many Austrian experts allegedly in reforming the Persian Empire. Despite his negative assessment of the progress of Persia, his recollection is extraordinarily positive, and he ends his presentation with the result *“daß wir Oesterreicher zur Kenntniß des Landes und zur Verbreitung von Cultur in Persien unser Scherflein beigetragen haben”*<sup>138</sup>. The rest of his presentation is a chronological list of his own deeds in Persia and ends with an assessment of other Austrians and their deeds in Persia. A fascinating anecdote he gives for his activities is that Polak himself intended and succeeded in building a military hospital to lessen the suffering of injured soldiers.<sup>139</sup> This wasn't a direct goal of the Austrian government, but it bolstered the Persian army's technological and logistical capabilities.

Even more interesting than his presentation is Polak's role during the World Fair in Vienna in 1873; he essentially served both governments as part of the Persian pavilion for the World Fair and the advertisement thereof. His catalogue indeed promotes trade between Persia and Austria to a large degree. It contains large sections about raw materials in Persia, the possibility of exploitation,<sup>140</sup> and the possibility of Persia as a market for Austrian goods. The whole

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<sup>135</sup> Polak, *Special-Catalog der Ausstellung des Persischen Reiches*.

<sup>136</sup> Polak, *Die österreichischen Lehrer in Persien*.

<sup>137</sup> *ibid.*, 4.

<sup>138</sup> *ibid.*, 32.

<sup>139</sup> *ibid.*, 23.

<sup>140</sup> Polak, *Special-Catalog der Ausstellung des Persischen Reiches*, 7–15; 30-31.

catalogue is more geared at showing what Persia has to offer, what raw material and trade opportunities the country offers, how to travel to Persia, and what kind of duties the government demands.<sup>141</sup> Since 1866 and the Austro-Hungarian compromise, the formerly weak economy of Austria-Hungary boomed more,<sup>142</sup> and the politics wanted to make use of that and gain more weight on the international playing field. The Austrian government welcomed the incentive to invest in Persia, as much as the Persian government was delighted to see foreign trade and inventions come to its country. For this success, Polak personally honoured himself for his part in the World Fair.<sup>143</sup>

Polak, much like Gasteiger, was an individual with excellent contacts to the Persian court and took part in official government affairs and organised events that were inherently important for the young diplomatic relations of the two countries. His impact on diplomatic relations between Austria and Persia reached beyond just the exchange of medical knowledge between Persia and Austria. He may not have been as influential, interested or even knowledgeable in foreign affairs as Gasteiger, something he mentioned in a talk with the Shah of Persia in 1860<sup>144</sup>, but he was still a part of the Austrian influence in Persia.

### An evaluation of the categorisation of the Austrian presence in Persia

The previous chapters evaluated source material about three decisive elements of Austrian influence in Persia during Slaby's "Austrian decade" and before that. This thesis set out to answer questions regarding the classification of the Austrian presence in Persia and to engage with Slaby's claim that Austrian researchers were only in Persia to conduct research and not interfere with the country politically. Regarding the question of colonialism, evaluating the Austrian presence in Persia remains difficult. Some elements of the Austrian presence in Persia undoubtedly had a colonial mindset. If we again look at Osterhammel's definition of colonialism and the three core elements defined therein, it can be said that the Austrian individuals in Persia certainly thought of their own culture as supreme compared to Persian culture. All three prominent individuals expressed their thought about this during their time in Persia. Most visibly, this happened with Eduard Polak's presentations back in Austria that praised the presence of Austrian teachers in Persia and their share in "civilising" the country. Another pillar of Osterhammel's definition is the lack of willingness to syncretise and the

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<sup>141</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> David F. Good, *The economic rise of the Habsburg Empire, 1750-1914* (Berkeley, London: University of California Press, 1984), 123–124.

<sup>143</sup> Gächter, 208.

<sup>144</sup> Polak, *Persien: das Land und seine Bewohner*, 317.

preference to import the “own” culture into another country. This certainly also happened to some degree in the Austro-Persian relations. This was, however, less of a state-initiated culture transfer but rather a wanted import of knowledge and techniques that certainly changed the Persian landscape of medicine, engineering, military ability and science. Contrary to their belief in the superiority of Western Austrian culture, the documents only give a few hints towards Austria or Austrians actively aiming to change the culture of the people. There are some like Polak’s statements about the educability of Persians and their potential to become good humans, but this is more likely to be a sign of the time rather than intentional.

The third definition of severe foreign influence is the hardest one to determine. Austrian influence on Persian politics in the 1870s and 1880s was existent and Persian politics changed. The question is, thereby, more if the official and unofficial influence of Austria-Hungary was considerable enough to determine or change how the Persian state acted. The answer to this is, again, partly, this was the case. The Austrian influence on domestic politics, e.g., the direct intervention and command of native Austrian army officers in the Kurdish revolution, was extensive. Further examples are Shah’s employment of many Austrian researchers and reformers during the 1870s and 1880s and the attempts to reform the coinage and post system after the Austrian standard in the 1870s. These eventually failed tries are excluded from the thesis due to their limitations but are worth looking into to understand Austro-Hungarian influence in Teheran better. Austria and Austrians certainly had and were actually, during the reform attempts of Shah Nasr ad din Shah supposed to influence Persia. The development of the state after, partly, the Austrian example was the goal of the Shah. Furthermore, it is clear that Austrian individuals still had linkages and interests in benefits for the Austrian state and direct influence on Persian government projects and economic deals. The capability to shape Persian politics to its will or direction was more present for Austria than for other states.

The influence on foreign politics paints a similar picture. Austria showed interest in being involved in the Great Game. Certainly not as a leading player, but the state saw the opportunity to use the uncertainty of the Persian government as an opportunity for grandeur. Again, Persia itself asked for Austro-German intervention in the Great Game, but even when this became unlikely, Austria certainly tried to keep its influence. Despite all of this, it is doubtful that the Austrian influence in Teheran would have been strong enough to dictate the direction of Persian politics. Still, Austria indeed enjoyed significant leverage over Persia. Regarding this first part of concluding thoughts, the definition of Austria’s presence in Persia as non-territorial colonialism depends on the definition and interpretation of certain words in definitions. Just

like Slaby already understood, the 1870s and 1880s in Persia indeed were an “Austrian decade”, and Austrian influence in Persia was great and most likely high than that of other nations in Teheran, except possibly Russia. Regarding all this, it is more inaccurate than accurate to call the Austro-Persian relationship at this time colonialist. It would be more accurate to call it a period of extensive influence that could have developed into a colonial relationship had it developed in this direction for longer and had Austria gained even more decisive influence, strengthening its capabilities to influence Persian decisions decisively. The main hindrance to calling this a colonial relationship is the strong Persian actorship and the active approach and import of Austrian influence.

What can be said, however, is that Slaby’s general statement about Austrian researchers being apolitical is factually wrong. This, of course, also depends on whom Slaby meant by “researcher”, but the two researchers presented in this thesis alone were far from apolitical and kept strong ties to Austrian politics and economy, which they used for Austria's benefit. For future work, it would be interesting to look further into other researchers who were active in Austria during the time. This would also hold for other countries; as of now, there are few written accounts of the political activity or influence of researchers in late Qajar Persia. There are certainly possibilities to conduct studies about this influence of Russian and British researchers, who, as Slaby argues, were politically very active.

Regarding the Austrian influence, a plethora of untouched source material on Austrian foreign relations is available in the HHStA in Vienna, which only waits to be evaluated and interpreted. Due to the constraints of this thesis, only a few folders of actual source material could be used, and it would be a worthy PhD project to evaluate the entire Austro-Persian relationship during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and its significance for both states. This would, however, be much more interesting by also using the Persian court correspondence of the time to properly be able to compare intentions and execution and to gain deeper insights into a unique relationship.

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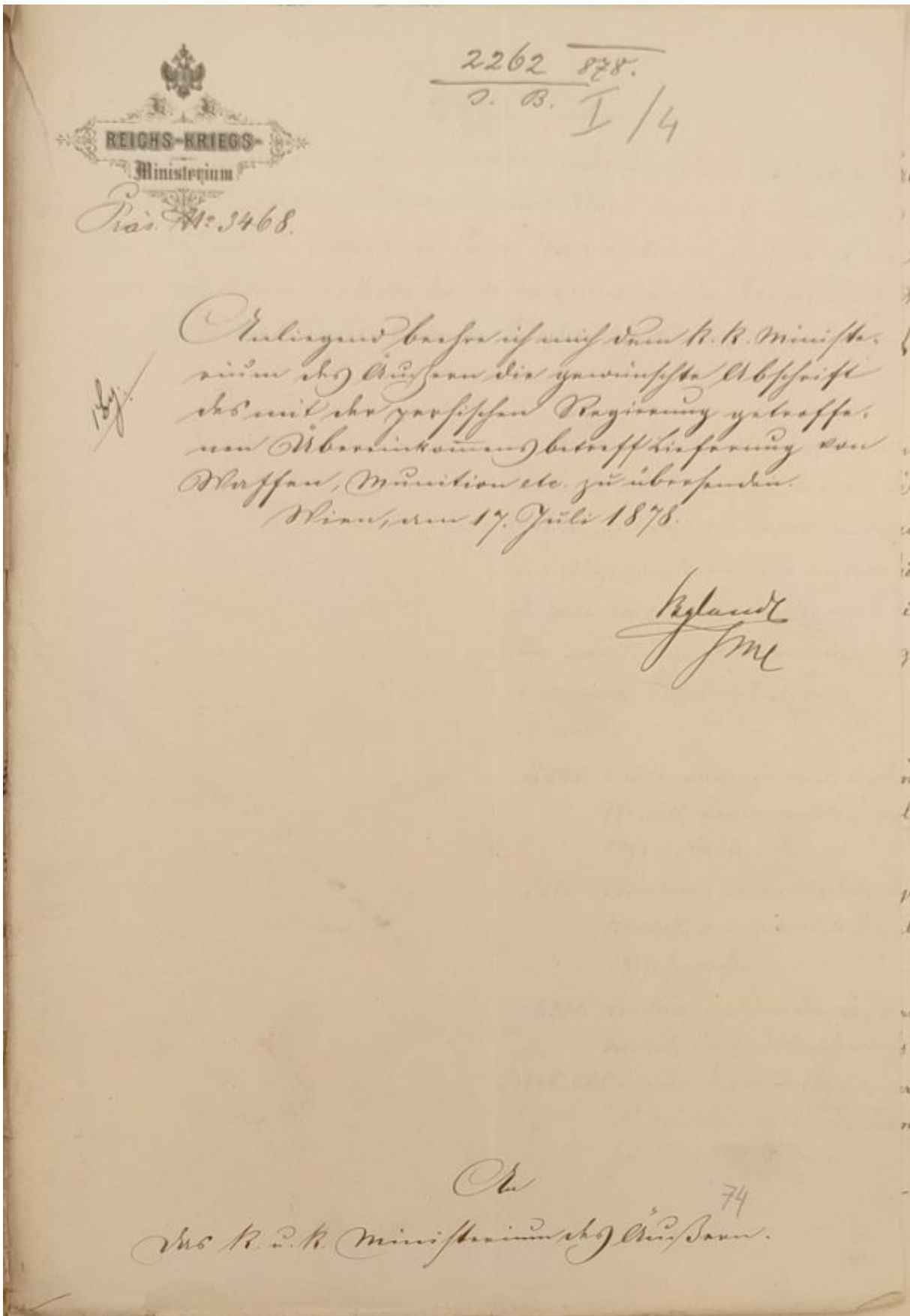
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# Appendix

A) Contract concerning weapon deliveries from Austria to Persia / Title and exemplary page



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## Convention

conclue à la date d'aujourd'hui entre Son Altesse le Grand Vizeir  
de Perse Hadschi Mirza Hussein Khan agissant au nom de  
Sa Majesté le Schah de Perse Nasr-Eddin d'une part et de  
Son Excellence le Ministre de la guerre de Sa Majesté S. M. R. I.,  
le Lieutenant-Général Comte Bylandt-Rheidt d'autre part.

Par suite du désir exprimé par  
S. M. le Schah de Perse, le ministère  
S. M. R. I. de la guerre se déclare disposé  
et s'oblige par la présente convention,  
de faire la commande des objets ci-des-  
sous spécifiés pour le compte du gou-  
vernement Impérial Persan :

savoir :

10.000 fusils pour infanterie, système  
Werndl, dernier modèle de l'an  
1877, neufs.

5000 carabines pour cavalerie, système  
Werndl, dernier modèle de l'an  
1877, neufs.

1.500 revolver, système Gousser, dernier  
modèle de l'an 1877, neufs.

3.000.000 cartouches métalliques pour fusil  
d'infanterie de 11<sup>mm</sup>, dernier modèle  
de l'an 1877, neufs.

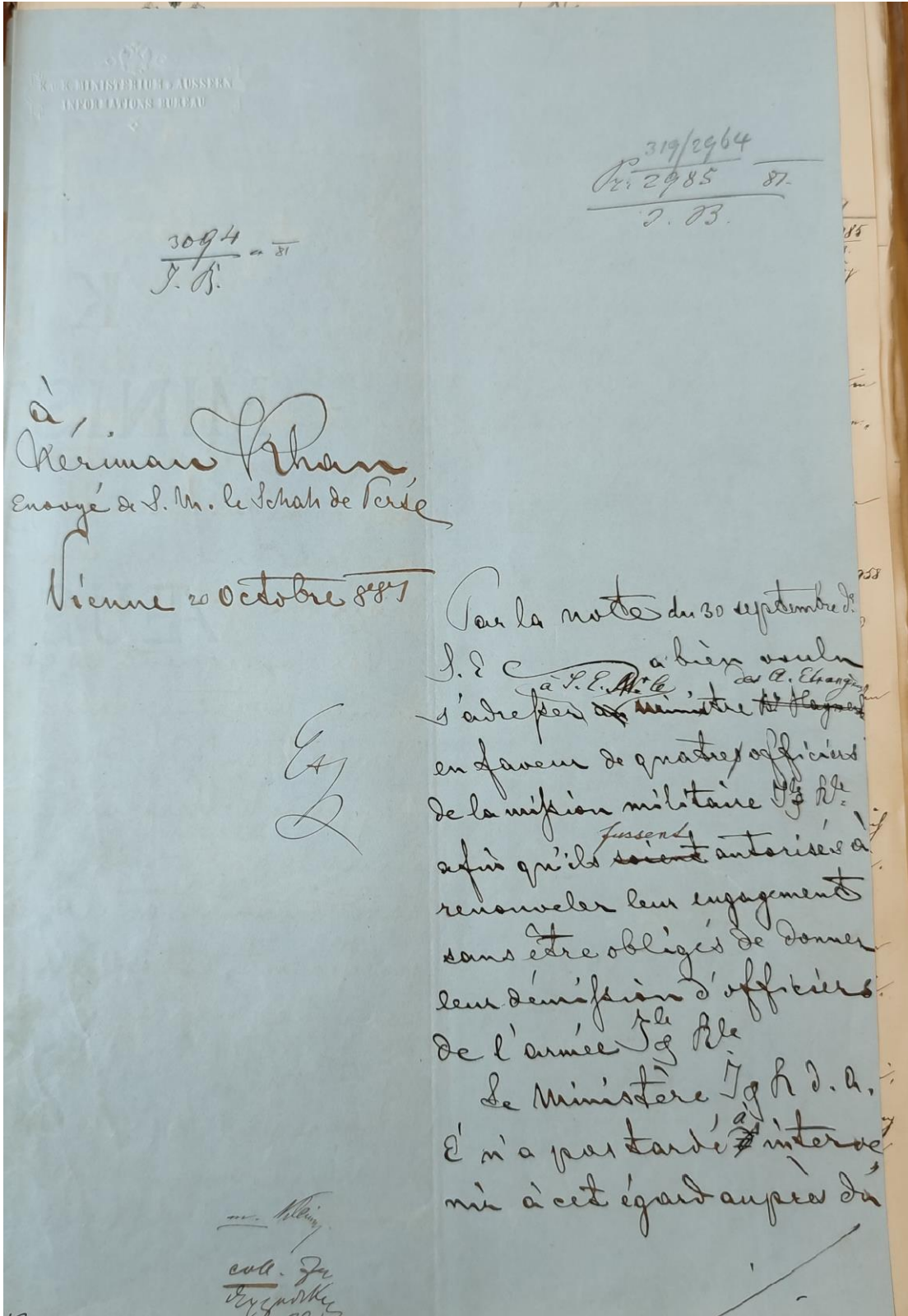
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B) Exemplary page of a rapport book

Rapport			
N <sup>o</sup>	Date	Objet du Rapport	Observations
18 B	25 sept.	<p>Révolution afghane.                      L'influence de la Russie.                      La marche du général Roberts                      à Caboul, où règne une                      anarchie complète.                      Candahar occupé de nouveau                      par les forces britanniques.                      L'Angleterre a promis au                      Jaurt persan de ne point                      s'emparer de Herat si elle ne                      s'y voyait forcée par les événements.                      La mort de l'Emir Chir Ali.                      La publication du professeur                      Martens conseil du Ministère                      d'Aff. Etg. à St Pétersbourg estime                      que les frontières de la Russie                      et de l'Angleterre se touchent                      déjà en Asie centrale.</p>	
18 C	25 sept.	<p>Le Chah se rendit en ville pour                      y recevoir les hommages de                      Sa Cour. - L'idée d'une                      transformation complète de                      l'armée persane. - Le mille                      fusils système Berdan pour les                      Cosaques ne sont pas un cadeau                      du Tsar. -                      Le directeur de la monnaie a                      reçu l'ordre de frapper des pièces                      d'or de la valeur des Impériales.                      Les amusemens du Roi. -                      Le Chah à Ghelandouer. -</p>	



C) Exemplary page of an envelope containing personal thoughts



D) First Page of the neutralisation folder containing the thematic correspondence

