

Periphery and Centre in Pahlavi Iran according to the Memoirs of Hossein Fardust

Walter Posch

Introduction

In late 1984 intelligence officers of the newly established “Ministry of Intelligence of the Islamic Republic of Iran” (*VAJA - vezarat-e ettela’at-e jomburi-ye eslami-ye Iran*) arrested Hossein Fardust, a four-star general (*arteshbod*) in the Shah’s notorious intelligence service, the SAVAK (*sazeman-e ettela’at va amniyat-e keshvar*, Organisation for Intelligence and National Security).¹ Contrary to many other regime luminaries, Fardust stayed in Iran and went underground where he remained undetected for several years. He hoped his friends in the Liberation Movement (*nehzat-e azadi*) could take over total power and control of the state apparatus, which would enable them to allow Fardust an honourable return to an official position of influence. It is not clear to us how long he fostered this illusion, which explains why he was so forthcoming during his interrogations until he passed away in prison in 1987.

The Intelligence Ministry collected and edited all the material produced during Fardust’s detention, mostly papers and testimonies written by himself. The ministry tasked Abdollah Shahbazi, an Iranian historian of notorious fame for his anti-Bahai and anti-Jewish conspiracy theories, with editing a two-volume book² under the title “The Rise and fall of the Pahlavi Dynasty, Memoirs of General Hossein Fardust”.³ Therein, Fardust devotes a lengthy chapter to “domestic security problems under Mohammad Reza” where he analyses the ethnic question as well as centre-periphery relations of the

¹ On the history of this organisation see Mozaffar Shahedi, *SAVAK – Sazeman-e Ettelaat va Amniyat-e Keshvar, 1335-1357*, Tehran: PSRI 1399/2000.

² For a discussion of this source, Fardust’s military career and the structure of Iranian intelligence during the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi see Walter Posch, ‘Die Memoiren des Hossein Fardoust als Quelle zum SAVAK,’ in: Alma Hannig and Claudia Reichl-Hamm (eds.), *Zwischen Krieg und Frieden. Festschrift für Erwin A. Schmidl zum 65. Geburtstag*, Wien: Militaria 2021, 484-503.

³ Abdollah Shahbazi (ed.) *Hozur va Soqut-e Saltanat-e Pahlavi. Khaterat-e Arteshbod-e sabegh, Hossein Fardust*, 2 vols. Tehran: Ettelaat 1380/1987, quoted in the text as (Fardust).

second Pahlavi from a purely security-centred perspective, as it was standard during his time (Fardust, 488-509). The Islamic Republic understood the problem of “securitizing” ethnic and ethno-religious identities and the former Supreme Leader Seyyed Ali Khamenei has often spoken out against this attitude.⁴ Yet, the centralising nature of the modern Iranian state – whether Pahlavi monarchy or Islamic Republic – is self-evident and inherently directed against the country’s multi-ethnic nature.⁵ Hence, Fardust’s description – or interpretation – of Iran’s domestic security situation allows a peculiar insight into Iran’s ethnic question during a particular historical period, the reign of the second Pahlavi, but it also gives us some clues about the methods and principles of the securitisation of ethnicity in modern Iran.

A Missing Doctrine?

As a former general, who was active at the supreme level of Iran’s security apparatus Fardust stresses his personal experience in the said field and explicitly refers to his former functions when he served as head of the “Special Intelligence Bureau” (SIB - *daftar-e vizheh-ye ettela’at*)⁶ and in this function was automatically the Deputy Chief of SAVAK, and as head of the “Imperial Inspectorate Organisation” (*sazeman-e bazresi-ye shahanshahi-e koll-e keshvar*), the latter being a civilian organisation.⁷ The starting point of his reflection, however, seems to be rather a look back at unfinished business of his time in active duty: he maintains that the lack of a cohesive “national security doctrine” (*doktrin-e amniyat-e melli*) may well have been the real cause for the downfall of the Pahlavi regime. According to Fardust, such a doctrine would ideally lay down the main guiding principles for a country’s domestic and

⁴ On the Islamic Republic of Iran’s Kurdistan policy and the understanding of the late Supreme Leader therein see Walter Posch, ‘Fellow Arians and Muslim Brothers. Iranian Narratives on the Kurds’, in: Gareth Stansfield and Mohammad Sharif (eds), *The Kurdish Question Revisited*, London: Hurst 2017, 331-352, esp. 332-340.

⁵ The Islamic Republic rather explicitly states its Persian- and Shi’ite-centred nature in its schoolbooks, see Amir Mirfakhraie, ‘Social Justice; Anti-Imperialist, Persian-Centric, and Shi’ite-Centric Discursive Formations of the Ideal Citizen and Iranian School Textbooks: A Social Biography Response,’ in: Peyman Vahabzadeh (editor), *Iran’s Struggles for Social Justice. Economics, Agency, Justice, Activism*, Cham: PalgraveMacMillan/Springer 2017, 99-125.

⁶ A critical evaluation of this organisation gives Gholamreza Ali-Babai, *Tarikh-e Artesh-e Iran. Az Hakhamaneshian ta Asr-e Pahlavi*, Tehran: Ashian 1382/2003, 346-355.

⁷ Posch, ‘Memoiren,’ 496-498.

foreign policy (Fardust, 479-487). In his view, such a doctrine does not emerge in a vacuum but under the influence of factors, such as:

“different historic, political, economic, confessional, racial, and climate factors, as well as the geographic position, neighbours and the kind of relationship with them, traditions and culture, the balance of domestic relations within the country, the level of development of the ways of public communication, ethnic diversity and tribes, political traditions of the society and the degree of the strength of laws and customs, the kind of governance etc. etc.” (Fardust, 479)

All these factors have a defining impact on a country's national security doctrine. In other words, it is hard and soft security factors setting the frame of such a doctrine. Yet, neither Reza Khan nor his son paid sufficient attention to it, but rather they implemented the wishes of foreign powers as one could see with the White Revolution or the land reform, two of the most important reform projects of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. According to Fardust, all reform projects have been undertaken without any consideration of Iran's cultural, societal and economic realities (Fardust, 480). This also holds true for the first Pahlavi, although admittedly he had indeed a “national security doctrine” in practice – namely to subjugate the clergy and the tribes. However, both measures were undertaken, ignoring the abovementioned factors, and thus ignoring the realities of Iran's society (Fardust, 482). In Fardust's view, the need for a security doctrine came up after the ouster of Mossadegh in 1953, influenced by British and American examples. The “Higher Coordination Council” (HCC - *shura-ye ali-e hamahang*) and the aforementioned Special Intelligence Bureau (SIB) were modelled after British institutions like the Joint Intelligence Committee (Fardust, 389, 390, 397-399).⁸ The HCC would meet on a regular basis and unite the heads of all Iranian foreign and domestic intelligence agencies. The Special Intelligence Bureau, however, would organise and prepare the council meetings, in other words it functioned as a secretariat and a coordination mechanism when the council was not in session.

⁸ According to Fardust 506, the HCC was previously called “Security Council” (*Shura-ye Amniyat*); on the HCC see Ali-Babai, *Tarikh-e Artesh-e Iran*, 338-346 and Posch, ‘Memoiren’, 498-499.

Fardust's views on the necessity for a national security doctrine are less analytical than biographical in nature. He started his higher military-intelligence service immediately after the fall of Mossadegh and the Shah had sent him to Britain for high-level intelligence training. Therefore, the newly appointed head of the SIB Hossein Fardust saw his office as the logical institution to formulate Iran's national security doctrine, yet he faced insurmountable obstacles on behalf of the other institutions and, ultimately, of the Shah too. For instance, in spite of positive changes in the institutional set-up after 1968, Fardust's SIB did still not receive the permission to set up a department for intelligence analysis and one for drafting the national security doctrine (Fardust, 483). In the end, the Shah would formulate most of the doctrine alone albeit under British and American guidance – at least regarding regional and international politics. Fardust gives many examples, where – according to his view – Mohammad Reza Shah would not pay sufficient attention to the function or committed grave mistakes in judgement (Fardust, 386). Although Fardust seems to be satisfied that the Shah would show his appreciation for his own office, the SIB within the HCC. However, there is no reason at all to support Fardust's argument that he and the SIB were the logical choice to draft the country's National Security Doctrine (NSD). To begin with, he never asked himself whether there was a simple and practical reason why no one tasked him to draft the country's NSD, namely that his fellow generals simply did not think he was up to the job. Besides, following institutional logic, such an endeavour would rather be conducted under the direct supervision of the joint-chief-of-staff and the prime minister before it produces a draft doctrine awaiting parliamentary and imperial approval. What the HCC and the special bureau did in fact do, was exactly what they were foreseen to: namely to conduct the final intelligence assessment for the political leadership, or at least this is what they should have done.

Topics of the HCC

The HCC dealt with an unknown number of cases related to domestic and regional crises and the ethnic question. Occasionally this body would produce an intelligence assessment related to trans-border issues too. Even so, the majority of the cases Fardust came up with dealt with the behaviour and actions of certain individuals who were well connected to the ruling elites in Tehran, hence in a way an officers' body would assess the (mis)behaviour of a fellow member of the military or an influential family of the same caste.

Expectedly, the cases quoted in this chapter are only a fraction of what Fardust knows and he uses the salvatory clause that he would only tell “to the amount my memory aids me” (Fardust, 488). Hence, he reveals nothing about left-wing groups like the various *chariki* communist guerrillas⁹ or Islamist armed groups, like the one under Seyyed Ali Andarzgu; an Islamist extremist, who is nowadays widely forgotten but headed one of the more important Khomeini-aligned terror groups.¹⁰ Furthermore, hailing from the military he devotes very personal memories of the conduct of his fellow brass, which, interesting as it is, would have better remained as chitchat in the officers’ mess. Even so, the following twelve cases are worth considering. These cases are in the order of their appearance. Ten of these cases were explicitly debated in the HCC, two more, the Dashnaksutyun and Kurdistan cases are added to the same chapter, but together with a thirteenth case about the 15th Khordad revolt, apparently were not (!) debated in the HCC. Unbelievable as this seems, it is clearly the impression Fardust’s wants to evoke. I have omitted the 15th Khordad case in this paper because I am dealing with this topic in detail already elsewhere. The following is a short synopsis of Fardust’s account, the order of the twelve main cases follows Fardust’s memoir. As each case deals with several aspects, we have subdivided the twelve cases into subcases (1.2, 12.3...) reaching a total of 26. A discussion and interpretation of these cases follow in the next section.

1. Isfahan, Sarem ol-Douleh’s family and the SAVAK (Fardust, 488, 489):

- 1.1. Quite surprisingly, the first case relates to Iran’s former capital city Isfahan. The British paid special attention to the city for its geographic position between the northern and the southern parts of the country. The British also supported Sarem ol-Doulah that is the Qajar aristocrat Akbar Mas’ud, recte Akbar Mirza Mas’ud Soltani Sarem ol-Douleh (1885-1975), who was “their own representative” (Fardust, 488). His son would later also make a career at the court and become for a while the Shah’s adjutant (*ajudan-e keshvari-ye Mohammad Reza Shah*). The Mas’ud family promoted the

⁹ Cf. Mazia Behrooz, *Rebels with a Cause. The failure of the Left in Iran*, London – New York: I.B.Tauris 2000, p. 95-134.

¹⁰ Rasul Jafariyan, *Jereyanha va Sazemanha-ye mazhabi-siyasi-ye Iran. Az ru-ye kar-amadan-e Reza Shah ta piruzi-ye Enqelab-e Eslami, 1320-1357*, Tehran: Elm 1396/2017 mentions Andarzgu only passingly.

transfer of Iran's capital city from Tehran to Isfahan. They made the point that Tehran is too close to the Soviet border in the North and would fall quickly whence the Soviets invade and thus would suffer the same fate as Berlin and Paris, as both cities fell so quickly in enemy hands because of their proximity to the border. Isfahan, on the other hand, is not only a 400 km more in the depth of the country but also safely behind high mountain ranges located and therefore easily defensible. Apparently, not much came out of this idea, but it was important enough to be debated in the HCC, most likely due to the prominence of the Mas'ud family.

- 1.2. Another point regarding Isfahan was the extension of the SAVAK's presence in the city. This was due to the high number of Soviet technicians and engineers working in the steel factories there. To deal with the situation the Higher Coordination Council explicitly underscored the SAVAK's responsibility, which in turn tasked its general-directorate 8 responsible for "counterintelligence"¹¹ which decided to follow every Soviet citizen in town and was expanded in manpower and material significantly.

2. Ilam, Colonel Ra'ufi (Fardust 489, 490):

In Ilam province Fardust does not remember any special problems, except the case of Colonel Ra'ufi. The Kurdish officer Ra'ufi was an acquaintance of Fardust whom he visited regularly in Tehran. Ra'ufi was also a member of the Nematollahi order of dervishes and was on favourable terms with the Shah whom he met several times. He made a decent career in the civilian administration: he was county governor (*farmandar*) of Marivan and Mehran and later on provincial governor (*ostandar*) of Kurdistan and Lorestan. His career stalled when he was governor of Lorestan. Back then the US ambassador asked him in a letter whether it was possible that he and his wife visit the province. Ra'ufi accepted without consulting the responsible authorities and the ambassadorial couple spent ten days in the province with Ra'ufi acting as their

¹¹ The SAVAK was organised differently to the military, the organisation maintained nine "main departments" or "main directorates" (*edareh-ye koll*), of which main department 3, domestic security and main department 8, counterintelligence are of relevance in this context. See Posch, 'Memoiren,' 491-493, who follows like all other authors Fardust.

personal guide. After their trip, the grateful ambassador sent the governor a personal invitation to the USA. Ra'ufi would send this letter of invitation together with the report of the visit to Fardust's office with the explicit wish that the Shah would read it. At first, Mohammad Reza Shah would not react at all, but Ra'ufi lost his governorship six months later and waited in vain for a new position. Fardust intervened on several occasions with the shah, asking for a new governorship for Ra'ufi but to no avail. Colonel Ra'ufi had already lost favour with the Shah because this was not the first time he acted on his own. During his time in Mehran, he built a city park and an earthen dam without permission. The dam interrupted the water-flow to Iraq and caused an international diplomatic incident.¹² Thus, when the Shah learnt of yet another unauthorized action, he simply shunned the colonel. Yet, Ra'ufi would not understand and tirelessly lobbied for himself to get another position. The last time he met Fardust was in the latter's office a few months before the revolution, still hoping for a new adequate post. Back then Ra'ufi just told Fardust, he would leave now for Kurdistan and was never heard of again.

3. Bakhtaran (Kermanshah), border issues and high brass infighting (Fardust, 490, 491):
 - 3.1. Bakhtaran (Kermanshah) province was prone to security incidents due to its undefined border with Iraq. Contrary to the eastern borders, where a multilateral border commission under general Jahanbani would help solve questions about the exact borderline, no such mechanism existed on the Western border with Iraq due to political circumstances. According to Fardust, the Iraqis complained regularly that on several points along a stretch of 100 km at the border the border-stones (*alayem-e marzi*) were misplaced up to 10 km into Iraqi territory. In 1974, some units of Iraqi border troops disarmed three Iranian border posts in this area causing a major incident. Yet the armies of the two countries would not intervene in order to prevent an international incident, resulting

¹² Fardust may err at this point because he mentions a river or creek named Ganjancham which waters into Soleymaniye province, but this would better fit to Marivan than to Mehran.

in war. Finally, the issue was resolved within the framework of the 1975 Algiers Accord between Iran and Iraq.

- 3.2. Alas, things could have gone awry easily due to the competition between General Gholamali Oveysi, commander of the Iranian army land forces (*niruha-ye xamini-ye artesh*) and his deputy Abbas Qarabaghi. Qarabaghi bad-mouthed Oveysi in private and foolishly believed his superior officer would not learn about it. Hence, Oveysi patiently waited until his deputy had settled into his new position including a new lodgement for himself and his family and rented out his own house. Then Oveysi created a new Western Army Corps Command (*farmandehi-ye sepah-e gharb*) in Kermanshah and, once the Shah had approved its creation, suggested Qarabaghi as the new commanding officer, promoting him successfully away to Iran's furthest most Western province. Qarabaghi arrived in Kermanshah just at the time when the border incident happened. He had not settled in yet privately and had not yet set up his new corps-structure. At this point, Oveysi informed the shah, that the only solution would be army support for the border troops, including artillery units, in order to fend off the Iraqi attack. Expectedly, Qarabaghi refused and saw the incident as an issue of the border guards (*marzban*) and not the regular army. Now Oveysi used his former deputy's refusal to replace him with a more dashing officer, Lieutenant-General (*sepahbod*) Farrok-Niya who became the new corps commander. But Farrok-Niya reached the same conclusion as Qarabaghi, however the case was not a military question at all, but a personal one. Meanwhile Qarabaghi was back again with his family in Tehran and waited desperately for a new post, because according to army regulations generals of his rank would have to retire when no new position would open for them, which obviously has been Oveysi's plan all along. Qarabaghi was lucky though: thanks to Fardust's support, the Shah would appoint him commander of the Gendarmerie, a position, which assured him the promotion to full general (*arteshbod*). He held this rank when he became the last joint-chief-of-staff before the revolution and facilitated the transition of the army to the new regime.

4. Khorasan, drugs and migrants (Fardust, 492):

Surprisingly, during the time of the existence of the HCC no peculiar Soviet activity in Khorasan occurred. There were two main problems: drugs and illegal migrants.

- 4.1. The essential problem was the drug routes via Taybad. Opium (*taryak*) came hidden in tank cars into the country and was traded exclusively in gold. The gendarmerie would only detect a few cars because huge transnational networks of drug drug-trafficking networks controlled most of the transport vehicles used in the trade.
- 4.2. The second problem was the number of illegal Afghan immigrants within the country. The gendarmerie was unable to control them all as Iranians preferred cheap Afghans labour to employing Iranian workers. Usually, they would use a pilgrimage to Mashhad as an excuse to enter the country but would not return.

5. Khuzestan, autonomy, smuggling (Fardust, 492, 493):

Khuzestan drew British and American attention, and the head of MI-6 at the British embassy in Tehran would regularly raise the situation there with his Iranian counterparts. He told Fardust the Shah should invest more in that poverty-struck region because the Arabs in Khuzistan are independent-minded and have a high sense of autonomy (*kel'od moker-tari*). Fardust agreed with him and raised the topic with the Shah and within the Higher Coordination Council, but no one would really pay attention. Khuzistan posed several problems for the HCC.

- 5.1. First, smuggling was widespread between the Gulf States (*sheikh-neshin*) and Iran. Smugglers had strong and vast organisations at their disposal, including military and police officers, especially customs officers and even civil servants up to the level of provincial governor (*ostandar*) – and their wives who would travel regularly to the Gulf States with 20-30 suitcases. The warehouses of the customs services became part of an alternative, almost legalised black market or even an element of smuggling (*qachaq*) because customs authorities sold confiscated goods after a while, allowing officials and their relatives the best deals.

- 5.2. Unemployment and irregular migration were the second greatest problem. Every year, large numbers of Iranian workers would illegally look for work in Kuwait, where salaries were much better than in Iran. The vast majority were trafficked by huge mixed Kuwaiti-Iranian gangs who took a certain amount of money from each worker. Kuwaiti authorities would sometimes accept and sometimes reject Iranian workers, depending on circumstances. And the travel with overcrowded boats to Kuwait and back would end fatally for many.
- 5.3. A more serious problem was the activity of the Khuzistan/Arabistan Liberation Front (*jebhe-ye tabrir-e Khuzistan/Arabistan*). SAVAK paid much attention to this organisation, which enjoyed Iraqi support and whose leaders resided in Baghdad, Basra and in the vicinity of Basra. The organisation fought for the independence of 'Arabistan' and would constantly distribute leaflets and other propaganda material they smuggled in from abroad. What made them peculiarly dangerous was that some of the local Arab tribes would support them, even though others would support Iran. How seriously the HCC took this organisation can be seen in the fact that SAVAK's main directorate 3 would produce monthly or two-monthly reports about them.
6. Alam Family in Sistan-Baluchistan, autonomy movement and smuggling (Fardust, 493-495):
 - 6.1. Fardust describes Sistan-Baluchistan almost as the personal fief of the Alam family. Their influence was so important that once a senator of the Khazimeh-Alam family travelled to Zahedan and was dissatisfied with the head of SAVAK there, general Nasiri had this person replaced immediately. The Alam family also had a hand in the widespread brigandage (*rahzani*) between Zahedan and Chabahar. Because whenever security forces caught one of the perpetrators, he would claim a relationship with the powerful family and when in court, the judges would let him go. When the head of the gendarmerie (*farmandeh*), Qarabaghi brought up this topic in the HCC generals Nasiri of SAVAK and Azhari chief-of-staff of the Army (*ra'is-e setad-e artesh*) vociferously protested. In reaction, Qarabaghi doubled down on his claims and bluntly

stated that local brigandage had no local roots but was clearly instigated from outside the region, which also explains why only a “broken road of the 3rd category” (*jaddeh-ye darejeh-ye 3 makehrubeh*) connected the 400 km long distance between the two cities. When Oveysi was head of gendarmerie before Qarabaghi’s turn, he would relate the catastrophic security situation to poverty and not to outside instigation of the Alam family, least he would bring up the topic in the HCC.

- 6.2. In a similar vein, the HCC dealt with the question of autonomy in Baluchistan. General-chief-of-staff Azhari would cut the debate short, whenever army G2 (*ra’is-e edareh-ye dovvom-e artesb*) Lieutenant-General (*sepahbod*) Kamal would bring up the topic. Kamal quoted British sources about a Baluchistan independence movement, laying claim on Iranian and Pakistani Baluchistan. Azhari would then insist on a verbal debate only, not allowing it to be included in the protocol (*suratjaleseh*) and invoked the role of the army in very general terms (“as long as this army exists, it will not allow such a plan to materialise”, Fardust, 494), meaning that he would have only a military solution for a political problem. Hence, the problem was not analysed and debated thoroughly within the HCC and no meaningful measures were taken. As one could expect, Iran’s security apparatus was unprepared, when during the reign of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in Pakistan insecurity in Baluchistan reached new risk levels. In the end, the Shah solved the problem simply by buying off the leaders of the Baluch tribes.
- 6.3. As in most border provinces in Zahedan too government officials participated in “quasi-official” (*nimeh alani*) smuggling and no authority was able or willing to stop this. Drug trafficking was conducted with trucks, and the main route was via Saravan, gendarmes would occasionally fine them but very often allow them to pass for some bribes. In general, the gendarmerie was demoralised and suffered from the lack of resources and the lack of budget. Gendarmerie posts were widely dispersed along the border with Pakistan as they were often located approximately 150 kilometres apart.

- 6.4. Other problems were reminiscent of other provinces, such as the influx of masses of unemployed Afghans and Baluch Pakistanis looking for work in Iran. One group among the smugglers drew the attention of the SAVAK: young Pakistani Baluch men who underwent military training in Lebanon, yet most of them passed over by sea to the Emirates, looking for better economic opportunities there, but obviously created no problem for Iran. Smuggling of drugs, arms and other goods via the sea was a problem too but it was not as serious as in other provinces.
- 6.5. Finally, Iran and Afghanistan tried to ameliorate their economic relations. Iran and Afghanistan initiated new ambitious road projects connecting Chabahar with Zahedan and Zabol and from there to Kabul via Qandahar, but later on altered the Iranian end-point of the route to Bandar-e Abbas. Due to changed political circumstances, this project never materialised.
7. Gorgan and Gonbad (Fardust, 495):

The northern province of Gorgan and Gonbad was largely Turkman, the Soviets would try to create as many intelligence assets as possible within this community bordering their own Turkoman Soviet Socialist Republic and had established a mechanism enabling them to cross the border. Then they would receive training and instructions on how to work for them. SAVAK was well aware of these machinations and SAVAK's general-directorate 8 "counter-intelligence" put all necessary countermeasures in place. Fardust seems to be satisfied with their work, stating that there were no other problems worth the HCC's while in this province.
8. Gilan and Mazandaran (Fardust, 495, 496):

In Gilan and Mazandaran SAVAK was equally successful in preventing any meaningful Soviet intelligence penetration. Furthermore, Iran's allies, USA and the UK would operate from there against the Soviets. Even more, the British had established an independent network under General Mahutian in this province, which was only formally subordinate to Iranian authorities and only loosely coordinated with the SAVAK.

9. Hormozgan (Fardust, 496):

Hormozgan province suffered from being a recent administrative creation, comprising territory and people that previously belonged to Baluchistan, Kerman and Fars provinces. There were high hopes for the development of this newfound province with Bandar-e Abbas as its capital city. The disappointment about the slow pace of the development of trade (import and export) made it a topic for the HCC, where the lack of infrastructure of the port city (*kambud-e ta'sisat-e bandari*) was a recurrent topic. In the end, the SIB sent a delegation to inquire into the situation. The result was that due to port facility insufficiencies 800 cargo vessels waited for unloading, some of them more than six months, so that in the first eight months after the establishment of the harbour the Iranian state already had to pay 2 billion USD to ship owners. The problem ran deeper: the lack of coordination on the Iranian side proved to be another major impediment. The issue was prepared for referral to the Shah who in turn sent it to his prime minister. Finally, the southern road system was still underdeveloped. Due to the urgency of the matter, a certain Khatibi's enterprise was tasked with the endeavour. However, they were only able to build level 3 dirt roads that would not survive the annual torrential rainfall in the region.

10. Armenians (Fardust, 497-499):

The Armenian "Dashnaksutyun" or "Dashnak" organisation was allowed a semi-legal existence in Iran. Yet the most important representatives of the – back then – 80,000+ Iranian Armenians were father and son Aleksander and Feliks Aqayan, who would become senator and was a friend of the Shah, and a certain Mr. Saginiyan, who ran the Armenian newspaper. In this function, he would occasionally get into contact with the SIB. Fardust distinguishes the Armenians according to their wealth, the poorest are menial workers, the middle class has shops in the alimentary sector and then there are the wealthy capitalists. Fardust stresses the strong bond between Armenians in the Soviet Union and in Iran and that they have two religious centres, one in Yerevan and one in Jerusalem. There was strong travel between Iran and Soviet Armenia and Iran's Armenians would freely write to their friends and relatives in the Soviet Union, often criticising the situation there. According to SAVAK, this was only possible because the local communist leadership

would allow it and the SAVAK's counter-intelligence directorate was cautious about returnees from the Soviet Republic, fearing they would work for soviet intelligence. But only the poorest went to Soviet Armenian, the wealthier classes preferred the USA, Europe or Israel, regardless of their strong feelings for the Armenian heartland. One day on the insistence of Saginiyan, Fardust would reluctantly meet the newly elected head of the Armenian secret army. In their first meeting, his unnamed youngish interlocutor would politely explain the existence of a secret leadership council. Fardust assumed, but without proof that Saginiyan was a member of said council. In the second meeting. The young man would clarify that the secret army is capable of killing any person anywhere in the world, if their committee decides to do so. Their sworn archenemy however is Turkey.

11. Kurds and Kurdistan (Fardust, 500-504):

Regarding the Kurds and Kurdistan Fardust only mentions the involvement of SAVAK with the Barzani-Kurds of the KDP in Iraq. Their struggle lasted from 1961-1975 and was, until then, the longest Kurdish struggle against any central government. In comparison, Qazi Mohammad's Soviet backed Republic of Mahabad only lasted barely a year. These two struggles are intertwined as Molla Mostafa Barzani fought alongside Qazi Mohammad. Relations with the Barzani-organisation were highly personalised. A certain Brigadier-General (*sartip*) Mansurpur, an Iranian army officer of Kurdish origin, who knew all Kurdish leaders personally, as well as the Kurdish European organisations, briefed Fardust, when he was the deputy head of SAVAK. Mansurpur was also part of the Barzani's staff and served as a military adviser. He would explain that Mostafa Barzani's stronghold was a natural cave (this must be Hajj Omran) and that the Iraqi Kurds conducted their fight from natural caves 300-500m above the ground of the valleys and therefore could inflict heavy casualties to the Iraqi army. He estimated the total sum of Barzani's fighters (*peshmergeh*) to be about 30,000 structured in brigade-like units of 5,000 to 6,000 men. Incapable of defeating the Kurds militarily the Iraqi army took revenge on the civilian population and destroyed their villages. Until 1975, Mansurpur was able to organise material and military support for the Iraqi Kurds from Iran. That year however changed everything, as the USA forced the Shah to cease Iranian support. Thus, the Iraqi Kurds could only flee to Iran. The leader-

ship of the Barzani organisation and tribe resettled in the Karaj area, their followers were dispersed and resettled in hastily erected townships throughout the country, costing millions of Tومans. Fardust estimates that Iranian officials stole up to 2/3 of these funds. Mansurpur remained in contact with Molla Mostafa even after the Kurdish disaster in Iraq and liaised between the Shah and Barzani. Mohammad Reza Pahlavi held Mansurpur and his acumen in dealing with such a delicate topic in such high esteem that he wanted to promote him. Hence, the military transferred Mansurpur to the Gendarmerie where he could be promoted to major general.

12. The tribal uprising in Fars (Fardust, 505-509):

One of the first tasks of the HCC and the SIB was to deal with the revolt of the Southern tribes. The previous regime under Reza Shah had already subjugated most of the Qashqay and other tribes, but during the war, the grip of central authorities on them loosened.

12.1. After WWII, Khosrow Qashqay, leader of the Qashqay lived in Western Germany and in order to prevent him causing trouble the Shah paid him a stipend of 10,000 tuman, perhaps even 20,000 monthly. One of his brothers and his wife were socialites in the Tehran society where they regularly met with Fardust in general Jam's house.

12.2. Mohammad Reza Shah did not expect any problem from this side and ordered the disarmament of the last tribes, among them the Qashqay of Fars. The topic of disarmament was regularly debated in the HCC and the SIB, Brigadier-General Alavi-Kiya, deputy head of SAVAK, and Lieutenant-General Malek, head of Gendarmerie explained the difficulties to realise the orders given to them. Bearing arms is too much a tradition in Iran's tribal societies, especially the Kurds, the Lurs, the tribes of Fars and elsewhere; hence forced disarmament would certainly meet stiff resistance. Meanwhile, local authorities and the gendarmerie would pragmatically settle for less: the tribes would hand in old handguns, get a receipt for having cooperated but kept the better and more modern weapons. This situation was untenable and when tensions in Fars province between gendarmerie and the Qashqay boiled over, military escalation was unavoidable.

- 12.3. Finally, the Shah appointed Lieutenant-General Ariyana as operational commander for the south (*farmandeh-ye amaliyat-e janub*) and put enough troops at his disposal. Even so, Asadollah Alam submitted a plan for the Shah's approval, according to which he would provide 4,000 armed Baluch men for Ariyana to fight against the Qashqay. The Shah instructed the joint-chief-of-staff (*ra'is-e setad-e artesht*) to present this idea in front of the HCC, where members in unison flatly rejected Alam's plan: if the Baluch did indeed come, the war would intensify and last for years. Because all tribes of Fars will join the war in order to prove they are no less men than the Baluch are, and they will not rest until the Baluch are all defeated and driven out. All commanders signed the protocol of this meeting, which in due course was sent to the Shah for final approval. Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi sided with his generals on this matter. Alam was furious with the members of the HCC but could not do anything.
- 12.4. Alongside wit Ariyana, who was appointed operational commander, Lieutenant-General Karim Varahram became governor (*ostandar*) and Brigadier-General Masud Hariri was appointed head of SAVAK in Fars. Fardust describes Ariyana and Varahram as the worst possible choices: According to his testimony they were always drunk, hung around with prostitutes and neglected their basic duties, the Shah was warned beforehand about them and instructed Fardust to send them off with an admonition to take their work seriously. Yet the drunkard Ariyana would lose a whole battalion in the first engagement with tribal forces in a valley, as he forgot basics such as rear-guard, vanguard and other basic security measures. A second battalion lost 2/3 of its manpower, the rest could flee. Reviewing the situation at the HCC, Fardust called for Major-General (*sarlashkar*) Fatemi, who taught the tactics of tribal warfare at the military university and sent him to Shiraz, where Ariyana's command post was located. Fatemi took office as an expert on tribal warfare. Together with Major-General Nazem they planned the operations and Nazem would personally command a special battalion surprising and annihilating several tribal forces. In only six months, some tribes totally vanished the

rest surrendered, some of the tribal chiefs were executed on the Shah's personal orders.

- 12.5. One of the main officers during the operation was Ariyana, who was according to Fardust a self-styled caricature of Napoleon Bonaparte, made a triumphant return to Tehran, was promoted to full general (*arteshbod*) and nominated joint-chief-of-staff (*ra'is-e setad-e artesh*), in this function he retired General Major Fatemi rather quickly.
- 12.6. Nazem however enjoyed the protection of General Jam. The two were very close comrades and when Jam became joint-chief-of-staff, Nazem was behind him and widely regarded as the real force behind Jam's tenure. The Azeri Turk Nazem would bad-mouth everyone, which was the main reason why the Shah would not promote him above major-general. On the other hand, the Shah may have learned from Fardust that Nazem suggested to Jam a coup d'état against the shah, whom he disparagingly called "in pe-sare" (that boy), just like Khomeini did.

Interpretation and Evaluation

From the outset, it is evident that the list of topics given above is much too short. Even if we disregard the majority of the cases discusses in the HCC as being of rather bureaucratic and procedural nature, such as inter-agency co-ordination, necessary coordination with other ministries and non-security related institutions and agencies and, of course, preparation of finalized intelligence for decision making, meaning sending it to the office of the shah. Almost all cases relate in one way or the other to centre-periphery relations, some with smuggling and officials' misconduct at the strategic level, and infighting within the high brass. In the following section, we organised the 26 cases presented above according to the topics debated.

Local Rule and Rulers

As seen from a centre-periphery perspective, the relations go from de facto recognition of autonomy without mentioning it, accepted local rule, the illegal demand for autonomy and outright separatism.

Entitled Families

The first category (cases 1.1, 6.1, 12.1, 12.3) contains the equivalent of local lords, the *moluk-ol-tavayef*, and relates to the Mas'ud, Alam and Qashqay families (and to a lesser degree to the Barzanis, who are not Iranian but Iraqi-Kurdish) whose role in running local affairs the Shah obviously recognised, at least on a de facto basis:

Akbar Mirza Mas'ud Soltani Sarem ol-Douleh (1885-1975) was a full Qajar prince, son of Mas'ud Mirza Qajar "Zellollah" and grandson of Naser ol-Din Shah Qajar. Sarem ol-Douleh was a successful diplomat and politician who held several official positions in Qajar and Pahlavi Iran, such as governor of Fars and member of parliament and member of the 1948 constitutional review commission. The career of his son Asghar Mirza Mas'ud as adjutant of the Shah fits the profile of such an influential family. In our view, only members of a royal family of this rank could propose to relocate the capital without creating any problem for themselves. At the same time, the mere fact that this topic was discussed within the HCC must be understood as an admission of simmering tensions regarding the status of the city of Isfahan and its urban elites relative to Tehran. These assumed tensions were never spoken out publicly and became both recognized and diffused by the mere fact that they were debated in the HCC using purely military-strategic arguments and thus assuring the debate would not turn political and remained without any practical consequences.

Things were similar in the east of the country. The Khazimeh-Alam family ruled parts of Eastern Iran since the early middle-ages, they even can trace their origins back to the first Arab conquerors of Khorasan. Their influence reached directly or indirectly from Khorasan down to Sistan-Baluchistan. The extraordinary influence of the family brought them high positions including the prime ministership for Asadollah Alam they also could wield power within the security apparatus, as one could see with Fardust's remark regarding the high-rank SAVAK officer, who was simply replaced at the behest of one prominent family member. It is unthinkable that their influence was not accepted on behalf of the Shah and the authorities. They even tolerated Alam's shadowy relations with armed groups. Two notable examples were the brigands and robbers operating in Baluchistan and the force of 4,000 armed men that Asadollah Alam offered in 1962 to reinforce the army

in its campaign against the Qashqay. The mere admission that such a force existed at the disposal of the highest dignitaries of the state proves a certain structural weakness of the state apparatus in controlling the delicate border province. It also should not go unnoticed, that Asadollah Alam's influential father, Shoukat-ol-Molk, did not only found schools and other public institutions, but also a military academy, according to Hossein Yekrangian.¹³

The influence of the Mas'ud and Alam families and power was tolerated because of their unwavering pro-Pahlavi stance. Things were different with another equally noble family with strong regional roots, the princely leaders of the Qashqay tribe, Khosrow Khan Qashqay had revolted before and the history of the Qashqay during the Second World War is well known and needs no repetition here. Although the Qashqay¹⁴ were in open revolt at a critical juncture of the Iranian history, the Shah would still send money to Khosrow Khan in Germany. This is only partially due to silence and to coopt him, more importantly it is a recognition of his princely status on behalf of the Shah. Hence, in all three cases one can detect the echo of the old privileges of the *moluk-ol-tavayef* of late Qajars' fame in the way these families were treated by the Shah as reflected in the HCC proceedings according to Far dust. This even extended to non-Iranians like the Iraqi-Kurdish Barzani family and tribe, who were resettled in Iran after their uprising failed (case 11).

Viceroy

Other forms of local rule (cases 2 and 8) were unacceptable but did not cause problems at first glance. The first case is that of Colonel Ra'ufi in Ilam province and regards his overstepping of competences: namely, his construction of a park and a dam without permission and later on allowing the US ambassador and his wife to visit his province. It is hard to imagine, that the same infractions of duty would have had any consequences if the colonel had been a member of the Alam or Mas'ud families. Ra'ufi, however, was a mere career officer, albeit a rather well connected one, who made it to powerful positions in the civilian administration but even so, lacking the proper pedigree he was

¹³ Hossein Yekrangian, *Seyri dar Tarikh-e Artesh-e Iran. Az Agħaz ta payan-e shahrivar 1320*, Tehran: Khojasteh 1384/2005, 224.

¹⁴ Pierre Oberling, *The Qashqā'i Nomads of Fārs*, The Hague – Paris: Mouton 1974, partially covers this uprising.

not entitled to any extravaganza at all. Apparently, the Kurdish colonel wanted to emulate the role of the old important families and therefore played “viceroy” in Ilam and Lorestan. In a certain sense case 8 of Mahutiyan fits into this category too, because the general must have been an *éminence grise* given his shadowy, powerful and foreign backed anti-communist network in Mazandaran and Gilan. Consequently, the Iranian authorities took a deep sigh when Mahutiyan retired and quickly disbanded his organisation.

Autonomists and Separatists

The third category relates to autonomy and separatism. Before we analyse the cases given by Fardust we shall remark that Fardust does not mention the most important cases of separatism in Iran until now: the creation of the independent Soviet-controlled Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan and the Kurdistan Republic of Mahabad. It is doubtful that high brass members of the HCC would ignore either issue, but this is exactly the impression Fardust wants to give. According to his testimony, autonomous movements and even separatists were strongest in Khuzistan and Baluchistan (cases 5.3 and 6.2). Rather absurdly, the HCC did not want to have anything to do with either case, although the case of Khuzistan was so important that representatives of the British MI6 saw the necessity to raise this problem with Fardust. Interestingly, Iraqi supported Khuzistani-Arab separatism was an issue for the SAVAK’s general-directorate 3, domestic security, and not for counterintelligence, which would be general-directorate 8. In Baluchistan, for political reasons, SAVAK focussed mostly on Pakistani Baluch, who had received military training in Lebanon (6.4). In both cases Pahlavi security state saw its natural limits with local tribes. The Shah paid off the heads of the Baluch tribes during heightened tensions and in Khuzestan too tribal support was obviously the key factor checking the nationalists.

Confronting Soviet intelligence

Iran, like no other close US ally had a long border with the Soviet Union, which had occupied Northern Iran during WWII and created a separatist republic after the war. One can take Fardust’s remark that the Soviets had no more presence in Khorasan (case 4) at face value. However, there were so many other cases where the Soviets would successfully penetrate the Iranian system including in the army as the cases of the communist Tudeh-

party's officers organisation, or of Lieutenant-General Mogharrebi who was executed as a Soviet spy in 1978¹⁵ has shown.

Soviet citizens and local communists

Controlling the vast Soviet expat community in Isfahan (case 1.2) was a rather standard procedure and must have been expected by the Soviets anyway. By and large one has to assume, that the SAVAK would successfully isolate this community from local Iranians. Suppressing domestic communist movements was a priority on the Caspian shore. We dealt with case 8 already from the perspective of General Mahutiyan playing "viceroy" in Gilan and Mazandaran. That said; his case fits even better into the category of fighting communism and Soviet influence. His unnamed organisation bears an eerie resemblance to NATO's notorious "Gladio"-network of operators¹⁶ and had only loose ties to Iran's emerging intelligence architecture, mostly SAVAK's general directorate 8 "counterintelligence". There are good reasons for and additional or special network in the region: Gilan was home to a short-lived Soviet Persian Republic in the early 1920s and left-wing activities were widespread during the whole Pahlavi period and beyond. The pinnacle was the 1971 Siyahkal incident when a guerrilla commando of the Feda'in-Khalq organisation attacked a gendarmerie outpost. The attack and its suppression became a core event of Iran's radical left, claiming it to be an indigenous revolutionary outburst against Western imperialism and the presumed fascism of the Shah regime. The truth is far from it, the incident and a similar one a year later in the Turkish village of Kizildere were part of a Soviet operation using local left-wing extremists against US listening and radar posts against the Soviet Union.

Cross border issues with the Soviet Union

The case was different in the north of the country, with the Turkman community (case 7). Fardust describes the cross-border machinations between local Turkomans and their Soviet handlers that allowed the Turkomans to cross the border indiscriminately until the day SAVAK closed this possibility

¹⁵ On these cases see Mohammad-Hossein Khosrovpanah, *Sazeman-e Afsaran-e Hezb-e Tudeh-ye Iran, 1323-1333*, Tehran: Shirazeh 1377/1996; Khosrov Motazed, *Timsar-e Shahanshahi dar kbedmat-e KGB*, Tehran: Alborz 1386/2007.

¹⁶ It should be mentioned that Iran is missing in the hitherto most thorough study on Gladio. See Daniele Ganser, *NATO's secret armies and terrorism in Western Europe*, London: Frank Cass 2005.

down too. One has to ask whether Fardust refers to the very early state of SAVAK in the mid-1950s when the last vestiges of Soviet influence in the north of the country were wiped out because during WWII the Soviets were indeed popular among some Turkoman tribes in Iran.

Another cross-border issue concerns Iran's Armenian community (case 10). Fardust presents the presence of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (*Hay Heghapokhaghban Dashnaksutyun*) Dashnaksutyun "the union", or shorter Dashnak (also Tashnak) as a mere accidental fact. However, Yeprem Khan (Yeprem Davidian) was not only a Dashnak revolutionary he was also one of the militant fathers of Iran's 1905 constitutional revolution and, after WW I, he also became police chief of Iran.¹⁷ The anti-communist Dashnaksutyun supported and cooperated with the Pahlavi state. Not without reason did SAVAK, especially its directorate 8, fear that Soviet intelligence could turn Iranian Armenians belonging to Dashnak and would send them back as spies. However, this fear might have been outdated even at the point of the creation of SAVAK in the 1950s. Because it happened mostly in the 1920s and 1930s when most of the Cheka's spies in Iran were turncoat Dashnaks.¹⁸ What is revealing is the fact that the same personalities active in the 1950s were still active later on. Furthermore, Sevag Saginiyan was close to the Shah and played a central role in the Iranian Armenian boy-scout movement, which he positioned against the communist and leftist youth.

Nothing, however, is known in the standard literature about Fardust's ties to the "head of the secret army of the Armenians", (*ra'is-e artesh-e serri-ye ar-ameneh*). This is understandable, because said army was the "Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia" or ASALA (HAHKP – *Hayastani Azadkrut'ean Hay Kaghtni Panag*) founded in 1975 in Beirut. Thus, the young man was no one less than Hagop Hagopian, *nomme de guerre* for Harutiun Takushian (1951-1988) a Mosul-born Iraqi Armenian, who founded the organisation with the help of extremist left-wing Palestinians such as the PFLP of George Habash. ASALA conducted a terror campaign against Turkish

¹⁷ See Houri Berberian, "The Dashnaksutyun and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1905-1911." in: *Iranian Studies*, 29 (1/2) 1996, 7–33. On the history of the Dashnaksutyun and other Armenian revolutionary organisations see Louise Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement. The Development of Armenian Political Parties through the Nineteenth Century*, Berkeley – Los Angeles – London: University of California Press 1963.

¹⁸ David N. Yaghoubian, *Ethnicity, Identity, and the Development of Nationalism in Iran*, Syracuse – New York: Syracuse University Press 2014, 131.

targets in Europe and the Middle East, killing roughly two dozen Turkish officials and maiming many more bystanders in the decade from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s. The meeting between Fardust, Saginiyan and Hagopian, the head of the secret army, must have taken place between the ASALA's foundation in 1975 and the Islamic Revolution in 1979.

Military infighting

One of the most disturbing facts about Fardust's memoirs is the vast space he devotes to military infighting and high brass incompetence. Many cases regard career issues and personal animosities, such as the "promotion" of Qarabaghi to corps commander in Kermanshah, just to wreck his future career (case 3.2), although we doubt that the Joint-Chief-of-Staff Oveysi would have restructured the military districts just for the purpose of getting rid of his deputy. After all the timeline of rearrangements within the Iranian Army's ORBAT does not support Fardust's argument, according to which a new command in the West of the country was created, rather it was disbanded as the following overview shows: In 1963 the military leadership disbanded the army corps (*sepah*) and created two army commands (*qarargah-e artesh*) one in Torbat-e Heydariyeh in the east of the country, one in Kermanshah in the west and, five years later, another one in Shiraz. These army commands were disbanded without apparent reason in 1971, and replaced by corps commands (*qarargah-e sepah*) again. Yet another turn occurred in 1974 when this structure was given up in favour of independent corps, divisions and brigades came under the roof of the Command and Staff of the Land Forces (*farmandehi va setad-e niru-ye zamini*).¹⁹ What remains as fact is Oveysi's wish to end Qarabaghi's career prematurely.

In the context of Sistan-Baluchistan we saw how the high brass refused to recognise problems and cut the necessary discussion about counter-measures short (cases 6.1 and 6.2). Fardust, who never commanded troops in battle, judges very hardly about his fellow officers but remains in simplistic black-and-white framework: those he likes have a good character and are competent soldiers, the others are immoral figures and militarily incompetent. Such is the case with General Ariyana whom he describes as a drunk and incompetent officer, whereas general Fatemi, whom he is clearly fond of, saved the day in the fight against the Qashqay (case 12.4); just in order to

¹⁹ Ali-Babayi, *Tarikh-e Artesh-e Iran*, 315, 316.

be dismissed unfairly by Ariyana after the war (case 12.5). Here one could see the importance of networks and network building: General Nazem who cooperated with Fatemi in the Qashqay campaign was saved due to his relations with General Jam, a political-military network Fardust belonged to, as he regularly frequented social events in Jam's house. Fardust stressed that Nazem like his fellow Azeri Qarabaghi would bad-mouth everyone including the shah and even went on one occasion so far as to suggest a coup d'état (case 12.6). Fardust clearly wanted to carry favour with Nazem, who held a high military position after the revolution, until – of course – his outspoken and candid remarks cost him his position and almost his life, before he fled to Turkey. There are several cases where one can see Fardust's personal role in *partibazi*, playing relationships and favours: he wanted to support Colonel Ra'ufi for another position (case 2), arranged for Colonel Mansurpur's and General Qarabaghi's transfers to the Gendarmerie thus enabling them to become major-general and full general (cases 11, 3.2).

Systemic Corruption

So-called corruption is an integral part of the functioning of almost all bodies-politic, mostly by default. Regimes however would tolerate corruption to a relatively high level for a very simple reason, on one hand it strengthens loyalty on the other hand, if need be, luminaries falling out of favour can be deposed of easily. The mere fact, that high-level corruption was tabled at HCC meetings can be ascribed to Fardust's position as head of the "Imperial Inspectorate Organisation" – which was essentially a civilian office, as we have mentioned already – and to the gravity of the situation. This was definitely the case with the Alam family and their relations to brigandage (case 6.1), the high level of smuggling and reselling of ceased goods by the authorities of Khuzistan province (5.1), officials in Zahedan (6.2), and with widespread misconduct on all levels in Bandar-e Abbas, the capital and potential economic hub of newfound Hormozgan province (case 9) and regarding the housing projects for the Barzani Kurds (case 11). Finally, narcotics and human trafficking – illegal migration were already problems back then: powerful criminal organisations of drug traffickers were rampant in Khorasan (case 4.1) and Sistan-Baluchistan, where the gendarmerie was hopelessly overstretched (case 6.3). Systematic and organised human trafficking took place in Khuzestan mostly from Iran to Kuwait (5.1), whereas in the East, Afghan and to a lesser degree Pakistani and Pakistani Baluch played a greater role as illegal migrants and cheap labour for Iran (cases 4.2, 5.2, 6.4).

Topics & Cases debated in HCC according to Fardust			
Topic	Sub-topic	Cases	Remark
Local rule and rules	Entitled families	Sare moldouleh (1.1), Alam (8), Barzani (11), Qashqay (12.1)	Aristocratic families and tribal aristocracy
	Viceroy	Raufi (2), Mahutian (8)	Military professionals
	Autonomists and separatists	Khuzestan (5.3), Baluchestan (6.2)	Important separatist/ autonomy movements missing, esp. Iranian Kurds
Confronting Soviet intelligence	Soviet Citizens and local communists	Isfahan (1.2), Mahutiyan in Gilan and Mazanderan (8)	Fight against left-wing extremism in academia and among the bourgeoisie ignored
	Cross-border Issues with the Soviet Union	Turkomans (7), Armenians (10)	Direct contact to international terrorism in case 10
Military Infighting	Personal rivalry	Oveysi-Qarabaghi (3.2), Ariyana-Fatemi (12.5)	
	Negligence of duty	Tolerating the influence of the Mas'ud and Alam families (1.1, 6.1), ignoring separatism (6.2), Ariyana's military conduct (12.4)	
	Networking (partibazi)	Jam, Fardust, Nazem (12.6), Ra'ufi (2), Qarabaghi (3.2), Mansurpur (11)	
	Military operations	Fight against the Qashqay (12.4), support for the Kurds (11), military evaluation of situation (3.2)	
Systemic corruption	Enrichment/dealing with smuggled goods	On behalf of officials in Khuzistan (5.1), Zahedan (6.2), misconduct in Bandar-e Abbas (9) and misuse of funds for the Kurds (11)	Link with international terrorism: Baluch with training in the ME (6.4)
	Human trafficking and illegal migration	Iranians from Khuzestan (5.2), Afghans in Khorasan (4.2), Afghan and Baluch Pakistani (6.4)	
	Drugs	Opium in Khorasan (4.1), Sistan and Baluchistan (6.3)	

By way of Conclusion: A path not taken

The variety of civilian and military topics debated at the HCC and recounted by Fardust illustrates the security-minded nature of the Iranian state. The details given in the cases above are most vivid regarding military operations, which we read as a reflection of the composition of the body: military men. Alas, they mostly debated issues unrelated to military matters for them being either policing issues or political problems. Tellingly most of them relate to the question of periphery and centre relations in Iran, something the Islamic Republic could not solve either. This may relate less to the nature of the regime, Islamic or not, but to the structure of the state and the way its institutions work. Occasionally we have referred to institutional and functional continuation of the Pahlavi-system with the system of the Islamic Republic.²⁰ Yet an in-depth systematic comparison and analysis on institutional continuity and change remains to be done. For the purpose of this paper, it is worth looking at a path not taken during the long reign of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi: the devolution of power and regionalisation. That said, Iranian governments undertake two attempts in this direction.

Modern Iran is a centralised state. The Pahlavi elites attributed the weakness of the country to centrifugal forces, starting with the Soviet Republic of Gilan, several regional uprisings and the separation of Azerbaijan and Kurdistan from Iran immediately after the Second World War created the impression of a juxtaposition between the unity of national independence and centralisation versus autonomy of any kind and foreign interference. Even so, careful steps towards regionalisation did happen. The first serious attempt was a political initiative of Prime Minister Hajj Ali-Razmara. The former general became prime minister in early 1950 and one of his first initiatives was the creation of district and provincial councils, according to the provisions in the Iranian constitution. Fulfilling his constitutional duties Razmara thought of a mere routine session when he tabled the draft law “On the Constitution of Province- and District Councils” (*tashkil-e anjomanha-ye eyalati va velayati*). Yet this law met stiff resistance in parliament, opposition leader Mohammad Mosaddegh (*Mosaddeqolsaltaneh*), a Qajar aristocrat, refuted the

²⁰ See Walter Posch, *The Iranian Security Apparatus, History – Present – Mission*, Vienna: Schriftenreihe der LVAK 2024.

draft law outright as “a plan for dismemberment” (*tajziyeh*) of Iran.²¹ There was no debate on the content of the draft law, such as the competencies of the deputies and their relationship with the national parliament, the Majles. It is quite evident, that the opposition under Mosaddeq did its best to deny Razmara any political success at all. Therefore, nothing came out of Razmara’s initiative, and the topic was overshadowed by other political dynamics, especially the negotiations on Iran’s oil industry. It finally died in the following year 1951 as a political issue, together with the assassination of its promoter prime minister general Razmara, who was shot by the Fedayan-e Eslam, an Islamist terror group in cahoots with Mohammad Mosaddegh – to the great relief of the better part of Iran’s political elite.

A decade later, in October 1962 the Shah personally undertook a second attempt to create district and province assemblies. The Shah’s initiative was part of a broader reform project, which he conducted with international support: A great reform project named the “White Revolution” or the “Revolution of the Shah and the People”.²² This attempt failed dramatically, first because it did not pass through parliament, which was in recess anyway. Hence, the State Council (*hey’at-e doulat*) had to issue it before the Shah confirmed it. As a result, the procedure appeared one-sided and authoritarian. Secondly, it was badly prepared at least with the clergy and the religious segment of the society. Briefly, it was a progressive law breaking with the country’s Islamic and patriarchal tradition, because it allowed women to stand as candidates, and the law would not oblige candidates to take their oath on the Qor’an, any sacred book would suffice. The reaction of the Shiite clergy was negative and people protested *en masse*. Even the secretary general of the Freedom Movement, Mehdi Bazargan found reason to criticize it, as there is no political freedom for men, he argued, what difference, then, could women’s voting rights make?²³ In a less polite manner Ayatollah Sadegh Khalkhali argued that the Shah wanted a higher voter turnout, hence he would allow “clueless

²¹ Jalal Matini, *Negahi be Karnameh-ye siyasi-ye Doktor-e Mohammad Mosaddeq*, Los Angeles: Ketab Corp. 1384/2005, 213, 214.

²² On the broader context see Ali Ansari, “The Myth of the White Revolution: Mohammad Reza Shah. ‘Modernization’ and the Consolidation of Power.” *Middle Eastern Studies*, 37.3.2001, 1-24.

²³ Baqer Moin, *Khomeini. Life of the Ayatollah*, London – New York: I.B. Tauris 2000, 77.

women” (*banuyan-e bi-khabar*) into the political process.²⁴ Not everyone was as negative. No one less than the later president Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani gives a rather objective assessment: In principle, the electoral reform had its merits but it stabilised the Shah’s imperial autocracy and for delicate issues like women’s vote, the government should have taken its time to engage the clergy, because they surely must have understood that resistance would occur.²⁵ Just like a decade before, other issues overtook the question of district and provincial councils. For Ruhollah Khomeini the uproar against the electoral law provided the best opportunity to start his political career. He immediately began his famous campaign of letters addressed to the Shah and the prime minister, which were widely circulated openly and clandestinely and read from the pulpit and made him the best-known cleric of the country.

Yet, in none of his letters concerning the electoral system, he would touch upon the core of the content, namely the role of the mandates, the function and the competencies of the “district and provincial councils” – and neither did the Shah! He had the councils created against all odds by imperial fiat only. But the politicians elected were left to their own devices, without clear guidelines about their functions and their rights and duties. Thus, Mozaffar Shahedi calls the councils the very institution with the least influence on the political life of Iran’s citizens.²⁶ They certainly could have been an additional security valve moderating tensions between centre and periphery, at least on the administrative level. Yet, without life and influence, the councils’ administrative creation resulted in a soulless institution, and therefore could not serve as a way for managing centre-periphery tensions. It remained a promising political path, which Iranian politics did not take seriously.

²⁴ Sadeq Khalkhali, *Khaterat-e Ayatollah Khalkhali. Arvalin Hakem-e Sher’e Dadgahha-ye Engelab*, 2 vols., Tehran: Sayeh 1383/2004, vol. 1, 61.

²⁵ Ali Akbar Hashemi-Bahramani Rafsanjani, *Douran-e Mobarez, Karnameh va Khaterat-e Hashemi Rafsanjani*, Tehran: Ma’aref-e Engelab 1386/2007, 120.

²⁶ Mozaffar Shahedi, *Seh Hezb. Mardom, Melliyun, Iran Novin, 1336-1353*, Tehran: PSRI 1387/2008, 196-213.