

Persia

Key facts in 1929

Area: 1'648'195km²^[1]

Population: 13.2 Million^[2]

Life expectancy: 27 years^[3]

Literacy rate: Below 10%^[4]

Biggest Minorities: Kurds, Azeris, Arabs, Mazandarani, Lurs, Tats, Balochs, Turkmen, Assyrians, Jews^[5]

Select Main Cities: Tehran, Isfahan, Tabriz, Shiraz, Mashhad

Neighboring countries: USSR, Afghanistan, British India, British mandate of Iraq, Turkey, Ararat^[6]

Sea Access: Yes, Caspian Sea, Persian Gulf, Gulf of Oman^[1]

GDP: 800'000'000 \$1929^[7,8]



Recent Historical Background

The Anglo-Russian Entente of 1907 negatively affected Persia by diminishing its sovereignty, fueling political instability, facilitating economic exploitation, leading to territorial losses, and setting a precedent for further foreign intervention.^[9] Such a foreign intervention was the Persian campaign of World War I, spanning from 1914 to 1918, in which Persia endured significant suffering, as an estimated 2 million civilians perished due to famine and disease related to the conflict.^[10] This devastating loss of life dealt a severe blow to the longstanding Qajar dynasty, which had governed Persia since 1789. Ultimately, these internal and external challenges contributed to the collapse of the Qajar dynasty in 1925.^[11] Following this tumultuous period, Reza Shah, a military figure, took power four years after the 1921 coup d'état, heralding the dawn of the Pahlavi dynasty and signaling the end of Qajar Iran.^[12]

Political Situation

In 1929, Persia was under an absolute monarchy led by Reza Shah Pahlavi and his prime Minister Mehdi Qoli Hedayat.^[13,14] The ideology of the government at that time was centered around modernization and secularization, with Reza Shah implementing a series of reforms aimed at modernizing Persia and consolidating power.^[15] Persia has also experienced quite some separatist uprisings, the most recent of them being the Sheikh Khazal rebellion of 1924 as well as the Simko Shikak revolt of 1926.^[16,17]

Economic Situation in 1929

By 1929, Persia was undergoing a significant transformation, transitioning from its primarily agrarian economy to one beginning to embrace industrialization. Planned by Reza Shah Pahlavi, reforms were implemented to modernize various sectors, including infrastructure, education, and the legal system. Notably, the government played a pivotal role in financing modern industries and imposing monopolies, while also fostering the emergence of a new class of entrepreneurs.^[18,19] Persia is rich in natural resources, including oil, natural gas, coal, copper, and other minerals. Oil specifically was a big point of interest for the United Kingdom, which imported much of its oil from Persia^[20]

Military Strength in 1929

After the various events, Persia's army was very decimated. In 1929, Persia only had about 33 planes, which were acquired in 1928^[21] and a very small military budget of less than 9 Million USD of 1929 (Conversion of 111.8 Million rials to USD)^[22,23,24]. In 1925, Reza Shah established the Persian Imperial Navy and Persia ordered several ships from Italy, which were not delivered yet by 1929.^[25] Persian pilots were trained in Germany and France while Persian navy members were trained in Italy.^[21,25]

Key Facts about Military Strength of Persia ^[21,22,23,24,26,27,28,29]	
Active personnel	80'000
Tanks	~50
Cavalry	None
Other vehicles	Unknown
Ships	None
Planes	33
Funding in 1929\$	9'093'686

Allies/Enemies/Existing territorial disputes in 1929

Allies: United Kingdom (Important Trading Partner)^[20]; Soviet Union (Russo-Persian Treaty of Friendship (1921))^[30]

Most enemies of Persia at that time were internal Enemies, such as the Emirate of Muhammara^[16].

Some of the main goals for the 1930s

1. Modernization and Secularization: Introduce Western-style reforms to modernize Persia's institutions and decrease religious influence.^[15]
2. Consolidation of Power and Centralization: Strengthen central government authority while diminishing regional and tribal power structures.^[31]
3. Nationalism and Sovereignty: Assert Persia's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity against foreign influence.^[32]

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