***An alternative perspective on the Tobacco protest 1890/1891***

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*[[1]](#footnote-1)The Iranian Tobacco Protest Movement 1890/91, power in numbers.*

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**Abstract**

This study will focus on the response of the British foreign office on tobacco protest and is, in part, an analysis of their interests. Promoting stability in Persia as well as consolidating the British position there. This thesis adopts a micro historical lens to simplify this vital moment in Persian (and British) history, from a British perspective and analyzes the British securitization efforts and motives that accompanied the eruption of the 1891 tobacco protest in Persia. Lord Salisbury was the dominant figure in foreign affairs together with the consul in Persia Sir Wolff. The utilization of the historical narrative, providing evidence of historical agency of local actors, is used in order to analyze the British foreign policy with the help of the modern securitization model of Buzan and Paul Roe. All to establish *to what extent the attitude of the British foreign ministry, towards the Persians during the tobacco protests in Persia, can be explained in terms of modern securitization theory?* British officials approached the Persian question with an underlying idea to construct Persia into a strong and independent buffer zone, to constitute a substantial outwork in Indian defense against the Russians. In order to achieve this a securitizing foreign policy was necessary to sustain stability, priority was to uphold Persia’s integrity. Concluding, securitization theory is a useful lens to analyze the British motives in the tobacco protest and shows that the British maintained a stable foreign policy to secure their own position in the region.

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**Introduction**

**Historical background**

Persia is one of the four countries in the Muslim world with a Shiite majority.[[2]](#footnote-2) Religious differences are a cause of historical and current conflict with other states in the region. Yet, this is not the only factor causing instability in Persia. Just like other Middle Eastern countries, Persia has been a playfield for European imperialists. Especially the British and the Russians attempted to extend their spheres of influence into Persia. The Anglo-Russian competition shifted to Persia under the Qajar Dynasty at the start of the nineteenth century. The Qajars possessed limited control over the country at that time.[[3]](#footnote-3) They were overpowered by the British and Russians and overshadowed by tribal leaders. Only Teheran was in complete control of the Qajar dynasty.

The Anglo- Russian rivalry on the Persian territory was not Persia’s first encounter with western societies. Merchants from the east and the west have crossed Persia since ancient times. As Persia is located along the silk road, they had a long tradition of trade. The trade in silk became especially important to Britain when Persia started to do more business with India, because India was a significant colony for the British.[[4]](#footnote-4) Therefore, they wanted to expand their power in Persia as well, to keep the trade routes open.

Britain developed a special relationship with Persia. Persia was the only country outside Europe were Britain had a diplomatic post.[[5]](#footnote-5) For some time the only European representative at the Shah’s court was that of Britain. However, this was not a relationship between equals. Persia was not doing well at the start of the nineteenth century. It was an ancient country full of poverty.[[6]](#footnote-6) Britain on the other hand was rapidly modernising due to the industrial revolution.

The relations between Britain and Persia consist of a long and complex history. Cultural affairs, political exchanges, but above all economic profits had their impact on both countries, resulting in an alternating attitude of mistrust and familiarity. British policy towards Persia can mostly be characterized by hectoring and unwarranted interference.[[7]](#footnote-7) British institutions, laws, constitutional government and industrial strength offered a prototype to be emulated.[[8]](#footnote-8) The presence of Britain had a dual impact in Persia, both positive and negative. The British navy in the Persian Gulf, threatened Persia’s sovereignty over her islands, but at the same time they modernized the technology and protected Persia’s developing trade.

**The tobacco concession**

Now that the lines of the relation between Persia and Britain are set, we continue by observing a shift at the end of the nineteenth century, when the British initiated a more assertive policy of economic penetration***.*** This brings us to the focus of this thesis, the Tobacco concession and protest of 1890/1891.

The concession was granted by Nasir al- Din Shah of Persia and allowed British control over growth, sale and export of tobacco. Persia had started to sell raw materials to the Russians and British in the nineteenth century. However, when Britain came in possession of the concession on the tobacco crop, the Persian people started to rise up against them. This eventually led to huge protests in 1891, a fatwa against tobacco use was issued by Grand Ayatollah Mirza Hassan Shirazi, as Persians did not want foreigners to operate one of their most valuable goods. The protestors were mainly Tehran merchants and clerics, each with their own motives. They were trapped in a challenging position, as they were unable to compete with the economic advantages acquired by European merchants.[[9]](#footnote-9)

However, the roots of this conflict go a little further back. Nasir al-Din Shah negotiated in 1872 a concession with the British Baron Julius de Reuter. This concession gave him the control over the Persian roads, telegraphs, mills, extraction of resources, factories and other public works. Even back then, the concession of the Reuter was not only met with internal outrage in the shape of local protest, the Russian government in term highly protested against the concession as well.[[10]](#footnote-10) The immense popular pressure forced Nasir al-Din Shah to cancel the agreement, despite his deteriorating financial situation.

Still, this concession made so much impact, even though it was only in practice for a year, that it formed the catalyst for the revolts against the tobacco concession in 1890. The core of the protest was to depict opposition against any attempt of a foreign power to infringe upon Persian sovereignty.[[11]](#footnote-11) This did not only infuriate the local population, but rival European powers as well.

**Historiography**

The Tobacco monopoly was called the *Régie*, the academic Nikki Keddie adds that the ‘strange alliance’ reaction of religious and radical reforming groups, is actually not that strange in modern history of Muslim countries, but very important. [[12]](#footnote-12) The Tobacco Movement’s principal strategy consisted of collective strikes and embargoes according to [Ranin Kazemi](https://brill.com/search?f_0=author&q_0=Ranin+Kazemi).[[13]](#footnote-13) The protest demonstrates an important phase in the development and maturation of what eventually came to be known as activist or political Islam. Even more so, Keddie adds that ‘*Iranians saw for the first time that it was possible to win out against the Shah and foreign interests… there is a direct line from the coalition which participated in the tobacco movement… culminating in the*[*Constitutional Revolution*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitutional_Revolution)*’* and arguably even the [1979 Iranian Revolution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1979_Iranian_Revolution).[[14]](#footnote-14) The whole event deeply affected the Shah’s attitude towards the west which turned into a hostile approach.

So, the national political outburst in 1979 had some deep roots into the international past of Persia. So much has been written about the Iranian revolution, that the focus on other parts of Iranian history have been overlooked. Important events, like the Tobacco protest in 1890, are often not getting the attention they deserve in modern day research. However, research on ‘smaller’ international events like this are helpful in order to understand the ground shaking revolution of 1979. Sir Wolff was an English diplomat and the British foreign minister in Persia from 1888 until 1891. In his work he ‘*denied having had anything to do with the actual concession; and his denial was twice repeated and confirmed by the Under-Secretary of State*’. [[15]](#footnote-15) Sir Wolff’s work and the work of Lord Salisbury, the prime minister of Britain at that time, will be used extensively in this research.[[16]](#footnote-16) [[17]](#footnote-17)

As Homa Katouzian points out, the Tobacco revolt ‘*was the first political act, properly so called, in Iranian history, and a prelude and rehearsal for the Constitutional Revolution*’.[[18]](#footnote-18)This quote emphasises the importance of the tobacco protest on Persian and political history. Some scholars have examined this topic, but only a few scholars have examined the Irian protest through the British perspective. Firstly, the British orientalist Edward Browne, who wrote that the negotiations regarding the concessions, ‘very probably’ began during the shah's third trip to Europe in 1889.[[19]](#footnote-19) Secondly, American scholar of Iranian history Keddie, who offers a tentative version of how the negotiations may have taken place as well as commenting on the primary work of Sir Henry Drummond Wolff's ‘highly probable’ activity in ‘encouraging the concession’.[[20]](#footnote-20) Thirdly, the academic Heidi Walcher mentions the ‘open-handed distribution of bribes’ to obtain the concession but does not enter into any more detail.[[21]](#footnote-21) Instead the last scholar, Platt, talks about the granting of the concession and states that ‘*there is no evidence to support the claim that the British minister at Tehran had anything directly to do with it’*.[[22]](#footnote-22) They all focus on the process around the British concessions, from a British perspective.

There is a more extensive analysis on the British foreign policy in the works of Keddie and Platt, which is obviously far less coloured and more objective than Wolff’s perspective. Still, a deeper focus on the foreign policy of the British state and the reasoning behind their actions remains absent. Therefore, there is a gap in the academic debate.

**Problem definition, method and source material**

This research aims to fill the gap in the historical debate, by providing an analysis of the British foreign policy at the time and by applying modern international relations theory and securitization theory to this policy. An alternative perspective will be provided in this research, for analysing the British relationship with Persia, using the case study of the tobacco protest. All to establish *to what extent the attitude of the British foreign ministry, towards the Persians during the tobacco protests in Persia, can be explained in terms of modern securitization theory*?

This qualitative research will be theory driven, with a focus on international (relation) politics and policy making. The hypothesis will be tested through the lens of modern securitization theory. This can help other researchers to use securitization theory to identify and analyze trends in Britain’s securitizing policies. ‘Security culture’ provides an analytical tool to explain the persistence of particular ways or behavioural patterns of doing ‘security.’[[23]](#footnote-23)I apply securitization theory to the tobacco event of 1890 to gain a better understanding of the overall event and the role the British played. Securitization theory is nowadays commonly used as a framework to define the pathways through which different ways of doing security evolve. The theory identifies openings and closures that might allow or prevent different approaches for states to secure themselves. It is innovative to use this modern concept, currently often used in ‘the war against terrorism’, on a historical event and to apply it on a country that want to secure itself (or its position), in another country where it is active.

In order to get a better understanding of foreign policy creation in Britain and to detect securitization efforts, this research will start by conceptualizing the unique relation between Persia and Britain, introducing the British players, Persian and British reactions and the Persian motives to protest and the British motives in Persia affairs (chapter one). Followed up by an extensive analysis on the British interference in Persia around 1890 with the help of international relations theory (chapter 2) and an examination of the British foreign policy towards Persia through the lens of the securitization model (chapter 3).

The primary source material will mainly exist of telegraph correspondence. As the head of the foreign ministry in Britain, Lord Salisbury, send his policies and ideas towards Wolff, the English diplomat in Persia, by telegraph. Later Wolff’s position will be taken over by Lascelles. Wolff, one of the main commercial intermediary and negotiator at that time, helps to establish which political decisions led up to this economic concession. In addition, state assurances and foreign office correspondence of 1890 and 1891 provide a solid foundation for further argumentation. Eventually, modern securitization theory will be used to establish the British security culture regarding the Persians, to establish the British manoeuvres in Persia.

**Chapter 1: History Anglo- Persian relation**

This chapter will look into the historical background of the tobacco protest. It will do so by discussing the players involved, their reaction on the concession and their motives.

**The chief players**

Let us start with the British politician Nathaniel Curzon. He presented his work, *Persia and the Persian Question*, in 1892 based on his 6 months stay in Persia in 1889/1890. He worked as a correspondent for the London Times. Next is Lord Salisbury, who was the leading figure in British foreign affairs in the period studied here. The British foreign office depended primarily upon Lord Salisbury guidance from 1885 until 1892 according to the academic Coughlin. Salisbury’s concepts and experience on dealing with Persia are therefore of real importance in this research. Salisbury wrote in a letter to Lord Lansdowne in 1891, that the affairs concerning Persia were described as ‘strictly a foreign office matter’, which is in line with the scope of tis research.[[24]](#footnote-24) He requested more information over the country. The aim of Lord Salisbury was to uphold a strong relation with Persia, as Persia had to function as the main bulwark in Indian defense, instead of Afghanistan as they became more involved with the Russians.[[25]](#footnote-25) Finally, Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, who was sent to Tehran to administer the buffer state policy endorsed by Salisbury.[[26]](#footnote-26) During his years in Persia, Wolff was very successful, he sponsored measures to enhance export capacities and instituted the Imperial bank.[[27]](#footnote-27) By doing so, he promoted not only the welfare of Persia but he also reinforced the position of Britain.

**The tobacco concession**

The first significant investment from the British in Persia was a telegraph line in 1862, from Ḵānaqin to Teh-ran and Bušehr, to link London with India. As stated before, this telegraph line is vital for primary source material. Other concessions followed, as Shah Nāṣer-al-Din permitted the British a large economic stake in Persia, to secure itself against the influence of Russia. The British prime minister Salisbury stimulated British enterprises ‘*to make Persia as strong as we can by internal development to resist the supposed aggression*,’ but with the attention that ‘*nothing must be pushed merely because it will favour a British speculation, unless you are certain that it will do good or at least no harm to Persia itself*’.[[28]](#footnote-28) The British government reacted, out of fear of being upstaged both politically and commercially by Russia and others, and invited Shah Nāṣer-al-Din to a state visit in London in 1889. According to Browne this was a very influential moment in Anglo-Persian political history, as he states that this trip marked the beginning of the further negotiations between Britain and Persia concerning their relationship with each other.[[29]](#footnote-29)

The Talbot concession of 1890 was already sold to the Imperial Tobacco Corporation of Persia by the fall of that same year. Talbot himself was excessively involved in this company according to Keddie.[[30]](#footnote-30) The tobacco crop was quite valuable at the time of the concession. Mainly because of the domestic market, but also because the Persians cultivated a range of tobacco which was ‘much prized in foreign markets’ as it was not produced anywhere else and therefore very exclusive and wanted.[[31]](#footnote-31) The monopoly on tobacco resulted in a huge pressure on the producers of tobacco, which was so high that they had no other option but to sell their goods to agents of the *Régie*. The agents would in turn, resell the acquired tobacco. So, the concession violated the time-honored relationship between Persian tobacco manufacturers and tobacco retailers. Moreover, the job security of a significant portion of the population was now seriously threatened.[[32]](#footnote-32)

The first resounding protest, surprisingly, did not come from Persian merchants or the Ulema but from the Russian government. They believed the Tobacco *Régie* violated the liberty of trade in the area marked by the treaty of Turkmanchai.[[33]](#footnote-33)Meanwhile, anonymous letters, showing public resentment towards the concessions for foreigners, were sent to members of the Qajar government and circulated in posters trough cities like Teheran.[[34]](#footnote-34)Mass protest instigated during the spring of 1891 in the bigger Persian cities Shiraz, Tehran and Tabriz. Organized by the bazaaris and the Ulma. As concessions were given to non-Muslim foreigners, the Ulema believed that the national-religious community were endangered. The boycott of smoking (part of the general protest) was very effective in Persia. An effective way to protest against foreign concessions and the monopoly of the production, sale and export of tobacco. Yet, the agitation became violent by July and a placard even stated ‘*We will kill the Europeans first and then plunder their property’.[[35]](#footnote-35)* When threats circulated in the country, Britain could not stay silent, especially as they feared a full scale rebellion in Persia.

**The Tobacco paradox**

Coughlin points out the paradox concerning the tobacco protest. Those who refer to tobacco in its early days predicted that it would be largely beneficial for Persians in the tobacco industry.[[36]](#footnote-36) Coughlin continues that ‘*the tobacco concession per se seems to have bee innocuous’*.[[37]](#footnote-37)However, the concession formed the ideal base for popular uprising, which had been boiling beneath the surface for years. ‘*The other concessions, moreover, were so far into the realm of politics that the people could not grasp their significance*.’ [[38]](#footnote-38) The Shah desperately wanted to withdraw the concession, However this would most certainly be interpreted as a weakness. Not only the Shah feared the outcome of the protest, the British state did as well. Especially when Wolff fell ill, which would later force his permanent departure from Tehran. This paralyzed the British to affectively handle the crisis in Persia. Salisbury received a letter that *‘The whole machinery of British prestige & success, political or commercial, at Teheran depended on Wolff’.[[39]](#footnote-39)*

**Britain’s motives**

Britain approached the Persian question from two points of view. On the one hand, there was a preference to create a strong and solid independent buffer state.[[40]](#footnote-40) Persia could thereby function as a substantial outwork in Indian defence and an obstacle to the Russians in the south. On the other hand, there was a fear that the barriers, towards reform and restoration, could not be overcome.[[41]](#footnote-41) However, the alternative would be an agreement with Russia to divide the country into spheres of influence, which would surely not be preferable. Curzon cautions patience against the dominant role for external concessions and states ‘ *Persian capital must be interested in the exploitation of Persian resources, for a monopoly of the finance by foreigners excites jealousy, and suggests the idea of usurpation’.[[42]](#footnote-42)* At that time, Britain had quite some commercial and economic interests in Persia, they were hoping that their export procedures would compete with those of Russia. The London times stated on the 26th of December in 1889, ‘*The day of doing nothing , and of letting the overripe Persian pear fall into Russia’s mouth, of discouraging still further by our apathy the already disheartened Persians, seems to have passes away, and in its place has arrived one marked by energetic but not provocative action, but the resolve to uphold our legitimate rights against all comers.*’[[43]](#footnote-43) Commercial but mostly Political considerations led to the opening of multiple consulates across Persia after the treaty of Paris in 1859. They were opened ‘*to represent to the native mind the prestige of a great and wealthy power’[[44]](#footnote-44)*, according to Curzon. This quote suggests that Britain wanted to obtain a certain powerful status in Persia, in order to achieve this they build numerous consulates. It was important for Britain to be involved in Persian affairs to maintain stability in the region, especially for their interest in India.

**Aftermath**

The British impact on Persian matters brought the Shah’s empire into the vortex of European politics. The duke of Argyll stated, ‘ *Teheran is the Capital where Indian and European politics meet. But the centre of interest is European. Even as regards Indian questions, the methods of operating upon them in Persia, are essentially connected with the main currents of European diplomacy.’*[[45]](#footnote-45)

The Persians did not want Britain’s interference; they rebelled with a boycott on the consumption of tobacco and farmers burning their own crops and bazaars that closed down out of solidarity. Nasir al- Din Shah and Prime Minister Amin al-Sultan found themselves in a difficult situation, pressured by Britain and fearing a Russian intervention in case of civil war.[[46]](#footnote-46) When the shah realized that the British government ‘was waffling’ in its support for the Imperial Tobacco Company, he canceled the concession. This automatically affected Britain. However, the two principal components of Salisbury’s policy, his concepts of Persia as a buffer state and the ‘independence and integrity of Persia’, were, and remained, leading in the policy from 1885 until 1892.[[47]](#footnote-47)Then again, when Salisbury realized later that Persia did not only have a lack of means but also of interest to oppose Russia, his sincere intention to support Persia faded.[[48]](#footnote-48) The next chapter will extent in more detail on the foreign policy of Britain and their political tactics.

**Chapter 2:** **Analysis of the British state department foreign policy**

While the previous chapter focused on the structure and procedure of the conflict, by introducing the players and their motives, this chapter will focus on the British foreign policy based on foreign office telegraph correspondence and international relations (IR) theory.

**International relations theory**

International relations theory aims to explain [causal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Causality) and constitutive effects in international politics. Political theory is an important tool in the analysis of international questions. In order to fully understand those issues, it is vital to adopt broader historical perspective. IR theory is a wide and complicated field of research, but very concise it comes down to three dominant theories in IR studies.

The first one is the Utopian theory liberalism, the idea that humans are innately good, they believe peace and harmony between nations is not only achievable, but desirable according to Emanuel Kant.[[49]](#footnote-49)

The second theory is realism (traditionalism), which became dominant since the Second World War. Realism reflects the ‘reality’ of the world and more essentially accounts for change in international politics. Thomas Hobbes, a precursor realist, already describes the brutality of life during the English Civil War of 1642–1651, where human beings are portrayed living in an anarchic ‘state of nature’ that he perceived as ‘a war of all against all.’[[50]](#footnote-50) Security risks are observed as a tangible danger, perceived as a direct threat to the state. Security is therefore static and state centered.

The third theory is constructivism (revisionism), a new theory since the 1990’s. Threats are noted as social constructions due to the process of historical contingency. Actions, interactions and perceptions shape reality and are continuously in motion. Security is therefore dynamic and non-state actors are involved.[[51]](#footnote-51)

The last two theories are significant in securitization theory and will help to clarify the underlying motives, for the British policy presented in this chapter, on the base of correspondence and memoirs of the British officials presented in chapter one.

**Britain’s foreign policy**

Britain’s foreign policy toward Persia during the tobacco protest was based on security. Security and stability were two important factors for Persia and therefore for Britain. As described in chapter one Britain had various motives to maintain its good connection with Persia. Lucia Zedner describes the concept of security as ‘*inherently complex, diverse and configured above all by the material practise through which it pursued’*.[[52]](#footnote-52) Security is at a state of being (for Persia) and a means to and end (for Britain).

The Shah asked Lord Salisbury for advice on what to do with the protest, who replied that ‘*severe measures’ should only be taken in the interest of the country and the safeguarding of the shah’s authority*.’[[53]](#footnote-53) When we incorporate the expanded meanings of security, we discover Lord Salisbury aims to restrain stability in the country, he does not want to act to quickly and only when really necessary. The modern international relations theory constructivism, that takes constant motion between situations and actions into account, is in this case the leading theory for the policy of Britain around 1890. Salisbury and his solid base Wolff are aware of the situation and its dynamic character and they anticipate on it.

Britain made its internal political philosophy, which focused on keeping the peace and preserving stability in Persia, the goal of its foreign policy. State preference is hereby leading, instead of state capabilities, therefore there is plurality in state actions. The economic factor and type of government at that time are important factors. Interaction between states are not limited to high politics but also to low politics and economic factors. Agency is hereby not only permitted by Britain to the state Persia but also to smaller actors like commercial firms and opposing organizations. Following this line of policy, there are numerous opportunities of cooperation and wider notions of power, in order to achieve peace and stability. Salisbury stated that ‘*we do not wish to assume the invidious position of urging vigorous measures, in order that foreigners may make money’.[[54]](#footnote-54)*

A short pause ensued during the tobacco protest at time and a peaceful arrangement seemed in sight. Then, the chief mujtahid put an interdict on smoking and branded all tobacco ‘unclean’ until the concession would be revoked. Sir Franks Lascelles, the substitute of Wolff, observed that the Persian authorities mainly saw two alternatives in case the concession would be maintained, namely civil war or the retirement of the prime minister Mirza Khan. [[55]](#footnote-55)

The initial correlation between the British Legation and the concessionaire was ambiguous. Wolff wrote ‘*some time ago the Imperial Bank, on depositing the stipulated sums on behalf of Major Talbot, received a concession for him and registered it. At the same time I heard Major Talbot was forming an international company. Since then I know nothing….’.[[56]](#footnote-56)* This quote of Wolff implies that the British foreign ministry was critical towards English institutions. In order to make a comprehensive policy it was necessary to take all the actions, of the Persian’s and the British, in various economic of political fields, into account.

Later, when the British tobacco company negotiated for compensation, Salisbury instructed Lascelles to give advice as the company had not been at fault. However, this support was not unqualified. Salisbury telegraphed ‘ *Remember that the first thing we have to care for is the maintenance of the Persian State*’.[[57]](#footnote-57) Herein, another constructive approach can be regarded. The willingness to keep the peace and to cooperate. Particularly, taken the fact that the company did not take any actions outside the legal limitations. The Persian government had no reserve funds to pay of the concession, as a lack of revenue had instigated the whole concession in the first place. Yet, the Russians jumped in and offered a sum of money on very liberal terms. Eventually, the Imperial Bank provided the loan to meet the Russian proposal.[[58]](#footnote-58) The enduring discussions about the loan, tested the patience of the British and the abolition of the tobacco concession reduced Persia’s reputation in European financial circles. Surprisingly, Coughlin states that this situation produced ‘*no change in England’s official policy*’[[59]](#footnote-59). Lascelles had private instructions form Salisbury in 1891, to build further on the foundation of Wolff; ‘*Wolff has done very much to aid in the development of Persia (….)We have to go in the same lines, favoring every enterprise which will increase the well being of the Persian people & strength of the Persian Government*.’[[60]](#footnote-60)After Wolff’s departure deterioration set in, the British Foreign Office was no longer surprised by reports recounting of revolts and seditious plots. [[61]](#footnote-61)However, the constructivist approach in their foreign policy and their willingness for stability and rest remained intact. Now that we have analyzed the reaction of Britain, in their foreign policy towards Persia, with the help of international relations theory, we will apply the securitization model in the next chapter to examine the British fundamental motives in their policy.

**Chapter 3: Utilizing modern securitization theory to the British foreign policy**

It is only since the long nineteenth century that the concept of ‘security’ has come to be a central theory of international political thought. ‘National security’ was installed in 1945 and security studies in IR about the same time. The Copenhagen school of security studies was instigated by the international relations theorist Barry Buzan.[[62]](#footnote-62) The concept security is a multisectoral issue. ‘Securitization’ comes down to the portrayal of certain issues persons or entities as existential threats by securitizing actor(s) through speech act to secure the referent object against the existential threat and persuading a relevant audience.

**Securitization theory**

Security is a contested term, often defined against adjacent concepts that specify it. State security is in the British case the referent object. There are three important factors in the security model according to Paul Roe: actor(s), audience(s) and emergency measures.[[63]](#footnote-63)

The **actors** evolve around the process wherein state actors convert subjects from recurring political issues into matters of ‘security’, to enable means to be used to establish security

The **audience** depends on the support of people, which is necessary to securitize the issue. However, the public does not have such a big role in securitization, as measures are often taken by (political) institutions, like the foreign minister Salisbury and the present diplomat Wolff. Still, it is important that the audience provides moral support for the institutions plans. The step of identification is important but mobilization eventually needs to take over.

**Emergency measures:** if matters of ‘security’ are successfully securitized they securitized subject should receive a disproportionate sum of attention and resources, in contrast to unsuccessful subject resulting in more human damage. Terrorism is for example a hot issue in security discussions. The Tobacco Protest is generally perceived as the beginning of social unrest and clear Islamic clerical influence leading up to the Constitutional Revolution. This chapter will therefore, apply modern securitization theory on the supposed origins of Islamic social unrest.[[64]](#footnote-64)

**Case study**

So, securitization aims to understand ‘*who securitizes (the securitizing actor), on what issues (threats), for whom (referent object), why, with what results, and not least, under what conditions*.’[[65]](#footnote-65) Now we will apply the securitization model to the tobacco protest.

The contextual component

**The existential threat:** The economic concession instigated a protest from the Persian people, which has been identified as ‘potentially harmful’

**The referent object:** Is (directly)the Persian state that needs to be protected from the protestors but also (indirectly) the British state, that wants to sustain a state of being unharmed in the future .

The enabling components

**The securitizing actor:** Britain, is in this case the entity who undertakes the securitizing.

**The audience:** The protestors, in this case the Mullah’s, people working in the ex and import of tobacco and merchants, they are the focus of the securitization act, this group needs to be convinced and recognize the issue as a security hazard.

The securitization model applied to the tobacco case comes down to the fact that the British want to stop the protest and social unrest in order to maintain peace and descent (trade) relations with Persia. The referent objects are in the first place the Persians but also the British in case when the revolt extends, the ideal that securitization wants to achieve here is ‘stability and rest’.

Securitization is mostly process oriented, as we can regard in the British approach and not on the material disposition of power, polarity or military capabilities, although it was clear that the British could easily overpower the Persians at that time.

The acceptance by the audience, the Persians (and British) civilians, was very important in this case as they had to accept their government decisions. The Tobacco protest in Persia was not a direct threat to the British state, all the more because the revolt was more directed towards the reign of the Shah. However, regardless whether the subject forms a real threat, according to Thierry Balzack *‘the success of which does not necessarily depend on the existence of a real threat, but on the discursive ability to effectively endow a development with such a specific complexion’*[[66]](#footnote-66). So the securitizing acts of Britain in another country, that does not expose a direct threat to them, are not rare at all.

**Securitization policy**

We distinguished a primary worry in the source material of chapter 2, regarding the foreign policy of Salisbury, that Persia constituted a serious gap in Indian defence plans. Salisbury therefore wanted to encourage reform in Persia. There are two significant document wherein an assurance is given by the British minister to the Shah, these assurances characterize the British approach and the maintenance of integrity of Persia.

The first one is given by Sir Wolff on the 24th of October 1888;

‘*In the event of any power making an attack without just cause or provocation on Persia, or attempting to take possession of Persian territory against the will of the Persian government, her majesty’s government engage to make earnest representations against such proceeding & to take such steps as may in their judgement be best calculated to prevent any infringement of the integrity of Persia.* ‘[[67]](#footnote-67) So when there was a notice of any threat to the integrity of Persia, by an internal or external power, Britain would react. This was the policy prior to the protest.

But then, Persians rose up against the concession and Britain struggled to find sufficient security for the payment of a certain and moderate interest on the capital. Without this ‘security’ British capitalist would not invest their money in enterprises containing high risks. So securitizing the economic benefits of Britain was an underlying point in their Foreign policy and an extra push for securitizing peace and stability in Persia.

Lord Salisbury made a sincere effort to persuade reform in Persia, however when he left the Foreign office in 1892 he abandoned the hope to transform Persia. Nevertheless, the correspondence in chapter two towards lord Lascelles illustrates that Salisbury had not deserted his traditional policy of an independent buffer state. The next paragraph from a letter of Salisbury to Lanscelles characterizes the British policy after the concession;

‘*This policy, though its advantages are obvious when stated in the words I have used, may easily, if not watched, degenerate into a very different policy(…) We have to guard against the suspicion that we are not laboring for the development, but only for the exploitation, of Persia. It is a suspicion which the Persians obviously entertain: & some circs. connected with the tobacco monopoly have therefore been unfortunate. Our commercial adventurers are very much on the watch, & would be very glad to convert the Legation into an agency for pushing British speculation in Persia. I need not point out how diametrically opposed such a policy would be to that which I am recommending, & how fatal it would be to our object. Nothing must be pushed, merely because it will favor a British speculation, unless you are certain that it will do good, or at least not do harm, to Persia itself. In this matter, where we have very few but moral weapons to use, character is of great importance to us.’[[68]](#footnote-68)*

The statement above indicates that the target of Salisbury’s policy had not really changed. Yes, Salisbury communicates his warnings, but at the same time he advocates that enterprises will increase the wellbeing of Persia and strengthen its Government. Which is very much in line with his previous policy. He explained that his policy in Persia' *may be summed up in two sentences: we have to make Persia as strong as we can by internal development to resist the supposed aggression: and we have to obtain for ourselves the amount and the kind of influence which will enable us when the crisis comes to turn the efforts of Persia into the right direction*'. So the concept of the British state basically remains the same. Lascelles had to build on the foundation of his predecessor, Sir Wolff, who fostered development in Persia. Lord Salisbury even mentioned, surprisingly, the tobacco concession as measure which should, in future, strengthen the country.

**Security culture**

The concept security culture is used as an analytical tool in securitization theory to explain the persistence of particular ways, or behavioral patterns, of doing ‘security’. The analyzation of the pathways through which different ways of doing security evolve so as to identify openings and closures that might allow or prevent different approaches. The British motives, stated in chapter one, reveal the British security culture, as it overarches diverse (in) securities. The British security culture, upholding the integrity and stability in Persia and keeping Persia as a buffer state to India, illustrates why actors act in a given situation to obtain security. Interestingly, it also traces the context of individuals like, Wolff, playing a vital role. The shah and the British foreign ministry form in this case a security community, because they act as ‘*a group of people who have become integrated to the point where there is a real assurance that the members of that community will not fight each other physically but will settle their disputes in some other way*.’[[69]](#footnote-69) May Kaldor bring in the crossing borders aspect in the concept of security culture, so global security cultures, she states that security cultures are ‘*characterized by groups of shared ideas and practices, a common style of doing security, a degree of mutual interdependence although not necessarily a common security policy*.’[[70]](#footnote-70) So security culture is an important aspect, in case of the British, as a way of doing security and exercising power.

To conclude, when we apply the securitization model to the British foreign policy we can see that a non- political issue, the tobacco concession, gets politicized. Although, the concession was intended to be economic, it became politicized when it was managed within the standard political system. Through communal governance, the British foreign ministry and the diplomats but also the Shah decided abolish the concession. The tobacco protest, and thereby the concession, were securitized when they were portrayed as an existential threat and the audience was convinced that emergency actions were required beyond the state’s political procedures, which meant the abolishment of the concession in order to restore the harmony.

**Conclusion**

The Anglo-Persian relation is a special one, that goes back centuries. Persia was important for the British as a buffer zone to India, against the Russians. The British foreign policy was therefore based on the principle of security to sustain the independence and integrity of Persia, whenever possible to uphold stability and harmony in Persia to safeguard the British buffer zone. This policy was ensured by the foreign minister Lord Salisbury and the consul sir Wolff, during the tobacco protest of 1890/1891, where Persian civilians, such as merchants, rose against the foreign operation of their national product.

Modern securitization theory, of Bulzan and Balzaq, can be applied to this historical case and the primary source correspondence of the British foreign ministry and the diplomats present in Persia. This analysis of the tobacco protest, with the help of the modern securitization model, exposes and highlights the underlying motives of the British and provides an answer to why they endorsed their foreign policy of maintaining solidity and solidarity in Persia, if possible. There were some doubts whether this approach could be maintained in the correspondence between the foreign office and the consul(s) Wolff and Lascelles, but they continued with the approach and reinstalled stability, the British were able to keep a strong hold in Central Asia in order to remain and protect their power position in the world. Therefore the British kept their focus on securitizing ‘stability’ and the ‘economic situation’, without hostility. The British were able to adapt slowly to the (dynamic) situation by working with the state and non- state actors and did not rush into action. This method would nowadays be classified as constructivism. The intra-state conflict between the government of Britain and the rebels in Persia, followed a causal mechanism. The Talbot concession situation affected several groups in Persia, which resulted in protests. The British securitization effort in their foreign policy was based on their desired state of being unharmed in the future.

The protest demonstrates an important phase in the development and maturation of what eventually came to be known as activist or political Islam. Radical and religious groups became, remarkably, actors working together to achieve a communal goal. This specific case study presented the, origins of political Islam and clarified it by an analysation of securitization theory for an alternative perspective on the protest. It highlights the importance of this particular event and spurs inspiration to further research the tobacco movement as the protest which, potentially, demonstrates an important phase in the development and maturation of activist or political Islam. We can conclude that the securitization attempts of Britain were successful during the tobacco protest for sustaining the Anglo-Persian relationship. However, further research has to clarify whether the real seeds of revolution were planted during the protest, which would suggests that at least segments of the Persian population did not buy into the narrative that the Anglo- Persian relationship were necessary for Persia’s prosperity and why Britain was no not able to maintain stability and the close relationship with Persia in the long term.

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