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Ahmad Shāh Qājār

Sultān **Ahmad Shāh Qājār** (1898–1930, r. 1909–25) was the seventh and last Qājār shah of Iran. His father, Muḥammad ‘Alī Shāh (d. 1925), was deposed by leaders of the Constitutional Revolution (1905–9) and sent into exile. Ahmad was close to his parents and wished to leave with them but was told to stay and ascend the throne. He came of age in August 1914 and was crowned a few days before the First World War broke out. Meanwhile, his father had made an abortive attempt to invade the country from Russia. The Russians had capitalised on their influence in state affairs and forced the Iranian government to sack W. Morgan Shuster, their American chief financial adviser in charge of economic reform. Upon his return he wrote the famous book *The strangling of Persia*. These events culminated in the closure of the second Majlis (parliament) in 1911. Elections to the third Majlis were to be held after the shah’s coronation.

Chaos and indiscipline had already begun after the establishment of the constitutional government, in the centre and

in provinces, but the intrusion of the First World War into Iran made matters worse. Iran declared neutrality, but this was not respected by foreign belligerents, and it led to the formation of a rival government in the west of the country, which declared war on the Entente powers. The Russian and Ottoman armies occupied the north and west, while the British effectively occupied the south. German agents were active in the south and southwest as well as in Afghanistan. There was little that the young shah could do in the circumstances, as he was a constitutional monarch and the country was in such a desperate situation that twenty governments were formed between 1909 and 1921.

At the end of the world war, Iran was in danger of disintegration. The Russian revolutions brought great mental and physical relief, but a famine ensued, which, combined with the Spanish flu epidemic, wrought havoc. Meanwhile, the state coffers were virtually empty and military and security forces almost non-existent. In August 1918 Vusūq al-Dawla (d. 1951), a powerful politician, became prime minister with the support of the British government, who paid a monthly subsidy of

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