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Afshar Nader Shah: Military Leadership, Strategy and the Armed Forces During his Reign

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Abstract

In the first half of the 18th century, Afshar Nader Shah had played an essential role in the history of Iran and the countries around. It was an area extending from the northeastern boundries of the Ottoman Empire to India and from Oman to Transoxiana wherein more than ten independent states exist in the present day. Nader Shah has been renowned most widely for having recovered the usurped Iranian throne from the Ghilzai Afghans and for uniting the country. However a considerable amount of literature has touched upon his military career, striking achievements and the armed forces during his reign. There has been a unanimity among the majority of the researchers that he was one of the unusual military leaders of the history who had grown up facing hardships and precious lessons of the battlegrounds. He had felt certain admiration for Timur who had once reigned over almost the same area. The army of Nader Shah had borne traces of previous Turkish and Safavid armies. On the other hand he had blended the prominent features, namely, mobility and firepower of either armies and developed an idiosyncratic military organization which was suitable for fighting over a vast area with diverse geographical features.

Key Words: *Afshar Nader Shah, army, military leadership, principles of war, military organization.*

Afşar Nadir Şah: Askerî Liderlik, Strateji ve Hükümdarlığı Döneminde Silahlı Kuvvetler

Özet

Afşar Nadir Şah 18. yüzyılın ilk yarısında İran ve çevre ülkelerin tarihinde önemli bir rol oynamıştır. Burası, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun kuzeydoğu sınırlarından Hindistan'a ve Umman'dan Maveraünnehir'e uzanan, günümüzde ondan fazla bağımsız devletin bulunduğu bir alandır. Nadir Şah daha yaygın olarak, ele geçirilmiş İran tahtını Gılzay Afganlarından geri alması ve ülkeyi birleştirmesi ile ün yapmıştır. Bununla birlikte önemli miktarda literatür onun askerî yönüne, dikkat çekici başarılarına ve kendi dönemindeki silahlı kuvvetlerine değinmiştir. Çoğu araştırmacı arasında, onun muharebe sahalarının zorlukları ve kıymetli dersleri ile yüzleşerek yetişmiş tarihin sıradışı askerî liderlerinden biri olduğuna dair uzlaşı vardır. O, bir zamanlar neredeyse aynı topraklarda hüküm sürmüş olan Timur'a gıpta etmiştir. Nadir Şah'ın ordusu eski Türk ve Safevi ordularının izlerini taşımaktadır. Öte yandan o, iki ordunun öne çıkan özelliklerinden hareketlilik ve ateş gücü yeteneklerini harmanlamış ve farklı coğrafî özelliklere sahip geniş bir alanda savaşmaya uygun kendine özgü askerî bir teşkilat ortaya çıkarmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Afşar Nadir Şah, ordu, askerî liderlik, harp prensipleri, askerî teşkilat*

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Introduction

Afshar[1] Nader Shah, alias Thamas Kuli Khan, has been a controversial personality to many historians since the titles deemed appropriate for him have oscillated between a *tyrant* and a *conqueror*. Although an enigmatic figure, he is widely accepted to have been a gifted military commander and a capable statesman of his time. Lockhart defined Afshar Nader Shah (hereafter Nader Shah) as "Scourge of Humanity" as he did the same for Chinghiz Khan and Timur (Tamerlane) as well. Nader Shah on the other hand had a habit to call himself "the Son of the Sword" (1938: 1, 20) which was a method of name giving by way of emphasizing the soldierly point of view. Another emphasis on his military genius is the approximation of "Napoleon of Iran" (Murphy 2008: 261) or "Napoleon of the East" (Malcolm 1812: 174) made by some other contemporary researchers.[2]

It was March 20, 1739 when he was entering the pompous palace of Shah Jahan in Delhi. Quite a distance from Iran, Nader Shah and his army managed to have a chance to confiscate the precious resources of Delhi (Axworthy 2006: 1, 2). This ceremonious walk took place just ten years after the dethronement of Ghilzai dynasty in Iran. Considerably in a very short span of time Nader Shah, as a military genius and victorious commander, had changed the ill-fate of Iran and its peoples: From the state of humiliation to a would-be pre-imperial state.

Nader Shah was one of the prominent conquerors and an excellent strategist in the World history (Bayur 1987: 6; Perry 1993: 885). His strategic perspective was displayed when he decided to transfer the capital city to Mashhad. The decision was not a manifestation of his homesickness or religious identity but the city's central position of his future empire. Thus, he displayed how his notion of imperial hegemony had differentiated from that of the Safavid idea (Roamer 1986: 328). For Nader Shah having a Turkish or Turkmen blood was something to take pride in (Lockhart 1938: 20) and his military understanding had borne resemblance to that of Timur's (Perry 1993: 855). Lockart also was of the opinion that Nader Shah had shaped his career taking that of Timur's as an appropriate model (1938: 1). Even the name *Shahrukh*, given to his grandson was an indication of modeling himself upon Timur. In fact both historical figures seemed to have some striking similarities (Lockhart 1938: 80, 81).

Nader was born in 1688, out of a dynastic family in Dashtgir city of Khorasan as a son of a *Qiriqlu* (Kırıklu) Afsharid Turkmen peasant[3] while his family was on the move for a yearly migration from Kubkan to Darragaz. The father, Imam Quli Beg followed a

1 Afshar (*Afşar, Avşar*) is the name of the tribe which belonged to Oghuz tribes confederation. See (Köprülü, 1979; 28).

2 Sırrı Efendi, the author of Risaletü't-Tarih-i Nadir Şah (Makale-i Vakı'a-ı Muhasara-i Kars (2012), had portrayed Nader Shah as haughty, ignorant etc.

3 Some sources relates that Nader Shah's father was the chief of an Afsharid clan and the commander of the Castle of Kalat. As an example, see (Fraser, 1742: 72).

tradition and gave the newborn his father's name, "Nadir Quli Beg" as a sign of respect. Although it was quite tumultuous, Nader Shah's early life is beyond the scope of this paper. Nevertheless the course events related to him was of utmost importance to find out how Nader Shah's personality had been shaped by. According to Lockhart, amongst them was the Uzbeg raid into Khorasan in 1704 after which Nader and his mother were taken away as slaves. This captivity had lasted four years until Nader ran off leaving his deceased mother behind (1938: 18, 20).

The inception of his military career in Abivard, the invasion of Iran by the Ghilzai Afghans and his struggle against them first in Khorasan and then throughout Iranian land were some other milestones of his early life. In a considerably short span of time, Nader Shah had risen to the Iranian throne in the first half of 18th century and established Afsharid dynasty. Despite having energy to lead, he also possessed the talent and passion for it. During the course of his reign, Nader Shah had not only dethroned Ghilzai dynasty dominating Iran but also incorporated the territory of today's Afghanistan. His military campaigns in Irak, Central Asia, Caucasus and India had been proper opportunities to prove his military genius. As Axworthy denotes, his unique major defeat was the one which he faced against the Ottomans on the outskirts of Baghdad in 1733 (2011: 34).

The Military Career of Nader Shah

Nader Shah's military career began when he was at Baba Ali Beg's service -the governor of Abivard and leader of the Afsharid Turkmen of the district. He got acquainted with firearms and tribal warfare during his service in Khorasan's norheastern frontiers. He was fighting with local tribesmen as a musketeer. Because of his talent and courage he was given the command of the guards unit (Lockhart 1938: 21). However he had come to prominance in *Mashad*, where he had been admitted into the service of the district ruler, namely *beglerbegi,* Malik Mahmud (Fraser 1742: 73; Axworthy 2007: 638). In a short span of time he was entrusted with the command of a mounted unit, together which he had realized skirmishes and found opportunities to show his conduct and courage. In a couple years he had been promoted to major and became the commander of a bigger unit with one thousand mounted men. He had remained in this post till the age of thirty two and proved himself to be a resolute and gallant leader (Fraser 1742: 73). However, Nader had somehow distanced himself from Malik Mahmut's court over time owing to some motives. As Lockhart specifies, either Nader acted for patriotic motives to liberate his country which is less probable, or he wanted to advance as a ruler in the district of *Kalat*. Regardless of the motive behind Nader's attitude, it is quite obvious that he had a talent to lead and govern since he had been able to muster many families and ethnicities around himself. This being the case, Nader had conspired to overthrow Malik Mahmud, with the assistance of two Afsharid chiefs, but the plot failed and Nader, fearing of a retribution from Mahmud, chose to flee to Abivard where he would raise an army to attack Mashad. Later on Nader had carried on his assaults against Malik Mahmud, Uzbeks and the Abdali Afghans in the neighbourhood and he had become renowned in the region (1938: 22).

Because of the political circumstances, a rapprochement between Nader and Shah Tahmasp came to existence and they had acted together against Malik Mahmud. This alliance opened up the way for Nader Shah to have the utmost power in Iran (Lockhart 1938: 25, 26). He became general of the Shah Tahmasp's army in 1727-28 (Fraser 1742: 90). He was awarded with the title "Tahmasp Quli Khan" and a new position called *kurci-bashi* [4] in 1729 after the indisputable victory against Abdali Afghans at Damgoun (Fraser 1742: 96, 97; Perry 1993: 853). In 1730, Nader became generalissimo and he was appointed as the ruler, the beglerbegi of Khorasan region (Fraser 1742: 100). Shah Tahmasp also granted him the fief of Khorasan, Kirman and Mazandaran (Lockhart 1938: 42). After Shah Tahmasp had been dethroned and while his son was still perfunctory shah, Nader Shah was declared the emperor of Iran (Fraser 1742: 118).

Nader Shah had participated in scores of battles during his military career and led many campaigns owing to a variety of motives. Khorasan, Caucasus region, India, Turkestan, Iraq and Afghanistan were the most important theatres of his military expeditions. He had fought against Ottoman forces four times between 1730-1745 in different occasions. In general terms, Baghdad, Mosul, Kirkuk, Hamadan, Adana, Kars, Arbil were the battle locations of the two armies. Among others, military campaign to India was of utmost importance for Nader Shah. As Minorsky underlines, Indian campaign of 1739 was a new turning point in Nader Shah's military career. While the previous wars had been fought to defend the boundaries of the state, Indian campaign was organized to capture new territories and financial sources (1964: 25).

The Army of Nader Shah

Although it was *sui generis*, the army of Nader Shah had been shaped on the root sources of some previous army organizations which were geographically and culturally akin. When the organization, composition, military doctrine, weapons etc. are considered, some relatively modern repetitions of the past armies' characteristics are discernable in the army of Nader Shah. Hence, ancient Turkish and Safavid armies might be two appropriate models which had some distinguishable effects on Nader Shah's army. Turkic nations in remote history, predominantly leading steppe way of life in Middle Asia and around had developed social institutions accordingly. Constant exposure to natural circumstances, like harsh climate conditions and geographical challenges, vital need for mobility and permanent sensation of being alert against security risks had shaped seperately the individual's character and the society as well. They should have managed through hardships finding some proper ways. Therefore, military institutions and the army structure had been taken form accordingly. The first organized Turkish army, which also is the origin of the present-day Turkish army was the Hun army, founded in 209 B.C.

4 *Kurchi* troops were formed first during the reign of Shah Abbas I as a balancer against Qizilbash troops. These corps were mounted units and they had constituted one of the four main elements of Safavid Army. For details see (Erdoğan, 2015).

by Motun Yabgu. But other Turkic states founded in due course had almost the same structure, tradition and the way of fighting.

The ancient Turkish army had boasted of speediness since the majority of the members were mounted warriors. This pecularity provided the army with initiative, flexibility and surprise effect whenever necessary. It facilitated the military deployment, distribution and assembling of the units, while practicing a concentration of force. Speediness also enabled the army to exert some idiosyncratic strategem: "The Turan Tactic" would fit as an appropriate example to support this premise. As Kafesoğlu quotes, Turan tactic was developed by Turks as a maneuvre for the battles fought in the steppes and it comprised of a false retreat and an ambush, practiced consecutively. Motun Yabgu has been famed for having exercised the tactic successfully during the war against Chinese army of emperor Kao-Ti in Pai-teng between 201-199 (Kafesoğlu 2005: 61, 282).

The dexterity of archers in using the bow from a distance had enabled the turkish army to exercise certain maneuvers depending upon the range of the arrrows. Thus, distance to the enemy lines could be kept and while inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy, this tactic would provide much more security. Whatsmore, the army had advantages against the heavy and clumsy adversaries, moving and fighting in masses whilst it was competent in war of attrition for having utmost mobility as well. The Turkish army had been accustomed to reconnaissance campaigns even they would have lasted for years. Usually the war of attrition would follow the recce campaigns. Especially during the war of attrition psychological activities were ongoing[5]. Above all, security was a prerequisite, *a sine qua non* in every phase of each combat (Kafesoğlu 2005: 284-287). The Hun army, the armies of successor states and armies of the other states with Turkic origin had mostly maintained and developed Turkish steppe army tradition, the conception of war and the way of fighting. Many were in the decimal structure and hierarchical organization as was the case in the Hun army. The superiority of the mounted warriors of the ancient Turkish army had been valid throughout the centuries and the weapons used by them were widely renowned.

When it comes to the other model -the Safavid army, firepower had become rather prominent. The Safavid empire had possessed an army generally less than 20.000 men before the 17th century. Since the army had been subjected to a series of defeats during the 16th century, there arose the need for a drastic military modernization. The firearms became crucially important for the Safavid army especially after the *Chaldiran* (Çaldıran) defeat since the traditional means had not sufficed so as to keep up with the contemporary rivals. While the Ottoman Army was a close and appropriate source for importing military

5 The first phase of the siege of Kars in 1744 was typical concerning the psychological war activities of Nader Shah's army such as sending distractive messages to the Ottomans and marching to Kars in full pomposity which had caused some of the Ottoman soldiers to fight individually and disorganizedly without any result. See (Sırrı Efendi 2012: 3-32).

technology, also the western experts had been summoned to serve as military advisers in this process (Mathee 1996: 391; Nolan 2006: 754). The gunpowder technology was transferred to Safavid army by the Portugueses (Roy 2015: 46) and Safavid Empire had been transformed to be one of those states which *Marshal Hodgson* described "Gunpowder Empires" referring to their monopoly in firearms. Therefore, they had borne resemblance with western states in character and this pecularity partly provided them the endurance for remaining in power (Mathee 1996: 389-390).

Accordingly, military advisers and cannons were demanded by Shah Ismail from Venice. Besides, in 1516 the lost Ottoman cannons which were captured by Safavids along the *Aras* river served as samples to make copies for Shah Ismail's Army. Moreover, deserted Ottoman soldiers, namely *Janissaries* had worked as instructors for Safavid Army. On the other hand, Qizilbash tribal leaders were claimed to have despised the gunpowder weapons since firearms were not consistent to their traditional way of fighting. Because the Qizilbash formations boasted of steppe way of battling, as the traditional turkish army, firearms had the potential to reduce their speed and mobility. Moreover, having a firearm and using it in a battle had somewhat psychological content which was directed to the pride of the warrior. Therefore, Shah Ismail had to staff the artillery and infantry units with men from Caucasus region (Roy 2015: 46). On the other hand, Mathee claims that the Qizilbash tribal cavalry of the Safavid army began to use the cannon in the beginning of the 16th century (1996: 369). Above all, the infantry units were continued to be manned with warriors other than the Qizilbash. For instance, a Turkish infantry unit, armed with arquebuses was at service in the army of Shah Tahmasp during the campaign in Khorasan between 1528-1529 (Roy 2015: 46).

There were ottomans and portugueses giving service to the arquebus and artillery units whilst Shah Ismail had 3000-4000 arquebuses available in the Safavid Army in 1517. The army's firepower was accrued by 1525, since this very year presumably 400 cannons and muskets, numbering between 10.000 and 15.000 were available. During the reign of Shah Abbas I, the Safavid army was reorganized and increased in number. The artillery corps were aggrandized as well and it had boasted of approximately 500 guns. The source countries for the firearms were diverse such as Britain, Venice and Russia (Mathee 1996: 391; Roy 2015: 46). During this reorganization process British Shirly brothers had served as senior military advisors. The reorganized army structure had been maintained with some additional modifications until after the time of Shah Hussein. During this period the Safavid army had consisted of a standing army and irregular forces. While cavalry, artillery and foot soldiers corps, each of which consisted of 12.000 men had constitued the regular forces, Qizilbash units and Kurchis were the irregulars. The Qizilbash militia, which had reached the utmost manpower of 80.000, was reduced to 30.000 by Shah Abbas I. Apart from these corps, there were also imperial guards in limited numbers (Roy 2015: 48, 49).

During Nader Shah's reign, aside from other governmental institutions, the army was

of utmost importance since it was the primary tool for defending the country's territory, to suppress the revolts, to strenghten the Shah's authority and to campaign across the new territories beyond the frontiers when the consolidation at home was complete. That was why Nader Shah had fully focused on his army and used every means available to reinforce its warpower while keeping the military loyal to his royalty (Arunova-Eşrefyan 2015: 1, 2). Nader Shah called his army "God's victorious instruments" (Fraser 1742: 121). As a prudent and prescient strategian, he had relieved his army of being totally dependent upon Persians, by incorporating Turkmen and Abdali elements (Lockhart 1938: 54). In the course of time his army had transformed to be a multi-ethnic entity and composed of a variety of elements such as Qizilbash, Georgians, Turkmen, Shi'a persians, Uzbeks, Afgans (Abdali, Yusufzai, Ghilzai) Indians, some combatants from Khorasan, Western Persia, Azerbaijan and the Caucasus, Lezge tribes from Dagestan, Kurds and Baluchis (Axworthy 2007: 640-643). After the capture of Kandahar the conscription of some young Ghilzais in Nader's bodyguard unit was remarkable (Lockhart 1938: 120). This was a brilliant idea to make them feel honoured and to keep them under close control. On the other hand, Nader Shah had pursued a balance policy and taken measures to counterbalance the influence of Shi'a elements of his army. A decision taken by the Shah to recruit Sunni troops and minimizing the Shi'a practices were striking measures to realize his considerations (Axworthy 2007: 643).

The army of Nader Shah was composed of regular army and tribal volunteer militias (*Koshun*) as was also the case under the Safavid regime. Tribal chieftains had to provide a specific force of combatants so as to follow a royal obligation called "blood tax" (*Maliyat-i Hun*) system. Tribesmen from different ethnic origins such as Abdalis, Ghilzais, Yusufzais, Hazaras were included in the army during the campaigns, depending on the locality and the theatre. Tribal militia elements which attended the battles under the command of their own chiefs were quite essential for the Shah's army since they generally sealed the fate of critical combats. It was also a common practice to enlist men in large numbers among the residents of a district when necessity arose (Lockhart 1938: 157; Arunova-Eşrefyan 2015: 112, 113).

The manpower of Nader Shah's army is a controversial issue since literature presents different numbers ever. A unique and fixed figure is not available owing to the changes in the numbers of troops over the years. At any rate, there was a core army which had been kept under arms and the other troops participating the military campaigns. After all, a rough estimation could be made between 50,000 and 200,000 (Arunova-Eşrefyan 2015: 113, 114) provided that the gradual variation due to time and importance of the campaigns should be borne in mind. Axworthy relates from an account of the pay clerk of Nader Shah that total number of troops under command had reached a peak level of 375,000. Despite all different remarks, as Axworthy underlines, Nader Shah's army had possessed such a combat power that it was superior to the other armies all around the World (2007: 635, 639). The army in a general sense kept reserve forces as well. The strength of the reserve was approximately 40.000 men during the combats against Ottoman forces in

1745 (Lockhart 1938: 250). This number seems quite considerable since the army of Nader Shah was estimated to have a total of 150,000 men during the siege of Kars which had begun in 1744 (Sırrı Efendi 2012: 29).

The army consisted of cavalry and infantry elements considering mobility (Axworthy 2007: 635). Fraser related that during the Indian campaign, total amount of the army reached 200,000 consisting of mounted and foot soldiers. The cavalry soldiers amounted to 40,000 some of which were lancemen, archers and musqueteers. Aside from horses, camels and mules were at service as well (1742: 153-154). As Axworthy cited from *Abraham of Crete*, many of the warriors in the cavalry units of Nader Shah's army had worn either chain mail or metal plates as armour. The cavalry units had the ability to maintain their activeness and speed even in difficult terrain (2007: 639). Afshar tribe, which Nader Shah belonged to had constitued the guard cavalry and they had also served in the cavalry corps. The Qizilbash horsemen were dominant and very efficient element of the cavalry. Also the Afgans were very useful in cavalry formations and they had been tasked as "shock cavalry" by Nader Shah. Apart from cavalry units Turkmen, Uzbeks and Baluchis were organized as light troops (Fraser 1742: 177; Axworthy 2007: 640, 641).

Jazayirchi branch, mainly a heavy infantry unit was the most priviliged element of Nader Shah's army. Almost a century ago the first jazayirchi unit of 600 men had been organized by Shah Abbas II. The unit's name was derivated from a heavy musket called *Jazayir*. In Nader Shah's army this branch had reached 12,000 men and the jazayirchis were the best equipped troops amongst others in the army. The men in jazayirchi unit were equipped with heavy muskets and a large proportion of the unit had acted in close contact with Nader Shah (Axworthy 2007: 636; Arunova-Eşrefyan 2015: 114). They were, in general terms foot soldiers but while the Indian campaign had proceeded they had served and proved themselves as a dexterous mounted infantry unit as well. Taking a Safavid legacy over, Nader Shah had maintained a special system of mounted infantry equipped with firearms. During the Indian campaign of Nader Shah these units were utilized considerably. Since these troops were originally recruited from the tribal cavalry (Axworthy 2007: 636, 641) they were holding mobility and firepower abilities together while having the advantage of battle worthiness across the territory covered with difficult terrain.

A very useful fire support element for the battles across the difficult terrain, was the *Zamburak* (Zanburak) corps. The system had light swivel cannons mounted on the saddles of dromedary camels. As Gomman quoted, the first use of these guns dated back to 1663, when Aurangzeb had launched a campaign to Kashmir. Aside from Mughals, Ghilzai Afghans had made use of zamburaks against Marathas and Safavids. This corps had almost reached a number of 700 in Nader Shah's army (Gomman 2002: 128; Axworthy 2007: 641). In general terms, it was a light artillery with high mobility. Zamburak units had provided accurate fire support to the maneuvre elements across the broken terrain where the heavy artillery guns could not have been positioned.

Nader Shah's army was equipped with modern firearms for the first time in persian military history. Some foreign advisers and engineers had been commissioned for the artillery branch but considering his overall military life this type of help was limited and provided only a minor effect. (Perry 1993: 854; Axworthy 2007: 635, 644). Nader Shah's light and medium artillery forces were better than his predecessors' artillery corps while heavy artillery units had lacked necessary characteristics in terms of quantity and quality. By and large, the artillery branch of his army was not the best when compared to its contemporaries (Lockhart 1938: 85, 268). In 1740 two siege artillery corps were formed by Nader Shah stationed in Kermanshah and Merv. Therefore, prior to Mosul and Kirkuk campaigns the army possessed 350 cannons and siege mortars (Axworthy 2007: 635, 641). Lockhart underlined that Nader Shah's military force contained 160 cannon and 230 mortars during the invasion of Mosul. Nevertheless the deficiency, especially in siege artillery prolonged such operations and caused the Shah to adopt blockading methods to overcome the opponents (Lockhart 1938: 116, 230). However, the deficiency and inability in siege warfare partly were the results of rugged terrain, a difficult geography of the territory over where Nader Shah had reigned (Axworthy 2007: 642).

Aside from cannons and mortars, some other firearms had been used. Axworthy relates from Hanway that muskets and sabers were the main arms for the majority of Nader Shah's army. As we understand from Fraser's quotes, there were also combatants who had used harquebuses during the campaigns. But some elements in the army were using small arms such as pistols and silent arms, namely sabers, bows and lances (Fraser 1742: 154-177; Axworthy 2007: 640). M.M. Astarabadi had frequently mentioned the swords and bayonets which warriors had used in combats (Shahed 2016: 208, 323). Battle-axes, maces and bows, zanburi bows -as Astarabadi depicted- were some other silent weapons utilized in Nader Shah's army (Shahed 2016: 213-272). For personal protection armours and helmets were the garments which had been widely utilized (Shahed 2016: 271-331). Concerning the war equipment, scaling ladders were of high importance especially during the siege operations. When the army of Nader Shah besieged Mosul, 1700 of them were said to have been used (Lockhart 1938, 230).

Since Nader Shah had to struggle against the Ottomans, he was to modernize his army. This was why he aggrandized his military capacity and entirely equipped the army with modern weapons. Moreover, he put the daily training activities into practice in order to get the utmost effectiveness of the up-to-date weapons (Axworthy 2011: 31, 33). For Nader Shah, training was necessarry not only to learn the use of firearms but also for practicing the tactics and maneuvers in combats. Under his leadership, the appropriate training in complience with combat discipline was a vital factor to accrue the combat power and to keep the enemy off balance accordingly (Lockhart 1938: 37). To sum up, he had put great emphasis in extensive drill in complience with his military method (Axworthy 2007: 638).

Aside from the land forces Nader Shah developed a naval programme and he had

aspired to dominate the Gulf region.[6] This was a project which reflects his passion to boost his authority to the greatest extent possible (Axworthy 2011: 31-93). Therefore he had the opinion to possess a navy which could show power and flag in the Gulf. Consequently, *Bushire*, a small fishing willage was chosen as a base for Nader Shah's navy. Latif Khan was responsible for the base and the organization of the fleet in 1734. He led a fleet of approximately sixty vessels during an unsuccesful campaign to capture Basra in 1735 (Lockhart 1938, 93, 94).[7] But the same Latif Khan, as the "admiral of the Gulf" of the Nader's fleet managed to recapture Bahrain in 1736. The year 1741 was a turning point for the fleet when Nader Shah decided to realize building his own warships in Bushire base (Lockhart 1938: 108, 213).

However, this project had proved inefficent owing to lack of timber material and inadequate transportation methods. Nevertheless, in the beginning of 1742 Nader Shah's fleet had grown up to contain fifteen ships including the purchased ones. During this period the fleet campaigned against rebel arabs at Qais island and Julfar. Nader Shah wanted to capture Oman using his fleet but all his efforts proved to be failure. Shipbuilding work had not made much progress and the naval project was terminated in 1743 by Nader Shah. His desire to make Iran a seapower in the Gulf did not come true and the Gulf fleet lose its fighting ability soon after Nader Shah's assasination. The difficulties in making fleet's own ship instead of purchasing, the mismanagement of the shipbuilding projects, the challenge of manning the ships with arabs, beluchis and indians and more importantly, Nader Shah's growing negligence in the matters related to the fleet determined its fate (Lockhart 1938: 215-222).

Aside from the combat units, some other elements in the army were organized to carry out the tasks related to military life. Since the protection of the entire force and combat train was of great importance, a different branch called *Hashama-ye Kashikchi* (the guard branch) had been active for defending the military camps. This unit was numbering between 4,000 and 6,000. They had been on duty both day and night, while a detachment were guarding the royal tent and quarters. A small unit, called *Jantavol* was tasked to guard the periphery of the camp, the important passes and the roads. This unit was entrusted with executing the capital sentences as well. *Nasaqchis* (military police) had to deal with the crimes committed in the camps and restraining desertions. They also had constituted a part of Nader Shah's bodyguards (Lockhart 1938: 97; Arunova-Eşrefyan 2015, 115). Meanwhile, some other small units were organized to carry out specific tasks in the army. *Munadees* or *Jarchees* for example, were criers and *Shatars* were fast runners. The Shah's orders and messages had been delivered by *shatars* who were performing their duties also as mounted messengers. The standard-bearers, called *alemdars* were

6 Besides having a fleet in the Gulf, Nader Shah had desired to have another one in the Caspian Sea. See (Lockhart 1938, 204).

7 Latif Khan campaigned against Oman commanding the fleet in 1737. But he was later poisened and killed in 1738 by Taqi han, the beglerbegi of Fars. See (Lockhart 1938: 183).

essential in the Nader's army as well (Lockhart 1938, 113; Arunova-Eşrefyan 2015: 115). Tradesmen, traffickers and the servants were the ordinary participants of the army other than the combatants (Fraser 1742: 154, 176). Additionaly two special units were formed in the armed forces including the relatives of the khans and tribal chiftains under the supremacy of the Shah. Concerning the clothing, there was not a standard uniform for the army since there were different units tasked with a variety of duties (Arunova-Eşrefyan 2015: 115, 117).

The combatants of Nader Shah's army were disciplined and motivated well. Even the women were armed and they had conducted like ordinary soldiers. Moreover, the veterans of Indian and Central Asian campaigns (Fraser 1742: 155; Axworthy 2007: 635) had increased the battle worthiness with their experiences. The combatants of the army, especially some ethnic elements such as Khorasanis were capable of going into action even in adverse weather conditions, in other words during very cold days of winter (Lockhart 1938: 43, 116). The combatants were accustomed to fight during the night under the moonlight as well (Shahed 2016: 152). Nader Shah's army was capable of pursuing its enemy for long distances and capture its precious belongings (Lockhart 1938: 49).

The army was well organized, considering the support services. Supply system was operating well (Fraser 1742: 174; Axworthy 2007: 635). The procurement activities of the army especially during the campaigns had been carried out at the expense of depleting local people's food sources (Lockhart 1938: 116). Nader Shah had been of the view to confiscate even the lands and revenues of the churches so as to meet the needs of the army (Fraser 1742: 121, 122). He himself had paid great attention to the logistics system. The preperations of a future campaign used to begin quite some time before the very campaign itself. Nader Shah had followed a routine to keep his soldiers well fed and equipped. His practice of building cities during the long sieges, such as Kandahar, Baghdad and in this manner providing logistical support while preventing epidemics (Axworthy 2007: 645) was remarkable in military logistics history.

The Strategic View of Nader Shah and the Military Doctrine

The military doctrines, or in simpler words "the ways of waging wars", since time immemorial have taken shape in accordance with geographical circumstances and cultural patterns of human groups. Moreover, close contact and cross-cultural interaction might have made it possible for fighting patterns to be transferred between peoples. The nations, living in a zone of transition might have acquired some fighting characteristics of neighbouring peoples or invaders, trespassing their territory. Historically, in the Middle Asia some dominant nations such as Turks, Persians, Chinese had left their marks in many ways by virtue of political sovereignty, social and military mobility over the years. Nevertheless, these great powers had largely preserved their pecularities, including their way of fighting.

With reference to the military doctrines, the principles of war have been practiced over the years during the combats. These principles provide a general framework for military decision-makers how to wage a war. According to Mallick, war principles are the expressions of military thought and they function to provide bases for combat doctrines. For instance, the following principles were adopted for The US Armed Forces in 1949: "The objective, the offensive, simplicity, unity of command, maneuver, mass, economy of forces, surprise, security" (2009: 7). These principles were reiterated in US Joint Publication 1 of 2013 (1-3). On the other hand, war principles in the British Defence Doctrine (2001) are as follows: "Selection and maintenance of the aim, maintenance of morale, offensive action, security, surprise, concentration of force, economy of effort, flexibility, cooperation, sustainability." The Indian Armed Force is the first example other than western armies. Nevertheless, it should be borne in mind that the British military tradition might have had influence on the Indian military thought to a certain extent. The principles of war for Indian Armed Force are "selection and maintenance of aim, maintenance of morale, offensive action, surprise, concentration of force, economy of effort, security, flexibility, cooperation, simplicity, administration, intelligence" (Mallick 2009: 8-10).

The Soviet Union's "principles of military art" were relatively different to those of the Western military thought: "Massing and correlation of forces, economy, sufficiency of force, initiative, surprise, mobility and tempo, simultaneous attack on all levels, preservation of combat effectiveness, interworking and coordination". Chinese military however, fits best for the last example to broaden the geographical spectrum on the principles of war: selection and maintenance of aim, offensive action, concentration of force, initiative and flexibility, coordination, security, surprise, morale, mobility, political mobilization, freedom of action (JFSC PUB 1, 2000: D-2).

Although Russian and Chinese military schools of thought seperately have Asiatic and communistic roots which partly differentiate them from western way of fighting, it is not improper to deduce that all the different schools we examined have more in common concerning the principles of war such as offensive (action), objective (or aim), concentration of force (or mass), security, surprise, flexibility et cetera. Naming the war principles might change in different armed forces' military literature and as Akad denotes, the importance of the principles might differantiate with regard to different military doctrines. However the war principles prevail in every war (2013: 17). Although the principles of war are named according to present day viewpoint, there arises a methodological necessity to evaluate how the principles of war had been handled by Nader Shah according to the circumstances of his time.

Nader Shah followed a cautious strategy to eliminate his enemies while struggling to restore the Iranian state. He had consolidated his power first in the country and then attacked the Ghilzais of Afghanistan which were the weakest of the enemies. After the Afghan territory was secured, India was the second to be conquered and then Central

Asian lands, namely the north of Amu Darya was the new military destination of the Shah (Murphy 2008: 261). Thus he had concentrated his efforts and power on a particular objective and ensured the economy of his forces. Every combat has an objective. But for Nader Shah, sometimes one battle meant acquiring more than one military or political objective. Accordingly, he had been of the opinion that the tensions between different parties shoud be exploited and provide advantages (Lockhart 1938: 41, 83).

Nader Shah had gained experience during the punitive expeditions carried out to quell the revolts (Lockhart 1938: 30). While he had won victories in his early career against the Afghan forces relying on firepower, he at the same time had successes owing to the excellent condition of his cavalry as was the case against Ottoman forces (Axworthy 2007: 642). He, by conforming to the general inclination, had preferred mostly the assault and siege alternatives with respect to combat operations (Fraser 1742: 132). His army had gained great tactical flexibility because of cavalry corps, including the Afghan shock cavalry (Axworthy 2007: 642). To surprise the enemy by attacking from an unexpected direction was a common tactic. He was wont to wait for the right time to carry out the necessary action (Lockhart 1938: 29, 66).

Nader Shah had the ability to assess the situations soundly, to analyze the terrain and to take precautions accordingly (Lockhart 1938: 30). He applied a variety of operations according to changing terrain conditions and the enemy situations. Apart from relatively static siege operations, his favorite strategies had relied on supreme mobility and flexibility. Since Turkish military tradition had considerable effect on the way he commanded, Nader Shah had succesfully practiced combat maneuvers like the Turan Tactic. An example of this, as Perry quotes, had been realized against the Ottoman troops in 1733, on the outskirts of Kirkuk. In the first phase, the Ottomon forces were lured to follow a retrograding unit and then in the second phase they were defeated definetely around the Akdarband defile (1993: 853). During a crisis with the Uzbeks who had planned to assault Khorasan, Nader Shah, by estimating the situation and analyzing the terrain soundly, had handled the combat as a matter of life or death but acted prudently, for not taking unnecessary risks. When necessary, he used to be cautious and decisive to restrain his forces. He believed that victory depended on the resolution and conduct other than numbers (Fraser 1742: 75-111; Lockhart 1938: 32).

According to tactical circumstances, Nader Shah had decided the type of operation to be realized. His army had carried out general and subsidiary attacks, counter attacks and siege operations. When necessary he did not hesitate to withdraw his forces. While a frontal attack could have been an appropriate option, also outflanking the enemy had been a usual tactic for his forces when the need arose (Lockhart 1938: 53-230), as was the case in 1735 against Ottomans and Moghul forces around Khyber pass in 1738 (Axworthy 2007, 642). This type of maneuvre had been realized especially to cause a surprise effect or whenever a frontal attack was useless to overcome the opponent.

During the campaigns it was a common practice in the army to send advance units as combat outposts ahead of main force before the contact. These advance forces were used to be entrusted with a series of tasks such as fulfilling combat reconnaissance, collecting information for combat intelligence purposes, constructing bridges and building boats. Reliable guides were inevitable when proceeding across an unfamiliar terrain especially during the surprise operations. The spies, as well, had been actively utilized in and around the advance direction of the column to receive information about the enemy (Lockhart 1938: 127-205). Before going into an action scouts had been providing the most updated information for Nader Shah (Lockhart 1938: 37). M. M. Astarabadi described the scouts and their swiftness by making an analogy using the "sprinting ostriches" epithet (Shahed 2016: 196,197). Nader Shah had received special information from the spies scattered all around (Fraser 1742: 228) and he used to discover the weaknesses of the enemy by scouting. This attitude many times made him victorious (Axworthy 2007: 642). On the other hand he used to take necessary counter-intelligence measures to hide the movements and activities of his own forces (Lockhart 1938: 132).

Throughout the phases of a battle, movement of the combat elements towards the enemy positions had been extremely important. Fraser described the march of Nader Shah's army to Jehanabad during the Indian campaign. A couple of days before the march, some advance elements had been sent to take possession of the key positions and critical terrain so as to secure the march of the main body. Then the royal court set out in company with the finest horsemen and harquebusers. The march column had been organized to keep the distance between each element. The immediate generals and their forces had moved either side of the Shah and on the wings of the column. The Qizilbash units helped maintain the formation of the column which covered a space of 5 *kos* in length and 3 kos in breadth (Fraser 1742: 175-177).[8]

When it comes to fighting, Nader Shah used to apply a general deployment on the battleground: The infantry was surrounded by the artillery and the cavalry on the flank(s), that is, a combat formation which would be used for an attack. The cavalry was the main force for the attack operations, sometimes directed on both flanks of the enemy. In his understanding of combat, Nader Shah had placed great emphasis on fire discipline. He had utilized fire power to bombard the towns when necessary. Sometimes the musketeers were reinforcing the encirclement as was the case during the deployment to relieve Samnan in 1729 (Lockhart 1938: 30-37). Especially it was a regular practice to bombard a well-fortified castle or strongholds heavily before the attack. During the Mosul invasion in 1743, the artillery bombardment lasted eight days without a break (Lockhart 1938: 228, 230). As another example, during the siege of Kars in 1744, the artillery of the Shah had bombarded the critical positions for a week to cause a heavy pressure on the Ottoman

8 *Kos* is an Indian term for linear measurement with a variety of usages. For example, the *short kos* of the Northwestern India is 1 ¼ mile. See (Cunningham 2013: 574).

forces (Sırrı Efendi 2012: 23, 24). Additionally, the mining activities were common even when siege operations were realized. Mining and counter mining had been frequently performed in the course of invasion campaigns (Lockhart 1938: 85, 230). Above all, tactical deception was routine in Nader Shah's military doctrine. Whenever necessary, ruses were utilized to deceive the enemy (Lockhart 1938: 38). He had applied tactical operations so as to deceive and outmaneuver enemy forces (Lockhart 1938: 68, 72, 73, 127). Rapid movement of the combat elements had functioned for providing surprise effect (Axworthy 2007: 642). He had made use of ambush over a suitable part of terrain to inflict casualties on the enemy forces (Lockhart 1938: 37-136). As M. M. Astarabadi stated, he had rapidly hunted the enemy by laying ambushes (Shahed 2016: 134).

The Military Leadership of Nader Shah

Nader Shah was an unusual type of leader in comparison with those of his time. He had attached great importance on leadership and served as an appropriate model for his subordinates with respect to personal character and military merits. Using initiative, communication with the subordinates by transmitting the orders swiftly, rapid intelligence gathering and reporting were of high degree of importance within his concept of military conduct (Axworthy 2007: 638, 642). He was, according to M. M. Astarabadi, extremely smart (Shahed 2016: 134) and determined to do his best to fulfill what he had decided. On the other hand, being overconfident and poorly advised he had sometimes given battles in disadvantageous locations (Lockhart 1938: 30, 71). But even after the defeat he did not lose heart and had persistently sought victory. As he was dominant in personality he disliked leaving the courses of events up to the chance (Fraser 1742: 110). Although ambitious and adventurous, he was perseveringly for discipline concerning military matters. Both code of conduct and obeying the rules of battle were of vital importance in Nader Shah's conception of war. On the other hand, he knew how to gain the affection of common soldiers. He used to make heartening speeches to his combatants before the upcoming fights (Fraser 1742: 91; Lockhart 1938: 81). He was six feet tall with extraordinarily loud and strong voice and these characteristics gave him the advantage for his orders to be heard over long distances. He had a habit of giving orders about different matters at the same time while dictating them to his secretaries. He did this in a regular way while being prompt as well. (Fraser 1742: 227, 233).

He had the spectacular ability for organizing, training and establishing control over his heterogeneous forces and for imposing confidence to the troops. When necessary, he was of the opinion for discussing the military matters with his immediate commanders (Lockhart 1938: 104, 268). Having a retentive memory he had an ability to remember many of his officers and some privates by their names. Nader Shah had gained the confidence of his subordinates and he used to pay and cloath his soldiers himself. He had behaved them generously and made the officers treat them fairly. He treated them all equally, including his eldest son Riza Kuli Mirza, who had been trained up in the army. He used to reward the officers in complience with their ranks. On the other hand, since he was very strict

concerning discipline, he did not hesitate to punish those who committed major offences with death. Most especially he had not approved of his subordinate commanders to yield in front of an enemy force which had not had any superiority whatsoever (Fraser 1742: 228-233; Lockhart 1938: 37, 113).

Nader Shah was not an ordinary monarch and he hadn't been used to piddle around in his capital. He was accustomed to be with his troops during the major campaigns and he had a habit to change his location steadily owing to security requirements (Axworthy 2011; 33). During the campaigns, he had been wont to live like a common soldier and made his officers do the same. Thus, he raised the quality of the army and its fighting ability (Fraser 1742: 229). He had not abstained from being in the main theatre during the combat and commanded his troops as was the case in Baghdad siege in 1733 and many others (Fraser 1742: 110-112; Lockhart 1938: 70). He was wounded during a battle against the Abdali Afghans but he himself managed to survive personally dangerous situations and attacks (Lockhart 1938: 32, 53). He had been said to feel joy only during the campaigns and very eager to go to his troops' assistance (Fraser 1742: 233-234).

Conclusion

Although Nader Shah had acted as a tyrant especially to those who revolted against his rule, many agree that he was the greatest soldier of his time. Aside from the military successes in the Middle East, Caucasus, Turkestan and India, his most striking acievement had been the restoration of Iranian state over its territory (Lockhart 1938: 269). As M. M. Astarabadi remarked, "he increased the value of Iran" (Shahed, 2016: 133) and united his country. His assasination caused a general vacuum throughout the land previously he had conquered (Roamer 1986: 329). His unexpected death and part of the treasure of his empire opened up the way to a new political entity: The first Afghan state under the rule of Ahmed Shah Durrani, one of the military leaders of Nader Shah.

While the secular state policy of Nader Shah was remarkable for his time, he was more of a revolutionist concerning military matters and the armed forces. His colossal efforts to form a navy, more training activities and drills, generalizing the firearms in the army instead of silent weapons, improving the siege warfare concept were some developments to portray his military revolution. Nader Shah's army had been organized and fought in complience with the geography and warring conditions of the East. Jazayirchi and Zanburak units were adopted according to the eastern geography and fighting necessities (Axworthy 2007: 644, 645). Although Nader Shah was not the inventor of these indigenous military units, he placed great importance on both and extensively used them during his military campaigns. Nader Shah was a brilliant military leader and one of the masters to utilize traditional war-fighting methods and the principles of war. His way of fighting, the conception of war and the composition of his army had root sources in the previous Turkish and Safavid armies. But he also had built up an idiosyncratic and victorious military apparatus. He seems like the present-day generals considering his interpretation

of war and handling the military matters.

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