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Factors Shaping the Personality of Reza Khan as a Psychological Construct Influencing His Rise to Power

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ABSTRACT

This article examines and provides an in-depth analysis of the factors shaping the personality of Reza Khan, the founder of the Pahlavi dynasty, through a psychological approach grounded in historical documentation. The primary objective of this study is to elucidate the psychological roots of Reza Khan's prominent personality traits, including ambition, authoritarianism, decisiveness, discipline, as well as aspects of violence and irascibility, and ultimately to analyze how these traits influenced his political trajectory and actions. In the complex domain of political leadership, understanding the personality of leaders is essential not only for interpreting historical events but also for predicting behavioral patterns and comprehending the motivations behind critical decisions. Reza Khan, as one of the most influential figures in modern Iranian history, represents a salient example of an individual whose personality traits played a fundamental role in shaping the political and social transformations of his era. This study employs a descriptive-analytical method and draws upon the framework of personality psychology to examine historical documents, memoirs, travelogues, and contemporary reports. The data for this research are primarily collected from primary and secondary historical sources, and key concepts from Alfred Adler's theory of individual psychology are applied for psychological analysis. Concepts such as the need for power, anxiety, defense mechanisms, and the influence of the environment on identity formation are utilized in the analysis. The findings indicate that a combination of environmental factors, early life experiences, and genetic predispositions, together with the turbulent social and political conditions of Iran in the late Qajar period, contributed to the formation of a personality characterized by traits such as an iron will, a strong inclination toward order and discipline, decisiveness in decision-making, and pronounced authoritarianism. His experience in the Cossack Brigade and exposure to insecurity and the weakness of the central government provided a conducive context for the development of authoritarian and order-imposing aspects of his personality. Furthermore, his interactions with foreign powers, particularly Britain, while influencing his path to power, also contributed to specific dimensions of his display of authority and authoritarianism. This study, through presenting a comprehensive and multidimensional analysis, contributes to a deeper understanding of Reza Khan's personality and its impact on the fate of Iran during the Pahlavi era.

Keywords: *Personality traits, accession to the throne, Reza Shah Pahlavi*

Introduction

The personality of political leaders in contemporary history is one of the most important variables capable of influencing the course of social transformations and the structures of power. The analysis of leaders' personalities is not merely a psychological matter; rather, it constitutes a bridge between psychology, political sociology, history,



and leadership theories (1). In the case of Reza Khan Pahlavi, this importance becomes even greater, because he was one of those figures who, within a short period, rose from the lowest social and military strata to the highest political office in the country. Examining the psychological factors that shaped his personality makes it possible to achieve a deeper understanding of this historical transformation. To understand this process, it is necessary to examine the political and social conditions, but this alone is not sufficient, because many dimensions of his behavior and decision-making cannot be explained without psychological analysis and knowledge of his individual characteristics.

In most historical studies of Reza Khan, the focus has been on structural factors, international developments, the role of military institutions, or Iran's social conditions in the late Qajar period. Although these factors are essential for understanding political developments, a significant part of the phenomenon of his rise to power cannot be analyzed without understanding his personality and individual traits. What distinguished Reza Khan from other contemporary military commanders, in addition to structural opportunities or external support, was a combination of individual traits, lived experiences, and psychological mechanisms that shaped his behavior and orientation.

Historical documents indicate that from childhood Reza Khan was confronted with poverty, family instability, the loss of his father, and harsh social conditions (2). In such a context, the formation of a personality grounded in physical strength, industriousness, a desire for control, and a striving for superiority is predictable. Adler's theory of individual psychology regards such experiences as laying the groundwork for the formation of an "initial inferiority complex" followed by a "striving for superiority," a concept that can be clearly observed in the case of Reza Khan. This theoretical framework has clear manifestations in his life, including his early inclination toward military occupations, his strong preference for discipline, and the importance he attached to physical power and authority in his lifestyle and conduct.

His entry into the Cossack Brigade can also be understood within this framework: a choice that both satisfied a psychological need for status and power and provided the conditions for the development of the military and behavioral skills necessary for advancement through the ranks.

From another perspective, the trait approach in psychology also indicates that many of Reza Khan's behavioral characteristics, such as orderliness, boldness, authoritarianism, strong pragmatism, behavioral directness, and decision-making power, were stable and enduring traits that manifested themselves across different situations. These traits were reinforced within the military environment of the Cossack Brigade and became part of his personal identity. Historical accounts show that Reza Khan's colleagues and commanders also recognized these characteristics in him and regarded them as the principal reason for his suitability for command.

In view of this body of theory, the analysis of Reza Khan's personality requires an interdisciplinary perspective that examines individual, social, and psychological elements together. The present article, relying on historical data and theoretical frameworks, follows two principal axes:

A) the role of Reza Khan's individual characteristics in his advancement and in attracting British support for elevating him to kingship;

B) the psychological factors that shaped his personality, including the economic, familial, social, and military experiences from childhood to his entry into the Cossack Brigade.

This approach helps to present a more precise, documented, and scientific portrait of Reza Khan's personality, a portrait formed on the basis of reliable evidence.

Accordingly, the main research problem is this: what factors played a role in the formation of Reza Khan's personality, and how did his individual and psychological characteristics shape his progress and rapid ascent? At a time when many studies have focused on the role of foreign powers or political developments, this study seeks, through psychological frameworks based on Adler and Bandura, to offer a more precise and comprehensive analysis of Reza Khan's personality. In essence, the issue is how the link between socio-biographical experiences, individual characteristics, and psychological mechanisms gave shape to the overall structure of his personality.

The importance of this problem lies in the fact that understanding Reza Khan's personality is not merely a historical matter; rather, it makes it possible to understand the mechanisms that lead to the emergence of powerful, authoritarian, or transformative leaders under particular social conditions. A psychologically grounded, evidence-based analysis can contribute to a deeper understanding of this phenomenon and move beyond one-dimensional analyses that focus solely on politics or structures of power.

Theoretical Framework: Alfred Adler's Theory of Individual Psychology

The theoretical framework of this study is based on Alfred Adler's theory of "individual psychology," an approach that regards human personality as the result of a dynamic interaction among initial feelings of inferiority, striving for superiority, lifestyle, purposiveness, and childhood experiences. The selection of this theory was necessary because Adler analyzes personality not as a purely internal construct or a merely biological phenomenon, but as a "process of forming meaningful behavioral patterns" in confrontation with the social world. Precisely this feature makes the framework more useful for studying historical personalities such as Reza Khan than other clinical or biological theories.

The theory of "individual psychology," founded by Alfred Adler, is regarded as one of the most important approaches to personality studies in the twentieth century. In this theory, human personality is shaped on the basis of a set of early life experiences, feelings of frustration and deficiency, individual goals, and striving for superiority. Adler is introduced as an Austrian psychiatrist, theorist, student, and associate of Freud, and the key components of his theory include the following (3).

Feelings of inferiority and striving for superiority

Adler believed that every human being begins life with a kind of "initial feeling of inferiority." This feeling is natural and universal and arises from the child's dependence on the environment and inability to satisfy his or her own needs (4). The crucial point, however, is that the intensity, nature, and mode of experiencing this feeling determine personality in adulthood.

Adler regarded feelings of deficiency, frustration, and lack of security as foundational factors in adult motivation (4). If these experiences are not accompanied by environmental support, they can turn into deep feelings of inferiority and drive the individual toward a "compensatory striving for superiority." This striving is not merely psychological; it is also the principal driving force behind behavior directed toward authority, success, and social power.

According to this view, many adult behaviors are responses to feelings of deficiency rooted in childhood. Adler believed that human beings are constantly striving to transcend their deficiencies and attain a form of superiority (5).

Goal orientation and finalism

One of the fundamental concepts in Adler's theory is "goal orientation" (6). In his view, human beings are creatures whose behaviors are organized not only on the basis of past experiences, but more importantly around future goals. This concept, known as "finalism," indicates that individuals always hold some idealized image of the future that guides their behavior.

In Adler's theory, in order to overcome feelings of inferiority, the individual constructs a superiority-seeking goal and unconsciously directs all efforts toward achieving it. This goal may be social, occupational, or personal. Therefore, human personality in Adler's theory is a "process" moving toward "perfection" or "superiority" (4).

Lifestyle

Another major component of Adler's theory is the concept of lifestyle (6). Lifestyle refers to the way an individual chooses to adapt to the world, solve problems, achieve goals, and establish social relations.

Adler believed that every person develops a distinctive lifestyle and that this lifestyle is largely fixed during the first years of childhood.

He regarded three components as important in the formation of lifestyle:

- the individual's perception of the self
- the individual's perception of others
- the way the individual relates to the world and its challenges

In Adler's view, lifestyle consists of stable patterns that determine the individual's course through life.

The role of the childhood environment and the family

In Adler's theory, the family environment—especially experiences of loss, poverty, birth order, and parenting style—has a profound effect on the structure of personality. The thesis text likewise refers to these elements and regards factors such as frustration, deficiency, and insecurity as central to the formation of lifestyle and individual motivation (4).

Adler maintained that childhood experiences do not determine personality by themselves; rather, the individual's interpretation of those experiences is even more important. If a child grows up in an environment based on affection, support, and trust, the tendency will be toward the formation of a "social and cooperative lifestyle." But if the environment is marked by humiliation, deprivation, or instability, the probability of developing destructive, domineering, or compensatory lifestyles increases (5).

Social interest and the sense of belonging

One of the essential concepts in Adler's theory is "social interest." This concept refers to the degree of an individual's sense of belonging to society, social participation, empathy, and sense of responsibility. Adler believed that healthy personality is formed only when social interest is present. The "need for community" and the "sense of belonging" are major axes of individual psychology. Adler argued that individuals raised in childhood with a sense of security and worth will, in adulthood, possess a greater capacity for cooperation and for being useful to society. By contrast, those who have not experienced a safe and supportive environment may have weaker social interest and tend toward noncooperative lifestyles.

Overall, Adler's theory provides a framework within which the interaction among a difficult childhood, experiences of deprivation, compensatory mechanisms, the desire for superiority, the formation of lifestyle, and tendencies toward power-seeking can be examined coherently. Because of the socio-historical nature of this theory and its capacity to analyze individuals for whom no clinical data are available, Adler's theory constitutes the most appropriate and sufficient theoretical framework for this study, making it possible to analyze the factors shaping Reza Khan's personality in a scientific, systematic, and historically grounded manner.

Reza Khan's Biography and the Process of His Rise to Power

Genealogy

Reza Khan was born in 1877 in Alasht, Savadkuh, into a family with a military background; both his grandfather and his father had served in the armed forces, and this background influenced the course of his life from the very beginning. In the early years of his life, Reza Khan lost his father and came to Tehran with his mother, an experience that acquainted him from childhood with economic and social hardship. These conditions pushed him very early toward seeking work and income, and in adolescence he eventually entered the Cossack force, the institution within which not only his political future but also his personality and character were later formed (7).

Entry into the Cossack Brigade and the formation of a military identity

Reza Khan entered the Cossack Brigade at the age of fifteen. The Cossack Brigade was an institution managed by Russian officers and emphasized iron discipline, unquestioning obedience, and severe training. The years he spent in this structure consolidated a military mentality and imperious patterns of behavior, while also developing his practical abilities in combat, marksmanship, and command. It was during this period that his bold and fearless disposition drew the attention of Russian commanders, and he gradually rose through the military hierarchy (8).

During this period, political instability and the weakness of governmental structures in Iran created a major opportunity for the Cossack forces, because many security and military affairs were in practice entrusted to them. Owing to his field capabilities and his power of rapid decision-making, Reza Khan undertook difficult missions, and this performance brought him recognition far more quickly than usual as a dependable figure within the Cossack forces.

Iran on the eve of Reza Khan's rise to power

In the 1910s, Iran was engulfed in wide-ranging turmoil: the consequences of the First World War, the presence of foreign forces on Iranian soil, the weakness of the Qajar monarchy, local uprisings, the inability of governments to administer affairs, and financial crisis. This situation created conditions in which any force capable of maintaining security and establishing order acquired value in the eyes of political elites and even foreign governments. Reza Khan, with his military background and decisive conduct, was one of the few individuals who projected such an image.

During this same period, foreign powers—especially Britain—were seeking a figure capable of establishing relative stability. Iran's political conditions were such that a person with an iron will, a tendency toward rapid decision-making, and disregard for worn-out traditional structures was needed to implement new programs. Reza

Khan, with the characteristics he had developed in the Cossack Brigade, gradually became one of the preferred options (9).

The 1921 coup and the emergence of a new figure

The coup of February 1921 was a turning point in Reza Khan's life. At that time, as commander of the Hamadan brigade, he assumed leadership of the military wing of the coup and, upon entering Tehran, took control of the capital's military affairs. The coup took place without extensive fighting, but its political consequences were profound. By relying on rapid restoration of order, decisive confrontation with unrest, and a strong public presence, Reza Khan quickly achieved a position beyond that of a mere military commander (2).

The initial confidence that developed among some politicians and intellectuals toward him was based largely on the belief that he could stand against disorder and strengthen the central government. In fact, it was precisely this perception of his personality—that of an orderly, commanding, action-oriented man—that led many, at first, to support his ascent.

Minister of War and Prime Minister

After the coup, Reza Khan first became Sardar Sepah and later Minister of War. During this period, he rebuilt the army, strengthened military structures, and curbed the power of local strongmen. These measures, together with his extreme decisiveness in dealing with opponents, caused his military and political power to become concentrated to an unprecedented degree.

In 1923, Reza Khan became prime minister. In this position, he expanded his centralizing policies and sought to redefine Iran's structure according to the model of a modern and unified state. Harsh responses to uprisings, strict control over administrative affairs, and the direct exercise of power in major national decisions were all consolidated during this period (10).

Changing the monarchy and ascending the throne

In 1925, with parliamentary approval, the Qajar monarchy came to an end and Reza Khan ascended the throne as the new Shah of Iran. This transformation was the result of a gradual process: from the consolidation of military authority, to the acquisition of political power, and then to becoming a figure whom part of the political elite of the time regarded as a suitable option for establishing stability.

Reza Khan's rise to power was both the result of Iran's particular historical conditions—crisis, instability, and the weakness of the central government—and the outcome of his individual characteristics: high self-confidence, a strong desire for control, firm will, military spirit, and a capacity for decisive decision-making. These characteristics played a role throughout his life and enabled him, within a short period, to rise from the lower ranks of the army to the position of monarchy (11).

The life of Reza Khan is the story of a man who emerged from the harsh environment of the Cossack Brigade, brought to the arena the capacities he had acquired in years of soldiering amid turmoil and the weakness of Iran's political structure, and, relying on his personal abilities, concentrated power at the highest level. His rise from an ordinary soldier to the king of Iran was a combination of particular historical circumstances and his individual traits—traits that were clearly visible in his manner of command, his decision-making, and his handling of the country's affairs, and that shaped his path to power.

Analysis of Reza Khan's Individual and Psychological Characteristics

An examination of Reza Khan's life from childhood to kingship shows that a set of personality and psychological traits—formed and consolidated over the course of his life—played an important role in his rise and in the consolidation of his power. These traits are observable not only in his personal behavior, but also in his decisions, political relations, style of command, and way of governing the country. Any examination of Reza Khan's personality that neglects the context of his life and the socio-political conditions of his era fails to provide a complete picture. Drawing on his historical biography and the process of his rise to power, this section seeks to portray his individual and psychological characteristics. The aim is not political judgment, but rather a scientific and documented analysis of the personality elements that played a role in his behaviors and decisions.

A hardened personality shaped in the context of deprivation and early responsibility

Childhood poverty, the early death of his father, and migration to Tehran created a period of psychological pressure and instability for Reza Khan. Many scholars regard such conditions as factors contributing to self-reliance, extreme independence, and distrust of social structures (12).

Such conditions typically lead to characteristics such as extreme independence, self-reliance, distrust of traditional institutions and surrounding people, and a need to control circumstances. Reza Khan's life reflects precisely this trajectory: from adolescence he tried to forge his own path of advancement by relying on personal ability and to depend on himself in decision-making. The effects of these traits are also visible in his adult behavior, including his refusal to rely on traditional institutions and his insistence on conducting affairs in an individual and centralized manner.

Military identity and an imperious personality

Reza Khan's entry into the Cossack Brigade during adolescence was a decisive turning point in the formation of his personality. The Cossack Brigade was a rigid institution, based on severe discipline and a strict hierarchical structure, an environment which, in Kasravi's view, made a man "more a soldier and an obedient subordinate than a citizen" (13).

This environment consolidated a number of traits in Reza Khan:

- a habit of commanding and issuing orders
- the use of the language of power in dealing with others
- low tolerance for opposition or resistance
- reliance on force, speed, and decisiveness in solving problems
- an instrumental and duty-oriented view of human relations

Many of his later political decisions—from army reform to the control of administrative institutions—reflect this same "military personality." Thus, many of his political behaviors were in effect direct extensions of this military disposition: speed in decision-making, decisive responses, and limited tolerance for opposition.

A strong desire for order, control, and the structuring of affairs

Historical accounts of Reza Khan's career identify a fascination with order and structure as one of the most salient elements of his personality (14). Long years of military service and presence in firing ranges, training

grounds, and hard missions shaped a personality naturally inclined toward order and control. In reality, prolonged military experience led him to view social issues as well through the lens of organization and concentration. Examples include:

- the formation of a modern army according to a model of iron discipline
- the reduction of the power of dispersed local structures
- the concentration of executive affairs within state institutions
- the elimination of parallel and traditional structures that disrupted his new order
- the administration of national affairs according to a “commander–executor” model

This psychological trait later became the foundation of many of his administrative and military reforms during his reign.

Ambition and motivation for advancement

Reza Khan's rise from an ordinary soldier to commander-in-chief, then prime minister, and finally king cannot be understood without a powerful motivation for advancement. Abrahamian describes this quality as “practical ambition,” an ambition coupled with rigorous effort and rapid action (12).

The signs and historical examples of this trait include:

- accepting difficult assignments within the Cossack Brigade
- striving to be seen and to stand out among his fellow servicemen
- consciously entering political processes
- accepting a leadership role in the 1921 coup
- seriously pursuing army reform and then taking hold of the premiership
- moving gradually and systematically toward changing the monarchy

This ambition was of the “active” type; that is, it involved not only a desire for advancement, but also the practical capacity to create the necessary conditions for it.

High decisiveness and rapid decision-making

Historical analyses portray Reza Khan as someone who made decisions in moments of crisis rather than in prolonged deliberative sessions (14). This decisiveness was the result of two factors:

- military training and the learning of rapid decision-making
- high self-confidence and belief in personal ability

This trait first became evident in military missions. In a period when Iran was experiencing structural collapse and turmoil, this characteristic appeared attractive—and even necessary—to many elites and segments of society, and it became a strength in attracting British support for bringing him to power.

A natural inclination toward leadership and social dominance

Political-psychological readings of leadership suggest that Reza Khan possessed a “charisma of power,” a type of commanding presence that elicited obedience from others (15, 16). Reza Khan appeared repeatedly in leadership roles, from commanding small military units to leading the coup and then directing the army and the government.

The traits associated with this dimension included:

- considerable self-confidence

- a tendency to lead groups under crisis conditions
- skill in exercising authority in both military and political environments
- the ability to engage others from a position of power

These characteristics caused him, alongside the armed forces, to be seen by some urban strata and Western-oriented politicians as a suitable figure for restoring order.

Structural distrust and a tendency toward the personal concentration of power

Analyses of Reza Khan's governing style indicate that he felt secure only when all affairs were under his direct supervision (17). Childhood experiences, the instability of the Qajar period, and his encounters with various interest groups caused him to have limited trust in others. The result of this distrust was the emergence of characteristics such as:

- reluctance to delegate power
- a tendency toward direct supervision over affairs
- distrust of independent institutions
- high sensitivity to real or imagined rivals

This psychological trait led power to become concentrated extensively in his person.

Intense pragmatism and disregard for deeply rooted traditions

In many of his decisions, Reza Khan paid attention to "immediate effectiveness" rather than relying on tradition. Historians regard this trait as one of the main reasons for his preference for rapid yet harsh solutions (18).

This pragmatism is observable in the following areas:

- administrative and military reforms
- confrontation with tribal structures
- the creation of new institutions in place of traditional mechanisms

This trait made him appear to segments of the urban middle class as a modernizing figure.

This characteristic was visible not only at the personal level, but also in his broader programs, such as army reform, the expansion of state institutions, and administrative change.

Based on an analysis of Reza Khan's biography and path to power, it may be said that when his individual characteristics are considered together, they form the picture of a personality in which the following elements stand out:

- a rigid military identity
- a tendency toward order and control
- active and driving ambition
- rapid and decisive decision-making
- reliance on individual ability rather than social institutions
- high self-confidence and strong leadership spirit
- distrust of others and a tendency to concentrate power

These characteristics did not emerge in the abstract; rather, they were formed within the concrete context of his life: a difficult childhood, harsh military training, the country's political instability, and the opportunities made available by historical circumstances. In Iran's specific historical context—crisis, instability, a weak central

government, and military disorder—these traits combined with one another and created the conditions for Reza Khan's rise.

Analysis of the Psychological Factors Influencing the Formation of Reza Khan's Personality on the Basis of Adler's Theory

Alfred Adler's theory, with its emphasis on "feelings of inferiority," "compensation," "lifestyle," and the "fictional final goal," provides a suitable framework for analyzing personalities who emerged from difficult childhood conditions and later developed tendencies toward power-seeking and authoritarianism. Reza Khan's life is a striking example of this pattern, especially because of the early experiences that, from an Adlerian perspective, formed the psychological foundations of his personality. Adler believed that a deprived childhood, the early death of a parent, or the absence of emotional support could generate a kind of "fundamental sense of weakness" that the individual spends a lifetime trying to compensate for (4). Reza Khan's life, marked by the death of his father in his earliest years and by his placement in a poor and insecure environment, precisely reflects the conditions that Adler identified as the source of "initial feelings of inferiority" (5).

This feeling of inferiority, reinforced by the experience of poverty and the absence of a support system, led to the formation of a powerful motive for compensation. Adler explains that individuals who undergo such experiences usually move toward constructing a kind of "personal superiority" in order to close the gap between their actual condition and their desired condition (3). Reza Khan's entry into the Cossack Brigade can be interpreted in precisely this framework: the choice of a harsh, orderly environment based on hierarchy and physical power offered an opportunity to compensate for childhood weakness and to achieve a sense of capability. Adler regarded this type of choice as one of the signs of active compensation, because the individual places himself in environments that make it possible to demonstrate superiority and control (5).

The process of Reza Khan's personal development also corresponded to a pattern consistent with "overcompensation": a strong need for order, control, decisive decision-making, and intolerance of disorder. Adler emphasized that those who experience insecurity in childhood often interpret external order in adulthood as a way of mastering internal chaos (3). In Reza Khan's case, this took the form of efforts to impose iron discipline in the military, concentrate political power, and show sensitivity toward disobedience, behavior that is consistent with the Adlerian pattern of "authoritarian striving for superiority" (4).

At a deeper level, Reza Khan's personality can also be explained through the Adlerian concept of "lifestyle." In Adler's theory, lifestyle is fixed by around the age of five and consists of the set of attitudes, expectations, and patterns of reaction through which the individual confronts the world (3). Reza Khan's lifestyle was a combination of extreme self-reliance, distrust of others, and a tendency to control his environment. The lack of adequate emotional support in childhood limited the development of "social interest" in him. Adler emphasized that weak social interest typically leads to the adoption of individualistic and at times coercive solutions (5), a matter whose signs can be traced in Reza Khan's political and military behavior.

Finally, the analysis of Reza Khan's personality on the basis of the concept of the "fictional final goal" is also illuminating. Adler believed that every individual forms in the mind an idealized—often unconscious—image of the future that guides behavior and decisions (3). In Reza Khan's case, this fictional goal can be reconstructed as a movement "from subordination to superiority," a continuous effort to escape the social margins and construct a dominant and powerful identity. This goal not only directed his path of military advancement but was also strongly

present in his political behavior, from the concentration of power to his sensitivity toward rivals. In Adlerian terms, when an individual's final goal is personal superiority, others are perceived not as collaborators but as potential threats; this helps explain part of Reza Khan's distrustful and controlling behavior.

Overall, the use of Adler's theoretical framework shows that Reza Khan's personality can be understood through the linkage between childhood experiences—poverty, the loss of his father, and insecurity—the process of compensation, and the formation of a lifestyle grounded in power and control. This pattern indicates that the path of Reza Khan's rise was not merely the product of Iran's political conditions, but that its roots also lay in his psychological structure, a structure that emerged from the effort to overcome initial feelings of inferiority and later manifested itself in authoritarian and centralizing behavior.

Conclusion

The present study was conducted with the aim of examining Reza Khan's personality from the perspective of Alfred Adler's individual psychology and analyzing how his psychological characteristics overlapped with the historical conditions of Iran during a period of transition. The findings show that understanding his emergence and political role would remain incomplete without attention to the relationship between psychological factors at the individual level and structural demands at the level of society and the international environment. The analysis sought to demonstrate how the core elements of Adler's theory—initial feelings of inferiority, compensation, lifestyle, social interest, and the fictional final goal—can serve as an effective framework for understanding certain aspects of Reza Khan's political and administrative behavior.

First, the analysis of Reza Khan's life history revealed that his childhood experiences—including deep poverty, the loss of his father and his replacement by an insecure environment, the absence of a stable emotional support system, and his early placement in situations requiring responsibility—created the conditions for the formation of “initial feelings of inferiority” in the Adlerian sense. According to Adler's view, such feelings are not merely a source of dysfunction, but can also become a powerful motive for intense striving toward superiority, control over the environment, and the construction of a self-reliant identity. In Reza Khan's case, the study showed that this feeling unconsciously became the driving force behind his extensive personal efforts toward social ascent, the display of power, extreme self-reliance, and independence from the support of others.

At the next stage, the study showed that the process of compensation in him was expressed in a particular form: the formation of a lifestyle based on strict discipline, a high tolerance for physical pressure, rapid decision-making, sensitivity to any sign of weakness, and a constant need to prove personal capability. This lifestyle, which Adler describes as a personal and unique pattern for organizing the world, enabled him not only to advance rapidly in military environments characterized by hierarchy and order, but also to feel greater psychological security there than in broader social environments. His limited social interest, as one of the dimensions of Adler's theory, also played a role in directing his preference for centralized control and his distrust of collective or participatory mechanisms.

At the structural and historical level, the findings showed that the characteristics formed in Reza Khan's personality came into meaningful alignment with the conditions of Iran after the First World War. During this period, society was confronted with chronic instability, administrative disorder, widespread insecurity, weak governmental institutions, and multiple social divisions. In such a setting, personalities capable of imposing rapid order, making authoritative decisions, exercising firm control over administrative and military structures, and responding

immediately to crises naturally moved to the center of attention for domestic forces as well as foreign actors. This study demonstrated that Reza Khan's psychological characteristics, which were largely rooted in his childhood experiences and developmental path, presented him as an individual with a high capacity for order-making, a capacity that acquired particular political and functional appeal during a time of turmoil.

The analysis of historical documents, without entering into political or value-based interpretation, indicates that certain foreign actors present in Iran at the time were seeking an individual capable of creating stability and implementing predictable structures. The study showed that this structural need overlapped with characteristics such as authoritarianism, intense self-reliance, sensitivity to disorder, and a constant tendency to impose control, all of which were prominent in Reza Khan's personality. This overlap does not imply a positive or negative evaluation of these traits; rather, it indicates their compatibility with the mental model held by those actors of a strong and order-producing figure during a period of political instability.

Accordingly, the overall conclusion of the study is that the emergence of Reza Khan should be understood as the result of the intersection of three levels. The first is the individual, or psychological, level: initial feelings of inferiority, intense compensation, an authority-centered lifestyle, limited social interest, and an unconscious purposiveness directed toward control and superiority. The second is the socio-historical level: the needs of Iranian society for the reconstruction of order during a period of institutional collapse and security crises. The third is the international level: the preferences of foreign actors for an individual who possessed the psychological capacity to create rapid and predictable order.

This study emphasizes that the analysis of political leaders' personalities cannot be fully explained through historical or political approaches alone, and that psychology, especially Adler's theory, can provide an effective tool for understanding the individual roots of behaviors that become influential at the macro level. The present examination showed that part of Reza Khan's historical trajectory was rooted not only in structures of power, but also in his psychological structure—structures that, in interaction with environmental conditions, contributed to the formation of his role in the contemporary history of Iran. Such an approach can offer a useful analytical model for studies concerned with the personalities of political leaders in periods of transition and crisis.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

All ethical principles were adhered in conducting and writing this article.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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