

Someone Like Us

The Revolutionary Result of the United States' Contradictory Foreign Policy toward Iran

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Abstract

Shortly after being elected President, Ike Eisenhower was approached with a plan that would involve the participation of the CIA in the overthrow of the Iranian government. His predecessor, Harry S. Truman, had refused complicity in such a plan. However, given the escalating tension between the Soviet Union and the West and the geopolitical value of Iran, Eisenhower approved the plan. As the first of its kind, the CIA-sponsored coup ended Iran's attempt at democracy and placed in power Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi. In an effort to preserve Iran as a cold war ally of the West, the United States gave extensive support to the Shah for the next three decades, even at the expense of civil rights for Iranian nationals. As a contradictory foreign policy, the United States simultaneously attempted Americanization of the Iranians through curricular and exchange programs. This dichotomous approach introduced the internal conflicts of Iranians and Americans alike during the Jimmy Carter presidency, who similarly struggled with international distribution of American civil rights and the desire to maintain control of Iran. With this understanding, the Iranian hostage crisis is not the sudden and unexpected event of the late 1970s as portrayed, but is a natural culmination of thirty years of conflicting cultural and ideological foreign policy towards Iran. The current animosity between the two countries is a modern reminder of an intimate Cold War relationship that turned hostile because of infidelity.

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A month and a half after his inauguration ceremony, the World War II general-turned-President “Ike” Eisenhower shook his head in frustration at the apparent lack of global appreciation for American efforts to save the free world from tyranny. Internationally, displeasure with the ideologies of democracy and capitalism was expanding as fast as communist influence could disseminate, and the growing American imperialistic lifestyle was being questioned by nations on every continent. On that occasion, Eisenhower complained aloud to the rest of the National Security Council, “it was a matter of great distress to him that we seemed unlikely to get some of these down-trodden countries to like us instead of hating us.”¹

The topic of discussion at the meeting quickly enveloped the perceived threat of communism against Iran, a nation that adored the United States because of its anti-imperial nature and unwillingness to force its way of life on others.² Despite the positive overtures in which Iran held the United States, the committee considered Persian soil so vital to American interests that they pursued a presidential thumbs-up to participate for the first time in the overthrow of a foreign government.³ Eisenhower obliged, and the U.S.-sponsored coup placed the infamous Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi in power for the next three decades, dismembering Iranian devotion from the enthusiastic chants of “Long Live America” resonating in the Persian streets to violent shouts of “Death to America” outside the U.S. embassy in Tehran.⁴ In an effort to maintain hegemony in the Middle East and access to Iranian oil, the United States allowed itself to employ contradicting foreign policies that resulted in the overthrow of the Pahlavi regime during the Carter administration as it simultaneously sought to 1) Americanize the rising Iranian generations through educational exchange and 2) manage the Iranian people via a puppet leader. The revolutionary backlash of 1979 was a logical result of this dissociative identity.

¹ U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954, Volume X, Iran, 1951-1954*. “Memorandum of Discussion at the 135th Meeting of the National Security Council, Washington, March 4, 1953,” (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1989), 699.

² Sattareh Farman-Farmaian. *Daughter of Persia: A Woman's Journey from her Father's Harem Through the Islamic Revolution* (New York: Anchor, 1992) 56-57. Farmaian claims that prior to 1953, “Americans were regarded with nearly universal admiration and affection... without attempting to force their way of life on people or convert us to their religion.”

³ Stephen Kinzer's *All the Shah's Men* is an authoritative reading of the 1953 coup in Iran, including the rationale for the coup and its subsequent roots in the 1979 revolution and hostage crisis.

⁴ Kuross A. Samii, *Involvement by invitation: American strategies of containment in Iran* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1987), 148.

The aforementioned National Security Council meeting of March 4, 1953 had on its mind the action plan outlined in NSC policy code 136/1. The plan states, “it is of critical importance to the United States that Iran remain an independent and sovereign nation, not dominated by the USSR.”⁵ The report cites four reasons for the importance of maintaining Iran as a friendly face in the region, “Because of its key strategic position, its petroleum resources, its vulnerability to intervention or armed attack by the USSR, and its vulnerability to political subversion.”⁶ Three decades later, in a subsequent report issued by the U.S. State Department, the Office of the Inspector General repeated, “Iran is the capstone of the buffer zone between the Soviet Union and the oil-rich Arabian peninsula.”⁷ The department further analyzed, “It is in many ways the linchpin of the region. Even if Iran had no oil or gas of its own, this simple geopolitical reality would make it difficult to ignore.”⁸ This strategic outpost for the defense of America against Communist expansion seemed to be as crucial a location as Korea, Vietnam, Eastern Europe, or Central America.

Eisenhower and his security council were not the first to recognize the importance of Iran, both in its location and its resources. In order to secure its oil fields for wartime use and to create an alternative supply route to the pre-communist Soviet Union, a neutral Iran was invaded by a joint venture of the Allied forces during WWII.⁹ Liberation from Soviet control after the war’s end was only ensured by Roosevelt’s “special attention to the territorial integrity of Iran during the Tehran conference” of the superpowers and “Truman’s admission of willingness to go to war with Stalin” over Iran’s control.¹⁰ Several years after the tense standoff over Iran and while serving his second term in the Oval Office, Truman engaged in a discussion with his aide George M. Elsey about the prior day’s invasion of South Korea by communist-backed forces from the north. Truman is recorded as having crossed the room to a globe, pointed

⁵ National Security Council, U.S. Department of State. National Security Council Report 136/1 (Washington, D.C: November 20, 1952), 5.
<http://www.paperlessarchives.com/BPNSC.pdf>

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Office of Inspector General, U.S. Department of State. *Inspection Report of the Conduct of Relations with Iran (NEA/IRN)*. (Washington D.C., September 1978), p.1, quoted in Ali M. Ansari, *Confronting Iran: the failure of American foreign policy and the next great crisis in the Middle East* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 3.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Richard A. Stewart, *Sunrise at Abadan: the British and Soviet invasion of Iran, 1941* (New York: Praeger, 1988), 139.

¹⁰ Samii, *Involvement by invitation: American strategies of containment in Iran*, 148.

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to Iran and declared, "Here is where they will start trouble if we aren't careful."¹¹ As the century wore on, and the rhetoric with the Soviet Union grew cataclysmically heated, the United States proceeded to exert as much influence as possible in Iran to prevent the trouble Truman was predicting.

Since the emerging cold war was, according to Arndt and Rubin, a "contest not for men's bodies but for their souls," greater weapons than swords, tanks, and nuclear warheads were going to be needed to overcome the communist threat.¹² National Security Council members and their staff were already sharpening their pens.¹³ Another NSC meeting revealed this, as the discussion of anti-Soviet propaganda in Iran iterated that operatives had "defined [their] targets carefully and decided just what elements of the population [they] wanted to hit."¹⁴ According to a Foreign Service despatch, these target groups included the Shah, the wealthy landowners, and their extended families as a starting group, with students, educators, and government employees as the "most important group."¹⁵ Group three comprised the "illiterate masses" and rural leaders who were increasingly influenced by the Tudeh (communist) forces.¹⁶ Of these three, the second group was the "most important group as they represent the public opinion molders" of the country.¹⁷ The foreign policy response to 'get them to like us' was the use of educational exchange

¹¹ Stephen Kinzer, *All the Shah's men: an American coup and the roots of Middle East terror* (Hoboken, N.J.: J. Wiley & Sons, 2003), 85.

¹² Richard T. Arndt and David Lee Rubin, editors, *The Fulbright difference, 1948-1992* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1993), 131.

¹³ The pen is mightier than the sword

¹⁴ U.S. Department of State, Meeting Transcript: "Working Group on Special Materials for Arab and Other Moslem Countries," April 1, 1952, 55. Available at <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB78/propaganda%20058.pdf> (accessed February 19, 2013). Also accessible at National Archives: Record Group 59. Records of the Department of State. Decimal Files, 1950-1954.

¹⁵ United States Embassy, Iran Despatch from Edward C. Wells to the Department of State. "IIA: Country Plan," April 28, 1952. Accessible at <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB78/propaganda%20060.pdf> (accessed February 19, 2013). Also accessible at National Archives: Record Group 59. Records of the Department of State. Decimal Files, 1950-1954.

¹⁶ United States Embassy, Iran Despatch from Edward C. Wells to the Department of State. "IIA: Country Plan," April 28, 1952. Accessible at <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB78/propaganda%20060.pdf> (accessed February 19, 2013). Also accessible at National Archives: Record Group 59. Records of the Department of State. Decimal Files, 1950-1954.

¹⁷ Ibid.

programs to increase “mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries.”¹⁸

Several of these exchange programs were enacted during the Truman administration, including the 1946 Fulbright program, the 1948 Information and Exchange Act, and the 1949 Point Four program. Later amendments included the Mutual Education and Cultural Exchange Act in 1961, the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, and the International Education Act of 1966.¹⁹ The United Nations counterpart to these programs, the Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), was also adopted in 1946. These education programs all had the goal of raising underdeveloped nations to increased prosperity through the sharing of knowledge.²⁰ In it, Truman expected to win the “hearts and minds” of the world, not only to counter Soviet aggression and reduce the chances of another world war, but to also improve trade and diplomatic relations.²¹ Outlining this doctrine in his 1949 inaugural address, Truman remarked, “For the first time in history, humanity possesses the knowledge and skill to relieve the suffering of [impoverished] people. The United States is pre-eminent among nations in the development of industrial and scientific techniques. The material resources which we can afford to use for assistance of other peoples are limited. But our imponderable resources in technical knowledge are constantly growing and are inexhaustible.”²² Continuing with its theme of American admiration, a naively eager Iran was one of the first to volunteer for these educational exchange programs with the United States.

¹⁸ American Council on Education, *Foreign students and institutional policy: toward an agenda for action: a report of the Committee on Foreign Students and Institutional Policy*, American Council on Education (Washington, D.C.: The Council, 1982), 26.

¹⁹ Gerald S. Harris, *International students in Utah: A profile and economic impact study* (Salt Lake City: Utah State Board of Regents, 1982), 6.

²⁰ Harry S. Truman, 1949 Inaugural Address, accessible at http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/50yr_archive/inagural20jan1949.htm (accessed April 6, 2013). He says, “Economic recovery and peace itself depend on increased world trade.”

²¹ Liping Bu, *Making the world like us: education, cultural expansion, and the American century* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2003), 7. See also point two of Harry S. Truman’s 1949 inaugural address

²² Harry S. Truman, 1949 Inaugural Address.

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The various programs of educational exchange spread hundreds of thousands of Americans across the globe and exposed their host nations to American thinking.²³ Twenty-four thousand would descend upon Iran alone between the years 1972-1976, with projections that at the end of the decade more than sixty thousand Americans were in the country, each armed with anti-communist dogma.²⁴ They filled roles as military trainers and financial advisors, as well as engineers helping the Middle Eastern state to pump oil into tankers headed toward American consumers anxious for energy during the oil crisis. There were so many Americans in Iran that there was even a section of Tehran nicknamed Little America (also known as Utahville), where it was possible to see more Americans on the streets than Iranian nationals.²⁵

This army of educators, advisors, and Peace Corps members in Iran set about building hospitals, schools, teaching agriculture, and fulfilling the “subtle assignment [of] working on curriculum reform at [Tehran] University.”²⁶ They would prepare, as seen in a memorandum from a public affairs officer to the U.S. Ambassador in Iran, “cultural connections with university groups,” which “encounters provide the best possible opportunity to explain and justify America’s position.”²⁷ Additionally, they would distribute pamphlets such as the four-page brochure telling of two Iranian boys “who are faced with the choice between communism (the supposedly fast, easy way to peace and prosperity) and patient study and industry (the slow, sure way).”²⁸ In the story of “Which Way to Prosperity and Peace,” the boy who chooses communism “suffers early and violent death in a street demonstration” while the other enjoys a “productive life.”²⁹ According to the propaganda machine in Tehran, education in the American-sponsored schools sprouting throughout the country provided the best route to happiness and longevity.

²³ Arndt, *The Fulbright difference, 1948-1992*, 1. An estimate is made of 200,000 Americans participating overseas.

²⁴ Ansari, *Confronting Iran: the failure of American foreign policy and the next great crisis in the Middle East*, 66.

²⁵ Janet Jenson, *The many lives of Franklin S. Harris* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Print Services, 2002), 187.

²⁶ Arndt, *The Fulbright difference, 1948-1992*, 142.

²⁷ United States Embassy, Iran Despatch from Loy Henderson to the Department of State. "Attaching Memorandum Entitled 'Report on the Use of Anti-Soviet Material within Iran during Period Covered by Last Two Years'," May 29, 1953.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

The political education project seemed to be working. An air mail letter to the American ambassador Loy Henderson revealed that the United States Information and Educational Exchange program (USIE) was “an extremely important propaganda mechanism” in setting in motion “an effective propaganda campaign” in Iran.³⁰ In agreement, a telegram to the Secretary of State in the early 1950s reported, “activities in the educational field ... have made major contributions toward molding public opinion in accordance with USIE objectives.”³¹ Ervand Abrahamian, in studying the national census statistics in the thirty years of intimate Iranian relations with the U.S., reports that because of American involvement in Iran “enrollment in kindergartens increased from 13,300 to 221,990, in elementary schools from 1,640,000 to 4,080,000” and that secondary schools doubled in size.³² American involvement in the establishment of curriculum sought to ensure that the rising Iranian generation would be friendly to American ideals. The colleges in Iran swelled from 25,000 to nearly 150,000.³³ U.S. citizens involved in the exchange programs, like Professor Willis J. Wager at the University at Tehran, were teaching American ideology and wondering with curiosity about the effects of their cultural exchange.³⁴

Others had determined their own gauge of the effectiveness of their Americanization attempts. Lois Roth, a Fulbright coordinator in Tehran, “coined what we used to call Roth’s Law: the understanding that democracy in Iran is directly proportional to the years spent in the U.S. prior to age 20.”³⁵ She understood that while Americans could press cultural change in Iran, an even greater effect was on those youth who experienced American ideals in its native habitat. This experience would enable Persian students returning from the United States at the conclusion

³⁰ U.S. Department of State, Letter from John H. Stutesman, Jr. to Loy Henderson. [Propaganda Situation following Coup], October 28, 1953. Accessible at <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB78/propaganda%20112.pdf> (accessed February 19, 2013). Also accessible at National Archives: Record Group 59. Records of the Department of State. Decimal Files, 1950-1954.

³¹ United States Embassy, Iran Cable from Loy Henderson to the Department of State. [U.S. Propaganda Program in Iran], September 6, 1952. Accessible at <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB78/propaganda%20071.pdf> (accessed February 19, 2013). Also accessible at National Archives: Record Group 59. Records of the Department of State. Decimal Files, 1950-1954.

³² Ervand Abrahamian, *A history of modern Iran* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 134.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Arndt, *The Fulbright difference, 1948-1992*, 233.

³⁵ Ibid.145.

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of exchange opportunities “to ‘carry’ culture in the opposite direction, telling friends at home about the people and things seen abroad.”³⁶

In order to become culture carriers, young Iranians would need to be able to find their way to the United States. Student visa regulations require that students demonstrate the ability to pay for the period of schooling in the United States before coming. This was one way to ensure that the students had intentions of returning home after their educational experiences were over. To appease those who feared immigrant competition for local jobs, student visa regulations adopted strict employment rules.³⁷ Applicants would likewise need to demonstrate the appropriate preparations for study in the U.S., including English language proficiency and sufficient education for the level they intended to participate in, as well as prove that they had indeed been accepted to study at an American educational institution.³⁸ Many of the schools in Iran and their Americanized curriculum focused on these preparations, including American Samuel Jordan’s Alborz College, where “thousands of its graduates went on to shape Iranian life” after their America-friendly educations.³⁹ A government document demonstrating compliance with these criteria, known as form I-20, would be issued by the accepting school in the United States and was required in order to obtain a student visa.⁴⁰

Two types of visas became common for Iranian students: the J-1 (meaning they were sponsored by someone, including the United Nations or Iranian/U.S. governments) and the F-1 (meaning their expenses were covered by either savings or family support).⁴¹ “A majority of international students admitted to the United States enter as F-1 visa holders,” and initially Iranians held similar statistics.⁴² This would suggest that those that were coming from Iran were from the first group mentioned in the despatch: families with wealth and/or personal ties to

³⁶ Thomas Marshall, “The Strategy of International Exchange” in *Students as links between cultures; a cross cultural survey based on Unesco studies*, ed. Ingrid Eide, (Oslo, Universitetsforlaget 1970), 20.

³⁷ Harris, *International students in Utah: A profile and economic impact study*, 15-16.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

³⁹ Kinzer, *All the Shah's men: an American coup and the roots of Middle East terror*, 85.

⁴⁰ American Council on Education, *Foreign students and institutional policy: toward an agenda for action: a report of the Committee on Foreign Students and Institutional Policy*, American Council on Education (Washington, D.C.: The Council, 1982), 32.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, xii

⁴² Harris, *International students in Utah: A profile and economic impact study*, 15.

the Shah, including “the political establishment in the United States.”⁴³ As economic prosperity in Iran (due to oil sales to the United States) created a new and growing middle class, the Americanization of the NSC’s second group at schools in the United States became even more crucial in order to maintain access.

Some students came with financial backing from the educational exchange programs while others simply came through the encouragement of American friends in Iran. Ruth C. Bosch wrote of her thesis research that many Iranians came to specific colleges simply because an American associate in Iran had recommended it.⁴⁴ The biography of Franklin S. Harris, president of Utah State University (1945-1950), reveals that his personal recommendations during his time participating as a Point Four advisor to the Shah brought many Iranian students to the university in Logan, Utah.⁴⁵ This same scenario is also shown in Ian Kinzer’s book “All the Shah’s Men,” detailing the story surrounding the U.S. coup of Iran’s Prime Minister Mossadegh. Mossadegh’s grandson Mahmoud provided translation services during meetings with U.S. ambassador Averell Harriman. Mahmoud recalled that following one meeting “[Harriman] asked me where I wanted to go to college. I told him that I assumed I would go somewhere in England, but he said the United States would be better. I asked him where in the United States. He was a Yale man, but for whatever reason he suggested Harvard. So when the time came I applied, and that was that!”⁴⁶ Kinzer remarked upon meeting Mahmoud, some fifty years after the encounter with Harriman, that he had not met an Iranian as Americanized as the Harvard grad in his suit and tie, who had just returned from his forty-fifth class reunion in the States.⁴⁷ Thus, even the target of the Iranian coup, Mossadegh, wasn’t immune from the planned Americanization in Iran.

⁴³ Ansari, *Confronting Iran: the failure of American foreign policy and the next great crisis in the Middle East*, 58.

⁴⁴ Ruth C. Busch, “The Iranian student in Logan: an exploratory study of foreign student social experience and adjustment” (Thesis (M.S.), Utah State Agricultural College, Dept. of Sociology, 1955), 31.

⁴⁵ Janet Jenson, *The many lives of Franklin S. Harris*, 190.

⁴⁶ Kinzer, *All the Shah's men: an American coup and the roots of Middle East terror*, 226. See also page 253.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 226.

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Recognizing the importance of winning “the hearts and minds of future foreign leaders, the [State Department] urged universities to accept more foreign students although American campuses were already swamped with returned GIs.”⁴⁸ Ina Corinne Brown, a Senior Specialist in Social Studies at the United States Office of Education, recognized the need to fit these international students despite crowded campuses as “the direction taken by any particular country in the future may well depend on where its students go for an education and the kind of experiences they have in the host country.”⁴⁹ Philip Coombs, a former Assistant Secretary of State for Education and Cultural Affairs, added “that educational exchange had become the ‘fourth dimension’ of foreign policy” to accompany the traditional political, economic, and military aspects.⁵⁰ The United States pursued this policy so aggressively in seeking to determine the direction of Iran that at the height of this cultural exchange some sixty-thousand Iranian youth were studying in the U.S.⁵¹ Fifty thousand of these Iranians were at American universities when diplomatic relations were cut with Iran in early 1980 as a result of the hostage crisis.⁵² This number was three times that of any other nation, and represented “the special historic and diplomatic ties” which the United States had developed with Iran.⁵³ Even Canada, with its “geographic proximity and language affinity” didn’t send more than fifteen thousand to U.S. universities in the late 1970s.⁵⁴

An immediate fear of politicians and citizens of the United States was that bringing foreigners, especially those from critical locations struggling with communistic uprisings, would “let down immigration bars and open American schools ‘to Communists and agitators’.”⁵⁵ There is evidence that students may have been hand selected from the Iranian population to attend U.S. schools. The American Council on Education report

⁴⁸ Bu, *Making the world like us: education, cultural expansion, and the American century*, 7.

⁴⁹ Ina Corinne Brown, “The Cultural Background of International Education,” in *Governmental policy and international education*, ed. Stewart Fraser (New York: J. Wiley, 1965), 48.

⁵⁰ Bu, *Making the world like us: education, cultural expansion, and the American century*, 7.

⁵¹ Ansari, *Confronting Iran: the failure of American foreign policy and the next great crisis in the Middle East*, 58-59.

⁵² Institute of International Education, “Open Doors Fact Sheet: Iran,” from *Open Doors: Report on International Educational Exchange 2012*, <http://www.iie.org/~media/Files/Corporate/Open-Doors/Fact-Sheets-2012/Country/Iran-Open-Doors-2012.ashx> (accessed February 27, 2013)

⁵³ American Council on Education, *Foreign students and institutional policy: toward an agenda for action: a report of the Committee on Foreign Students and Institutional Policy*, American Council on Education, 9.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Bu, *Making the world like us: education, cultural expansion, and the American century*, 155

expressed concern over the corruption of the Iranian government, coupled with the fact that recruiting agents had become commonplace in Iran with “pre-signed, but otherwise blank I-20s” from American schools.⁵⁶ These blank checks allowed for the realization of political favors and the express recruitment of students who would be appropriately Americanized once in the western hemisphere. In another source, “it is an unfortunate fact of international educational exchange that so-called ‘brokers’ in Teheran can, for a fee, arrange admission to certain American institutions.”⁵⁷ Thus, Iran’s Pahlavi elite could send whom it wanted, and universities in the West would be pleased to receive them.

A number of studies were performed to evaluate the effectiveness of the educational exchange programs. In 1963, a UNESCO report was sponsored by the U.S. State Department, which claimed, “Iranians adjust much more to their host countries than do [other] students, and seem to accept more of their host countries’ values and institutions, even to the point of wanting to introduce them in their home countries and actually engaging in efforts to do so.”⁵⁸ One of the analysts of the project, Morteza Nassefat, summarized that a significant “85% replied that people around them seemed interested in the experience ... and the new cultural values they had assimilated” from the United States.⁵⁹ They weren’t afraid to share these new values and life-changing experiences either, with over seventy percent making concerted “attempts to share via personal conversation with friends, colleagues, or family” while some attempted to “share values learned in study abroad by press or radio.”⁶⁰ The number of American agents abroad was growing quickly with such enthusiastic graduates, and a fresh crop was studying in the United States during the 1970s.

⁵⁶ American Council on Education, *Foreign students and institutional policy: toward an agenda for action: a report of the Committee on Foreign Students and Institutional Policy*, American Council on Education, 32.

⁵⁷ Education and World Affairs, *The overseas selection of foreign students: a report* (New York, 1966), 13-14.

⁵⁸ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *UNESCO/SS/COM/2* (Oslo, 1970) quoted in Ingrid Eide, *Students as links between cultures; a cross cultural survey based on Unesco studies*, 128.

⁵⁹ Eide, *Students as links between cultures; a cross cultural survey based on Unesco studies*, 145.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 146.

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The end goal of the exchange program in Iran, recalling the aforementioned Foreign Service despatch, was to place these Americanized individuals in positions where they could mold public opinion.⁶¹ A fitting place for these individuals with “cultivated political idealism” was in the government that supported the Shah.⁶² Since so much effort had been extended into placing Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlavi in power by the United States, it follows a logical conclusion to surround him with individuals that would maintain him. Mark Gasiorowski, an expert on Iran and American foreign policy, agrees, “The most significant of the [informational and cultural] measures were probably the programs that enabled Iranians to study in the United States, for they helped foster a technocratic, modern-middle-class faction that staffed the state bureaucracy and was fairly supportive of the shah’s regime.”⁶³ He adds that after using this invisible educational weapon on the Iranian people, by the 1970s “very little popular unrest had surfaced for nearly two decades [and] a new breed of Western-educated technocrats had been installed in the top positions of government and industry, providing Iran with potentially effective, pragmatic leaders.”⁶⁴ These leaders assisted willingly because their position in the expanding state bureaucracy brought “social mobility and the benefits of the corruption that was rampant in the state agencies.”⁶⁵ The expanding oil revenues and U.S. financial support provided an ideal petri dish climate for this corruption and waste.

This group that seemed best to support the Shah, however, hardly lifted a finger to support him in the end. This was because individuals in positions in the Iran bureaucracy had been “brought into the ever-widening network of governmental jobs on the understanding that they would not talk or act out of turn.”⁶⁶ When they did, the intelligence-police force of Iran, SAVAK (trained by the CIA no less), immediately cracked down. The daughter of the ambassador to Iran wrote in 1974 that,

⁶¹ United States Embassy, Iran Despatch from Edward C. Wells to the Department of State. "IIA: Country Plan," April 28, 1952.

⁶² Bu, *Making the world like us: education, cultural expansion, and the American century*, 2.

⁶³ Mark J. Gasiorowski, *U.S. foreign policy and the shah: building a client state in Iran* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991), 129. The technocrats included nuclear aides, oil engineers, university professors, and state employees.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, xi.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 165.

⁶⁶ Nikki R. Keddie, *Modern Iran: roots and results of revolution* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2003), 134.

“SAVAK has agents in the lobby of every hotel, in every government department, and in every university classroom. In the provinces, SAVAK runs a political intelligence-gathering service, and abroad it keeps a check on every Iranian student... Educated Iranians cannot trust anyone beyond a close circle of friends, and for them the effect is the same as if everyone else belonged. SAVAK intensifies this fear by giving no account of its activities. People disappear in Iran, and their disappearances go unrecorded... The Shah says his government has no political prisoners. (Communists, he explains, are not political offenders but common criminals.) Amnesty International estimates that there are about 20,000 of them.”⁶⁷

Four years later, in his 1978 address to members of Congress, Brian Wrobel pointed out that estimates by Amnesty International suggested that over 100,000 political prisoners were incarcerated in Iran (the increased number demonstrating the signs of increasing dissatisfaction within Iran), but that the figure *could not* be accurate because it was based solely upon official Iranian public records.⁶⁸ Certainly many who had vocalized discontent with the situation in Iran, as suggested by Frances Fitzgerald, were not on the official ledgers. So important was maintaining control through censorship that the Shah met personally with the head of SAVAK each morning to discuss the recent arrests and complaints against him.⁶⁹ These individuals and their complaints, disappearing without SAVAK having to give public accountability, were not just communists or criminals, but also American-educated Iranians who were experiencing first-hand the contradictory foreign policy of the United States in relation to Iran.

The growing number of Americanized leaders in the bureaucracy faced conscionable difficulty in their native country. On the one hand, they brought new culture home with them that mimicked the Shah’s modernization campaign. James Bill writes that between the years 1973-1978 the number of telephone calls from the United States to Iran increased “from 53,597 to an astonishing 854,382 ... an increase of over

⁶⁷ Frances Fitzgerald, “Giving the Shah Everything He Wants,” *Harper’s Magazine*, November 1974. <http://harpers.org/archive/1974/11/giving-the-shah-everything-he-wants/> (accessed April 6, 2013).

⁶⁸ Brian Wrobel, *Human Rights in Iran: Testimony on Behalf of Amnesty International before the Subcommittee on International Organizations of the Committee of International Relations of the House of Representatives U.S. Congress*, 8. Retrieved from <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE13/001/1978/en/4d7a8d62-e382-47e5-95ab-7a900aca52a2/mde130011978en.pdf> (accessed March 23, 2013).

⁶⁹ Abrahamian, *A history of modern Iran*, 126.

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1600 percent ... and by 1978 Iran had become the fourth largest revenue producer for AT&T.”⁷⁰ The popular Pepsi drink from American vending machines was readily available in Iran through the country’s bottling company, under the subsidiary pseudonym “Zam Zam Cola.”⁷¹ On the other hand, these Americanized technocrats struggled with the absence of the ideology in which they had been immersed while studying in the United States.

This ideology spoke of freedom of speech, peaceable protest, and a citizenry that could be heard by its government and even replace unsatisfactory representatives through election. These students had experienced life on American campuses during the Korean and Vietnam wars, a period of social unrest where they had seen their Western classmates clamor in protest for change.⁷² For these Iranians exposed to the test tubes of Americanization, “it was easy to draw connections [with] the anti-establishment movements in the West and their own struggle against the Shah.”⁷³ After all, the human rights campaign was “an international struggle, and Nixon’s resignation after Watergate and the American withdrawal from Vietnam served to encourage idealized student radicals that change could be imposed” on government.⁷⁴

Iran’s government, however, was not open to fundamental change. Its autocratic ruler, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, had been placed in power by the CIA and MI6-sponsored coup in 1953 and was a puppet of the United States. He had a wealthy superpower as an ally that was willing to cross many lines to maintain him as a stabilizing force in the region, once again “because of [Iran’s] key strategic position, its petroleum resources, its vulnerability to intervention or armed attack by the USSR, and its vulnerability to political subversion.”⁷⁵ Nikki Keddie, a professor of Iranian Studies at the University of California, writes, “Beginning in the 1950s and increasingly during the next two decades, the Shah showed a growing interest in modernizing Iran’s economy and society and in

⁷⁰ James A. Bill, *The eagle and the lion: the tragedy of American-Iranian relations* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 211.

⁷¹ Christina Lamb, “Our Man in the land of Zam Zam Cola,” *New Statesman*, 12/16/2002, Vol 131 Issue 4618, 32.

⁷² Ansari, *Confronting Iran: the failure of American foreign policy and the next great crisis in the Middle East*, 58.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ National Security Council, U.S. Department of State, Document 136/1, pg 5. Accessible at <http://www.paperlessarchives.com/BPNNSC.pdf> (accessed March 23, 2013).

making the country Western in character.”⁷⁶ In pointed coincidence, this period matched a growth in the U.S. consumption of oil.

By the time the Islamic Revolution was in full swing, many in the United States and Iran recognized,” Iran’s relationship with the United States was the cornerstone of its foreign policy... The United States was one of Iran’s largest trading partners, buying large amounts of Iranian oil and exporting consumer goods and other products to Iran. The two countries also engaged in various kinds of cultural interactions [which]... fostered Westernization and made many Iranians acutely aware of how close the two countries had become.”⁷⁷ The program of molding the Iranian people through educating their youth seemed to be filling all of the goals that had been set years earlier, and the Shah was “their man in the Middle East,” helping to accomplish these goals.⁷⁸ For the U.S., supporting the Shah meant displaying blind eye in exchange for any methods used. It was a mutually beneficial arrangement.

It can be argued just how much control the Shah had in the decision that came from his desk. Henry Brandon, a foreign correspondent, sent to Iran, recalls hearing the British ambassador to Iran, Sir Anthony Parsons, complain that the Americans had an incontestable monopoly on whispering in the Shah’s ear.⁷⁹ These would suggest that the Shah was more accurately a figurehead running a colonial holding of the United States. Kuross Samii writes,”despite developing an overblown ego,” the Shah was “desperately dependent” on the United States for political, economic, and military advice.⁸⁰ In his review of Kinzer’s “All the Shah’s Men,” the CIA Historian David S. Robarge goes so far as to describe the Shah not as *king* of Iran, but as an American satrap, a Persian provincial *governor*.⁸¹

⁷⁶ Keddie, *Modern Iran: roots and results of revolution*, 133.

⁷⁷ Ali Pasha Saleh, *Cultural Ties between Iran and the United States* (Tehran, np 1976) Iran White Paper sec III.G. as quoted in Gasiorowski, *U.S. foreign policy and the shah: building a client state in Iran*, 208.

⁷⁸ Samii, *Involvement by invitation: American strategies of containment in Iran*, 149.

⁷⁹ Henry Brandon, *Special Relationships* (New York: Macmillian Publishing Co, 1988), 355.

⁸⁰ Samii, *Involvement by invitation: American strategies of containment in Iran*, 149.

⁸¹ David S. Robarge, “A Review of All the Shah’s Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror.” CIA.gov (April 14, 2007). Accessed at <https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/csi-studies/studies/vol48no2/article10.html> on April 6, 2013.

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It was well known to ambassadors sent to Iran that the Shah frequently waited for instructions from Washington before making a decision, and enacted reforms only at the urging of American presidents.⁸² A prime example is the White Revolution in Iran, where the Shah undertook a massive program of “land reform, nationalization of forests, sale of state-owned enterprises to the public, a worker’s profit-sharing plan, female suffrage, and creation of the Literacy Corps.”⁸³ Mohsen Milani, a foreign policy expert on Iran at the University of South Florida, asserts, “at his visit with President Kennedy in early 1962, the Shah seemed to have struck a deal to support land reform” in return for American economic assistance.⁸⁴ Samii claims in his book about American strategies of containment in Iran that these changes only came because of President John. F. Kennedy’s insistence:

“By the Shah’s own admission, so disgusted was President Kennedy with the pervasive corruption in Iran that he demanded the appointment of a new prime minister before approving American economic assistance. By tying American aid to the introduction of comprehensive development programs, President Kennedy compelled the Shah to implement land reforms and other social programs, that, if they had been administered properly in the subsequent years, might have saved the Shah from himself and spared America much aggravation. Unfortunately, John F. Kennedy’s presidency was brief ... neither his predecessors nor his successors demonstrated his keen intelligence and foresight in dealing with the Shah of Iran.”⁸⁵

Following the enactment of the reforms, “President Kennedy immediately sent a telegram congratulating the Shah on his ‘victory in the historic referendum’.”⁸⁶ No mention is made in the telegram that the idea to implement reforms was not necessarily the Shah’s.

⁸² David S. Robarge, “A Review of All the Shah’s Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror.” CIA.gov (April 14, 2007).

⁸³ Mohsen M. Milani, *The making of Iran’s Islamic revolution: from monarchy to Islamic republic* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 85.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Samii, *Involvement by invitation: American strategies of containment in Iran*, 151.

⁸⁶ John F. Kennedy, *Public Papers of the President* (U.S. Government Printing Office: February 12, 1963), 160.

The Shah was so dependent on Washington that, on the eve of his overthrow, “even at the hour of gravest danger he remained hesitant to make a move without first asking for American approval.”⁸⁷ Back in Washington, various parts of the bureaucratic machinery were still arguing not just what to do, but also whether or not the Shah was actually in any danger of being deposed.⁸⁸ In the end, no message delineating the appropriate action for the Shah came from Washington, and he was deposed while waiting by the phone. Perhaps he expected the promised American military backing and intervention, with an opportunity to repeat the words he had said three decades earlier to Kermit Roosevelt, the CIA operative that had orchestrated the coup that put him in power, “I owe my throne to God, my people, my army—and to you,” the United States.⁸⁹

While the Shah may have indeed owed his position to the United States, the American bureaucracy did not feel any urgency to maintain him in power. Gary Sick, principal White House aide for Iran on the National Security Staff under the Carter administration, wrote that, “for fifteen months . . . meetings were held, reports drafted, telephone calls made, and cables dispatched. There *was* activity on the Iran question (emphasis added).”⁹⁰ Ultimately it was a lack of “decisive action,” which was a “reification of the status quo, which heavily marked U.S. policy toward Iran in the late 1970s.”⁹¹ America cared all right, but there was an expectation that their culture had become so entrenched in the Iranian bureaucracy that the Shah may not need intervention. The contradiction was that the educational visits to the Western world had taught the many Americanized Iranians that maintaining the status quo was contrary to their new ideology, and in that light revolution should hardly have been a surprise.

⁸⁷ Samii, *Involvement by invitation: American strategies of containment in Iran*, 149.

⁸⁸ For a quality account of the internal disputes between agencies, see Gary Sick’s memoir *All Fall Down: America’s Tragic Encounter With Iran* (New York: Random House, 1986).

⁸⁹ Hamid Dabashi, *Iran: a people interrupted* (New York: New Press: Distributed by W.W. Norton, 2007), 123.

⁹⁰ Charles-Philippe David, *Foreign policy failure in the White House: reappraising the fall of the shah and the Iran-Contra Affair* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1993), 72.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

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A most significant demonstration of how tightly the puppet strings were attached to the Shah was Iran's response to the conflict at Jerusalem. Denying his nation's linked religious culture with the rest of the Middle East, the Shah refused to actively participate in the Arab condemnation of the state of Israel, instead placing his support *for* the Jewish ally of the United States through silent dealings and covert alliances.⁹² This is best demonstrated through Israeli support "in helping the Shah develop a nuclear program in the 1970s."⁹³ Not everyone in the world received access to nuclear technology, and it was Israel that gave it to their Middle Eastern compatriot. Feelings were certainly warm between the two, even though the Shah was forced to tread a fine diplomatic line between "overt hostility" (to appease the neighbors) and "overt alliance" (to appease the puppeteer).⁹⁴

This fine line, however, was backed by a large American-trained army, laden with the latest American military equipment. The Shah was ready to fulfill Iran's role with Israel, pointedly described by Nixon's defense secretary Melvin Laird, as "local cops on the beat."⁹⁵ Together, Iran and Israel were "the cornerstone of U.S. hegemony in the Middle East for more than twenty years ... ensuring that 'radical nationalists' would not threaten U.S. interests."⁹⁶ A Senate report shows the extent of the American proxy army in Iran. The report notes that the "sale of military equipment has amounted to 10.4 billion between 1972-1976, making Iran the single largest purchaser of U.S. arms."⁹⁷ This included naval vessels, tanks, fighter jets and bombers, with all of the latest gadgets an army-for-hire would need. With a military force in Iran that didn't have accountability to the American public, the U.S. presidents had deployed a mobilized battalion, present to deal with any sudden threats in the region. This massive military spending was all done with American loans, grants-in-aid, and the sale of Persian oil to American consumers. Since any democratic change from an obedient puppet to the 'will of the people' in Iran threatened a change in the status quo, it concurrently ran the risk of

⁹² William Quandt, "New U.S. Policies for a New Middle East?" in *The Middle East and the United States: a historical and political reassessment*, ed. David A. Lesch (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1996), 413.

⁹³ Dabashi, *Iran: a people interrupted*, 123.

⁹⁴ Trita Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance: The Secret Dealings of Israel, Iran, and the United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 20.

⁹⁵ David Barsamian, *Targeting Iran* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2007), 17.

⁹⁶ Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, *Dictatorships and double standards: rationalism and reason in politics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), 17.

⁹⁷ Ansari, *Confronting Iran: the failure of American foreign policy and the next great crisis in the Middle East*, 66.

threatening the hegemony that the United States had patiently built up during the 1940s, 50s, 60s, and 70s. The United States, therefore, pursued support for the Shah despite its contradiction of American ideals.

The hegemony was thoroughly disrupted in the late 1970s when the ideals that had been spread through educational exchange met their antithesis, incidentally from the same source as their democratic ideals. As information became available detailing the American involvement in the assassination of democracy in 1953, Iranians began to surge against the both the puppet and his Western controller. This was evident in public demonstrations both in the Iranian streets and at American universities. Two convocation orators on national speaking tours, ex-CIA William Colby and former Iranian ambassador to the United Nations Fereydoon Hoveyda, were repeatedly booed and interrupted by protesting Iranian students, including bomb threats in Utah and Texas, as they revealed the U.S. complicity in abuses in Iran.⁹⁸ Gary Sick, the White House staff aide for Iran, recorded that upon the Shah's first visit with President Jimmy Carter, pro-Shah students organized by the embassy clashed with disenchanted Iranian students in front of the White House as the President and the Shah prepared to give their press conference. "Police were forced to use tear gas to quell the battle... and whiffs of acrid gas wafted over the crowds assembled on the White House lawn. President Carter completed his remarks and the shah plowed through his formal statement despite the wave of coughing and choking... Newspaper photographs the following day showed President Carter wiping tears from his eyes as he listened to the shah."⁹⁹

It is possible that the tears from Carter could have been more than just the effects of the tear gas; actual concern could exist for the conflicted students who were fighting both internally and externally against themselves just blocks away. President Carter, later to win the 2002 Nobel Peace Prize, had vocalized his intents toward human rights during his acceptance speech of the Democratic party's nomination, saying, "Peace is the unceasing effort to preserve human rights ... creating a basis for a unique role of America—that of a pioneer in shaping more decent and

⁹⁸ Greg Hughes, "Convocation degenerates to shouting match," *Utah Statesman*, February 29, 1980, page 1. Also,

Utah Statesman, "Opinion," November 10, 1978, 4.

⁹⁹ Gary Sick, *All Fall Down: America's Tragic encounter with Iran* (New York, N.Y.: Penguin Books, 1986), 32.

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just relations among people and among societies.”¹⁰⁰ His words foreshadowed change toward Iran. Carter demonstrated his resolve to this facet of his foreign policy by leaving “vacant for six months the key ambassadorship to Teheran, a calculated insult intended apparently to remind the Shah of the disdainful distance” he would keep himself from the human rights violations of the Pahlavi regime.¹⁰¹

Interestingly enough, however, was the fact that the United States valued the unwavering support from the Shah, despite whatever methods he had used in the past. As many within the bureaucracy came to realize, even within the National Security Agency ten years before the revolution, “the realities of the future will not include indefinite prolongation of one-man rule... [It] appears likely that the Shah will confront a choice between allowing greater participation in government or seriously risking a fall from power.”¹⁰² Conversely, the Shah couldn’t grant the democracy and freedoms the people were demanding, “as greater democratization might lead to disorder,” and that allowing greater participation in Iranian government by the people “might entail challenges to the existing leaders”¹⁰³ The United States had no reason to change who their ‘man in the Middle East’ was when the Shah was quite obedient to their every demand.

William Sullivan, the man finally named by Carter to take the delayed ambassadorship to Iran, admitted that he “had no particular qualifications” for the post in Teheran, and felt “like a fish out of water.”¹⁰⁴ During his briefing with the president, he asked point blank about the human rights situation with Iran. President Carter responded, “the intelligence we receive, particularly from our listening stations [in Iran] focused on the Soviet Union, was of such importance that we should continue the collaboration” with the human rights violator, but that he expected Sullivan “to try to persuade the Shah to improve the human-rights performance of his government in all aspects.”¹⁰⁵ In other words, Iran was still a strategic post and the United States wanted to maintain

¹⁰⁰ Jimmy Carter, Democratic Presidential Nomination speech, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=25953> (accessed March 23, 2013).

¹⁰¹ Donald S. Spencer, *The Carter implosion: Jimmy Carter and the amateur style of diplomacy* (New York: Praeger, 1988), 74.

¹⁰² National Security Agency, U.S. Department of State, Document 03561, as quoted in David, *Foreign policy failure in the White House: reappraising the fall of the shah and the Iran-Contra Affair*, 61.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 52.

¹⁰⁴ William H. Sullivan, *Mission to Iran* (New York: Morton, 1981), 13.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 21-22.

relations, even if human rights did not improve. The Iranian people responded differently.

In October 1978, “the U.S. People’s Committee on Iran, chaired by Professor Richard Falk of Princeton University, sent a three man international commission of inquiry to Iran” to assess the reports of human rights violations and political unrest.¹⁰⁶ It reported, “The fact is that Iran is currently the scene of one of the world’s largest and most *conscious* mass movements for national upheaval (emphasis added).”¹⁰⁷ The upheaval in Iran was “conscious” of what existed outside of the Persian borders, having first-hand American educational experiences which had “liberalized the minds of students from abroad, who embraced the concepts of freedom, equality, and democracy [even] while their existential experiences made them aware of the contradictions of those concepts in United States,” but most especially in Iran.¹⁰⁸ Mark Gasiorowski writes of those who had been co-opted into the Shah’s government after their return from studies in the United States, saying, “Although the technocratic fraction of the modern middle class staffed the state bureaucracy in the 1960s and 1970s, it never enthusiastically supported the Shah’s regime . . . The clearest proof of this came in 1978-79 when the technocratic fraction made no effort to prevent the Shah’s downfall.”¹⁰⁹ These former students of American philosophy, politics, and economics understood the connections of American support for the Shah and human rights abuses in their homeland.

One of the most blatant reminders of this contradiction in ideology was Jimmy Carter’s pronouncements regarding human rights violations worldwide. Each State of the Union address during Carter’s tenure in the White House included statements such as, “The very heart of our identity as a nation is our firm commitment to human rights,” and “We stand for human rights because we believe that government has as a purpose to promote the well-being of its citizens.”¹¹⁰ He contradicted those words to Congress and the American media with a toast to the Shah at Iran’s 1978

¹⁰⁶ David, *Foreign policy failure in the White House: reappraising the fall of the shah and the Iran-Contra Affair*, 93

¹⁰⁷ National Security Agency, U.S. Department of State, Document 01737, as quoted in David, *Foreign policy failure in the White House: reappraising the fall of the shah and the Iran-Contra Affair*, 93.

¹⁰⁸ Bu, *Making the world like us: education, cultural expansion, and the American century*, 2.

¹⁰⁹ Gasiorowski, *U.S. foreign policy and the shah: building a client state in Iran*, 169.

¹¹⁰ Jimmy Carter, 1978 State of the Union address. Accessed at <http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/documents/speeches/su78jec.phtml> (accessed April 6, 2013).

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New Year's celebration. To the dismay of many Iranians, he proclaimed, "Iran, because of the great leadership of the Shah, is an island of stability in one of the more troubled areas of the world. This is a great tribute to you, Your Majesty, and to your leadership and to the respect and the admiration and love which your people give to you."¹¹¹ Since "history changes course when people realize there is an alternative to blind obedience," it seemed apparent to these educated Iranians that the 'love' of the people of Iran for both the Shah and the United States was about to run cold.¹¹²

A Department of State airgram in October 1978 showed that even Americans in Iran were unsure about the mixed message coming from a well-intentioned Carter. The message from the consul at Shiraz shared the concerns that nine American professors at the university had brought to discuss with him. One political science professor, in discussing the conflicting Presidential statements from Carter about simultaneous support for both the Shah and human rights, admitted being, "embarrassed to try to explain the meaning of such statements to his students."¹¹³ The rest of the professors agreed, "All present cited numerous examples of personal acquaintances who were encouraged last year by the President's pronouncements regarding human rights, but are now deeply bitter about his support for the Shah ... the crux of Iran's present political difficulties."¹¹⁴ These professors found colleagues, who were previously "well-disposed", now "increasingly hostile" and demonstrating a "sense of betrayal."¹¹⁵ The consul reported to headquarters that he "countered by expressing sympathy with their concerns but also pointing out the President's need to be mindful of American national interests in Iran."¹¹⁶ The consul closed the report to Washington with a lengthy personal comment of his views, including:

¹¹¹ Jimmy Carter, New Year's Toast to Shah of Iran, accessed at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=7080> (accessed April 6, 2013).

¹¹² Kinzer, *All the Shah's men: an American coup and the roots of Middle East terror*, 33.

¹¹³ United States Consulate. Shiraz (Iran) Airgram from Victor L. Tomseth to the Department of State. "Official Support for the Shah and Anti-American Sentiment," October 30, 1978. Accessible at <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB78/propaganda%/20137.pdf> (accessed February 19, 2013).

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

"This meeting probably did more to demonstrate this particular group's naiveté about the realities of inter-governmental relations than it did to prove Washington's ignorance about what is going on in Iran. However, one point seems both valid and pertinent: Anti-Shah sentiment runs deep and broad throughout Iranian society and public pronouncements of support for him on our part in the face of this sentiment probably do little to enhance his ability to cope with it."¹¹⁷

The consul concludes with the idea, "it is just good poker to hedge our bets" by curtailing such provocative statements towards Iran in the event that a new government claimed power.¹¹⁸ Such an event would happen just a few months later, with the new leader being an ayatollah that spewed anti-American sentiment as bitterly as a scorned intimate companion.

The opposition to the Shah grew out of the third group the NSC had identified as *least* important years earlier in their 1952 despatch: the rural masses and the religious community.¹¹⁹ The Americanization of this group was largely by obedience to the intelligentsia that returned from overseas education, but "Western values did not trickle down to the popular classes any more than did significant benefits from the [Shah's] modernization program. Ultimately the vast majority of Iranians became more anti-Western, more anti-shah, and more open to oppositionists who stood against the shah, the West, and Western ideas."¹²⁰ Without the same Americanization as the intelligentsia, the majority of Iranians fell into this third category that became part of the opposition due to their exclusion from American-sourced wealth.

By the late 1970s, the Shah and his feared police force had been able to subvert all of the opposition groups except for the Islamic leadership. This group became the vocal opposition to the Shah that the people were able to rally around, and attempts to silence them only intensified the rebellion of the "illiterate masses" identified in the 1952 despatch.¹²¹ Thus, it could be argued that the Iranian Revolution was not Islamic Fundamentalist in nature, rather it fell into those terms because the ulama

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ United States Embassy, Iran Despatch from Edward C. Wells to the Department of State. "IIA: Country Plan," April 28, 1952.

¹²⁰ Keddie, *Modern Iran: roots and results of revolution*, 135.

¹²¹ United States Embassy, Iran Despatch from Edward C. Wells to the Department of State. "IIA: Country Plan," April 28, 1952.

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were the only ones not able to be silenced. One of these, the Ayatollah Khomeini, was ultimately exiled from the country to Iraq, and at the bidding of the United States and SAVAK (and after the death of his son, which was claimed by Khomeini's followers to be an assassination), Khomeini was forced out of Iraq. Instead of "fading from public view and never be[ing] heard from again", Khomeini was able to increase the availability of his tirades against the Shah and his American backers to the Iranian masses from his new home in Paris, France.¹²²

The revolution in Iran is an interesting subject, of which there are many reputable sources which detail the events. No time will be taken here to look at these events, but it is sufficient to point out that vocalization of support from the American government for its pawn, the Shah, only served to further aggravate the Iranian people. Enough was known about America's purported ideals and actual dealings with Iran that the general feeling among Iranians was that cutting ties with the traitorous United States would be the best course of action. The media and populace of Iran, after all, each "observes the anniversary of the [1953] coup as a day of perfidy that ranks with Pearl Harbor."¹²³ The Islamic revolution was a response similar to the American one to the Japanese.

Khomeini, the most vocal proponent of this separation, became the Supreme Leader of Iran following the revolution, and his first orders of business were to cleanse the nation of its western influence. He immediately pursued a complete overhaul of the government, military and university officials. Many were imprisoned, others were executed, and some were exiled. Says Dabashi (an Iranian and professor of Iranian Studies at Columbia University) about Khomeini's consolidation of power and expulsion of Americanization in Iran, "His was a purgatorial passage, a vindictive kingdom ruled with terrorizing vengeance and unsurpassed tyranny. The shah's tyranny seemed pathetic in comparison to the violence Khomeini inflicted on the nation. He ordered the swift and brutal execution of anyone who even seemed to challenge his vision of an Islamic republic."¹²⁴ The revolution had completed a trade-in of one tyrant for a modified version of the same model.

¹²² Sullivan, *Mission to Iran*, 166.

¹²³ Ansari, *Confronting Iran: the failure of American foreign policy and the next great crisis in the Middle East*, 37.

¹²⁴ Dabashi, *Iran: a people interrupted*, 163.

Khomeini was so threatened by the Americanization that was prevalent that he shut down the universities and ordered a complete overhaul of the curriculum. Keddie laments, “In 1979 and early 1980 [Iranian] universities were a forum for ideological debate. Khomeini supported a campaign to cleanse the universities of ‘subversives’... [which] was a major blow to Iran’s cultural and intellectual life and achievement, interrupting the education and professional livelihood of many and encouraging further emigration by students, teachers, and other professionals.”¹²⁵ While he did not order the immediate return of Iranians studying in the United States, he did remand that Iranians abroad only study “engineering, science, pre-med, or the social sciences.”¹²⁶ This was a small way to limit the political instruction given as part of the Americanization educational exchange program. In the meantime, Khomeini continued his purges of the Iranian bureaucracy that had been co-opted by the United States and the Shah. Charles-Philippe David, a Canadian professor at the University of Quebec at Montreal, writes, “it took Khomeini several years of political struggle, including many arrests and executions, to silence the alternative leadership represented by the modernizing and prodemocracy intelligentsia and business classes and their political representatives.”¹²⁷ Americanization had become quite entrenched in the upper classes and bureaucracy.

The puppet strings with America were eventually broken. Iran was resolute to not allow the United States control their government, economy, and military for uses that did not benefit the Iranian people. While the cold war had not yet come to a conclusion (it would last another decade), Iran had been shown that their best friend had become as evil as the feared neighbor just across the long, shared border. As Arndt and Rubin write, “It is after all a reciprocal process: in long conflicts like this one [the U.S. and USSR], you become something of your enemy; each side takes on some of the colors and beliefs of the other.”¹²⁸ All of the propaganda that had been disseminated during the forty years of U.S. control in Iran had elements that demonstrated themselves during the revolution the United States. Again, according to Arndt and Rubin, “For the developing countries, what we were doing amounted to more than a cultural hurricane... one need only look at Iran under the Shah... to see how the assaults on traditional beliefs and structures have driven many whole peoples into trauma or even into

¹²⁵ Keddie, *Modern Iran: roots and results of revolution*, 250.

¹²⁶ *Utah Statesman*, “Enrollment up for new Iranians,” September 22, 1980, 43.

¹²⁷ David, *Foreign policy failure in the White House: reappraising the fall of the shah and the Iran-Contra Affair*, 86.

¹²⁸ Arndt, *The Fulbright difference, 1948-1992*, 132.

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madness.”¹²⁹ Such madness would be revealed on November 4, 1979 following the revolution, when Iran would shock the world by overrunning the U.S. embassy in Tehran and holding diplomatic personnel hostage for 444 days, including the duration of Carter’s presidency. The perpetrators: students from local colleges in Iran that felt the sting of betrayal and the confusion of conflicting ideology. Khomeini applauded their actions.

Two reasons are given for the embassy takeover. The first was the fear that another coup could be planned from the embassy, a repeat of the events of 1953 (which brought immediate suspicion of all Americans who had not fled Iran). The second appears to be related to the asylum given to the Shah in the United States. At this time, the Shah was seeking American medical treatment for cancer. Some within the administration were anxious to complete the severing of ties with the Shah to facilitate relations with the new government.¹³⁰ Henry Kissinger, the renowned American diplomat, recorded in his book, *For The Record*, that it was his “conviction that on the human level we owed the Shah a place of refuge” and, “it is incompatible with our national honor to turn our back on a leader who cooperated with us for a generation.”¹³¹ Following the admission of the Shah to the U.S., the embassy in Tehran was captured. Shortly thereafter, the Shah was gently invited to leave the United States, but only after receiving the promise, “the education of the Shah’s children in the America” would be arranged.¹³²

¹²⁹ Ibid., 131.

¹³⁰ David, *Foreign policy failure in the White House: reappraising the fall of the shah and the Iran-Contra Affair*, 95.

¹³¹ Henry Kissinger, *For the record: selected statements, 1977-1980* (Boston: Little Brown, c1981), 254-255.

¹³² Ibid.

Perhaps the best evidence from the hostage crisis demonstrating the bitterness felt by Iranians is in the account of Bruce Laingen, chief of the U.S. embassy staff. Kinzer writes:

*“One day, after Laingen had spent more than a year as a hostage, one of his captors visited him in his solitary cell. Laingen exploded in rage, shouting at his jailer that this hostage-taking was immoral, illegal and ‘totally wrong.’ The jailer waited for him to finish, then replied without sympathy. ‘You have nothing to complain about,’ he told Laingen. ‘The United States took our whole country hostage in 1953.’”*¹³³

The hostage crisis was a polarizing moment for Americans. Many wondered at the anger and violence that was demonstrated toward America. The United States responded with additional salt on the wounds. The hostage-taking students at the embassy made three requests that would secure the release of the hostages, “that the terminally ill Shah be returned to Iran for trial and execution; that the United States apologize for having supported his government; and that the Carter administration turn over a sum of money, perhaps as much as 24 billion, to Iran’s revolutionary government.”¹³⁴ While the Department of State would not allow the Shah to remain within the United States, they also refused to turn their loyal and former puppet over to the revolutionary government for execution. Likewise, a refusal to apologize for past actions in Iran was also made. As for the money, it was the national assets of Iran and the personal accounts of the Shah that were being demanded.

President Carter, knowing,” foreign policy professionals spend almost as much time managing the media and its repercussions as they do managing foreign policy itself,” responded with a show of force.¹³⁵ To counter the hostage crisis, he issued an executive order which froze all of the assets of Iran (including those of the Shah) that were held in U.S. banks.¹³⁶ He claims in his White House Diary that it was only “until we could ascertain what Iran owes us in every possible form.”¹³⁷ Enough money had been

¹³³ Stephen Kinzer, “Inside Iran’s Fury,” *SmithsonianMag.com*, October 2008, under “People and Places,” <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/people-places/iran-fury.html> (accessed April 7, 2013).

¹³⁴ Spencer, *The Carter implosion: Jimmy Carter and the amateur style of diplomacy*, 80.

¹³⁵ Ansari, *Confronting Iran: the failure of American foreign policy and the next great crisis in the Middle East*, 5.

¹³⁶ United States Department of State, Office of the Historian, *American Foreign Policy Basic Documents 1977-1980*, (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983), 739.

¹³⁷ Jimmy Carter, *White House Diary* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010), 370.

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spent in Iran over the years, and protecting other current American investments in Iran seemed appropriate. He continued with another order that blocked all future travel of Iranians to the United States.¹³⁸ This joined another executive order requiring all Iranian students in the United States to report to the nearest consulate to verify that their visas were in order.¹³⁹ When the hostage crisis was not resolved by the following April, President Carter broke off diplomatic relations with the entire nation of Iran, a status that is still in effect. Recently, when asked about any decision changes he would have made, Carter replied that in retrospect he “would have sent one more helicopter,” referring to the failed rescue attempt portrayed in the recent film *Argo*.¹⁴⁰ Of all the statements he could retract, all the executive orders he could revise, and all the foreign relations he undertook, the only thing he felt uncomfortable with was the hostage rescue, not the avoidance of the revolution itself.

With fifty thousand Iranians at American colleges at the time of the crisis, it is significant that the United States did not immediately require their removal from the country. Americans were certainly incensed. In accordance with the presidential order that required the validation of visa compliance for these students, Immigration and Naturalization Services discovered that only 150 were not in appropriate status with their visa agreements.¹⁴¹ This amounts to .003 percent of the total. In fact, “in 1980 the number of students in higher education increased a bit as a result of Iranians already in the country who had earlier matriculated for secondary education.”¹⁴² The United States continued to foster the positive relationship with Iranian students, perhaps in hopes that the relationship would soon normalize. Nearly thirty-five years later, they still have not, leaving American-Iranian diplomatic relations severed since early 1980.

¹³⁸ United States Department of State, Office of the Historian, *American Foreign Policy Basic Documents 1977-1980*, 758.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 737.

¹⁴⁰ Jimmy Carter, in October 21, 2010 interview with Riz Khan on Al Jazeera television, at whitehousediarybook.com. (accessed April 6, 2013)

¹⁴¹ U.S. Department of State, Department of State Bulletin (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, January 1980), 3. Accessed at <http://archive.org/stream/departmentofstata8080unit#page/n11/mode/2up> (accessed March 15, 2013).

¹⁴² American Council on Education, *Foreign students and institutional policy: toward an agenda for action: a report of the Committee on Foreign Students and Institutional Policy*, American Council on Education, 46.

It is of significance as well that the same month that diplomatic relations with Iran were cut, a bill was passed in Congress allowing a larger number of political refugees to become legal citizens of the United States.¹⁴³ The increased number of refugees allowed under the bill should sound familiar: 50,000. Not wanting to waste the effort that had been spent on Americanizing and educating these Iranian students, the invitation was made to allow them to stay as U.S. citizens. A subsequent proposal was debated in 1983 with the Immigration Reform and Control Act. Senator Edward M. Kennedy remarked about this legislation that he “thought it was in the national interest to retain skilled scientific personnel for American academic institutions and companies,” knowing that many “excellent students on F-1 visas would not return to their developing countries” if given an opportunity to stay.¹⁴⁴ As such, they could become, as stated by Secretary of State Dean Rusk, “one of our greatest national treasures.”¹⁴⁵ Shirin Hakimzadeh and David Dixon of the Migration Policy Institute report that some 200,000 educated and Americanized Iranians took advantage of this policy, with another 280,000 of their children being born in the United States.¹⁴⁶ The efforts at Americanization certainly were not wasted with this ‘national treasure’ joining the ranks at American universities and research labs.

Analysts of the events of the years between the end of World War II and the 1979 hostage crisis have recognized the failed American policy towards Iran. David J. Allor claims, “if the U.S. sought to secure oil and engender democracy in the Middle East, it achieved only the former but at great human and economic cost.”¹⁴⁷ The U.S., in fact, did not try to engender democracy but squashed it by “enabling the state to become highly autonomous,” creating a “U.S.-Iran cliency relationship [that] helped bring about the 1978-1979 revolution.”¹⁴⁸ Ali Ansari adds, “although she may not have appreciated it, America was present at the birth of modern politics in Iran.”¹⁴⁹ While many Americans adamantly refute the fact that America has been building an empire during the last

¹⁴³ Charles Fenyvesi, “Immigration Anxiety,” *The New Republic*, 182, no. 24 (1980), 17.

¹⁴⁴ Maxine K. Rochester, *Foreign students in American library education: impact on home countries* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1986), 123.

¹⁴⁵ Rochester, *Foreign students in American library education: impact on home countries*, 123.

¹⁴⁶ Shirin Hakimzadeh and David Dixon, “Spotlight on the Iranian Foreign Born,”

Migrationinformation.org (June 2006). Accessed April 6, 2013 at www.migrationinformation.org/usfocus/display.cfm?ID=404

¹⁴⁷ Arndt, *The Fulbright difference, 1948-1992*, 303.

¹⁴⁸ Gasiorowski, *U.S. foreign policy and the shah: building a client state in Iran*, 223.

¹⁴⁹ Ansari, *Confronting Iran: the failure of American foreign policy and the next great crisis in the Middle East*, 37.

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century, and assert that it “only briefly flirt[ed] with this kind of formal empire,” it certainly has practiced its own form of hegemony in Iran.¹⁵⁰ Niall Ferguson, as a European observer, believes that there is nothing wrong with America assuming the vacated mantle of imperial power left by Great Britain, because “in many ways it is too uniquely well equipped” to accept that role.¹⁵¹ Kuross Samii agrees that in regard to Iran, “What has militated against American interests, however, has not been imperialism per se but poor management of imperialism.”¹⁵²

Lois Roth, our aforementioned Fulbright coordinator in Tehran, claimed “Democracy requires democrats, and democrats can only be educated over time.”¹⁵³ It is said that time can heal all wounds, and enough time has passed since the divorce between the United States and Iran that the rifts might actually be able to start to fill in if we let them. Since 1979, the government of Iran has had its share of democratic moments, which have been discouraged through Shah-like maneuvers, and likewise the United States has had its dose of bumps and bruises concerning democracy.¹⁵⁴ Over the years since the separation of Iran and the United States, many media spats have erupted between the former intimate companions. Due to the number of Iranians that participated in the Americanization process, disillusionment with the Islamic regime, and the absence of the U.S. in the Iranian political scene, opinion polls have revealed,” Iranians are the most pro-American of the Middle Eastern populations.”¹⁵⁵ The effects of Americanization are clearly still being felt.

¹⁵⁰ Niall Ferguson, *Colossus: The Rise and Fall of the American Empire* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 8.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.* 301.

¹⁵² Samii, *Involvement by invitation: American strategies of containment in Iran*, 148.

¹⁵³ Arndt, *The Fulbright difference, 1948-1992*, 145.

¹⁵⁴ Keddie, *Modern Iran: roots and results of revolution*, 276-277.

¹⁵⁵ Shireen T. Hunter, *Iran's foreign policy in the post-Soviet era: resisting the new international order* (Santa Barbara, California: Praeger, 2010), 37.

Additionally, while the Iranian government currently discourages students seeking to study abroad from going to the United States for their education (instead it encourages them to go to places like China or Russia), many pursue the difficult journey to America anyways, even circumnavigating the absence of an embassy in Iran by traveling to where there is one.¹⁵⁶ Says Amin Shariatzadeh, an Iranian studying in Oklahoma, “The United States, especially, is really, really attractive for Iranian students. They want to experience America as it is, not through [Iranian] government propaganda.”¹⁵⁷ As a result, the numbers of Iranians coming to the United States have increased an average of twenty percent each year, with the total for the 2011-2012 school year reaching 7,000 at U.S. universities.¹⁵⁸ While this total does not match the numbers of 1979-1980, they are extremely significant considering the lack of diplomatic relations with Iran.

At the current rate, Iran could become once again the top sender of students to the U.S. for education. If that is the case, another revolution could be on the horizon. It could be once again time for a try at the democracy that has evaded the Persian nation four separate times. Despite what Niall Ferguson says, it might be better for Iran if the United States simply avoids participation. Nearly a century later, Eisenhower might finally get his wish: someone that likes us, in the Middle East no less.

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¹⁵⁶ June Torbati Yeganeh, “New Wave of Iranians seek U.S. Studies,” *New York Times*, August 9, 2010, U.S. section, online edition.
http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/10/education/10students.html?_r=0 (accessed March 23, 2013).

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Institute of International Education, “Open Doors Fact Sheet: Iran,” from *Open Doors: Report on International Educational Exchange 2012*.

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