



# Middle East Resources

INFORMATION FOR TEACHING ABOUT THE MIDDLE EAST AT THE PRECOLLEGIATE LEVEL

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## United States Foreign Policy America and its Relationship with the World



In recent state and federal curriculum standards for History and Social Studies there is a strong emphasis on teaching the history of the United States. However, the desire to educate students about other countries and their cultures is equally strong among teachers and parents. One way to meet both objectives is to focus on America's relationships with other societies, especially non-western ones; Asian, African, Middle Eastern, Latin American. The students' understanding of their own country's history will be enhanced by examining the United States' place in the global system and how world events impact American history and society, as well as how Americans influence the history of other nations.

This issue of *Middle Eastern Resources* provides a foreign policy curriculum unit for World History and United States History secondary school teachers, using as a case study America's relations with Iran following World War II. Primary sources that are listed are available from the Teaching Resource Library and copies will be sent, at no cost, to teachers using the unit in their classes.

In *Some Reflections on American Foreign Policy and the Middle East*, a paper prepared for a foreign policy workshop for secondary school teachers, Thomas D. Mullins, Association Director at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, writes:

*Those who are ethically concerned with American foreign policy should seek to understand the concrete impact of policy choices and proposals on people - human beings like themselves - and not just the abstract academic logic of geopolitical and strategic interests - if we are to remain true to our perceived national ideologies.*

*The successful conduct of foreign policy today requires a much keener sense of human history, an intuitive feel for the rhythms of contemporary societies and an instinct for what can go wrong when attempting to engineer the politics of someone else's country. This is doubly true now, when the main challenge for American foreign policy is not to influence relations between states but rather to influence events within states in an area, and indeed in a world, that is simultaneously fragmenting politically and yet consolidating economically.*

*Of course, America's national interests must come first, but those interests need not be at variance with an honest humane concern for a region, its inhabitants, their traditions and future.*

# U.S. Foreign Policy and the Iranian Revolution

## A Case Study

### Introduction

The Iranian revolution raised many questions about United States foreign policy. Why, for example, did the United States put its trust in the Shah of Iran as the protector of its national interests in the Persian Gulf? Should human rights considerations play a role in the implementation of foreign policy? How could the United States have missed the signs of impending revolution? Why did it emerge as the "Great Satan" of the revolution? To find possible answers to these questions, we will look at an overview of American foreign policy regarding Iran, with consideration given to the roles of *national security*, *domestic politics*, and *internal economics* in creating this policy.

United States Policy and Iran: 1945 to 1967

### Policy of Containment

Following World War II, the United States, as the strongest country globally, both economically and militarily, assumed leadership of the non-Communist world. The Cold War between the West and the Soviet Union was beginning, and, in response, the Truman administration adopted a *policy of containment*. The purpose of this foreign policy was to prevent the expansion of the Soviet Union's borders and its influence in the world. Implementing a policy of containment resulted in the United States' involvement in different regions of the world, as Washington sought to contain what it saw as Soviet and/or Chinese Communist attempts to exploit power vacuums, intraregional conflicts, and differences between Western countries and the Third World. One of these regions, comprising the countries bordering the Persian Gulf, included Iran which shared a 1,250-mile border with the Soviet Union.

### Soviet Troops in Iran

Soon after the end of World War II, as a result of its policy of containment, the United States became more deeply involved in Iranian affairs. During the war, the Soviets had occupied a portion of northern Iran in order to receive war supplies from the United States. When the war ended, they refused to leave Iran. In response, the United States played a role in the United Nations in helping Iran to dislodge the Soviet army; Soviet troops left Iran in mid-1946. In 1947 a small amount of United States military aid was given to Iran to help the Iranian army protect its borders; the gendarmerie were in charge of domestic security.

### Mohammad Mossadegh

In 1953, Mohammad Mossadegh, a liberal democrat, an elected member of parliament and the prime minister of Iran, nationalized the Anglo-Iranian Oil Co., sought to wean the Iranian economy from its dependency upon oil, and insisted on the shah reigning but not ruling; that was the work of parliament. The United States, fearing the rise of Iran's Communist Tudeh Party, and Britain, who in the past had significant influence in Iran's political affairs and wanted to recover control of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, together with supporters of the shah, contrived populist demonstrations in his favor. With help from Britain and the United States, the shah's army was able to overthrow Mossadegh. The shah, who had left Iran temporarily, returned to regain his power. The United States increased its military aid to Iran and provided economic and technical assistance to strengthen the shah's government against both internal and external threats.

**Baghdad Pact**

During the ensuing years, the political, military and economic ties which had developed between the United States and the shah since the 1940s were strengthened. In 1955 Iran joined the United States supported Baghdad Pact, a political and military alliance, whose members included Britain, and countries sharing a border with the Soviet Union, or located near it: Turkey, Iraq and Pakistan. Following the Iraqi Revolution in 1958, Iraq withdrew from the alliance. The reshaped alliance became the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO). In 1959 the United States and Iran signed a bilateral defense agreement. Military and economic aid to Iran continued through the late 1960s.

**United States Policy and Iran: 1968-1976****Nixon Doctrine**

In 1968 Richard Nixon was elected president of the United States. Public opposition to United States involvement in Vietnam and economic concerns were among the factors that led him to proclaim the *Nixon Doctrine* in July 1969 and elaborate on it in January 1970. The Nixon Doctrine served as justification for the United States reduction, and eventual withdrawal, of American forces from Vietnam. It states that it is America's intent to keep treaty commitments made with other nations and to provide a nuclear shield if a nuclear power threatens the freedom of any nation allied with the United States or considered vital to American security. To counter other types of aggression, the United States would provide military and economic assistance to threatened nations but would not deploy troops for their defense. However, although the Nixon Doctrine was created with Vietnam in mind, it had broader foreign policy implications: the doctrine represented a tactical change in the implementation of containment. Because it shifted responsibility for a region's stability and resistance to communism from the United States to a regional power, the United States would be able to concentrate its forces in areas considered to be defensible and vital namely, Western Europe and Japan. The overall change reduced defense expenses at a time of economic difficulties and of public opposition to any new troop commitments overseas.

**Persian Gulf and the Shah**

In 1972, President Nixon applied the Nixon Doctrine to the Persian Gulf area. Traditionally, the British had provided protection for this region since the Persian Gulf straddled the route to India and was contiguous to British possessions and oil supplies. However, for domestic reasons, the British decided to withdraw from the Gulf thus creating a power vacuum. To prevent Soviet advances into the Gulf, the United States chose to employ Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi of Iran as its surrogate in the region. President Nixon signed an agreement with the shah which in effect made him the protector of the Persian Gulf and United States interests in the region. There was some concern among United States government officials and congressmen about the repressive nature of the Iranian government. Intimidation, torture and persecution of the shah's enemies by SAVAK, a Persian acronym for Iran's State Security and Intelligence Organization, had become commonplace during the 1970s. However, officials and congressmen were impressed by the shah's modernization program in Iran and his willingness to supply petroleum to Israel. The latter decision relieved the United States of a significant obligation.

The United States and Mohammad Reza Shah soon developed a close relationship. The shah was encouraged to purchase a vast amount of American military equipment, including advanced non-nuclear technology, and the United States sent increased technical assistance for his military programs. The United States defense industry, along with American businesses, received billions of dollars in earnings from Iran. Meanwhile the shah maintained regional stability and allowed the United States

to establish sites in Iran to monitor Soviet missile launchings. Government officials considered these sites vital to American national interests, especially since they believed the Soviet Union had achieved strategic parity with the United States. Officials came to view the shah as irreplaceable in protecting American interests in the Persian Gulf area. They also believed that he was in complete control of Iran and that he had the support of many Iranians. But the American government had lost touch with Iranians outside official circles. The shah discouraged such contacts and the United States, not wishing to alienate him over such a minor issue, acquiesced. Most United States officials in Iran did not speak Persian, nor were they acquainted with Iran's history. They circulated among the English speaking members of the Iranian elite and became dependent upon these Iranians for information regarding matters within their country. As a result, they were unaware of the depth and scope of the enmity felt by many Iranians towards the shah.

## United States Policy and Iran: 1977-1981

### The Carter Presidency

When Jimmy Carter became president of the US in 1977, he continued to implement the containment policy through the Nixon Doctrine. However, he sought to gain public support for American foreign policy by restoring a sense of idealism, which previous administrations had not done. Carter felt that by failing to exhibit the idealism promoted by past presidents such as Thomas Jefferson and Woodrow Wilson, the United States had lost an effective way to counter totalitarian ideology abroad and to arouse the democratic spirit of Americans at home. The president therefore made respect for human rights, an element of idealism, a central theme in his foreign policy. He combined this concern for human rights with containment, a policy of realism.<sup>1</sup> However, while Carter made frequent statements throughout the world in support of human rights, he did little to pressure authoritarian states like Iran which, although abusing rights, were vital to US interests.

### Growing Resentment

There were Iranians who held genuine enthusiasm for the shah and his policies. They supported the "White Revolution," the shah's modernization program to stimulate economic growth and social development. It promoted literacy, health services and women's rights, the nationalization of natural resources, the sale of state owned factories and profit sharing for workers, but its cornerstone was land reform. Among these Iranians were members of the security forces, technocrats, the new rich, and wealthy peasants who benefited from the White Revolution.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, many Iranians, such as the lower middle class, the urban unskilled workers, the poor and landless peasantry, and tribesman acquiesced to the regime because they saw no alternative. Still others, such as the secular liberal intelligentsia, Muslim and Marxist student activists, the ulama (religious scholars), and the merchants from the bazaar (the covered market place in towns) who held close ties with the ulama, began to organize opposition movements.<sup>3</sup> Iranians who disliked the shah often saw him as a creation of the British and United States governments because of their support of the shah in 1953. They believed that the central direction for the shah's defense program, industrial and economic transactions, and oil policy originated in Washington. They also believed that the much hated SAVAK, which had imprisoned many thousands of Iranians for political reasons, received instructions from the United States government that included torture as a method of interrogation.<sup>4</sup>

A great many Iranians resented the shah's arbitrary and dictatorial rule. He banned political parties and made criticism of the shah a treasonable offense. He imposed state control over schools, universities and private organizations. They also disliked the shah's economic policies. They thought the shah squandered oil revenue on unneeded military hardware, which they viewed as benefiting the United States. They believed the growing income gap between the rich and the poor was the result of the

regime's preference for its wealthier citizens and for large economic enterprises. They also resented the corruption and waste that was pervasive in the government and especially in the royal family.<sup>5</sup> All this dissatisfaction was further compounded by a recession in 1975-76, caused in part by a drop in oil revenue and by the shah's efforts to reduce inflation. The recession affected the poor and new urban immigrants, many of whom were former agricultural laborers who could not find work in their villages, as well as the middle class. By 1977 there was a predisposition for revolution.<sup>6</sup>

### **Opposition to the Shah**

At this critical time of discontent in Iran, Jimmy Carter proclaimed human rights as a major tenet of his foreign policy. Those opposed to the shah's policies were excited by President Carter's remarks because they, like most Iranians, believed that the United States exercised ultimate control over the government and they hoped he would support them against the government. Members of the opposition groups wrote open letters and signed petitions protesting government policies. By the fall of 1977 their activities had developed momentum. Prominent Iranian secularists formed the Committee for the Defense for Human Rights and Liberty which became a focal point for demands. At first the shah allowed these activities, but he very soon vacillated between liberalization and repression.

### **Ayatollah Khomeini**

Among the religious opposition leaders was Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, a prominent Shi'ite imam.<sup>7</sup> From 1961 to 1963 Khomeini had openly criticized the shah's dictatorial exercise of power and policies, including those designed to reduce the power of the religious clerics and the role of Islam in national life. He spoke out against woman's rights and land reform, as well as foreign influence over government and foreign involvement in the Iranian oil industry, both of which he viewed as threatening Iran's independence. As a result of this activity, Khomeini spent over ten months in jail. In 1964 he was exiled to Turkey, then moved to Iraq and finally to France. Khomeini continued his criticisms of the shah and his policies while in exile and this activism enhanced his standing among members of the lower and middle classes. As early as 1969 he called for the overthrow of the shah and the establishment of an Islamic state. Khomeini's speeches were circulated throughout Iran on cassette tapes.<sup>8</sup>

In January 1978 an Iranian newspaper attack on Khomeini's character provoked a massive protest and sit-in by religious clerics and theological students in the holy city of Qum. A violent clash occurred between the students and authorities. The Qum incident is considered the point at which much of the initiative in the protest movement swung from secular forces to the religiously-led opposition. Many more demonstrations and loss of lives would occur in various Iranian cities over the next twelve months. Secular forces, along with most Iranians, would later join in a coalition with the religious opposition, united by common hatred of the shah.

Khomeini directed revolutionary activities from France through an extensive network that included clerics and bazaaris (retailers and wholesalers in the bazaar). In the cassettes he sent from France, Khomeini encouraged Iranians to continue their uprising until the shah and his regime were uprooted. At the same time, he called for the establishment of an Islamic state in Iran. Khomeini expressed sympathy for the plight of the lower classes and denounced the shah for his extravagant lifestyle. He complained of domination in Iranian affairs by the United States, which he called the "Great Satan," and the squandering of Iranian public funds on massive arms,<sup>9</sup> and said very little about his own plans for cleric domination of the state.

### **United States Response**

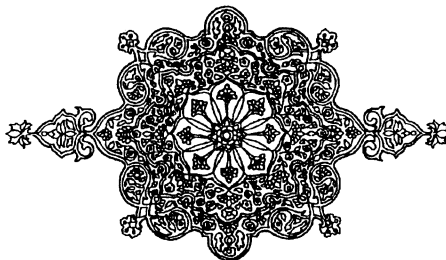
During this period of growing unrest in Iran, Carter took the path of political realism despite his

advocating of human rights. He was supportive of the shah because he, like his predecessors, believed that Iran was vitally important to United States national interests. Carter encouraged, but did not pressure, the shah to improve his human rights policy because he believed that the instability arising from opposition would endanger United States interests.<sup>10</sup> Not only did the United States continue to sell arms to Iran, but the president supported the sale of AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System) planes to Iran, which members of Congress opposed. The president argued that the sale would compensate for the research and development cost of the plane and would help alleviate the consequences of stagflation, the combination of high unemployment and high inflation.

In November 1978, the American ambassador to Iran, William H. Sullivan, sent a telegram to the president warning of a possibility that the shah's regime could collapse. However, divisions within the administration impeded efforts to develop and carry out a strategy to deal with the crisis. Zbigniew Brzezinski, national security adviser to the president, believed that the strategic value of Iran to the United States took precedence over human rights considerations. He proposed that the president encourage the shah to use military force to suppress the opposition. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance believed that the solution to the instability in Iran was the gradual transfer of power to the opposition and the departure of the shah from Iran. Vance also recommended opening contacts with the opposition leaders as soon as possible. President Carter accepted Secretary Vance's recommendations.

On January 3, 1979, the president sent a message to Mohammad Reza Shah, who had already decided to leave Iran but would not set a date. In the message, Carter subtly pressured the shah to hasten his departure by stating his support for the formation, as soon as possible, of a regency council to govern the country. Carter told the shah he would be welcome in the United States. Mohammad Reza Shah left Iran on January 16, 1979, but chose to go Egypt rather than the United States, then to Morocco.<sup>11</sup> By mid-February, a raging anti-Americanism and the occupation of the US embassy in Tehran by students forced the president to retract his invitation to the shah out of concern for the safety of embassy personnel. The shah went first to the Bahamas and then to Mexico. In the fall of 1979, Carter was told that the shah needed to receive treatment for his cancer at a New York medical facility. After notifying Iran's Prime Minister Bazargan of the shah's medical condition, and receiving Bazargan's assurance that the United States embassy in Iran would be protected if the shah were to be admitted into the country for treatment, President Carter gave his permission. The shah arrived in the United States on October 29, 1979.<sup>12</sup>

In the meantime, Khomeini had returned to Iran in triumph on February 1, 1979. After the army's declaration of neutrality and a national uprising, Prime Minister Bakhtiar, a secular opposition leader who now led the interim government, fled to France. Khomeini appointed the well-respected Mehdi Bazargan, a secular liberal democrat, as prime minister of Iran. The United States recognized Bazargan's government and tried to normalize relations with Iran, but opposition and pressure by the clerics and Khomeini prevented reconciliation between the two countries.



### Continued Hostilities

Efforts at normalization ceased on November 4, 1979, when militant students took United States embassy personnel in Tehran as hostages. Backed by Khomeini, students demanded the return of the shah before releasing the diplomats. The takeover was seen as a move by the religious leadership to embarrass their government and prevent normalization with the United States, and it caused the collapse of the Bazargan government. Prime minister Bazargan and other democratic liberals had no choice but to resign. The little influence that secular liberals had in the government was ended. Khomeini had consolidated his power in Iran and the United States severed diplomatic relations.

After the hostage taking, President Carter initially opted for a policy of restraint, fearing that more aggressive action could jeopardize the lives of the American diplomats. He received wide public support for this position. The president mobilized broad international backing and ordered a freeze on eight to nine billion dollars in Iranian assets in the United States. He called on American companies to stop buying Iranian oil for the United States market and exerted pressure on the Japanese and other allies not to increase purchases from Iran. The president enlarged the United States military presence in the Persian Gulf and sought collective economic sanctions against Iran under the United Nations charter but the action was vetoed by the Soviet Union. During this period Khomeini adamantly called for the shah's return before the release of the hostages.<sup>13</sup> With diplomatic measures having failed to gain release of the hostages, and with American patience wearing thin, President Carter and his advisers attempted a rescue in April 1979.<sup>14</sup> The attempt failed. On July 27, 1980, Mohammad Reza Shah died from cancer in Cairo, Egypt, after a nineteen month journey between six countries.

With the aid of Algerian officials, talks began in the fall of 1979 between Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher and an Iranian official. An agreement was made which provided for the release of the hostages and the unfreezing of Iranian assets in the United States. Iranian claims on the shah's personal assets were to be resolved in United States courts. Both countries were to rely on the International Court of Justice at the Hague to settle Iranian claims and United States counterclaims regarding corporate and financial problems. The hostages were released shortly after Ronald Reagan took his oath of office for the United States presidency on January 20, 1981.

### Postscript:

During the 1980s United States foreign policy played Iran and Iraq against each other to insure that one did not become too strong at the expense of the other. In the 1990s United States policy toward Iran and Iraq changed to the present policy known as *dual containment* — that is, containment of both Iran and Iraq. This containment policy was first applied to Iraq following the 1991 Persian Gulf war when the United States and some of its coalition partners initiated economic, military, and other sanctions at the United Nations. The sanctions were approved by the United Nations and, in effect, "contained" Iraq by terminating its income from oil and non-humanitarian trade, along with its military activity, externally and to a great extent, internally. In 1993 the Clinton administration decided that Iran, like Iraq, should be contained because of the administration's belief that Iran supported terrorism worldwide and was pursuing the development of nuclear weapons. This policy calls for collective economic action against Iran and aims at denying Iran access to the money, supplies, and weapons needed to complete a military resurgence. In May 1995, the Clinton administration prohibited all United States trade and investment with Iran, including purchases of Iranian oil by American companies for resale on the world market. However, while United States allies have prohibited the sale of dual-use technology and weapons to Iran, they have been reluctant to stop all trading with Iran. In response to the allies' "hesitation," President Clinton signed a new law on August 5, 1996, *The Iran and Libya Sanctions Act of 1996*, which places sanctions on foreigners who invest more than \$40 million in a year in the oil or natural gas industries of Iran and Libya. This new law has provoked threats

of retaliation against United States firms by Europe, where oil companies have been pursuing ventures with Iran and Libya.

1. Realism is the dominant school of thought within the field of international relations. It holds, among other tenets, that at a minimum states seek their own preservation and, at a maximum, drive for universal domination. Only after survival is assured, can they afford to seek other goals, including idealistic ones. As a result, states act, first and foremost, to maximize their security. A realist studies the world as it is and not as one may wish it to be, is guided by the facts and one's experience in a given situation, explores alternatives and pros and cons, is flexible, and makes a decision based on evidence, not hope or fear. A realist also considers standards of conduct at the international level to be different from those governing behavior within states. A realist chooses national interests first, whether it be security or economic, and pushes aside idealistic considerations.

Joel Krieger, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Politics of the World*, pp. 771-773.

John G. Stoessinger, *Crusaders and Pragmatists: Movers of Modern American Foreign Policy*, pp. xv-xvi; 278-279.

Human rights were defined by Secretary of State Cyrus Vance as freedom from government violation of the integrity of the person; the right to fulfillment of such vital needs as food, shelter, health care and education; and the right to enjoy political and civil liberties.

*Department of State Bulletin* 29, No. 1978, p. 505.

2. The shah called his modernization program the White Revolution. The middle classes saw it as a palliative designed to impress foreigners while Pahlavi power continued to be absolute. The program was inaugurated in 1963.

James Bill, *The Lion and the Eagle: The Tragedy of American-Iranian Relations*, p. 148.

3. Richard Cottam, "Revolutionary Iran," *Current History*, January 1980, pp. 13-15.

Nikki Keddie, *Roots of Revolution*, pp. 244-250.

4. Richard Cottam, "Goodbye to America's Shah," *Foreign Policy* 39 (Spring 1979), p. 7-8.

5. Saul Bakhsh, *The Reign of the Ayatollahs: Iran and the Islamic Revolution*, pp. 10-13. Cottam, "Goodbye," pp. 10-13.

6. Bakhsh, pp. 10-13. Cottam, "Goodbye," pp. 10-13. Farhad Kazemi, "Urban Migrants and the Revolution," *Iranian Studies* 13, Nos. 1-4, 1980, pp. 260-262.

7. *Shi'ite* is an Anglicized form of the Arabic word *Shi'i* meaning a member of the Shi'a branch of Islam. *Imam* is an Arabic word for prayer leader or for a religious leader.

8. Bakhsh, pp. 25-37.

9. Cyrus Vance, *Hard Choices*, pp. 316-317.

10. Gary Sick, *All Fall Down: America's Tragic Encounter with Iran*, pp. 146-154.

11. Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith*, pp. 455-56.

12. Eric Rouleau, "Khomeini's Iran," *Foreign Affairs* (Fall 1980), pp. 3-6.

13. William B. Quandt, "The Middle East Crises," *Foreign Affairs* (America & the World 1979), p. 544.

14. Carter, pp. 506-510. Vance, pp. 408.

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Bakhash, Saul. The Reign of the Ayatollahs: Iran and the Islamic Revolution. New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1984.

*An important and useful book for the general reader giving the background and causes of the 1979 revolution, its goals, and the domestic politics involved in transforming Iran from a secular to an Islamic state.*

Bill, James A. The Lion and the Eagle: The Tragedy of American-Iranian Relations. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988.

*Focuses on the US side of the American-Iranian relationship from the 1940s to the Iran-contra affair; An absorbing, well constructed account of American policy and policy makers.*

Gaddis, John Lewis. Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy. New York: Oxford University Press, 1982.

*A must for educators interested in US foreign policy, the book examines development and implementation of strategy of containment and discusses the concern by different administrations as to what constitutes vital or peripheral US interests and their responses.*

Sick, Gary. All Fall Down: America's Tragic Encounter with Iran. New York: Viking Penguin, Inc., 1986.

*This former aide under Carter, and an Iranian specialist, writes a fair and convincing account of the American hostage crisis. Discusses internal struggles in the White House over strategy for dealing with events.*

## PRIMARY SOURCES FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

## Declarations and Speeches:

Richard Nixon. Excerpts from the Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon, 1970 and 1971, regarding the Nixon Doctrine, February 18, 1970 and February 25, 1971.

Jimmy Carter. Speech given at the University of Notre Dame, May 22, 1977, concerning American foreign policy. The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Jimmy Carter, 1977.

Cyrus Vance, Secretary of State during Carter Administration, defines human rights in a speech given at the University of Georgia, April 30, 1977. Department of State Bulletin, 1978.

Ayatollah R. Khomeini. Three speeches from Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini, edited and translated by Hamid Algar. Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1981.

**Articles from The New York Times concerning American Foreign policy and the crisis in Iran, December 28, 1978 to January 17, 1979:**

Iran: December 28, 1978. John Vinocur, "Political Crisis Appears at Acute Stage as Public Faces Loss of Fuel."

US: December 28, 1978. Bernard Gwertzman. "US Backs Shah on the Forming of New Regime."

Iran: December 30, 1978. John Vinocur. "New Nominee a Respected Opponent—Regency System Ruled Out." [The Shah asks an opposition leader to form a civilian government.]

Iran: January 2, 1979. Nicholas Gage. "Shah Now Willing to Take 'Vacation.'"

US: January 4, 1979. Bernard Gwertzman. "US Tries to Decide on Advice to Shah."

US: January 9, 1979. Bernard Gwertzman. "US, in New Stand, Advises Shah to Leave Iran for Good of Country." [Stresses a Trip would be temporary, but return is viewed as difficult.]

Iran: January 9, 1979. Eric Pace. "Prime Minister Says Ruler is Committed to Depart—Regency [Council] is Planned."

US: January 12, 1979. Bernard Gwertzman. "Vance Asserts Shah Will Quit Iran Soon and US Backs Step." *Text of Vance's statement on situation in Iran attached to article.*

Iran: January 17, 1979. Nicholas Gage. "Ruler Goes to Egypt."

**Other articles from The New York Times:**

November 6, 1978. Drew Middleton. "Both East and West Regard Iran as Pivotal in the Power Balance." A military analysis.

January 12, 1979. Richard Burt. "US Strategy on Iran Stirs a Fierce Debate." The debate is within the Carter administration.

January 12, 1979. Nicholas Gage. "[An Iranian] Family's Resolve: Get Rid of Shah at Any Price."

**Articles from The New York Times Magazine:**

January 17, 1978. Nicholas Gage. "Iran: Making of a Revolution," Contains interviews with religious and secular leaders involved in the revolution.

May 17, 1981. John Kifner. "How a Sit-in Turned Into a Siege." Contains interviews with the students who took US embassy personnel as hostages.

April 30, 1995. Geraldine Brooks. "Teen-Age Infidels Hanging Out." Interviews with today's Iranian teenagers. [They are different from the teenagers of 1978.]

**Articles from The New York Times regarding the Clinton administration's policy toward Iran:**

May 27, 1993. Douglas Jehl. "US Seeks Ways to Isolate Iran; Describes Leaders as Dangerous."

May 1, 1995. Todd S. Purdum. "Clinton to Order a Trade Embargo Against Tehran."

**Article from International Journal of Middle East Studies.**

Ladjevardi, Habib. "The Origins of US Support for an Autocratic Iran". No. 15. 1983. pp. 225-239.



## LESSON PLAN FOR TEACHERS US Foreign Policy and the Iranian Revolution

### Objectives:

1. To use a case study of American foreign policy towards Iran leading up to, and including, the Islamic Revolution of 1979, as an opportunity for students to gain an understanding of the role certain elements play in creating foreign policy.
2. To engage students in the higher thinking skills of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

### Session I: Introducing the Case Study.

1. Explain the idea of a "case study".
2. Ask students what they think are some of the elements<sup>1</sup> that are given consideration when forming US foreign policy; have them try to cite particular cases<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> National security, domestic politics, internal economics, human rights.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. the Gulf War, the famine in Somali, the Israeli / Palestinian peace process etc.

3. Locate Iran on a world relief and resources map. Note its bordering countries and geography and discuss how they might or might not influence American foreign policy, particularly after World War II and during the "cold war".
4. Assign the text of the case study as required reading for the next session.

### Session II: United States Policy and Iran 1945 - 1967.

#### Questions to think about:

1. What led the United States to adopt a policy of *containment* after World War II?
2. How did the United States react to the actions of the Soviet Union in Iran in 1945 -1946?
3. Who was Mohammad Mossadegh? How did his policies lead to confrontation with Britain and the United States in 1951-1953?
4. Describe the relationship between the shah and the United States after Mossadegh.
5. What were the important political and military alliances<sup>1</sup> involving Iran, some of its neighbors, and the United States during the 1950s and 1960s?

<sup>1</sup>Baghdad Pact 1955, CENTO 1959, US / Iran Bilateral Defense Agreement 1960.

#### Suggested student activities:

1. Define the following terms:
  - national security
  - domestic politics
  - internal economics
  - human rights

Choose 4 articles from a newspaper, or 4 items from television newscasts, which you think illustrate the role played by one or more of the above in shaping U.S. foreign policy. Explain your selections in class and be prepared to defend your reasons for choosing them .

2. Research the terms *Cold War* and *Iron Curtain* and present your findings in a short report.

3. In the 40s the United States gave military aid to Iran to help the Iranians maintain order within the country after Soviet troops left. Choose a hypothetical situation in which you would be either for, or against, giving military aid to a foreign country.

Give at least 3 reasons for your stand. In class the students for giving military aid, and those against giving military aid gather separately. Discuss together the reasons for your position and choose one student to represent your side in a classroom debate on the issue.

### Session III. United States Policy and Iran 1968-1976

Questions to think about:

1. Why did the US fail to establish its own military presence in the Persian Gulf to fill the power/ security vacuum created by the British withdrawal from that region in 1971?
2. Why did the US government, in the name of the Nixon Doctrine, put trust in the shah of Iran as the "protector" of US national interests in the Persian Gulf?
3. Why were some government officials and congressmen concerned about this choice?
4. How did US government officials come to view the shah and Iran? What was the relationship between US officials and Iranians outside of government circles?

Suggested student activities:

1. View the Iranian portion of the video *Revolution: Iraq & Iran*. (12-14 minutes). Shaul Bakhash, a former Tehran newspaper editor and eyewitness to the revolution, and presently a professor at George Mason University, gives an overview of the political, social, and economic situation just before the revolution. After seeing the video discuss the reasons Mr. Bakhash gives for the Revolution. What was the narrator's attitude toward American involvement in Iran as you perceived it?
2. You are a government official whose job it is to select personnel for work in a branch of foreign service. Write down the qualifications you would require for a position which carries decision making responsibilities. Then, in a career directory in your library, look up the various overseas government jobs and the requirements listed. In a brief report compare your list with those in the directory.

### Session IV: United States Policy and Iran 1977-1981

Questions to think about:

1. Why did President Carter make human rights a central theme in United States foreign policy?
2. What were the feelings of the Iranian people towards the shah's rule, both positive and negative?
3. What was the political, military and economic relationship between the United States and the shah during the 1970s? Why didn't the United States press the shah to politically liberalize?
4. Who was Ayatollah Khomeini and what were his goals? Who supported him and why?
5. Was the United States prepared for a possible revolution? Explain.
6. Why do you think the United States was considered the "Great Satan" by Khomeini?
7. Is culture a different dimension than realism in foreign policy?

Student Activities:

1. Write a summary of the United States government response to the situation in Iran during 1978 and early 1979. Then imagine, and write, a different response which you think might have changed the outcome of Iranian / United States relations?
2. You are a foreign policy consultant to the president. What advice would you give in regard to either of these situations?
  - Should the shah be admitted into the United States?
  - What can be done to bring an end to the hostage crisis?

Choose one of these questions on which to advise the president and write a conversation, in the form of a dialogue, between you and him.

3. Organize a debate on the role of human rights vs. political realities in United States foreign policy.
4. The culture of a country plays an important role in shaping relations between other nations. Research one of the following issues in present day Iran. How do you, as an American, agree or disagree with Iranian laws or social customs and why?
  - Women's rights
  - Freedom of religion
  - Electoral process
  - Freedom of expression

In discussing your reasons be objective when stating the Iranian position and give consideration to other possible American opinions on these issues besides your own.

5. Using the case study and/or primary, and other, sources, write a position paper from the point of view of one of the major participants in the 1978/79 events:
  - President Carter
  - Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi
  - Ayatollah Khomeini
  - The people of Iran.

Use the position papers as a basis for role play.

