

# DOMESTIC DIPLOMACY

## British Failures, American Intrigues, and Interventionist Attitudes in the Lead-up to the Overthrow of Mohammed Mossadegh

*Abstract: In 1953, the Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh was overthrown by a coup d'état secretly coordinated by the United States and United Kingdom. For years prior to the coup, the Mossadegh government had been determined to oust the British-owned Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, and nationalize the oil industry. With Britain and Iran at loggerheads, the United States was forced to decide between supporting a trusted ally and forging closer relations with a country losing barriers to communism from the East. The new Eisenhower Administration finally decided to take action with the British to convince the Iranian Shah to oppose Mossadegh, a successful operation. New FRUS documents shed light on American decision-making, as well as the complex motivations at the heart of the planning.*

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His truck bouncing across the rocky Iranian desert, C.M. Woodhouse, a veteran British intelligence officer fresh off a stint as the leader of operations in German-occupied Greece, covertly traveled through the countryside to the tribal-controlled northern Iran. Winding through mountainous back roads to avoid government checkpoints, Woodhouse and his convoy hoped to keep their trucks away from prying Iranian eyes. The trucks were packed with rifles and Sten guns designated for prominent tribal leaders whom the British deemed crucial potential allies if Iran fell to domestic communists or the Soviet military. Flown in a Royal Air Force plane from a British outpost in Iraq, the light arms represented the British government's increasingly desperate fail-safe measures amid the tense diplomatic scene in the Iranian capital.<sup>1</sup> It was the summer of 1952, and with Prime Minister Mossadegh on the edge of breaking diplomatic relations with Britain, London anticipated the imminent collapse of Iran's central government. Colonel Woodhouse was in charge of the British operation, but as recently released documents reveal, he was not the sole Western intelligence officer operating in Iran. Washington also had contingencies for a communist takeover that included arming Iranian tribal leaders, and these plans, too, were well underway by July 1952.

The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the British Secret-Intelligence Service (MI6) had been running parallel covert operations in Iran since the end of World War II in an effort to counter communist interference in the struggling nation.<sup>2</sup> These operations became more desperate after Mohammad Mossadegh, then a rising nationalist politician, led Iran's Parliament, the Majlis, to nationalize the oil industry and oust the British government-owned Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC). Nationalization sparked a tense standoff between



Photograph of President Truman and Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh of Iran (1951)

Source: National Archives (Wikimedia Commons)

Tehran and London which threatened the stability of Iran's central government as British oil boycotts and sanctions decimated Iranian oil production. What started as a dispute over oil nationalization quickly became an international crisis, forcing the United States to decide between supporting a key European ally or propping up a government vulnerable to communist takeover. The impasse dominated US policy in the Middle East throughout the Truman Administration and early into Eisenhower's tenure before a joint UK-US operation in the late summer of 1953 overthrew Mossadegh and ushered the pro-western Shah into power. Although British and American documents on the coup have proven difficult to access, the circumstances surrounding the coup, its planning, and its implementation have since been the subject of intense academic study.

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However, in 2017, the State Department released an update to its *Foreign Relations of the United States* series on Iran, providing historians new access to a number of recently declassified State, CIA, and Department of Defense cables, letters, and internal memos from the time-period preceding Mossadegh's overthrow.<sup>3</sup> Though the publication offers little new insight into the actual operational planning and implementation of the coup, the *FRUS* documents offer important insights into the decision-making leading up to the coup. The new documents shed light on how Mossadegh's removal was conceived and justified by members of the U.S. foreign policy establishment and provide a more comprehensive view of the sentiments held by career officials in both the Truman and early Eisenhower Administrations.<sup>4</sup> The *FRUS* release challenges existing narratives of the coup and demonstrates that the Eisenhower Administration's decision to overthrow Mossadegh's government was the result of a number of converging factors that trace their origins to the developing perceptions and policy decisions of career foreign policy officials of the late Truman Administration. This paper seeks to add to the historical narrative surrounding the 1953 coup d'état and to re-examine the Truman Administration's policy in Iran, with particular focus on the policy and attitudes taking shape within foreign policy agencies.<sup>5</sup>

Rather than a sudden ideological change in the Oval Office or a shift in geopolitical atmosphere, I argue that a convergence of other factors, both external and internal, drove increasing support for Mossadegh's among career foreign policy officials. As the Shah's prestige degraded, and Mossadegh's National Front coalition fractured amid several political struggles in the latter half of 1952 and early 1953, American officials saw what they considered Iran's primary bulwarks against communism slip away. Both of these changes occurred as British failures in Iran constrained joint US-UK action, frustrating officials and driving them to increasingly advocate for greater American influence in Iran. As negotiations stalled and seemed unlikely to achieve success while Mossadegh was in power, the US sought to "prop up a government so it could negotiate an oil settlement, not negotiate an oil settlement to prop up a government," according to one assessment in 1953.<sup>6</sup> Essentially, this paper demonstrates that American policy in Iran was more nuanced than previously thought, with policies that were often driven by interventionist attitudes growing within the American foreign policy establishment. These attitudes reached a fever pitch upon the convergence of these factors, resulting in the sustained push for Mossadegh's ouster that would last with career officials into the Eisenhower Administration.

### **HISTORICAL SKETCHES OF THE COUP**

The forces shaping the 1953 coup d'état against Mossadegh have been covered extensively. Historians such as Stephen Kinzer, Malcom Byrne, and Bill James argue that the change

in Administration between Truman and Eisenhower was an important factor in the implementation of the 1953 coup d'état.<sup>7</sup> Their analyses of the coup rest on assertions that the United States under the Truman Administration was averse to using covert action in Iran as it pressed for a diplomatic solution to the Anglo-Iranian oil dispute, supporting Mossadegh, until, as Mark Gasiorowski argues, "early 1953, when the more hawkish, interventionist Eisenhower Administration turned against him."<sup>8</sup> Eisenhower, these historians argue, was more sensitive to communism and wished to take decisive action against Soviet influence in Iran. These theories also rest on the assumption that it was British lobbying which pushed Eisenhower's Administration to overthrow Mossadegh; British agents may have found a receptive audience in the CIA, according to these traditional narratives, but it was British proposals which ultimately brought them around to the idea of a coup.<sup>9</sup>

Other historians have accepted these narratives while asserting differing views on US motivations. Ervand Abrahamian demonstrates that more continuity existed between Truman and Eisenhower Administration policy in Iran than previous historians have observed.<sup>10</sup> Abrahamian views the continuity in policy between Truman and Eisenhower as an extension of American sympathy for British oil interests and a desire to grant American companies access to the AIOC's oil concession in Iran. His argument rests on the previous narratives' assumptions that British lobbying influenced American policy, but he asserts that it was Eisenhower's harsher stance toward nationalization that ultimately pushed the coup forward. Francis Gavin and Mark Gasiorowski, too, argue that Truman and Eisenhower policies in Iran were not drastically different, but they advocate different theories for why Eisenhower's administration sanctioned the coup when Truman's did not. Gavin contends that a changing geo-political scene and a restructuring of the military power-balance between the US and the Soviet Union bolstered Eisenhower's confidence and allowed him to take riskier actions against communism than his more constrained predecessor. Mark Gasiorowski, however, concludes that Truman's confidence in diplomacy and fear of establishing a negative precedent for intervention distinguished his foreign policy from his successor's more hawkish interventions.<sup>11</sup>

While all of these considerations are important factors that contributed to the 1953 coup, in light of the new *FRUS* release, they alone do not provide a comprehensive analysis of US policy in Iran. The new documents confirm that the policies being advocated within the State Department and Central Intelligence Agency changed little between Presidencies, but they also reveal a far more nuanced American position in Iran that began with negotiations and domestic interventions early in the Truman Administration and ended with stalled diplomacy and the downfall of Mossadegh in 1953.

## THE ROOTS OF THE COUP

Though the Truman Administration initially pressured the British government to negotiate, the prevailing sentiment in the British Foreign Office held that negotiations with Mossadegh were useless.<sup>12</sup> A European-educated politician and wealthy landowner, Mossadegh's position as a nationalist firebrand—and his very political survival, as John Foster Dulles would remark in a 1953 NSC meeting—rested on his “bucking of the British yoke.”<sup>13</sup> By early 1951, Mossadegh and his National Front had become a lightning rod for Iranian nationalist sentiment. For his supporters, the successful nationalization of the oil industry defined Iranian sovereignty and rejected foreign imperialism.

If Britain had a clear symbol of imperial power in the Middle East, it was the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC).

however, coming to a head between the years 1947 and 1951, when Mossadegh and a loose coalition of nationalist parties, known as the National Front, capitalized on the public disapproval of Britain and the AIOC, to achieve a majority in the Majlis. In 1951, a tense political situation developed as the National Front forced renegotiations with the AIOC. The Prime Minister leading the negotiations, Ali Razmara, was assassinated on March 7, 1951 by nationalist radicals after a proposed settlement was met with heavy public disapproval. His death, and the resulting political instability, left a power vacuum in Tehran and encouraged nationalist politicians to pressure the Shah's government to draft a heavily pro-Iranian settlement. After the AIOC rejected the Majlis's proposal to split profits 50/50 under the model of the newly created Arab-American Oil Company (ARAMCO) in Saudi Arabia, the Majlis nationalized the Iranian oil industry in March 1951.

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Founded in 1901 by wealthy Londoner, Knox D'Arcy, who purchased the rights to extract oil in southern Iran from the Qajar monarchy for 20,000 pounds and royalties, the AIOC came to dominate the oil industry in Iran throughout the first half of the Twentieth Century. The company struck oil in 1908, when company prospector George Reynolds's expedition drilled in the rocky desert of south-western Masjid-i-Suleiman.<sup>14</sup> After Reynolds's discovery, the company's position in Iran, and its profits from Iranian oil, ballooned. By 1912, the company, then known as the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC), had established itself with a group of investors in London, and its newly constructed refinery on Abadan island in the Persian Gulf was the largest in the world.<sup>15</sup>

In 1914, with World War I looming on the horizon, Iranian oil had become so strategically important to the British Navy that Parliament purchased majority stock in the company to maintain supplies for the burgeoning war effort. Once the British government took majority control over APOC, the company maintained complete autonomy over export prices and kept its records secret. After World War I, the APOC's profits swelled even as its royalty payments to the Iranian government stagnated under its decades-old contract. In 1932, 8 years after political upstart Reza Pahlavi took power from the Qajars, the new Shah cancelled the D'Arcy concession and forced new negotiations, coming out with a nominal increase in the state's share of royalties and new concessions from the APOC—including a name change to the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC). Grievances continued,

A little more than a month later, on April 29, 1951, the Majlis nominated—and forced the Shah to install—Mossadegh as the Prime Minister to implement the bill.<sup>16</sup>

The initial American response to nationalization emphasized solidarity with Britain. The Truman Administration understood the importance of Iranian oil to Britain's economy. The crown-jewel of the mid-century British Empire, the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company represented “the single overseas enterprise in British commerce” and provided the British government with much needed revenue and dollar exchange during its post-war rebuilding efforts.<sup>17</sup> Iranian oil was also critical for the British armed forces; according to a January 1951 national intelligence estimate (NIE) prepared for the U.S. National Security Council (NSC), the Abadan refinery produced 27 million tons of refined oil per year—31 percent of total Middle East production—supplying the Royal Navy with 90 percent of its oil at a fraction of the market value.<sup>18</sup> The same NIE estimated that British oil shortages from the loss of Iranian oil could be stabilized by increased production elsewhere within a matter of months, but warned that the effect of the AIOC's loss on the British economy “would be overcome slowly, if at all.”<sup>19</sup> To avoid the collapse of the fragile post-war British and western European economy, the Truman Administration desperately wanted to see the flow of oil continue.

However, officials in Washington were also well aware of the importance a stable Iran held for American national security. The United States viewed Iran as a critical buffer between

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the Soviet Union and other US oil resources in the Persian Gulf and feared that a protracted Anglo-Iranian oil dispute would make the nation vulnerable to Soviet influence. Days after Prime Minister Razmara's assassination by nationalist sympathizers, when the situation in Iran looked anything but stable, and nationalist tensions accelerated the dispute with Britain, the National Security Council (NSC) warned that the economic and political instability in Iran could prompt a direct Soviet intervention or a communist takeover of the central government.<sup>20</sup> The loss of Iran, the NSC concluded, also threatened the "entire security of the Middle East area."<sup>21</sup> After Mossadegh nationalized the industry and ascended to the Premiership in the spring of 1951, it became U.S. policy to offer limited aid to Iran, while pressuring both governments to negotiate a speedy settlement.

### **AN AMERICAN PROFILE OF MOSSADEGH: OBSTACLE TO A DEAL**

There was little love for Mossadegh among the American foreign policy establishment. Seventy-years old when he ascended to the premiership, Mossadegh would often hold sensitive negotiations with American Ambassadors from his bed, still wearing his pajamas from the night before.<sup>22</sup> During a visit to Washington in March 1952, Mossadegh remained hospitalized bed-side for much of his two-week trip, forcing prominent diplomats to usher messages between Walter Reed Hospital and Truman's White House, angering presidential advisors and State Department officials alike.<sup>23</sup> In Iran, Mossadegh fluctuated between displays of frailty and political strength. An extensive report on Mossadegh cabled to Washington in mid-February 1952 from John Stutesman, the Second Secretary of the Embassy, recounts tales of Mossadegh's passionate speeches and his habit of fainting during moments of excitement in the Majlis.<sup>24</sup>

Although historians have questioned the level to which Mossadegh's passionate public behavior and disregard for diplomatic norms reflected his true mental condition or were merely part of his political gamesmanship, they had a definite effect on American officials' views of the aging Prime Minister.<sup>25</sup> Stutesman's report concluded there was "little doubt" that Mossadegh was a sick man whose "frequent petty passions" reflected his physical infirmities.<sup>26</sup> A February 20, 1953 cable to Washington from the Embassy similarly reported that "sources indicate a decline in Mossadegh's [sic] mental stability," warning that "some of [his] closest associates admit Prime Minister [sic] increasingly irrational."<sup>27</sup> This perceived irrationality roused anxiety from a Washington establishment increasingly concerned for Iran's stability. A third secretary in the Tehran Embassy during the early 1950s remembered how Mossadegh's attitude and "crazy qualities" endangered Iranian security and urged the CIA to engage in operations to contain the "unbalanced" Premier.<sup>28</sup> As State Department staffers' assessments of Mossadegh reveal, U.S. officials' views of Mossadegh became an important drive of

the later gradual shift in sentiment toward unilateral action in Iran. This sentiment became especially salient in early 1953 as American intelligence officials determined that the Iranian government's fragile position rested solely on the Prime Minister's unpredictable "personality."<sup>29</sup>

In addition to US perceptions of Mossadegh's irrationality and danger to US interests, there was also little belief that Mossadegh could compromise with the British on any component of nationalization. Leaning up from his bed during a conversation with American Ambassador Grady in the summer of 1951, Mossadegh sharply uttered that "we [Iranians] care more about independence than economics."<sup>30</sup> That the Prime Minister preferred independence to oil revenue was no secret in Washington even before this bedside comment, as policy-makers had long interpreted Mossadegh to be dismissive of any efforts to achieve an oil settlement. Stutesman's 1952 report lamented that Mossadegh perceived US military aid and American efforts to financially support the central government "as evidence of some international desperation to prop him up" and not as U.S. officials intended it: a stop-gap measure to keep Iran afloat as it negotiated with the British.<sup>31</sup> Stutesman's record of Mossadegh's comments, and earlier CIA assessments of his 'structural inability' to come to a deal, illustrate that both policy-makers, and American officials on the ground implementing policy, had little faith that a deal between Mossadegh and the British government could be made.

For their part, the British, too, had little confidence that a settlement could be reached. They sought aggressive policies in Iran to undermine Mossadegh's position, hoping that he would step down and allow a "more reasonable" government to step in.<sup>32</sup> In July, after Britain maneuvered warships into the Persian Gulf—arousing U.S. fears of British military action in Iran and prompting the NSC to recommend the United States "bring its influence to bear" to encourage a settlement of the dispute—Truman dispatched veteran diplomat W. Averall Harriman to Iran to try and solve the diplomatic impasse. The Harriman mission, however, failed to bring either party closer to a settlement. During the accompanying negotiations, it became increasingly clear to U.S. officials that Mossadegh's sole goal was to secure Iranian control of oil production, something that Britain and the AIOC felt unwilling to cede.<sup>33</sup> Realizing that diplomacy had stalled, Harriman attempted to impact the situation through interference in domestic politics. The senior diplomat privately prompted the Shah to replace Mossadegh, even as the Shah warned that Mossadegh's political position had grown too strong for unilateral royal intervention.<sup>34</sup>

As Harriman publically negotiated with Mossadegh—and privately lobbied against him—the British were simultaneously attempting to undermine Mossadegh's political position. In June 1951, the Foreign Office sent C.M. Woodhouse and Robin Zaehner, a leading diplomatic



1953 Iranian coup d'état - pulling down statues of the Reza Shah (1953)  
Source: *Pahlavi Dynasty*, *The Guardian* (Wikimedia Commons)

authority on Iran, to the British Embassy in Tehran. Throughout the latter half of 1951, Woodhouse and Zaehner groomed potential contacts and cultivated a massive covert operation to weaken the Prime Minister and his National Front.<sup>35</sup> Utilizing an extensive intelligence network that included Majlis deputies and high-ranking politicians, senior army and police officers, bazaar-class merchants, clerics and religious leaders, prominent heads of newspapers, and southern tribal leaders opposed to the central government, Woodhouse and MI6 spread anti-Mossadegh propaganda and vetted potential successors to Mossadegh under the close direction of Zaehner and the Foreign Office.<sup>36</sup>

London's immense intelligence operation in Iran sought to replace Mossadegh with a Prime Minister that would be more susceptible to British pressure and friendlier to a potential settlement. Woodhouse and Zaehner found a Prime Minister they could support in Seyid Zia, a conservative

political leader and known British-ally. However, by the summer of 1951, the US had entrenched itself in the Iranian Oil Crisis, so the British needed American consent before they could unilaterally act against Mossadegh. An inter-embassy memo to Ambassador Henderson in August 1951 reports that George Middleton, the Counsellor of the British Embassy and the chief British diplomat in Iran, sought to get US backing for Zia and their plan to overthrow Mossadegh, stressing the need for the two countries to "agree in advance of a parallel if not identical course of action before a change of the Mosadeq [sic] Government becomes imminent."<sup>37</sup> Middleton asserted that the Shah needed to be reminded of the "necessity for acceptance of the strongest possible Prime Minister" and that he would require moral support or assurance of his choice from the US or UK governments.<sup>38</sup> The American Embassy dismissed the British suggestions, but London continued its efforts to undermine Mossadegh throughout 1951.

## **BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY FAILURES AND INTRIGUES**

London's efforts to undermine Mossadegh frustrated officials in Washington, with the prevailing sentiment among top U.S. officials asserting that British policy in Iran needlessly hindered American and British interests in the region and endangered the central government. In early September, a State Policy Planning official criticized British attempts to overthrow Mossadegh, asserting that such actions made it "no longer possible to reach an agreement which would permit the British to retain any semblance of the authority previously exercised."<sup>39</sup> In 1951, Woodhouse and Zaehner were expanding their covert network and seeking new avenues to undermine Mossadegh. By the fall, British intelligence was actively working with the Rashidian brothers, a powerful and wealthy family that was fervently anti-Mossadegh and anti-American.<sup>40</sup> However, by October 12, after a number of political intrigues in Tehran bore the Foreign Office's fingerprints, the CIA Station in Tehran warned Washington that "the British position in Iran [had] collapsed."<sup>41</sup>

Though their position had not collapsed as fully as the Station suggested, a series of British miscalculations severely wounded their interests in Iran while strengthening Mossadegh's grip on power. In late

In the aftermath of the AIOC's expulsion from Iran, the developing tension forced the United States to re-examine its policy in Iran. The Truman Administration decided to push for a new round of negotiations between the two countries during the spring and summer of 1951. The United States would continue its aide to Iran while it worked with Britain on joint US-UK proposals to offer Mossadegh, or another government in the event he stepped down or the Majlis replaced him. Although these talks did little to move British or Iranian sentiment to a consensus, by early 1952, Britain agreed to US proposals for interim aide to any new government, provided it intended to come to a 'reasonable agreement' on an oil settlement. By this time, the World Bank had also intervened in an effort to negotiate an oil settlement. After it failed, the State Department began to seriously consider whether an agreement could be reached while Mossadegh remained Premier.<sup>45</sup> It was at this time that Ambassador Henderson began to privately, and quietly, press the Shah to remove Mossadegh from power, an act which led to a significant political crisis in the summer of 1952.

## **HENDERSON'S DOMESTIC DIPLOMACY AND THE JULY POLITICAL CRISIS**

The documents reveal that Ambassador Henderson played a larger role in Iran's internal politics than previous histories have accounted for. He vetted candidates to replace

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**“...the political crisis of 1952 illustrated to the State Department and the CIA that any overthrow of Mossadegh would rest on the Shah...”**

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September, as Harriman's negotiations stalled, Mossadegh offered the British a modified proposal which, "while still far from satisfactory," according to a paper prepared by the State Department's Iran Desk in early October, "the Department felt provided hope that a basis could be found to renew talks."<sup>42</sup> Sensing an opportunity to weaken Mossadegh and encourage the Shah to remove him, the Foreign Office flatly rejected the offer, refused to send a counter, and declared that negotiations had ceased.<sup>43</sup> The British government dispatched more warships to the Persian Gulf, withdrew AIOC personnel from Iranian oil-fields, and announced it would seek legal actions against purchasers of Iranian oil, which it viewed as stolen British property. In response to the British, Mossadegh deployed troops to secure the Abadan refinery and expel AIOC personnel from its grounds. British troops in the Persian Gulf were poised to re-seize Abadan, but opposition from Washington caused London to abandon its military strike. Instead, Britain withdrew its personnel and appealed to the UN Security Council for a resolution against Mossadegh's action.<sup>44</sup>

Mossadegh shortly after the Prime Minister was appointed, and amid the crisis enveloping the monarchy in February 1953, he intervened to convince the Shah to remain in Iran, saving the monarchy from imminent collapse.<sup>46</sup> Throughout late 1952 and early 1953, Henderson worked with the CIA to exploit cracks in Mossadegh's ruling coalition between the Prime Minister and Ayatollah Kashani, one of Iran's most prominent clerics and a leftist supporter of Mossadegh. Kashani signaled he was ready to break with Mossadegh in late September 1952, according to CIA intelligence estimates, but Henderson's meetings with the cleric drove a further wedge between the former allies.<sup>47</sup> Kashani would later tacitly support the August 1953 coup and receive an unspecified amount of funding from the CIA.<sup>48</sup>

However, one of Henderson's most significant ventures into domestic Iranian politics occurred in July 1952, when—though he claimed that the "US govt. pursues [sic] policy of non-interference in Iran internal affairs" to Iranian stakeholders—he was a primary engineer of the political chaos that accompanied Mossadegh's resignation

and his replacement with Ahmed Qavam.<sup>49</sup> After being approached by representatives of Qavam in early March 1952, Henderson renewed his efforts to convince the Shah to replace Mossadegh with a Prime Minister more amenable to negotiations. In early May, Hossen 'Ala, a former Prime Minister and an opponent of Mossadegh, contacted Henderson and lobbied for promises of American support to a potential successor to Mossadegh.<sup>50</sup> This contact spurred a number of meetings between 'Ala and the Ambassador throughout the early summer of 1952.<sup>51</sup> Henderson offered his advice on Mossadegh's successor, privately advocating for Qavam. In mid-June, Henderson met with Qavam at the house of a mutual friend, and though Qavam himself "didn't ask [Henderson] to support him," according to a State Department memo recounting the meeting, the former Premier made it clear that a government under him would remain open to negotiations with Britain.<sup>52</sup>

After this meeting, Henderson, 'Ala, and George Middleton, the British Ambassador to Iran, lobbied the Shah on behalf of Qavam. There was extensive communication between Qavam, 'Ala, Middleton, and Henderson throughout June and July, as the Iranians attempted to gain assurances of American support in the event Mossadegh was replaced. However, while talks with Qavam were still underway, Mossadegh unexpectedly resigned on July 17, after the Shah refused to accept the Prime Minister's simultaneous appointment as Minister of War, an office which was historically the source of the Shah's influence in Cabinet.<sup>53</sup> The reluctant Shah appointed Qavam as Premier, and the new Iranian government was promised immediate aid from the United States. Mossadegh's replacement infuriated members of the National Front, and beginning on July 18, the coalition staged massive demonstrations in Tehran.<sup>54</sup> In the ensuing chaos, the Shah refused British and American lobbying to grant Qavam 'extraordinary powers' to quell the protests, prompting Qavam to resign as his political situation deteriorated.<sup>55</sup> The Shah did not accept his resignation, but Qavam remained sequestered in his home for the remainder of the crisis, and did nothing to secure his government. After heavy rioting broke out and enveloped Tehran on July 20, Washington feared the imminent collapse of the central government, and the CIA proposed placing its stay-behind plans on stand-by. However, after the Shah finally accepted Qavam's resignation on July 21, Mossadegh re-assumed control and quickly restored order.<sup>56</sup>

The July 1952 Crisis placed the indecisiveness of the Shah and the strength of Mossadegh firmly in Washington's consciousness. In a cable to the Embassy in London, senior State Department staff confirmed Washington's "worst fears as to the weakness of the Shah" and warned that it was "highly unlikely any other constructive [political] elements [would] attempt to exercise power in Iran after what happened to Qavam."<sup>57</sup> After Mossadegh supporters' show of strength on July 20, Washington doubted that any

opposition force could rival Mossadegh's grip on power, prompting one State Department official to remark that any removal of Mossadegh would likely usher in a leftist government, and not a "more constructive group," as had been previously hoped.<sup>58</sup> Officials also doubted whether the Shah could effectively exercise any political influence in Tehran after his public spat with the popular Prime Minister. Secretary of State Acheson informed the President of the "general disintegration of authority in Iran" shortly after Mossadegh's reinstatement, while a July 22 position paper from the State Department concluded that after the "Shah [had] been discredited" by the riots, Mossadegh stood in a "stronger position than at any time since the nationalization of Iran's oil in April 1951."<sup>59</sup>

The Shah's appointment of Qavam, according to the Embassy and CIA Station in Tehran, severely damaged his prestige and curtailed his influence in a political scene firmly under Mossadegh's control.<sup>60</sup> The Shah's standing in Iran had been so damaged, in fact, it prompted a number of officials to fear the dissolution of the monarchy altogether, even as policy-makers viewed the Shah as one of the only constant bulwarks against a communist takeover. In a July 30 meeting, Director Smith commented that though Mossadegh and the National Front were effectively the "only anti-communist forces left in Iran," the toppling of the Shah would leave Iran open to domination by a future communist government without the monarch's ability to contain or stop it.<sup>61</sup> The uncertainty surrounding the Shah's position prompted CIA officials to simultaneously float the idea of changing the ruling dynasty, "by letting the stronger tribal leaders have a whack at the royal power," and an ambitious propaganda and intelligence program aimed at reinforcing the Shah's prestige and repairing his tattered image.<sup>62</sup>

Still, the political crisis of 1952 illustrated to the State Department and CIA that any overthrow of Mossadegh would rest on the Shah—who represented the "only present source of continuity of leadership" since the assassination of Razmara, according to one intelligence draft.<sup>63</sup> However, after the Shah's inaction almost led to the collapse of the central government in July, Washington doubted the rationality of any policy that rested on him, even as officials continued to push for decisive US action in Iran. Voices within State and the CIA expressing frustration with the state of Iran after Qavam's short stint in power grew increasingly loud in the latter half of 1952. To many policy-makers, the situation in Iran was largely unchanged from where it had been at the time of Mossadegh's ascent. For a growing number of others, the situation had actively deteriorated now that Mossadegh's coalition proved an active threat to the Shah and the survival of the Iranian monarchy. Without the steadiness of the monarchy, analysts warned, Iran would be ripe for a communist movement and the establishment of a Soviet-aligned republic.

In an October 1952 Special Estimate, a CIA agent reported that the Shah had “almost completely lost his capability for action,” while earlier that month, another staffer described the Iranian monarch as “virtually a prisoner who was discouraged from contacts with foreign chiefs of mission.”<sup>64</sup> As these reports show, much of Washington’s post-July anxiety stemmed from the decline in the Shah’s prestige; but the Shah’s strength was criticized even before the July crisis spotlighted his failings and indecisiveness. A memo to Henderson in August 1951 commented on the “almost tragic need of the Shah for moral support from the US and UK governments,” and an October cable from the Station in Iran warned that the “Shah dares not talk back or step out of line.”<sup>65</sup> In a 1988 interview, a US Embassy staffer remembered naming the Shah a “weak reed” who was unable

revelations of Henderson’s interventions in Iranian politics confirm, this proposed policy examination was only one instance in a range of ventures in collaboration with the CIA. The Embassy worked to vet candidates for parliament to aide CIA operation during the 1952 parliamentary elections, and it identified journalists, politicians, and clerics for potential work with the CIA.<sup>69</sup> The State Department’s consideration of alternatives to Mossadegh days after the July crisis, and the Embassy’s long history of interventionism demonstrates Washington officials’ sustained push for US action in Iran.

This push also came from within the CIA, particularly from future CIA Director, Allen Dulles, referred to by contemporaries in the Tehran Embassy as a ‘big factor in the game being played,’ and Kermit Roosevelt, the head of

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**“Amid these growing frustrations with British policy, a new attitude toward America’s role in Iran was taking shape in Washington.”**

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to shield Iran from communism. That same staffer claimed that “if Mossadegh had insisted on it, a republic could have happened any day.”<sup>66</sup> It seems likely, amid the declining influence of the monarchy and American assumptions about its importance, that increasingly negative perspectives on the Shah’s abilities and powers provoked the urgency that CIA and State Department officials felt for taking action in Iran. However, the Shah’s declining prestige and the lessons American officials took away from the July crisis tempered American actions, even as different individuals advocated stronger US policy.

**A PUSH FOR POLICY ACTION**

After severe rioting that nearly toppled the central government in July provoked a sense of urgency in several officials’ stances on Iran, a growing number of policy papers, memos, and cables offered sustained advocacy for Mossadegh’s removal—especially among top agents within the CIA. Only days after Mossadegh’s reinstatement, the State Department requested a “reappraisal of the situation” from the Embassy and CIA Station in Tehran, “to include (A) recommendations as to possible joint courses action by US–UK; (B) possible alternatives to Mosadeq (C) methods bring such alternative to power; (D) form encouragement and support which would be necessary.” A memo from Assistant Secretary of State Byroade to Secretary of State Acheson confirmed that State was “considering, in some cases in conjunction with CIA, every possible alternative to save Iran.”<sup>67</sup> The State Department advocated strengthening position of the US with Iranian tribes, “which could be a major factor of any coup d’état type of action.”<sup>68</sup> As the new

Middle Eastern operations. Dulles developed a hardline stance toward Mossadegh from the very beginning of the crisis, arguing for the removal of the Prime Minister in a series of conversations with top Agency officials in May 1951.<sup>70</sup> Dulles advocated for greater CIA intervention in Iran even before Mossadegh ascended to Prime Minister, stating in an early 1951 meeting that “Iran may be lost to the West in the coming 12 months” unless the Agency expanded the scale of its operations in the country.<sup>71</sup>

Although the CIA’s network and involvement in the country grew continuously throughout Mossadegh’s time as Prime Minister, Dulles continued to push for the Agency. In a meeting with then Director Smith, Allen Dulles expressed a desire to increase CIA capabilities in Iran, and during a conversation with policy planners, Roosevelt proposed using these new capabilities in the event of chaos or civil war, advocating that the agency stockpile weapons and ammunitions in neighboring countries to be used in such a contingency.<sup>72</sup> The CIA’s growing capabilities in Iran were ongoing operations from the ‘TPBEDAMN’ operations approved by NSC directive 107 during the early days of the oil dispute.<sup>73</sup> These operations sought to undermine the communist Tudeh party through black propaganda and to prepare for the contingencies that Roosevelt mentioned. Gasiorowski documented the TPBEDAMN program based on interviews with past agents, but the State Documents fill in crucial gaps in his narrative, and demonstrate a gradual drift toward sustained advocacy for the removal of Mossadegh. In the beginning, the CIA solely focused on the Tudeh party—TPBEDAMN, after all, stood for “Tudeh Party Be Damned,”



1953 Iranian coup d'état - Pro-shah sympathisers (1953)  
Source: *Pahlavi Dynasty*, *The Guardian* (Wikimedia Commons)

according to Gasiorowski—but after prominent staffers in the agency advocated an expanded intelligence role in Iran, TPEDAMN grew to encompass a number of parallel operations. By May 1953, the CIA operations were routinely attacking Tudeh supporters while inciting unrest among clerics and engaging in ‘psychological warfare’ against other perceived opponents of American interests in Iran.

Officials also increasingly emphasized the communist threat on Iran. An NIE drafted in November 1952 predicted that the National Front would hold onto power for the duration of 1953, and that the central government was unlikely to lose control to the Tudeh party “by constitutional means or by force” for the next year.<sup>74</sup> These views, however, were not a consensus within Washington or the Embassy in Tehran. A cable to the State Department from the Charge d’Affaires in Iran doubted the estimate’s conclusions, deeming it “unrealistic” as it failed to demonstrate how the National Front would stay in power amid an unstable political scene.<sup>75</sup> In a meeting with senior NSC officials in December, Ambassador Henderson voiced concern for the paper’s “dark side,” warning that the American position “could disintegrate very fast” if Iranians resorted to “rash things” when they felt US aide was not forthcoming.<sup>76</sup> The

CIA, too, expressed doubt in the NIE, with Roosevelt and other agents pushing for a word change. In a CIA draft paper proposing an update of NSC 136, staffers concluded that the “trends in Iran [were] unfavorable to the maintenance of control by a non-communist regime for an extended period of time” as Mossadegh’s coalition unwittingly “eliminated every alternative to their own rule except the Communist Tudeh Party.”<sup>77</sup> This rephrasing was reflected in the updated release of NSC 136/7 in January, and is only one example of many wording changes that demonstrate the increasing push among officials to highlight the communist threat. Previous scholars have identified the growing threat of communism as a primary factor in the coup, but until the *FRUS* release, there was little evidence of this mid-Administration shift in American rhetoric.

#### **BREAK WITH BRITAIN**

It was amid this ideological current that a growing disillusion with British policy in Iran came to dominant attitudes in the State Department and CIA. American action began to reach a fever-pitch as officials became increasingly frustrated with British constraints on American policy. Although one State Department official had concluded that the time had “arrived for a show-down with the U.K.” in September 1951,

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as Britain's efforts against Mossadegh heated up while the US still advocated diplomacy, it wasn't until mid-summer 1952 that this sentiment began to be reflected in policy proposals.<sup>78</sup> After the failure of Qavam's coup signaled the collapse of British influence on Iranian politics, frustrations with British policies increased in Washington while officials began to advocate a foreign policy in Iran that excised American actions from British influence. These frustrations increased drastically when Mossadegh ended diplomatic relations with Britain after a number of British political intrigues orchestrated by Woodhouse and Middleton.

An October State Department memo on a British intelligence estimate of Iran sent from London questioned the need for "absolute Anglo-United States solidarity," asserting that in the case of a break-down of the British position in Iran, "it would be in the interest of the free world for the United States to remain capable of independent action vis-à-vis Iran."<sup>79</sup> The same memo also questioned the "paradox of the British position in Iran," which acknowledged the need for monetary assistance to the Iranian state, but refused to allow its implementation until the oil dispute had been resolved.<sup>80</sup> Similarly, in a CIA draft paper proposing a language-oriented revision of NSC 136 in mid-November 1952, the Agency asserted that "the United Kingdom no longer possesses the capability unilaterally to assure stability in the area" and warned that "if present trends" continued unchecked, "Iran could be effectively lost to the free world before an actual communist takeover."<sup>81</sup>

Amid these growing frustrations with British policy, a new attitude toward America's role in Iran was taking shape in Washington. Throughout 1951 and early 1952, the CIA, State Department, and Department of Defense endorsed policies that supported Iranian security, but the agencies maintained that primary responsibility for that security fell on the United Kingdom. However, following Qavam's fall and what many staffers viewed as the imminent end of UK-Iranian diplomatic relations, American officials increasingly expressed a belief that British failure left the United States responsible for Iran's security and stability. According to the Third Secretary of the Tehran Embassy in 1953, "The British were kicked out, and we [filled] that gap."<sup>82</sup> A policy draft paper prepared in the Department of Defense and circulated by the NSC Executive Secretary on October 7, 1952 revised NSC directive 107/2<sup>83</sup> to emphasize the failures of the British and advocate unilateral US action, regardless of its effect on Anglo-American relations:

In the light of...the present dangerous situation in Iran, the failure of British policy and lack of British capabilities in Iran, increasing United States influence in the Middle East and increasing United States strength, the United States should take action to prevent Iran from falling to communism, even if this involves acting independently of the United

Kingdom and the risk of damaging our close relations with the United Kingdom. The United States should be prepared, if necessary, to accept primary responsibility for Iran, and for taking the initiative in the military support of Iran in the event of communist aggression or attempted subversion.<sup>84</sup>

Prior to this directive stressing the need to take primary responsibility for Iran, the NSC declared in the early stages of the Crisis that "responsibility for military operations in Iran were the United Kingdom's."<sup>85</sup> This draft proposal illustrates the increasing break between the British and US sides. Although the final coup in August was a collaborative effort between the two nations, the new documents from the State Department show that American officials were moving away from the British policy on Iran, and not toward it as the traditional narratives have largely assumed.

In March 1953, the NSC seriously considered unilateral action in Iran, considering how rumors of unilateral British intrigue were swirling, especially among tribes in the south with whom Britain had remained close. The President, too, was seriously considering unilateral action when a series of new economic troubles plagued the country after the February 1953 political crisis. "If I had \$500,000,000 of money to spend in secret" Eisenhower famously remarked in a March 4, 1953 NSC meeting, "I would get \$100,000,000 of it to Iran right now."<sup>86</sup> After the Secretary of the Treasury told President Eisenhower that funds were available to send to Iran, the President ordered Secretary of State Dulles to sit down with British Secretary of the Foreign Office Eden to "find out immediately how the British feel—whether they are ready to concede to us on this situation, or whether they are going to be stiff-necked" about American aid to Iran.<sup>87</sup> The United States still sought approval from London for any extension of aid, but as the memorandum from the meeting notes, "the question of unilateral action in Iran was clearly posed" and a break with UK policy lay on the horizon.<sup>88</sup>

### **THE THORNBURG PROPOSAL**

It was in November 1952, prior to Eisenhower taking office, that the CIA first began to consider a tangible, concerted action against Mossadegh's government. Traditional histories of the coup have placed the impetus of the coup on British intelligence officers who lobbied Washington in late 1952 after the election of a President poised to harden America's stance in Iran.<sup>89</sup> In a memoir, Christopher Woodhouse remembered pitching the idea to a receptive audience at the CIA only weeks after Eisenhower's election. Emphasizing the Soviet threat over considerations of the oil crisis, so as to not be "accused of using Americans to pull British chestnuts out of the fire," Woodhouse petitioned senior intelligence officers to carry the plan to the State Department.<sup>90</sup> However, internal CIA memorandums reveal that plans to carry out "what in effect would be a military coup," according to one CIA operative, were underway prior to Woodhouse's trip to Washington and

a detailed proposal was being disseminated throughout the agency as early as August 1952. This internal memorandum was written shortly after the July political crisis toppled the British government's diplomatic mission in Iran and shortly before the Department of Defense's revised NSC directive recommended more direct American action in the country.<sup>91</sup>

The "Thornburg program," as the prospective plan is referenced in inter-Agency letters, was prepared by Max Thornburg, an American oil executive and intelligence consultant who advised Mossadegh's government in 1952.<sup>92</sup> Thornburg's proposal was effectively for a coup d'état that would have allowed the Shah to remove Mossadegh and install a Prime Minister that would not challenge his authority. Thornburg advocated strengthening the Shah's position and prestige in Iranian politics while backing the Shah "in establishing a 'responsible' government...loyal to the Shah...and disposed to accept a reasonable settlement of the oil dispute."<sup>93</sup> Thornburg's proposal advocated US support in a series of programs aimed to bolster the Shah's position so that he could unilaterally negotiate an end to the oil dispute. As summed up by a CIA agent in an internal memo in September:

Mr. Thornburg has recommended an early, direct approach to the Shah for the purpose of inducing him to lead and carry out what in effect would be a military coup. The Shah would be assured by the U.S. and U.K. of full moral support, sufficient material assistance to tide Iran over until the oil issue was amicably settled, and detailed advice with respect to: (a) the implementation of the coup; (b) the formation of a new Government; (c) the carrying out of necessary reforms; and (d) the settlement of the oil controversy.

In addition to US support for the coup, if the Shah took control, Iran could expect economic assistance from the US to "restore a reasonable measure of financial stability within [the] country."<sup>94</sup> Thornburg's proposal did not reflect a consensus view within Washington, and it didn't receive an immediate warm-welcome in the CIA. CIA officials questioned the Shah's ability to execute the coup, the likelihood of gaining British support, and the risk of severe domestic fall-out from Mossadegh's removal. Nonetheless, the proposal was considered as potential policy and its initial planning was carried out.<sup>95</sup> The CIA even green-lit an inter-agency effort to develop a second, more feasible, plan for a coup after senior officials determined that the original Thornburg proposal was unlikely to succeed.<sup>96</sup> The fact that the proposal was made and considered make this previously undisclosed policy-option important as it marks the beginning of a steady drift toward policy proposals and intelligence estimates that highlight the communist threat and advocate for extraordinary U.S. actions to curtail it. Though Thornburg's program is the first declassified instance of advocacy for an actual military-backed coup d'état, he

wasn't working in an ideological vacuum. Officials within the agency—particularly Allen Dulles and Kermit Roosevelt—had been advocating decisive action in Iran since 1951 and '52. Since the initial NSC directive 107 authorizing covert intelligence operations in Iran, Roosevelt, Dulles, and other agents pressed for action in Iran, even as State Department contributions to NIEs argued that the Tudeh party stood little chance of overthrowing the central government.<sup>97</sup> Memos from agents in Washington and cables from the station in Tehran also illustrate that the CIA, working in concert with the Embassy, and often Ambassador Henderson, played a larger role in internal Iranian politics in 1951 and 1952 than previous historians have accounted for. All of these changes, however, occurred after a long history of British failure in Iran and growing frustrations with British policies that many in the Agency felt were needlessly hindering American national security goals.<sup>98</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The new documents from the State Department demonstrate that American policy in Iran from 1951-1953 was nuanced and that Eisenhower's decision to overthrow Mossadegh cannot be explained by one single event. Building on the narratives of historians that previously lacked access to these documents, this paper has shown that a convergence of factors motivated the coup, including many that had roots in Truman-era policies. The degradation of the Shah's position heightened American concerns regarding the stability of Iran's central government, while frustrations with British policy motivated Washington to separate US policy from British policy in Iran. Both of these factors, as well as a history of interventionist actions and policies during the Truman Administration, provoked a sustained effort toward Mossadegh's overthrow during the latter half of 1952 and into early 1953. The CIA might have collaborated with the British government during the coup planning process, but it was the attitudes of career American officials, assessments of the deteriorating situation, and a stalling of British policy vis-à-vis Mossadegh that were ultimately responsible for the fall of the Prime Minister. 🏛️

## Endnotes

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- [1] C.W. Woodhouse, Interview conducted in 1997 by Robert Fisk. In "With Sten Guns and Sovereigns Britain and US saved Iran's throne for the Shah." March 15, 1997. Independent, accessed online at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/with-sten-guns-and-sovereigns-britain-and-us-saved-irans-throne-for-the-shah-1272932.html>
- [2] For a review of secondary literature on these operations, see: Gasiorowski, Mark J. "The 1953 Coup D'état in Iran." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 19, no. 3 (1987): 261–86. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/163655> and Wm. Roger Luis, "Britain and the Overthrow of Mossadegh" *Mohammad Mosaddeq and the 1953 Coup in Iran*. 1 edition. eds. Mark Gasiorowski and Malcolm Byrne, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004, 126-177.
- [3] An earlier version of the same series released in 1988 featured no mention of U.S. or U.K. covert actions and was largely criticized as an overly censored, incomplete narrative of the coup.
- [4] Many of these insights were provided by Donald Wilbur, a senior intelligence official and later historian who played a prominent role in the planning and execution of the coup and wrote a secret history for the Agency's reflection one year after the coup d'état. This history was supplemented by later CIA historians and officially released in multiple versions between 2011 and 2013.
- [5] Such a study is important, in light of these new documents, and as recent political changes in the United States have placed a spotlight on the study of foreign policy implementation and warranted a study on the effect career diplomats, senior intelligence officials, and others in the foreign policy establishment have on the formation of foreign policy.
- [6] *FRUS, 1952-1954, Iran, 1951-1954*, ed. James C. Van Hook (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2017), Document 156.
- [7] Bill, James A. "America, Iran, and the politics of intervention, 1951-1953" in *Mussadiq, Iranian Nationalism, and Oil*, ed. Bill and Louis, 1988; Gasiorowski, Mark J. "The 1953 Coup D'état in Iran." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 19, no. 3 (1987): 261–86. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/163655>. Malcolm Byrne, "The Road to Intervention," in *Mohammad Mosaddeq and the 1953 Coup in Iran*. 1 edition. eds. Mark Gasiorowski and Malcolm Byrne, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004, 201-226; and Kinzer, Stephen. *All the Shah's Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2003.
- [8] Gasiorowski, Mark. "Review of The Coup: 1953, The CIA, and the Roots of Modern U.S.-Iranian Relations." *Middle East Journal* 67, no. 2 (2013): 315–17. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43698055>, 316.
- [9] Wm. Roger Luis, "Britain and the Overthrow of Mossadegh" *Mohammad Mosaddeq and the 1953 Coup in Iran*, 126-177.
- [10] Abrahamian, Ervand. *The Coup: 1953, the CIA, and the Roots of Modern U.S.-Iranian Relations*. Reprint edition. New York, NY u.a.: The New Press, 2015.
- [11] Gasiorowski, "The 1953 Coup D'état in Iran."
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- [13] Homa Katouzian, "Mossadegh's Government in Iranian History" in *Mohammad Mosaddeq and the 1953 Coup in Iran*. 1 edition. eds. Mark Gasiorowski and Malcolm Byrne, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004, 1-26.
- [14] Lenczowski, George. *Russia and the West in Iran, 1918-1948: A Study in Big-Power Rivalry*. New York, NY: Praeger, 1949, 76-77; Daniel, Elton L. *The History of Iran*. ABC-CLIO, 2012.
- [15] *Ibid.*
- [16] *Ibid*; Ferrier, Ronald W. "The Anglo-Iranian Oil Dispute: a triangular relationship" in *Musaddiq, Iranian Nationalism and Oil*. Ed. Louis, William Roger, and James A. Bill London: Tauris, 1988, 164-199, 166-170.
- [17] Rahnema, Ali. *Behind the 1953 Coup in Iran: Thugs, Turncoats, Soldiers, and Spooks*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- [18] *FRUS, 1951, The Near East and Africa, Volume V*, (Washington: Government Printing Office 1982), 268-276.
- [19] *Ibid*, 270.
- [20] *FRUS, 1952-1954 Iran, 1951-1954*, Document 6
- [21] *Ibid.*
- [22] John H. Stutesman, Transcript of an oral history conducted 1988 by William Burr. Foundation in Iranian Studies, Colombia University. In *Iran Country Reader*. Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, 18-64.
- [23] *Ibid.*
- [24] *FRUS, 1952-1954, Iran, 1951-1954*, ed. James C. Van Hook (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2017), Document 65.
- [25] Malcolm Byrne, "The Road to Intervention," in *Mohammad Mosaddeq and the 1953 Coup in Iran*. 1 edition. eds. Mark Gasiorowski and Malcolm Byrne, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004, 201-226.
- [26] *FRUS, 1952-1954, Iran, 1951-1954*, ed. James C. Van Hook (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2017), Document 65.
- [27] *FRUS, 1952-1954, Iran, 1951-1954*, Document 155.
- [28] Kennedy, Charles Stuart, and R. Lewis Hoffacker. Interview with Ambassador Lewis Hoffacker. 1989. Manuscript/Mixed Material. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mfdipbib001363/>.
- [29] *Ibid.*
- [30] *FRUS, 1952-1954, Iran, 1951-1954*, Document 65.
- [31] *Ibid*; *Ibid*, Document 6; *Ibid*, Document 153.
- [32] Wm. Roger Luis, "Britain and the Overthrow of Mossadegh" in *Mohammad Mosaddeq and the 1953 Coup in Iran*. 1 edition. eds. Mark Gasiorowski and Malcolm Byrne, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004, 126-177.
- [33] *Ibid.*
- [34] John Stutesman interview, 1988; Wm. Roger Luis, "Britain and the Overthrow of Mossadegh" *Mohammad Mosaddeq and the 1953 Coup in Iran*. 1 edition. eds. Mark Gasiorowski and Malcolm Byrne, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004, 126-177.

- [35] *Ibid.*
- [36] *Ibid.*
- [37] *FRUS, 1952-1954, Iran 1951-1954*, Document 42.
- [38] *Ibid.*
- [39] *FRUS, 1952-1954, Iran, 1951-1954*, ed. James C. Van Hook (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2017), Document 47.
- [40] *FRUS, 1952-1954, Iran, 1951-1954*, ed. James C. Van Hook (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2017), Document
- [41] *FRUS, 1952-1954, Iran, 1951-1954*, Document, 51.
- [42] *Ibid.*, Document 49.
- [43] The British Ambassador relayed his view that the Shah was ready to sack Mossadegh to Henderson during an informal meeting, which Henderson reported in a cable on September 25 (*FRUS, 1952-1954, Iran 1951-1954*, Document 45). This meeting occurred shortly after the Counselor of the British Embassy contacted an American diplomat to gauge American support in a potential successor.
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- [45] Rahnema, Ali. *Behind the 1953 Coup in Iran*.
- [46] *FRUS, 1952-1954, Iran, 1951-1954*, Document 164.
- [47] *FRUS, 1952-1954, Iran, 1951-1954, Document 164*.
- [48] Even with the release of the new documents, this aspect of the CIA's operation remains classified.
- [49] *Ibid.*, Document 69.
- [50] *FRUS, 1952-1954, Iran, 1951-1954*, Document 75.
- [51] *FRUS, 1952-1954, Iran, 1951-1953*, Document 69, 72-79.
- [52] *Ibid.*
- [53] Rahnema, Ali. *Behind the 1953 Coup in Iran; FRUS, 1952-1954, Iran, 1951-1953*, Document 97.
- [54] *Ibid.*
- [55] *Ibid; FRUS, 1952-1954, Iran, 1951-1953*, Document 92.
- [56] Rahnema, Ali. *Behind the 1953 Coup in Iran*.
- [57] *FRUS, 1952-1954, Iran, 1951-1954*, Document 99.
- [58] *Ibid.*
- [59] *Ibid.*, 97.
- [60] *Ibid.*
- [61] *Ibid.*, Document 104.
- [62] *Ibid.*, Document 104, 126.
- [63] *Ibid.*
- [64] *FRUS, 1952-1954, Iran, 1951-1954*, ed. James C. Van Hook (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2017), Document 132; *Ibid.*, Document 126.
- [65] *FRUS, 1952-1954, Iran, 1951-1954*, Document 51.
- [66] *Ibid.*
- [67] *Ibid.*, Document 101.
- [68] *Ibid.*
- [69] *Ibid.*, Document 59, 66.
- [70] *Ibid.*, Document 26.
- [71] *Ibid.*, Document 11.
- [72] *Ibid.*, Document 104, 105.
- [73] *Ibid.*
- [74] *FRUS, 1952-1954, Iran, 1951-1954*, Document 145.
- [75] *Ibid.*, 151.
- [76] *Ibid.*, 150.
- [77] *Ibid.*, 145.
- [78] *FRUS, 1952-1954, Iran, 1951-1954*, ed. James C. Van Hook (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2017), Document 47.
- [79] *FRUS, 1952-1954, Iran, 1951-1954*, Document 133.
- [80] *Ibid.*
- [81] *FRUS, 1952-1954, Iran, 1951-1954*, ed. James C. Van Hook (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2017), Document 144.
- [82] Kennedy, Charles Stuart, Interview with R. Lewis Hoffacker.
- [83] The revision was of NSC 107/2 (*FRUS, 1952-1954, Iran, 1951-1954*, Document 35) paragraph 5, which read as follows: "Because of United States commitments in other areas, the current understanding with the United Kingdom that it is responsible for the initiative in military support of Iran in the event of communist aggression should be continued but should be kept under review in light of the importance of Middle Eastern oil, the situation in Iran, British capabilities, increasing United States influence in the Middle East, and increasing United States strength."
- [84] *FRUS, 1952-1954, Iran, 1951-1954*, ed. James C. Van Hook (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2017), Document 128.
- [85] *FRUS, 1952-1954, Iran, 1951-1954*, Document 6.
- [86] *Ibid.*, Document 312.
- [87] *Ibid.*
- [88] *FRUS, 1952-1954, Iran, 1951-1954*, Document 312.
- [89] For a comprehensive overview of this historical literature, see: Abrahamian "The 1953 Coup in Iran," Gasiorowski, Mark J. "The 1953 Coup D'état in Iran." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 19, no. 3 (1987): 261-86. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/163655>; and Kinzer, Stephen. *All the Shah's Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2003, 48-52.
- [90] C.M. Woodhouse, *Something Ventured* (London: Granada, 1982), 117; Kinzer, *All the Shah's Men; CIA, History of the 1953 Coup*.
- [91] *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954, Iran, 1951-1954*, ed. James C. Van Hook (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2017), Document 122.
- [92] John Stutesman, a consular official and later Officer in Charge of Iranian Affairs at the State Department, remembered Thornburg, a former Standard Oil executive and an 'oil buccaneer in the region, as a preeminent figure in the country, and "believed that he had lines of communications to the National Front" while he lived in Tehran (John H. Stutesman, Transcript of an oral history conducted 1988 by William Burr. Foundation in Iranian Studies, Colombia University. In *Iran Country Reader*. Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, 18-64.)
- [93] *FRUS, 1952-1954, Iran, 1951-1954*, ed. James C. Van Hook (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2017), Document 118.
- [94] *FRUS, 1952-1954, Iran, 1951-1954*, ed. James C. Van Hook (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2017), Document 118.
- [95] *Ibid.*, Document 122, 123, 126.
- [96] *Ibid.*, Document 122.
- [97] *FRUS, 1952-1954, Iran, 1951-1954*, Document 143.
- [98] *Ibid.*, Document 138-145.