

“Catastrophic Success”

“America goes not abroad in search of monsters to destroy.”

Secretary of State John Quincy Adams to the House of Representatives, July 4, 1821.

Oil is discovered

On May 26, 1908, Englishman William Knox D’Arcy, after an eight-year search in Iran, discovered what has proved to be the second largest oil field in the world. Crowed Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, it was “a prize from fairyland beyond our wildest dreams.” The English government hurried to pay 2 million pounds (then about \$10 million), to buy the majority interest in the concessionaire, the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC). To fund the indolent, careless life the ruling Qajar monarchs preferred, they sold concessions to European governments and even private citizens for a pittance: a telegraph line, a contract to print the currency, the monopoly of the caviar trade, to another the tobacco trade. As for the AIOC, eighty-four percent of the profits would go to Britain, the residue to Iran. His Majesty’s navy got first call on the oil, at a steep discount. As in Hollywood, management—the British—kept the books and never allowed an Iranian audit. It was a prize Great Britain intended to keep: Under the Anglo-Persian Treaty of 1919, Britain assumed control of Iran’s army, treasury, communication system, and transport network, and in 1933 the expiration date for the oil concession was extended from 1961 to 1993.

Conditions at the Abadan Refinery

The Anglo-Iranian Oil Company was not a good boss. Its Iranian workers lived a nightmare out of Dickens. It never kept its promises to provide training so that Iranians could advance in the company, nor did it build the schools, hospitals, roads, and telephone system it had promised. Iranian wages were 50 cents a day, no vacation pay, sick leave, or disability compensation. In 1951 Averill Harriman, touring the Abadan refinery (the largest in the world employing 50,000 men), cabled President Truman that for “a large Western Oil company” employee housing was “shocking . . .” The workers lived in a shantytown they called Kaghazabadf—“Paper Town.” Their dwellings made of

rusted oil drums hammered flat, turned into veritable ovens in the torrid heat of summer. Lacking running water, electricity, or sewers, in winter the workers and their families were moved into big halls housing up to 4,000 people; without partitions or lavatories, each family occupied a blanket space. With streets knee deep in mud, canoes ran alongside the roadways for transport. Then there was the stench: every day 20,000 barrels—one million tons a year--were burned indiscriminately for the refinery to function--wasted oil for which Iran was never paid. While “Paper Town” hadn’t a tree, a bath, or a teashop, British employees and managers had air-conditioned offices, as did their clubs; their residential section had lawns, flowerbeds, tennis courts, and swimming pools. One result were strikes and rioting workers; another was they bred support for the small communist Tudeh Party, founded during World War II.

Over time, the one-sided division of the profits and subordination to England galled Iran’s nationalists, and on May 1, 1951, three days after his election, a new prime minister of Iran’s parliament, the Majlis, had the temerity to nationalize the AIOC, overturning arrangements in the industry more than four decades old and the main source of income for both the United Kingdom and Iran.

What impudence! Before accepting the office of prime minister, he was shrewd enough to hold a vote of the Majlis on a resolution to nationalize the AIOC (it passed unanimously). He was a man who believed that eliminating “the power of the British Company would also eliminate corruption and intrigue, and foreign influence in [Iran’s] internal affairs.” Oil revenues would meet the “entire government budget and combat poverty, disease, and backwardness among our people.” “Once tutelage has ceased, Iran will have achieved its economic and political independence.”

Who was Mohamed Mossadegh? Born to a prominent family in Tehran in 1882, his mother a granddaughter of a reformist prince of the ruling Qajar dynasty, his father for over thirty years was the monarchy’s finance minister. Mossadegh attended Tehran University and pursued graduate studies leading to the B.A. and an M.A. from the Ecole Libre Sciences Politiques (“Science Po” in Paris), and a doctorate of law from the

University of Neuchatel, Switzerland (the first Iranian to win a law doctorate from a European university). Elected to the Majlis at 24, Mossadegh would hold a number of government posts (finance minister, foreign minister), gaining a reputation for honesty, brilliance, and integrity. Having grown up seeing foreigners outrageously mulct the country, he had two central passions: for the rule of law and democracy, which made him an enemy of autocracy and the shah; and nationalism, the conviction that Iranians must rule themselves, which made him the enemy of the AIOC. England wasn't having any.

To say that people differed about Mohammed Mossadegh is a massive understatement. To the British, his main adversary, he was, by turns, wild, erratic, crazy, gangster-like, fanatical, absurd, dictatorial, demagogic, inflammatory, cunning, slippery, completely unscrupulous, clearly imbalanced, a wily oriental, who looks like a cab horse, diffus[ing] a slight reek of opium." To Kermit Roosevelt, grandson of Theodore Roosevelt and CIA's man on the spot whose job will be to get rid of Mossadegh, described a right-wing politician, a political megalomaniac, an "ill-tempered, erratic old peasant," "vain, opinionated, domineering," but also possessing great oratorical power. Dean Acheson saw "a rich, reactionary, feudal-minded Persian inspired by fanatical hatred of the British" determined to expel them from Iran "regardless of cost." The confidential profile of Mossadegh President Truman received said he was "supported by majority of population," "witty," "affable," "honest," and "well-informed." It is fair to say that he was difficult but able, embodying Iranian traits: touchy, hyper-nationalistic, stubborn, suspicious. (Richard Helms who served as CIA director and ambassador to Iran, 1966-1976, said he could never understand Iranians.)

Britain's economic problems 1945-1953

World War I dealt a terrific blow to Britain's finances and world stature; World War II, after only six months of real fighting, sank them. Unable to pay for the equipment, supplies, and foodstuffs needed to keep itself in the war, made it necessary for Franklin Roosevelt to invent Lend-Lease. The wartime need for ships, tanks, and planes left consumer goods in short supply, which explain the worn and shabby clothing and the bland and inadequate English diet of the period; the contrast between the quality

of the food, pay, and uniforms of the American military in England with that of the British was telling, and much resented by the latter.

Postwar Britain, unlike the United States, experienced continued austerity. Wartime controls and the rationing of food, clothing, and shoes, begun in 1940, continued to growing discontent to 1951. Recall Winston Smith in the novel 1984 (set in the future, but describing conditions in 1948), reusing razor blades, the unappetizing food, the lack of fuel, building rubble still in the streets, gas fires turned low. Even the elements proved unhelpful—the harsh winter of 1946, 1947 led to coal shortages injurious both to comfort and industrial production. Capital to renew ageing factories and to cover the costs of shifting from war production to consumer goods was wanting; balance of trade problems twice required the pound's devaluation. England, it was said, was “ruined,” “exhausted,” “shattered,” “bankrupt.” Forced to give up India, the Mau Mau active in Kenya, and now Iran had taken its oil company, a British diplomat wailed that if the momentum was not reversed “we will be driven back to our island, where we shall starve.” Little wonder that Britain was so intransigent in defense of its AIOC profits. The bleeding had to be stopped.

The Fuzzy Wuzzy [WOG] factor

Before discussing the efforts of Iran and Great Britain to negotiate their differences, it's necessary to bring in what we might call the “fuzzy wuzzy” or the WOG [Worthy Oriental Gentlemen] factor—the English-speaking world's unshakeable conviction that non-Westerners require the tutelage of the West (what Kipling in “The White Man's Burden” called the “lesser breeds”). Keep it in mind--it is crucial to understanding the dealings between Mossadegh and the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. To show what I mean, as one of the latter put it: “We English have had hundreds of years of experience on how to treat the natives. Socialism is all right back home (Mossadegh would constantly bring attention to the Labour government's current policy of nationalizing industries), but out here you have to be the master.” An example of the Fuzzy Wuzzy factor is the British diplomat whose “study” of Iranian psychology found the typical Iranian motivated by

an unabashed dishonesty, fatalistic outlook, [and] indifference to suffering. . . .

The ordinary Persian is vain, unprincipled, eager to promise what he knows he is incapable or has no intention of performing, wedded to procrastination, lacking in perseverance and energy, but amenable to discipline. Above all, he enjoys intrigue and readily turns to prevarication and dishonesty whenever there is a possibility of personal gain. Although an accomplished liar, he does not expect to be believed. They easily acquire a superficial knowledge of technical subjects, deluding themselves into the belief that it is profound.”

Churchill’s foreign minister Anthony Eden, was more succinct: Iranians were “rug dealers, that’s all.”

Negotiations between the AIOC and Mossadegh began in June 1951; Mossadegh offered to set aside twenty-five percent of net profits as compensation to Great Britain, employ its British employees (Iranians had not been trained as technicians), and continue to sell under the existing arrangements set by the big oil companies. The contempt the British had for Iran can be measured by their initial proposal--that all assets and installations of the AIOC be transferred to a new National Persian Oil Company, which in turn would be transferred to a “third company” formed and operated by the former AIOC officials! As Mossadegh told reporters, the idea was “childish and designed to deceive children.” Ominously, back in London the leader of the British delegation told reporters there was “no hope of oil negotiations reopening” while Mossadegh was in power.

Six weeks later a second British delegation offered a thinly disguised iteration of the previous proposal. Mossadegh rejected it, but declared his willingness to discuss oil sales to Britain to meet its domestic needs, the continued employment of British workers in the new National Iranian Oil Company, and the amount of money Iran should pay for the AIOC for its nationalized assets. That same day, the British shut down the Abadan refinery. The U.S. ambassador to Iran informed the Truman Administration that Britain was determined to overthrow Mossadegh, “a man with 95 to 98 percent support” among Iranians: “It is utter folly to push him out.”

That was President Truman's view: worried, Truman sent Averill Harriman to help the principals find a way out of the stalemate. For the experienced Harriman, issues were a matter of practicalities--technical challenges to be resolved by rational analysis, discussion, compromise. In this dispute, however, neither the AIOC nor Mossadegh would or could budge. For Iranians, determined to eliminate British operations and influence, Iran was at a sublime moment of liberation. In any case, Mossadegh could not yield on nationalization. He had gained office on a promise to nationalize the oil, his popularity was dependent on that pursuit, and then, too, there was the example of the prime minister who had been assassinated two months before because his willingness to continue negotiations with the British was taken as evidence that he was open to compromise on nationalization. As the influential Ayatollah Abolqasem Kashani told Harriman; "If [Mossadegh] yields his blood will flow like [Ali] Razmara's."

Truman, believing that to prevent a communist coup Mossadegh should stay, told Churchill that on no account would the U.S. support an invasion, and when negotiations broke down in October, calls the British "blockheaded." Secretary of State Dean Acheson, at more length, told the British the same thing. And since "the British were so obstructive and determined" on a policy of "rule or ruin policy in Iran," Acheson thought the U.S. should strike out on an independent policy." In the end, the Truman Administration, while it did little to encourage the British, our strongest ally, it didn't provide Iran with aid or loans to soften its economic hardships either.

The British Response

With negotiations going nowhere, and after considering bribing Mossadegh, invasion, even assassination, Britain chose to strangle Iran's economy. Stepping up its naval presence in the Gulf, it declared a blockade (an act of war), froze Iran's financial assets held in British banks, and enforced a worldwide boycott of Iranian oil. (By impoverishing the country, Britain made any compensation payments impossible.) In September 1951 the AIOC closed down operations (subtly sabotaging equipment to prevent production from resuming), and evacuated its technicians. Unfortunately for the

British, the head of the AIOC in Tehran left damning papers in his office for the Iranians to find: they showed that the company bribed members of parliament and cabinet ministers, forced opponents of the company out of office, and paid newspapers to publish articles hostile to the National Front (nationalists, trade unions, social and civic reformers founded in 1944 and led by Mossadegh).

The AIOC's efforts to get the United Nations Security and the World Court to intervene come to nothing; the British stall, waiting on the embargo to bring hard times and public unrest to Iran. Oil production dropped from 241 million barrels in 1950 to 10 million in 1952. Great economic hardship in Iran ensued, yet Iranians become more nationalistic than ever. At the United Nations Mossadegh's oratory routs Britain's spokesman. Now a world figure (Time magazine's "1951 Man of the year") Mossadegh rejected it. Unable to budge him, Britain decides on his overthrow.

The Plot

At this point, we might well ask, "Why would the Eisenhower Administration want to overthrow Mossadegh anyway? In part, there was the new administration's need for a win against Communism somewhere, and while no one who knew Mossadegh could call him a communist with a straight face, perhaps he was insufficiently anti-communist? As an indication of Dulles' dissatisfaction with the Korean stalemate, he urged Eisenhower to renounce the ceasefire, send the army into the demilitarized zone, and not rest until all of Asia is shown "our clear superiority in giving the Chinese one hell of a licking." Shut out of the presidency for two decades, the Republican Party had promised to carry the fight to the enemy, had promised victories. Since Russia, Eastern Europe, and China were ruled out—too big, too dangerous—something smaller would have to do. As an open society, Iran was an easy target and we wanted a piece of its oil; then, too, there was the "loss of China" business. Would Iran be lost, too?

The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was well-positioned for the sort of operation it was about to undertake: The 1947 act establishing the CIA listed specific duties, but also authorized "such other functions and duties related to intelligence

affecting national security as the National Security Council (NSC) may from time to time direct.” A year later, the National Security Council paper, NSC-10, spelled it out: The CIA could engage in “propaganda, economic warfare, preventive direct action including sabotage, demolition and evacuation measures, subversion against hostile states, including aid to underground resistance movements, guerillas, and refugee liberation groups.” Such a mandate, as Secretary of State Dean Acheson warned President Harry Truman, meant that neither the president nor the National Security Council, “nor anyone would be in a position to know what the CIA was doing or control it.” Operations were planned to hide the hand of the US Government so if discovered, “plausible deniability” would work. Often the denials were implausible. No matter.

In October 1952, Prime Minister Mossadegh, having evidence of the ongoing effort to overthrow him, declared Great Britain an enemy and expelled its officials from the country. In early November, Kermit Roosevelt, grandson of Theodore Roosevelt and the CIA’s Near East operations’ chief, traveled to Tehran to “clean up the mess” for his friends in British intelligence--meaning paying off Britain’s network of Iranian agents and recruiting them for the U.S. Stopping in London to report to MI-6, he learns that Churchill wants the CIA to overthrow Mossadegh; Roosevelt tells the British that while there’s no chance the Truman Administration would sanction it, President-elect Eisenhower and John Foster Dulles might: Mossadegh’s supposed willingness to tolerate Communists, Iran’s oil riches, and its thousand mile border with Russia were the attractions. Beyond these, the Republicans had campaigned on rolling back the Russians, not mere containment. By Thanksgiving, Monty Woodhouse, head of British intelligence, was in Washington to discuss getting rid of Mossadegh with his opposite number, General Walter Bedell Smith.

Between November and Eisenhower’s inauguration there were insistent discussions between the incoming administration and the British, because a few days before the inauguration, Bedell Smith (leaving the CIA to become an undersecretary at State), told Kermit Roosevelt to “pull up your socks and get going” on the coup. Smith had tried to get the Truman Administration to do it. Now he tells Roosevelt “to get on with it,” that

the British and Dulles will “OK” it and that Eisenhower “will agree.” Days later, Loy Henderson, the new U.S. ambassador to Iran, began contacting likely Iranian conspirators and proposed Kermit Roosevelt to head the coup. For the past two years Roosevelt had had the CIA’s mandate to undermine the communist Tudeh Party, and had ample funds (at least a million dollars a year) to do so. Chief among Britain’s Iranian assets available to Roosevelt were the Rashidian brothers; sons of an Iranian Anglophile wealthy from shipping, banking, and real estate, the Rashidians had influence in the Majlis, banking, senior military officers, publishing, bazaar merchants, and at least one member of Mossadegh’s cabinet.

As the plotting in Washington and Tehran proceeded through late winter and into spring 1953, in meetings and in public Foster Dulles’s insisted that Iran might go communist and, if so, all the dominoes in the Middle East would fall and the loss of Iran’s oil to the West would mean gas rationing in the U.S. Soon Roosevelt and Woodhouse are informed that CIA director Allen Dulles had given the go-ahead for the coup. Ironically, in March, Stalin just having died, Eisenhower gave a speech before the National Press Association, “The Chance for Peace.” In it he listed five “precepts” of United States policy, two of them pertinent here: “Every nation’s right to form a government and an economics system of its own choosing is inalienable,” and “Any nation attempting to dictate to other nations their form of government is indefensible.” About this time the CIA station chief in Tehran warned headquarters that it made no sense to depose Mossadegh; it would only serve Anglo-French colonialists. Allen Dulles recalled him to Washington *post haste*. Somebody always fails to get the memo.

Ten men representing the State Department, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the National Security Council, gathered in John Foster Dulles’ office in late June 1952 to hear Kermit Roosevelt outline the plan to overthrow Mossadegh. Picking up the Roosevelt’s twenty-two page report, Dulles opened the meeting with “So this is how we get rid of that madman Mossadegh!” Called to speak, Roosevelt expressed his conviction that the Red threat was real, that Mossadegh, however unwittingly, was an ally of Russia, but that the army and the people were loyal to the shah. What the United States had to

organize was “the necessary military and popular backing . . . “ He saw “no prospect of failure.” The cost, he thought would be minimal--\$100,000 or \$200,000. (He’s given \$1 million and as much more as needed.) In any case, if nothing were done Iran would fall to the local Reds, with the Soviets “right behind them.” Ambassador Henderson tells Foster Dulles that he doesn’t like [the coup] at all, “But we are confronted by a desperate, dangerous situation, and a madman who would ally himself with the Russians.” That’s that, then,” said Dulles: “Let’s get going.”

Reflecting on the June meeting in his 1979 book, Countercoup, Roosevelt mused that though the matter “deserved thorough examination” at the highest level, there had been no real discussion, nor any legal or ethical issues raised. Of the ten men present, he thought half would have opposed the coup but, understanding that the decision had been made, lacked the courage to speak. Neither Allen nor Foster Dulles ever gathered subordinates to discuss whether the coup was good idea, never considered alternatives or asked views. At the time, the State Department had two experts on Iran—neither knew of the plot.

For the coup to succeed, Roosevelt had to convince a fearful Shah that the United States and Great Britain were on his side and would provide whatever was needed to force Mossadegh out. Roosevelt pressured the shah, insisting that the coup would take place and fabricated a message from Eisenhower wishing “God speed to the Pahlavis and the Roosevelts.” “I have complete faith that you will get this done!” Next, Roosevelt persuaded the shah to produce two “firmans”—decrees—(drafted by the CIA) one dismissing Mossadegh, a second replacing him with General Fahzollah Zahedi.

Overthrow, August, 14 -19 1953

On July 19, 1953, in the best traditions of the spy trade, “James Lockridge,” aka Kermit Roosevelt, slipped into Iran from Iraq and begins sowing disinformation for D-Day, August 14th. At first, everything goes wrong, beginning with the cat being out of the bag: Five weeks before, the Tudeh Party’s clandestine radio station had warned that that the Central Intelligence Agency and General Fahzolloh Zahedi were “working to

liquidate the Mossadegh government.” Mossadegh, also aware a plot was in the works (though not America’s part), mobilized a loyal garrison to defend his home with tanks and when Zahedi’s man, a colonel, tries to serve the firmans removing Mossadegh and appointing Zahedi, he is arrested. Roosevelt discovers that Zahedi, having spent most of the summer in hiding, had recruited neither officers nor troops for the coup. The shah, waiting at a safe distance at his Caspian Sea resort, panics and flees to Baghdad en route to Rome. Radio Tehran announced the coup’s failure early on August 16th, the coup’s third day. Unaware of Roosevelt’s presence in Tehran and America’s role, Mossadegh concludes that the shah’s flight had ended the danger.

It might have done if Roosevelt hadn’t ignored instructions from headquarters to call it off. Instead, Roosevelt improvises: working with a U.S. army officer he recruits Iranian officers, gathers equipment, and busses tribesmen in from countryside (having paid their leaders). He hands his Iranian agents \$50,000 to produce a crowd next day to pose as communists and terrorize the city. Led by exercise club members, weightlifters, and circus strongmen shouting “Long live the Shah,” produces the desired chaos. Government offices, pro-Mossadegh newspapers, and structures all over the city are sacked. The Ayatollah Kashani and his 51-year-old disciple, Ruhollah Khomeini, are part of the crowd. At least a hundred people die on the streets that day. By the afternoon of August 19th, Radio Tehran, having been seized by the plotters, announces that the shah has dismissed Mossadegh, General Zahedi is in, and the shah is coming home. (None of this had happened yet—Kermit Roosevelt called it a “pre-truth.”) Fittingly, the recorded music played to herald the announcement was “The Star Spangled Banner.”

Hearing the good news in Rome the shah exults “I knew they loved me!” and returns to Tehran. [One recalls Benjamin Harrison’s expression of gratitude to Providence for his election in 1888; observed his campaign manager disgustedly, “He’ll never know how close some of us had to approach the penitentiary to get him elected.”] General Zahedi is given \$1 million in cash for himself and \$5 million more to crush any opposition (600 loyalist officers, several student leaders, and some Tudeh leaders are shot).

In the meantime, Mossadegh is at Ahmad Abad, his village outside Tehran, defended by loyal troops. Iranian military units supplied with U.S. Army trucks and equipment shell the residence. In all, some 300 die and hundreds more are wounded before the defenders are forced to surrender. The house is leveled. Mossadegh escapes but two days later surrenders. After a six-week military trial he is found guilty as a traitor and condemned to death; Mossadegh's popularity is such that the new regime could not chance a more brutal fate and the sentence is commuted to three years solitary confinement in prison followed by house arrest for life. His only companions are his family and a small circle of friends. In 1967, Mohhamed Mossadegh died, age 85, at Tehran hospital. The shah refused him burial in the cemetery of the martyrs, and his body was interred in the dining room of his house in Ahmad-Abad. His reputation as an "honest patriot" remains intact to this day, though he is too secular for Iran's ruling theocrats.

Iran, 1953, the template for coups

The Iran operation becomes the template for all subsequent American coups against disfavored regimes: In Iran start by bribing newspaper columnists and publishers, other influentials (in Islamic societies the mullahs and tribal leaders), members of the government, and over and over denounce the regime and all its works; use Big Lies, not little ones, and constant repetition to create fears; farcically, Mossadegh was accused of being an atheist, a Jew, a homosexual, a communist, even a British agent. Rent the allegiance of soldiers and street mobs; suborn key military officers and the police, hire thugs and bullyboys to rampage about shouting "We love Mohammed Mossadegh and Communism!" Counter that mob with another to attack the first, producing chaos. The process is messy, since few or none, not even the puppet master Roosevelt, can be sure what's what. In these ways "the CIA created a degree of violence sufficient to stage a coup."

Seen as the CIA's "greatest triumph," Kermit Roosevelt is a hero; he proved the thing could be done and the CIA boys were the ones to do it. Of course, the Iranian people would not forget by whom and how the shah had been installed. Roosevelt made

much of telling the shah that he owed the United States and Great Britain nothing, knowing full well that the shah owed everything to the former and a great deal to the latter. In his diary Eisenhower mused that Mossadegh's defeat was a serious blow to the USSR, and marveled at the low loss of life--a few hundred, none American. Clearly, coups d'états will be the coming thing in the pursuit of America's foreign policy goals. Guatemala is next up.

Consequences of the 1953 coup

The lesson the New York Times drew from the Iran coup of 1953 was that “underdeveloped countries with rich resources now have an object lesson in the heavy cost that must be paid by one of their number which goes berserk with fanatical nationalism.”

Indeed, Washington's delight with the Iran coup led straight to Guatemala where an upstart social democrat, Jacobo Arbenz-Guzman, was busily instituting land reforms and raising taxes on the United Fruit Company, a client of the Dulleses' old law firm, Sullivan and Cromwell. Roosevelt says he told Foster Dulles that if “we do this again, we must be sure that people and the army want what we want.” But Dulles “did not want to hear what [he] was saying.” Allen Dulles offered Roosevelt the command of the plot against Guatemala “already in preparation,” but a quick check showed that his conditions were not met and he declined. Roosevelt left the agency to become Gulf Oil's director of government relations and later opened his own lobbying firm.

How did Guatemala fare after Jacob Arbenz was overthrown? Not well: it experienced a parade of dictators and continuous civil war lasting decades (1963-1999). Between 1978 and 1984 the UN estimated that Guatemalan soldiers killed some 180,000 people, mostly unarmed peasants, mostly Ixils. Banned from arming Guatemala, President Reagan asked Israel to do it, a precursor of the Iran-Contra affair. The CIA deposed or tried to depose leaders from Cuba, Chile, Nicaragua, Indonesia, the Congo and Vietnam—all in violation of Eisenhower's “precepts”—national self-determination

and non-interference in another's domestic affairs. The price exacted was not small and are measured in lost civil and political rights, state terror, disappearances, and massacres.

1953 Iran and 2003 Iraq Compared

In both, oil was an important factor; in both the threat to U.S. interests was grossly exaggerated. The communist Tudeh Party was neither ready nor likely to take over Iran in 1953 or ever; nor was Saddam Hussein an "existential" threat to his neighbors, to Israel, or to U.S. interests after the first Gulf War and its defeat in the eight year war with Iran. In both, the Republican administrations involved were filled with people hot to do big things in foreign affairs. In 1953 Eisenhower-Dulles (at least rhetorically) was committed to the "rollback" of communism; in 2003, the Bush Administration seized on the September 11 disaster to remake the Middle East according to its lights, conniving at their own ignorance in their haste to get a big win. The consequences of both 1953 and 2003 were unanticipated and bad.

As for contrasts, the threat of a communism takeover was not an excuse for intervention in the 2003 Iraq War; and that war was an invasion and occupation, not a coup. In money and lives lost, especially American lives, the 1953 coup was covert and cheap (\$19 million is one estimate), while the invasion-occupation of Iraq brought huge financial costs and was not cheap in lives, especially Iraqi lives. Now, in 2014, violence is endemic and no one would be surprised if Iraq separates into Shi'a, Sunni, and Kurdish states. Medical costs for seriously injured American troops over their lifetimes will prove immense. The time it took the American people to sour on each differed. Satisfaction with the Iran coup took 26 years to dissipate (1953-1979); our romance with the Iraq War took only from 19 March 2003 when it began, to August, or at most, summer 2004 to evaporate.

"Catastrophic success" was the term President George W. Bush applied to the Iraq War at a West Virginia rally the day before the 2004 Republican National Convention. Admitting that there were no "weapons of mass destruction" found in Iraq, nevertheless he would invade again because Saddam Hussein could pass the "knowhow"

of WMD to other countries. He would've used different tactics had he known "that an enemy that should have surrendered or been done in escaped and lived to fight another day."

Whether he coined it or not, Bush did better than he knows: "Catastrophic success" serves all too well as a shorthand description for all too many of our foreign policy adventures. One might say, it is an indispensable concept.

What are we to conclude?

"O would some power the giftie gie us
To see ourselves as others see us."

Robert Burns, "To Louise"

For Further Reading

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Additional Notes

Consequences for Iran

The chance that Iran would become a stable democracy was cut short by Mossadegh's overthrow and led directly to the Iranian revolution of 1979 and the humiliation of the hostage crisis. As the head of the British SIS in Washington put it, it's easy to see the connection of '79 to '53: "At the time we were simply relieved that a threat to British interests had been removed." That the shah would use power so tyrannically wasn't thought of.

The shah began by imposing martial law, lasting three years; Iran becomes the centerpiece of American foreign policy in the Islamic world. For the next 26 years Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlavi was America's closest ally in the Third World. For Cold War purposes, Iran's thousand-mile border with the USSR provided convenient listening posts and bases for surveillance flights. Savak, the shah's intelligence agency, built on the model of the East German Stasi, was an American and Israeli creation. It became notorious for employing the whole toolbox of torture. In 1975 Amnesty International reported that no country had a worse human rights record than Iran. Significantly, the shah left the mosques alone, with the result that they become the only places--and mullahs the only people, where one was able to talk freely. To keep its hold on Iran, the U.S. doled out an estimated \$400 million a year to the mullahs. It was the cut off of these funds by the Carter Administration that marked the beginning of end for the shah. Discouraged by the regime from contacts with citizens, the CIA missed the danger signs.

By 1979, hatred of the shah, and his sponsor, the United States, was palpable among all classes of Iranian society. Iranians blamed America for his excesses, and drank deeply of their humiliation. On January 16, 1979 the shah flees, the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini arrives from exile, and in November student militants, fearful that the shah will be returned to power by the U.S. seize the American embassy. Iran becomes a repressive theocracy at home and a supporter of terror abroad— Hamas, Hezbollah, etc.— and is implicated in the deaths of the 214 marines killed in Lebanon, 19 other Americans

in Saudi Arabia, the 93 dead in the bombing of the Jewish Community Center in Buenos Aires. In March 2000 Secretary of State Madeline Albright expresses regret for the coup.

Iran's Islamic Revolution radically reshaped the strategic map of the Middle East and Central Asia to America's detriment; the United States traded a secular moderniser, democratic intellectual, and patriot for a reactionary Shi'a Islamic "Supreme Religious Leader." Ironically, although ignored by the present regime because of his secularism and western manner, Mohammed Mossadegh served as rallying point for the 1979 revolution and remains one of the most popular figures in Iranian history.

Great Britain lost its monopoly of Iran's oil, but was generously compensated; under the new arrangement, as British Petroleum, it retained a 40 percent share (U.S. companies shared 40 percent, with 15 percent to the Dutch, and some to France). The U.S. did get oil at advantageous prices for 20 years.

Was there a danger of a Red takeover?

How serious was the danger of a communist takeover under Mossadegh? In his book, Countercoup, Roosevelt offered no evidence, only assertions of "fact," that the Communist threat was real and that Mossadegh's presence was a great threat. Truman's ambassador to Iran, George McGhee, regarded the prime minister as "a patriotic Iranian nationalist with no reason to be attracted to socialism." Mossadegh's relations with the Tudeh Party were complicated: Wrongly blamed for an attempted assassination attempt on the shah, Tudeh was declared illegal in 1949 by the shah; Mossadegh allowed it operate, partly out of democratic conviction, partly because the Tudeh supported nationalization of the AIOC, as did Mossadegh's National Front, and he needed its support. He even appointed some party members to government posts.

As for relations between the Tudeh Communist Party and the National Front, Tudeh whole-heartedly supported nationalization of the AIOC. As for the rest, a State Department intelligence report, January 9, 1953, found that "opposition to Mossadegh's National Front came from vested interests [religious leaders, merchants,] and the Tudeh

Party.” Later, in July, Foster Dulles himself testified to a senate committee, July 1953, that there was “no substantial evidence” that Iran was cooperating with the USSR, noting that, on the whole, “Moslems” opposed Communism “although at times” the Government “appears to rely for support on the Tudeh Party, which is communistic.”

Like all communist parties, Tudeh tended to followed Moscow’s line; its feelings about Mossadegh, a wealthy, aristocratic, eccentric landlord, yet one standing up to the colonialists, were ambiguous. It supported Mossadegh when it suited their interests, and when he didn’t, attacked him bitterly. The communists were like the ayatollah’s. The same was true for Mossadegh: in July 1951, pressured by Ambassador Henderson’s complaints regarding the safety of US citizens in Tehran, Mossadegh ordered a Tudeh-sponsored demonstration suppressed by the police; some 100 died and 500 were injured. Small, but influential, any move by the Tudeh Party to grab power would see Iranians unite to oppose it.

As for the Soviet Union, Mossadegh helped end its presence in northern Iran, and in 1947 led the Majlis’ rejection of a government proposal for a joint USSR-Iranian effort to exploit the oil present in that part of the country. Notably, given the American coup and the supposedly powerful Tudeh Party, the USSR was absolutely quiescent.

We ought to remember that Mossadegh intended to use the revenues from the expropriation of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (later British Petroleum, BP) to fund his social welfare policies--social security, rent control, land reform, sick benefits, and others. Granted special powers by parliament, unemployment compensation was introduced; peasants were freed from forced labor on landlords’ estates; 20 percent of landlords’ rent was garnished for pest control, rural housing, public baths. He imposed heavy taxes on the wealthy, and supported women’s rights, religious freedom, and permitted the courts and universities to function freely. Of course, given his overthrow, much less was achieved.

Effects of coup on world affairs:

Fearing that Iran's Islamic Revolution would spill over into its southern republics, the "Stans," the USSR invaded Afghanistan to prop up its client there. In response, the U.S. supplied weapons to the Afghan resistance and chose to aid Iraq in its war with Iran, 1980-1988, deepening Iranian anti-Americanism. America's refusal to support an investigation of Iraq's use of chemical weapons in that war provoked Iran's ambition to become a nuclear power. Shi'a Iran is anti-Taliban (Sunni) and therefore quietly useful against them; however, in his 2002 State of the Union address, President Bush set back promising negotiations with Iran when he placed it with North Korea and Iraq as part of an "axis of evil." Early in 2003 (months before the our invasion of Iraq) Iran, through the Swiss, proposed comprehensive talks: The U.S. would end hostile behavior, lift economic sanctions, guarantee Iran's access to peaceful nuclear technology, and recognize its legitimate security interests. In return, Iran offered full transparency in its nuclear program and an end to its material support for militant groups in Middle East, specifically, Hezbollah, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad. The Bush Administration, however, wanting to destroy the regime not compromise with it, refused to reply and upbraids the Swiss ambassador for even bringing it to them.

Too few Americans, too rarely, have any truck with seeing ourselves as "others see us," let alone the desire to critically examine our history. We prefer, and are satisfied, with what amounts to a child's version of our past Eisenhower affected bafflement over Fidel Castro's hostility, professing not to know "what the difficulty is." "After all, [Cuba's] principal market is here, their best market. You would think they would want good relationships." Yet in his eight years in the Oval Office the CIA undertook 170 major covert operations in 48 countries—political, psychological, and paramilitary missions--places where American agents knew little of the culture, language or history of the people.

MM and Ike adm. Two weeks before Eisenhower took office, Mossadegh cabled him for help regarding the urgent economic crisis in Iran; Eisenhower responded promptly but was noncommittal. In late May 1953, Iran's situation worsening, Mossadegh requests

Eisenhower's help in removing the boycott of Iranian oil or failing that, for financial assistance. A month passes Eisenhower replies; having authorized Mossadegh's overthrow, he denies the request. Feigning neutrality, Eisenhower expresses concern for the Iranian people and suggests some neutral international body mediate (the UN Security Council had already dismissed British claims against Iran, as had the World Court (no jurisdiction)).

.....
Mohammed Mossadegh, **prime** minister from 28 April 1951-16 July 1952; and 21 July 1952-19 August 1953,

In **mid July 1952**, Mossadegh insisted on constitutional prerogative of the prime minister to name ministers of war and the chief of staff; the shah refused. Mossadegh resigns and appeals to public for support. Pahlavi appoints a new prime minister and announces his intention to reopen negotiations with Great Britain. The **National Front**, the Tudeh Party, Islamists, and socialist parties demonstrate on the street, as strikes break out. Tehran's Bazaar closes. After five days of mass demonstrations army commanders, fearful of the men's loyalty, order their troops to barracks, leaving the city to the demonstrators. The shah has no choice but to bring back Mossadegh, now more popular than ever. Mossadegh covers his flank by appointing Ayatollah Kashani house speaker and the Tudeh Party become his political allies. Mossadegh cuts the shah's budget, forbids his direct communication with foreign diplomats, transfers royal lands to the state, and expels the shah's strong willed sister, Ashraf. (During the coup the CIA will approach her to stiffen Shah's will.)

#January 1953, given emergency powers for twelve more months by the Majlis, Mossadegh issues decrees reforming village councils and increases the peasants' share of production. With the English boycott and the loss of oil revenue, the Iranian economy is suffering, Mossadegh's coalition begins to fray, his enemies, recipients of CIA largesse, grows, among them, the Ayatollah XXXX Kashani.

****9 January 1953]**, **At the end of the Truman Administration** a secret State Department intelligence report identified the opposition to Mossadegh's National Front

as various “vested interests” (mullahs, bazaar merchants, etc., and the Tudeh Party. When a religious fanatic tried to assassinate the shah in 1949, Tudeh was blamed and declared illegal. Mossadegh, partly due to his democratic convictions, and partly in his political interests, allowed it to operate openly and even appointed some Tudeh sympathizers to government posts.

(Woodhouse regards the AIOC leadership as “stupid, boring, pigheaded, and tiresome”)

In late April 1953 Britain nominates General Fazholdi [sp?] Zahedi to lead the coup; CIA agrees. Allen Dulles approves \$1 million for the task. Woodhouse suggests that no one would believe Mossadegh was a Red, but the longer he stayed in office the greater the danger USSR would invade Iran. Zahedi goes into hiding, does not surface for 11 weeks. Zahedi given \$75,000 cash to recruit colonels for overthrow. CIA pays a group “Warriors of Islam” to threaten the lives of Mossadegh’s followers in and out of government. They staged attacks on respected religious leaders to look like the work of the Tudeh Party. Roosevelt launches \$100, 000 propaganda campaign—“Mossadegh favors the communists,” “an a\enemy of Islam,” “is leading country into economic collapse”, “is corrupted by power”, “favors the Soviet Union,” etc.

#In April, 1953 Allen Dulles approves \$1million for the task. Woodhouse suggests that while no one would believe Mossadegh was a Red, suggests the claim that the longer he stayed in office the greater the danger USSR would invade.

#May 28 1953 Mossadegh appeals to Eisenhower for \$25m loan. The president demurs on the ground that no negotiations between Iran and Great Britain show no progress.

#14 June 1953, Ike ok’s the coup, is briefed vaguely, he doesn’t want to know.

#The CIA Plan was to seize army staff hdqrs, Radio Tehran, MM’s home, the central bank, police hdqrs, and the telegraph and telegraph offices; \$11,000 per week budgeted to buy enough members of Majlis to ensure a majority vote to proclaim Zahedi p.m.

#11 July 1953 IKE finally gives go ahead.

Leftists, etc. Henderson picks Zahedi [the Brits nominee] to be MM’s replacement.

#28 feb 1953, Ayatollah XXX Kashani orchestrated mob violence--not spontaneous—was seized on by the Dulleses, et al. to cry—Reds! Reds! At the time, Foreign minister

Anthony Eden in Washington; British agents are working with the CIA to jell plans for coup.

Negotiations:

#March 1953 Eden/Dulles issue communiqué saying that Iran will be allowed to run its oil industry and impose its own policies, but really, the British would return to run it. Mossadegh denounces it but offers offered to submit to mediation by Swizerland or Germany.

US decision meetings

****On March 4, 1953** the National Security Council met to discuss Mossadegh's overthrow; Both Dulleses are for it—the “Red menace,” fear of a Soviet takeover, belief in the Domino effect, etc. All agree that action is needed, but Eisenhower is reluctant. Still, by not opposing it;

#End of march 1953 Allen Dulles dispatches \$1 million to CIA station in Tehran for use “in any way that would bring but the fall of Mossadgh.” 160, All shah men.

it was clear that plot planning would go ahead and a month later (**April 4 1953**) Allen Dulles signed off and approved \$1million for it. ****Recognizing that it was silly to suggest that Mossadegh was a communist, the British ambassador WHEN?? suggests the administration argue that the longer he stayed in power, the more likely the USSR would invade. Allen Dulles gave the go ahead March 18, 1953 and April 4, \$1m was dispatched to CIA station in Tehran.**

#March 30 1953, twelve days later, President Eisenhower in a speech to the national press club, “**The Chance for Peace,**” offered five precepts in international affairs, two of which are pertinent here: **#Eisenhower gives the green light July 11, 1953.** Weiner in Ashes. Kinzer thinks that Ike made decision to support coup in **March 1953.**

In **May, 1953**, in Pakistan, ??which Dulles asked if he undermining MM replied the US had “no disposition to meddle in the affairs of others.”

#May 28, 1953 MM unwittingly appealed to Ike for help in Iran's econ and poltical difficulties.

The Dulleses and USA assumptions re Cold War and the USSR.

**John Foster Dulles once said, “There are two kinds of people in the world. There are those who are Christians and support free enterprise, and there are the others,” surely one of history’s great simplifications. JFD problem with MM is that he is a neutralist like Nehru and Nasser. At his inauguration Eisenhower said “The forces of good and evil are massed and armed and opposed as rarely before in history. Freedom is pitted against slavery, lightness against dark.” Like many others, Dulles saw the world in black and white--you’re either for us or against us. Consequently, there could be no possibility of a *modus vivendi* with the Soviets or other communist regimes (despite the example of Tito’s Yugoslavia after 1948). Even Stalin’s death in March 1953 didn’t matter. Russian overtures to the West were rejected as a trick. “Peaceful coexistence” was one trick. Neutrality was another that must not be borne—it was immoral.

**The Dullesees failed to understand the end of colonialism and third world nationalism. They never imagined the long-term effects of intervention, of coups, of suborning foreign institutions—the police, the press, politicians. They had no notion of blowback—that the export of lies for foreign consumption would be re-imported to the U.S. to mislead and muddy understanding. Both men were manicheans and messianic. Not containment, that was defeatist, but roll back! (Senator Barry Goldwater would call for victory.) Actually, the Eisenhower-Dulles regime followed containment, rollback was a rhetorical device. And except for Castro none of the monster was a Red.

The Soviet Threat in retrospect:

Nikita Khrushchev said that Stalin “was afraid of war.” He “trembled” and “quivered” at the prospect of war with the United States. ”Stalin never did anything to provoke a war with the United States. He knew his weakness.” **Weiner, Ashes, 83, 84.**

**It is painfully clear that the premise of American foreign policy after World War II—that the USSR was bent on world conquest, was false. Stalin was an opportunist, not an adventurer; he was playing defense, not offense. Holy Mother Russia’s war losses were immense: twenty million dead, 1700 cities and towns and 70,000 villages and hamlets completely or partially destroyed. The security of the regime, staying in power, these were Stalin’s concerns. Over time, the Soviets could hardly hold what they had

conquered in Eastern Europe, territory which provided what George Kennan called a glacis--a shield against Western influences, which, if absent, would work as a solvent rendering a closed society impossible. As was demonstrated when the Berlin Wall came down. Why else build a wall? Why else send repatriated Russian troops taken prisoner by the Germans to the Gulag? The West must be kept from infecting their people: "How ya gonna keep them down on the farm, after they've seen Paree?" Eisenhower relied on nuclear weapons—cheaper than troops, and the CIA, also cheap, to deter USSR. Biggest problem was that the CIA couldn't tell Ike re USSR capabilities. So worse case. (The U-2 flights would turn back the curtain).

**That wasn't the picture Truman received: In April 1950 the National Security Council produced NSC-68, a paper outlining the nation's policy regarding the Soviet Union: Describing the USSR as bent on world domination, at stake was not only the "destruction" "of this Republic but of civilization itself." Needed were huge increases in military expenditures. The trend in world affairs seen as against us, it was not the time to be open to negotiations. In June the North Koreans attacked across the 38 Parallel and the voices of those who denied that the trend was unfavorable to the United States were drowned out. The other problem is that the CIA had almost no intelligence on what was happening behind the Iron Curtain; in default we embrace a false picture of a powerful Russia. For decades the American people would swim in an anti-Communist stream.

The attraction of covert ops for IKE.

**To wage the Cold War Eisenhower's "New Look" policy had three parts: a smaller army; reliance on nuclear deterrence; and covert operations. What they had in common was the expectation that they would cut costs and increase efficiency. Before taking the job as Secretary of the Treasury, George Humphrey insisted that the administration produce balanced budgets). In World War II covert ops were far more important than commonly realized—vital German and Japanese codes were broken, false intelligence planted, resistance movements cultivated and supplied, etc. Eisenhower saw them as humanitarian—few or no American lives would be lost in Iran nor in Guatemala, --and they were deniable (at least in the short run). And since Russia was evil, there were no qualms about using the black arts, of what will be infamously called, "going to the

dark side.” As an example, the CIA in the 1950s had a “health alteration committee” headed by a physician that dealt in methods of procuring deniable murders (poisons and drugs, germs and gadgets). As for costs to innocent others—health and welfare, financial, political--collateral damage in war is a fact of life.

Good guys and bad guys Analysis: We all have biases--ways of seeing the world and we hold fast to them; It's called confirmation bias. The Dulleses of the world believed that since the U.S. is moral it is justified what for it does. Our leaders know what is best for other peoples. Blessed by providence, “exceptionalism,” International communism a worldwide conspiracy, ergo every place on the planet is important, even Grenada! Magnify Red threat. The importance of fear: When Truman wanted to put his marker on aid to Turkey and Greece, he was told he had to “scare the hell out of the American people.” Ultimate stakes justify extreme measures. [Note Ike gave order to assassinate Lumumba and Castro.] **Don't sit back. Act!** Note in Guatemala Arbenz term wd expire in two years [?] and he cdn't run again--against the constitution. His replacement almost certainly wd be more conservative. Dulleses cdn't wait. It was an article of faith that commies wouldn't give up power; even to go quietly wd have taught the lesson that regimes we dislike could give up power. Jean Kirkpatrick, advisor during the Reagan Administration, advanced the theses that communist and fascist totalitarians never go quietly—they have to be defeated. And since the Cold War is, at bottom, a zero sum game--every place on earth is crucial—the Falkland-Malvinas, Grenada, etc. **Before the Vietnam War was ever thought of, the Dulles brothers applied the domino theory to Iran and the Middle East.

****Kermit Roosevelt's memoir of the “Operation Ajax,” Countercoup: The Struggle for the Control of Iran** (McGraw-Hill: New York, 1979), was published the year of the 1979 Iranian Revolution and the hostage crisis. A Long Island neighbor of Allen Dulles, Roosevelt dedicated the book to “the long-standing friendship between the Iranian and American people and to its continuation, albeit under different circumstances.” The “Countercoup” in the title is to foster the idea that Mossadegh's pressure on the shah, in

doing the work of the Tudeh Party, therefore constituted a Red coup. Whether witting or unwitting, Mossadegh must not be allowed to succeed.

Present negotiations with Iran over the issues

According to an Iranian psychiatrist at Tufts Medical Center, in Boston: “Americans are willing to compromise principle for results; Iranians are willing to sacrifice results to principle.” **Kinzer, Reset, 214. ** However, U.S. diplomat Ryan C. Crocker, in an op ed, in the New York Times, 4 November 2013, A23. argued that negotiations with Iran have succeeded before and can do so again. For example, after the attack on the World Trade Center, Crocker sat down with Iran’s representatives and found them “constructive, pragmatic, and focused.” Just before our military action in Iraq began, they even produced a map showing Taliban troop strength and positions. We have enemies in common—the Taliban and al Qaeda are both Sunni Muslims, Iran is Shi’a. Iran also supported our efforts to establish an “Interim Authority” in Afghanistan. Crocker opened our embassy in Kabul and got Iran agreement to coordinate reconstruction plans and cooperation on various security issues. But then President Bush’s in early 2002, accused Iran of being, with North Korea and Iraq, part of the “axis of evil” and “things fell apart.”

Crocker believes sees Iran’s government a rational actor. In negotiating with it there are four lessons: first, progress requires direct talks between the U.S. and the Iranian government; second, the substance of talks have to be “closely held” --no leaks; third, use the negotiations to introduce other issues beyond that of nuclear weapons; four, the U.S. must make it clear that it has no desire to overthrow Iran’s government. What would a deal look like? Iran wants sanctions lifted and an end to its isolation; the international community wants verification that Iran’s nuclear program will not be weaponized. Crocker believes it should be doable. **Kinzer, Reset, 214. **

**Kenneth Waltz, d. 12 May 2013), One foreign policy realist believed it would be a good thing if Iran joined Israel in the nuclear club—it would promote stability. Others think that the Shi’a’ attraction to martyrdom makes this foolish.)

Dealing with Shi’a Islamites.

Al-Tabarri, long ago Muslim jurist: the obligation to dissociate, to shun, unbelievers. Who are the unbelievers? Since Sunni and Shi'a have different hadiths (according to tradition, Mohammed's sayings), the four "bads" differ; for example, for Shi'a there are the four "idols"--the four Caliphs (Abu Bakr, Omar, Uthman, Mu'awiyah) who preceded Ali, or the four bad women (Ayesha, Hatsa, Hind, Ummad Hakam), or it could be someone else. It's a matter of choice.

Taquiya: When they perceive their lives are in jeopardy, Shi'a have recourse to the doctrine of "taquiya," meaning religious dissimulation, concealment, caution. Quran, 3:28. "Let believers not take for friends and allies infidels instead of believers . . . unless you but guard yourself against [the infidels], taking precautions." "If you [Muslims] are under their [infidels] authority, fearing for yourselves, behave loyally to them, with your tongue, while harboring inner animosity for them." In such cases, you can be on friendly and intimate terms with them. When under threat, it is obligatory to put aside Tabarri and use Taquiya. In certain cases, a believer can deny Islam (if the alternative is torture or death), and can even pretend to apostasize, for example, pretend to be Sunni, but remain a Shi'a internally. Quran, 4: 29. Note one result: in Wahhabi Saudi Arabia estimates of the percentage of Shi'a range from one percent to twenty percent. We just don't know. In any case, "Custerism" isn't a doctrine of the Shi'a.

Since Islam, (Dar al Islam (House of Peace) sees the world divided between itself and Dar al Harb (House of War). it follows that religious war [jihad] against the unbeliever is obligatory. Mohamed taught that deceit is acceptable in three situations: to reconcile two or more quarreling parties, to reconcile husband and wife, and in war.

There are both peaceful and tolerant verses in the Quran. Which apply? For Islamic scholars the peaceful verses are the early ones, revealed to Mohammed when Islam was weak; the warlike, intolerant verses are later revelations from Allah. In any case, circumstances differ and it is circumstances that determine what one should do.

One more thing to add is the Shi'a embrace of martyrdom. Islam came to Persia in 638, six years after Mohammed's death. The conquered Persians became the partisans of Ali as Mohammed's successor. (Ali was a cousin of Mohammed, raised in his household, and his son-in-law.) Ali finally became Caliph in 656 but five years later was assassinated and Ali's son, Hussein, killed in battle.



&With encouragement from the British, in 1925 the Qajar dynasty gave way to the Pahlavi; Mossadegh was one of only four members of parliament to vote against Reza Kahn being made king, and was punished for it by the new shah by being maneuvered out of the Majlis. In 1940 criticism of the shah earned Mossadegh police harassment, a ransacked home, and a sentence to house arrest at his home in Ahmad-Abad “until,” as Reza Shah put it, “he dies there.” In **September 1941**, however, Britain forced Reza Shah’s abdication over his pro-Nazi views in favor of his son; Mossadegh’s house arrest is lifted and he returned to politics after a twenty-year absence.

.....
July 1953 Foster Dulles himself testified to a senate committee that there was no “substantial evidence” of Iran/Soviet coop.

Eisenhower then tartly replied to Mossadegh’s letter with his worries about American taxpayers, given the unresolved oil dispute. The NSC gives its approval **July 1, 1953**.

Reza’s coup 1920s

The founder of the Pahlavi dynasty, Reza Kahn, came from nothing: his father died when in Reza’s infancy; a stable boy at 15 to the Cossack Brigade of Persia, he soon is accepted as a brigade member. Tall, 6’4,” uneducated, courageous, and a force, in time he becomes its head. In 1921, the Majlis, Iran’s parliament (f. 1906), elect him prime minister, and in 1926, king, thus ending the Qajar dynasty; one of the four naysayers is Mohammed Mossadegh. **132. In 1933 he got somewhat better terms from Britain on oil, establishes a National Bank of Iran to replace the British Imperial Bank of Persia, and took back the post office and telegraph Influenced by Kemal Ataturk’s example, he establishes Tehran University, builds a European-style urban landscape, permits cinemas, represses dervishes and fortune tellers as irrational, etc. Some liberation of women took place—off with the veil, the marriage age raised from 9 to 15. A new dress code teachers and wives of government officials required they uncover themselves and men to wear a brimmed hat; religious titles were banned, shrines and services opened to non-Muslims; chairs were to be used for mourners at funerals rather than kneeling. Again, like Ataturk, Reza Shah countenanced no opposition: When a group of mullahs resisted his reforms, he had the mosque attacked, killing hundreds. When bakers began hoarding bread, raising prices, he made an example of one baker by throwing him into his oven.

**As often the case, power, a heady draught, went to his head; he became arbitrary and vicious. But it was his pro-Nazi enthusiasms that led England and Russia to force his abdication in favor of his son. (The British ship him to South Africa where he dies 26 July 1944.)