

**IN THE BELLY OF THE BEAR? SOVIET-IRANIAN
RELATIONS DURING THE REIGN OF MOHAMMAD REZA
PAHLAVI**

Michael Pye

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews**



2015

**Full metadata for this item is available in
St Andrews Research Repository
at:**

<http://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/>

Please use this identifier to cite or link to this item:

<http://hdl.handle.net/10023/9501>

This item is protected by original copyright



University of
St Andrews

600
YEARS

IN THE BELLY OF THE BEAR? SOVIET-IRANIAN
RELATIONS DURING THE REIGN OF MOHAMMAD REZA
PAHLAVI



CANDIDATE: MICHAEL PYE
DEGREE: DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
DATE OF SUBMISSION: 26TH OF MAY 2015

ABSTRACT

The question mark of the project's title alludes to a critical reexamination of Soviet-Iranian relations during the period and aims to offer an original contribution to scholarship in the field by exploring an aspect of Pahlavi foreign relations that lacks any detailed treatment in the literature presently available. In pursuit of this goal, research has been concentrated on recently-released western archival documentation, the Iranian Studies collection held at the University of St Andrews, and similarly materials from the Russian Federal Archive for Foreign Relations, to which the author was granted access, including ambassadorial papers relating to the premiership of Mohammad Mosaddeq. As far as can be ascertained, the majority of the Russian archival evidence presented in the dissertation has not been previously been utilised by any Western-based scholar.

At core, the thesis argues that the trajectory of Pahlavi foreign relations specifically (and to a certain degree Mohammad Reza's regency more broadly) owed principally to a deeply-rooted belief in, and perceived necessity to guard against, the Soviet Union's (and Russia's) historical 'objectives' vis-à-vis Iran. While the Shah proved himself to be a very effective advocate of this approach, it is suggested that the importance attached to the spectre of Soviet interference cannot solely be explained as a means of leverage in relation to Iran's western allies, although at times it was undoubtedly used in this manner. Rather, the anxieties of Iranian politicians were the genuine consequence of a painfully proximate history, significantly reinforced by the unfortunate disconnect between public Soviet diplomacy towards Iran and the activities of various 'deniable' Communist elements operating both within and outwith Iran's borders.

CANDIDATE DECLARATION

I, Michael Stephen Pye, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately eighty thousand words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree. I was admitted as a research student in September 2010 and as a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in June 2011; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St Andrews between 2010 and 2013.

Date: *26th of May 2015* Signature:

SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of St Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.

Date: *26th of May 2015* Signature:

PERMISSION FOR ELECTRONIC PUBLICATION

In submitting this thesis to the University of St Andrews I understand that I am giving permission for it to be made available for use in accordance with the regulations of the University Library for the time being in force, subject to any copyright vested in the work not being affected thereby. I also understand that the title and the abstract will be published, and that a copy of the work may be made and supplied to any bona fide library or research worker, that my thesis will be electronically accessible for personal or research use unless exempt by award of an embargo as requested below, and that the library has the right to migrate my thesis into new electronic forms as required to ensure continued access to the thesis. I have obtained any third-party copyright permissions that may be required in order to allow such access and migration, or have requested the appropriate embargo below. The following is an agreed request by candidate and supervisor regarding the electronic publication of this thesis: access to printed copy and electronic publication of thesis through the University of St Andrews.

Signature of candidate:

Signature of supervisor:

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to record my sincere debt of gratitude to three people: to the sponsor of my doctoral studies at the University of St Andrews, Mr. Mahmoud Khayami, whose generous provision of a scholarship has made this project feasible in the first instance; to my supervisor, Professor Ali Ansari, whose kind support and patient encouragement has ensured its completion; and to my very dear friend in Moscow, Tamara Gigolashvili, without whose generosity and kindness what follows would be considerably poorer and quite possibly non-existent.

CONTENTS

OVERVIEW AND DOCUMENTARY SOURCES	P1
~ AIMS OF THE THESIS ~ RATIONALE FOR CASE STUDY APPROACH ~ NATURE AND EXTENT OF AVAILABLE MATERIALS ~ ANALYSIS OF DOCUMENTARY SOURCES ~	
INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	P13
~ REIFICATION OF THE STATE ~ STRUCTURE AND AGENCY ~ RATIONALITY AND 'RATIONAL' ACTORS ~ NARRATIVE AND EMOTION IN SOVIET-IRANIAN RELATIONS ~	
SOVIET-IRANIAN RELATIONS IN THEIR HISTORICAL CONTEXT	P31
~ IRAN'S RELATIONS WITH TSARIST RUSSIA ~ ~ IRAN'S RELATIONS WITH POST-REVOLUTIONARY RUSSIA ~	
CHAPTER 1 FROM MAHABAD TO MOSADDEQ	P38
~ THE ALLIED INVASION OF IRAN AND ITS AFTERMATH ~ A FEBRILE POST-WAR ENVIRONMENT ~ THE FAILED ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT ON THE SHAH ~ ~ DR. MOHAMMAD MOSADDEQ AND THE SOVIET UNION ~	
CHAPTER 2 THE SHAH'S WESTERN PIVOT	P77
~ THE BAGHDAD PACT AND SOVIET RESPONSES ~ THE SHAH'S STATE VISIT TO THE SOVIET UNION ~ THE COUP IN IRAQ AND THE QARANI AFFAIR ~ SECRET NEGOTIATIONS FOR A TREATY OF NON-AGGRESSION ~	
CHAPTER 3 IRAN AND THE SOVIET UNION UNDER DÉTENTE	P110
~ THE STATE VISIT OF PRESIDENT BREZHNEV TO IRAN ~ SOVIET-IRANIAN ECONOMIC ENGAGEMENT AND THE ESFAHAN STEEL MILL ~ A CRISIS OVER SOVIET ARMS ~ THE SOVIET-IRANIAN OIL AGREEMENT AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ~	
CHAPTER 4 SEEDS OF A REVOLUTION	P143
~ NARRATIVE OF ENCIRCLEMENT: THE SHAH'S REGIONAL OUTLOOK ~ ~ IRAN, IRAQ AND THE KURDISH TRUMP CARD ~ ~ CONCERN AND CONCESSION: THE CURIOUS CASE OF LIEUTENANT ZOSIMOV ~ ~ RETICENCE AND REALISATION: SOVIET POLICY TOWARD IRAN IN 1979 ~	
CONCLUSION	P180
~ THE DEPARTING WEST DID NOT LEAVE BEHIND A SOCIALIST EAST ~	
BIBLIOGRAPHY & APPENDICES	P193

OVERVIEW AND DOCUMENTARY SOURCES

The aim of this dissertation is to offer a chronologically-presented, historical analysis of relations between Iran under the reign of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Accordingly, the period of research extends from 1941 – the Allied invasion of Iran and the abdication of Reza Shah Pahlavi, Mohammad Reza's father – to the Islamic Revolution of 1979. The choice of timeframe, coinciding with a defined period of Iranian history as opposed to the lifespan of the Soviet Union, reflects both the supervisory framework for the project (under the auspices of the Institute for Iranian Studies in the University of St Andrews) and therefore the project's central concern: to complement existing scholarship on Pahlavi-era foreign policy, to which, it will be argued, elite perceptions of and interactions with Moscow were central. The principal objectives may be stated as follows:

1. To draw together and analyse relevant bodies of documentary and archival evidence, complemented by other primary source materials, with a view to describing and assessing key Soviet-Iranian episodes and encounters during the period, both in their own right and for their relevance to the trajectory of Iran's relations with the other powers;
2. Conversely, using the same methodology, to consider the impact of Western regional interests and broader political considerations on the Iranian leadership's attitudes toward the USSR, and the extent to which those considerations either reinforced, or caused the alteration of, the Iranian leadership's policy choices with respect to the USSR and more widely;
3. To highlight, as broader observation, the potency of history, myth and historical consciousness in guiding and informing Iran's foreign policy during the period, and to emphasise more specifically that the perceived need to counter or accommodate the Soviet Union had a significant bearing on both the rise and indeed fall of the Pahlavi regime.

It is necessary first to concede that a full discussion of the many possible episodes categorisable under the heading 'Soviet-Iranian relations' over a period of thirty-eight

years would pose a significant challenge within the context of a doctoral dissertation. Accordingly, a case study-orientated approach is adopted. Each chapter presents four extended case studies offering an analysis of a particular event (or connected series of events), the selection criteria for which were governed in the first instance by the aims stated above, and in the second by a preference for episodes where the highest-quality documentary or primary source materials could be obtained. The latter criterium proceeds from the observation that existing scholarly literature on Soviet-Iranian relations exhibit a relative paucity of primary sources in addressing the topic; a deficiency by no means due to a lack of diligence on the part of the scholars involved, but rather from the handicap of certain documentary sources not having been available at their time of research.¹ By fortunate contrast, this dissertation has benefitted extensively from archival research in a number of areas. First, all of the U.K. Foreign Office records relating to Soviet-Iranian relations during the period under review, with few exceptions, have now been released to the National Archive at Kew.² Second, there exists a comparable availability of U.S. archival materials covering the majority of the period under study (to 1976), the most recent tranche of which was released in December 2012.³ Third, the author's successful application to the Russian Foreign Ministry for access to its closed Archive, including the opportunity to view papers not previously open to researchers outwith the former Soviet Union, furnished a number of crucial discoveries.⁴ The thesis makes further use of several political memoirs, in Persian and Russian, that do not previously appear to have attracted scholarly attention.

In terms of source content, the core methodological challenges may be stated as, primarily, the need to draw a clear distinction between materials that were broadly private at their point of composition (namely the 'closed' diplomatic documentary record) and those that were public (press articles, radio broadcasts political memoirs, official governmental communiqués or interviews); and more obviously, to identify and acknowledge the merits and demerits of each source. While separating rhetoric from

1 See for instance Shahram Chubin's monograph *Soviet policy toward Iran and the Gulf* (International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1980), which is principally based on contemporary media materials.

2 The British government operates a thirty-year release policy in the majority of cases.

3 *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume XXVII: Iran; Iraq, 1973-1976.*

4 The folios relating to Mohammad Mosaddeq, for instance, appeared to have only been accessed by Foreign Ministry personnel and a single Azerbaijani scholar, Jamil Hasanli, who made only tangential use of them (referenced where appropriate.)

reality in the study of relations between states is a standard task for the historian, it holds particular importance for the present dissertation in approaching a relationship characterised by a significant degree of strain and emotional charge on the part of those involved. A basic distinction is therefore made that, whereas statements in the public arena (being directed towards a wider audience) display a tendency to highlight how actors on both sides desired relations to be *perceived* by a variety of audiences, the diplomatic record (being intended for an closed audience) may provide a more accurate insight into the *actual* status of relations. Such a distinction does not seek to imply, however, that ‘open’ primary-source materials are inferior. Public rhetoric provides a rich repository of political narrative, and its importance during the period under review was considerable. It is furthermore clear that the vagaries and vicissitudes of private politics bore a strong relation to the character and intent of their public expression, of which broadcast or print media were the most prominent manifestation. It is worth emphasising in this connection that both governments exercised a high degree of control over their respective medias, whose services were frequently employed to send a message to the other side that may otherwise have been inadmissible within the framework of normal diplomatic exchange.⁵ Indeed, the British Foreign Office dossiers (and no less their Soviet equivalent) contain extensive collections of press clippings and news monitoring materials, which constitute an integral part of their reports on specific incidents.⁶ In short, while awareness of the distinction between the public and private is crucial, both are of benefit in providing a rounded appreciation of events.

Press and Media Materials

The greater part of the media evidence employed in this dissertation derives from the corpus of materials offered within the diplomatic records themselves. In terms of physical presence, this applies only to the British and Russian archives; published U.S. diplomatic materials frequently reference media items but do not reproduce them. A further and important difference between the British and Russian archives is that, whereas the British files intersperse press monitoring materials chronologically between diplomatic papers, the Soviet Foreign Ministry made use of a separate organisation

5 For the use of the media as an unofficial diplomatic channel, see: B. Rotheray, *A History of BBC Monitoring*. http://www.monitor.bbc.co.uk/about_us/ (accessed 27.02.2013.)

6 See e.g. files on the Niavaran Palace plot of 1965. National Archives, FO248/1608 and FO248/1609.

(Telegraphic Agency of the Soviet Union or TASS) to collate and translate relevant materials, which are presented as a separate file series. The Russian system is notably more comprehensive than the British, with a typical year yielding between five to six hundred pages of translations from Iranian newspapers. It was often the case that the Tehran TASS correspondent would sit in the Iranian parliament (Majles) press gallery and translate politicians' speeches verbatim for reference by the Embassy or Soviet Foreign Ministry, a practice that has afforded a number of illuminating insights. In instances where Western or Soviet press articles were identified to be of interest, the British Library's Newspaper Collection and its Russian equivalent (the National Library's Newspaper Division located in the Moscow suburb of Khimki) both proved useful resources.⁷ Finally, research undertaken in the open-source intelligence archives – namely the BBC's Summary of World Broadcast Service (SWB) and the U.S. Government's Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) – furnished additional translations of radio and television broadcasts, newspapers and periodicals, government statements and speeches by leading figures.⁸

Despite constituting a useful primary source in their own right however, news materials cannot in themselves provide a comprehensive means for assessing government policy. Even in firmly state-controlled media environment, inferring a particular government's viewpoint through the prism of journalistic selection or interpretation poses two risks. First, it assumes that the viewpoint of the government in question was uniform and coherent. It frequently was not. And secondly, depending on a specific news source's proximity to ruling elites, its content may convey a stronger (or indeed weaker) impression than was in fact the reality. Soviet radio stations are a salient example of the latter challenge. In assessing their output, it is necessary to establish a distinction between 'official' media outlets operating with official state sanction, whose programming tended toward more restrained rhetoric in reflecting the government line, and 'public' radio stations (that is, those not ostensibly state-controlled and often operating from the communist periphery), which could afford to be a great deal harsher

7 For instance, the full text of the Soviet government's Note of protest to Iran following the departure of its delegation from Tehran in 1959 was reproduced in the *Pravda* newspaper (see Appendix.)

8 Both organisations were formed during World War II with the aim of monitoring Japanese radio transmissions and subsequently expanded to serve a broader function.

in tone due to their deniable nature.⁹ Neither variety may be relied upon to furnish a full or accurate picture of underlying official attitudes. And as Soviet archival records demonstrate, the internal discussion of certain press articles that were ultimately withheld can be just as revealing as the content of those that were published.

Archival Materials of the UK Foreign Office

The archives of the Foreign Office (Foreign and Commonwealth Office from 1968) are held at the United Kingdom's National Archives at Kew, and contain diplomatic correspondence both to and from the British Embassy in Tehran falling under the period of research. The central advantage of the material held by the Archives is their ability – in contrast to the published series¹⁰ – to add much greater depth on specific incidents, both quantitatively in terms of their volume and qualitatively through the inclusion of the differing perspectives, for instance memoranda of conversations with Iranian politicians or diplomats in other embassies and organisations. In addition, each set of Embassy correspondence contains the comments and minutes of the receiving Foreign Office department, providing further insight into official attitudes and setting the Soviet-Iranian relationship in its wider regional and global context. Documentation from the British Embassy in Tehran and from the relevant government departments in London are available in full, except for a limited number of cases where documents retained under the Public Records Act (where disclosure is deemed prejudicial to the effective conduct of public affairs or detrimental to UK's national security interests.) In such cases, a researcher may submit a request for classification review under the Freedom of Information Act. Two such requests were made in the course of preparatory research, the first of which was successful (resulting in the release of Cabinet Office minutes from 1978) and the second of which was denied on the somewhat confusing basis that ‘disclosure could impact on the UK's international standing with the Soviet Union.’¹¹

9 The editor of *Radio Peace and Progress* (one such outlet broadcasting to Iran) claimed, for example, that the point of view of the station was that ‘of our public.’ See Open Society Archive: *Radio Free Liberty Background Reports*, HU OSA 300–8–3: Radio Peace and Progress, 8 July 1970, p2.

10 For part of the period covered by this thesis (1941-1965) there exist six volumes of Foreign Office correspondence from Iran, published as *Iran Political Diaries (XI -XIV)*. A further thirteen volumes, entitled *Iran Under Allied Occupation*, cover developments in Iran during World War II specifically.

11 E-mail to author from National Archives' Freedom of Information Assessor, 12 January 2012, regarding extract FCO 28/3872, Folio 16A: *Relations between the Soviet Union and the Middle East*.

With regard to Soviet-Iranian relations specifically, of particular value was the discovery that, for the majority of years covered by this dissertation, a series of folios were dedicated exclusively to political or commercial relations between Iran and the Soviet Union. Each volume comprised chronological reports on incidents of note, accompanied by the relevant documentary materials (for instance translations of Iranian or Soviet diplomatic notes) and press clippings where appropriate. Although these collections yielded a lesser volume of information between 1968 and 1972, most likely due to departmental reorganisation in the Foreign Office, a quantity of American archival material was fortuitously available to cover the period in comparable depth.¹² This exception notwithstanding, the archives provide an extraordinary wealth of material, shedding considerable light on the Iranian political climate in general and the relevance to it of Iran's relations with the USSR. In 1959, for example, the year of the Shah's secret and ultimately abortive attempt to conclude a Treaty of Non-Aggression with Soviet Union, there are over two hundred individual reports and documents.¹³ This embarrassment of riches called for a strict methodology in order to focus acquisition appropriately. It entailed, first, directing research toward specific Soviet-Iranian encounters on the case study basis outlined above. And second, the focussing of archival work predominantly toward the period from after 1958, that is, the latter half of the thesis. The rationale behind this approach was that, prior to 1958, the availability of published British document volumes (taken together with Iranian and Russian sources) were of sufficient quality to render additional quantities of archival material broadly unnecessary; whereas in later years the British materials serve as a useful, albeit far from neutral, counterweight to Soviet or U.S. viewpoints.

U.S. Government Archival Materials

The *Foreign Relations of the United States* series represents the U.S. government's official documentary record of foreign policy decision making. The original documents presented within individual volumes are drawn primarily from the State Department's archives but are widely supplemented by a range of other primary source materials, most prominently records from the Department of Defence, the presidential libraries,

¹² Foreign Relations of the United States, 1968-1976, E-4, 1968-1972: Iran.

¹³ The files are contained in FO 371/140797, FO 371/140798 and FO 371/140799.

the U.S. National Security Council, the Central Intelligence Agency and so forth. The principles guiding the compilation and editing of the volumes were established under the Secretaryship of Frank Kellogg in 1925, which call for a comprehensive, unedited and objective record, in which ‘nothing shall be omitted for the purpose of glossing over what might be regarded by some as a defect in policy.’ While these stated aims are ostensibly subject to a number of clear caveats, most notably ‘to avoid publication of matters that might impede current diplomatic relations’; ‘to preserve the confidence reposed in the Department by individuals or foreign governments’; and finally ‘to eliminate personal opinions presented in dispatches and not acted upon by the Department’, in practice the documents exhibit a broad swathe of views, both consequential or otherwise, particularly on the part of those Iranian politicians with whom U.S. officials interacted; an important point of interest.¹⁴ The need to safeguard the conduct of present-day diplomatic relations, as in the case of the U.K. archives, is achieved by a release limitation of between eighteen and thirty-nine years, the average being thirty-two years.¹⁵

The specific value of the FRUS series to this dissertation lay primarily in its chronological-organised presentation of selected correspondence between the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and the Department of State; diplomatic reports detailing the internal situation in Iran and recounting conversations with prominent government officials. In particular, and reflecting Iran's Cold War alignment, U.S. ambassadors enjoyed regular and preferential access to the Shah himself throughout the period. A second benefit is that, whereas the published series are intended to provide a record of U.S. relations with Iran as a whole, a considerable portion of the materials pertain either directly or indirectly to Soviet-Iranian relations. For the twelve year period 1964-1976, for instance, approximately one half of all published documentation on Iran (over two thousand pages in total) contains a reference to the Soviet Union or the threat of communism. A third advantage is that later volumes (from 1961 onwards) have visibly benefitted from wider access afforded to State Department historians by the CIA following a procedural review undertaken in 1991.¹⁶ The *Foreign Relations* series does,

14 See *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers*, 1942, Vol. IV, Preface, III

15 Survey by author based on comparison between publication dates and document dates.

16 See *Foreign relations of the United States*, 1955-1957. Near East; Iran; Iraq. *Preface*, V.

however, have one particular flaw from the standpoint of this thesis. Being a record of United States foreign policy, as opposed to of Soviet or Iranian foreign policy, a number of volumes naturally focus on broader U.S. strategy rather than the specifics of local diplomacy. An example is the volume covering Iran from 1955 to 1957, which emphasises the development and execution of the Eisenhower Doctrine in the region and adopts this as its primary basis for document selection. Although the theme is of clear importance with respect to Iran's adherence to the Baghdad Pact, the focus reduces the space available for U.S. diplomatic reportage from Iran itself, including (by the editors' own admission) internal Department of State assessments, or details relating to policy execution.¹⁷ Fortunately, the level of detail available in other sources proved more than adequate to address this deficiency; the series overall offered invaluable insights into perceptions of the Soviet Union on the part of Iranian politicians, the consequences of those perceptions, and their impact on U.S. decision making.

Soviet Foreign Ministry Archival Materials

Prior to its recent refurbishment, a sign prominently positioned above the enquiries desk at the Russian Federal Archive for Foreign Affairs bore the following advice: 'Enter quietly, speak carefully, ask for little, leave quickly.'¹⁸ Although meant in jest, the instruction offers in fact a fair and accurate reflection on the experience that awaits visiting researchers, on whom the restrictions are both varied and inventive. In order to gain access, applicants must first submit their *bone fides* three months in advance to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, together with cover letter setting out, in precise detail, the topics and date ranges proposed for research. This task is impeded by the fact that information regarding the Archive's extent, organisation and holdings is not available publicly. Rather, only after having secured permission and gained access to the Archive's premises in Moscow may scholars consult the Archive's authoritative *Spravochnik* (Guide), which lays out, in a format that may be generously characterised as basic, the composition of the Ministry's sixteen miles of shelving, comprising over forty five thousand separate folios. Of the six divisions (*razdel*) from which the Archive is composed, three were relevant to the period under research:

17 See *Foreign relations of the United States, 1955-1957. Near East; Iran; Iraq*. Preface, IV

18 Входи тихо, говори чётко, спроси мало, уходи быстро.

- Division I - the largest collection in the Archive, comprising records of the Ministry's country-specific *referenturi* ('Desks' in Western diplomatic parlance);
- Division II - records of individual Ministry departments (*otdel*), containing materials that fall within a particular Department's geographic remit and internal exchanges of correspondence between its staff;
- Division III - records from the Secretariats of individual Foreign Ministers.

Division I contained a single accumulative reserve on Iran, with records organised chronologically beginning in 1909. Individual years are divided into two folios, one half of which records official Soviet correspondence directed to the Iranian government via the Soviet Embassy in Tehran, and the second of which holds diplomatic notes and memoranda received from the Iranian Embassy in Moscow. Both halves proved immensely valuable both in bringing to light exchanges that Western diplomatic personnel were evidently unaware of and in recording the official Iranian standpoint on the certain episodes. Division I also offered an insight into internal debates within the Foreign Ministry itself, including in one fascinating instance the text of a proposed newspaper article, publication of which was evidently dropped amid concerns its release would create an 'unfavourable atmosphere' for the Shah's visit to Moscow in June 1956. The polemic, excoriating Iran's decision to join the Western-sponsored Baghdad Pact, was entitled 'Pie with an American Filling.'¹⁹ Finally, in a breakthrough that required a separate excursion to Moscow and sustained diplomatic pressure, access was granted to the papers of Ivan Sadchikov, Soviet ambassador to Iran in the final year of Mohammad Mosaddeq's premiership, including memoranda of conversations with the Prime Minister himself. Findings from this documentation are presented in Chapter One.

Of the source materials on offer from Division II, documentation was provided from the Near East Department's Press Division. These folios, as noted above, offer substantial quantities of news media reportage compiled by the Soviet press agency TASS, via its office based in Tehran during the period, the majority of which are Russian translations

¹⁹ АВПРФ, ф.94, оп.45, п.132, д.201-ИР: О размещении в печати статьи <<Пирог с американской начинкой.>> 15 May 1956

of articles and broadcasts from the Persian original. The compilations document official Iranian views on incidents of significance, and more specifically, collate evidence of the Iranian government's reaction to Soviet policy. This includes, in a number of important cases, the full text of Iranian diplomatic notes otherwise lost in alternative sources, in addition to speeches by Iranian politicians on Soviet-Iranian relations in the Majles and Senate and anecdotes from press conferences held by prominent Iranian officials. Finally, Division III held out the possibility of accessing the personal files of prominent personalities who had close dealings with Iran, including papers from the Secretariats of Vyacheslav Molotov and Sergei Kavtaradze, respectively Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs (1939-1949; 1953-1956), and Assistant People's Commissar for Near East Affairs (1941-1944.) Of these, access was granted to Molotov's personal files only: permission to review Kavtaradze's files was refused on the grounds that the latter's famously unsuccessful mission to Iran in 1944 (to secure an oil concession for the Soviet Union) constituted an 'economic' question, whereas the Ministry had only granted the author access to 'diplomatic' materials. This setback notwithstanding, Molotov's files shed considerable light on the formulation of Soviet policy toward Iran in the 1950s (discussed in Chapter Two.)

The disadvantages of working with the Foreign Ministry materials are several. Most obviously, aside from the difficulties of gaining access in the first instance, is the fact that visiting scholars are not permitted to peruse the Archive's holdings independently. Instead, having first ascertained from the Guide in which fund documents of interest might be located, an official request must be submitted, itemising the specific matters or events regarding which materials are sought. The number of requests that may feature on an order is ten, based on which a custodian of the Archive will themselves identify and locate 'appropriate' documentation on the researcher's behalf. The time required for this process is four working days. Photocopying is permitted up to a maximum of twenty pages, a restriction which applies to the permission holder's field as a whole not to individual orders. Any copies of text required above this limit must be written out by hand. No photographic equipment is permitted in the reading room. These challenges called for a highly selective approach, and accordingly a number of specific episodes were chosen for research with the aim of addressing gaps in the Western diplomatic

record:

1. Interactions between Soviet diplomatic representatives and the Iranian government officials during the final year of Mosaddeq's premiership;
2. Internal Soviet reaction to Iran's decision to join the Baghdad Pact and the subsequent invitation of Mohammad Reza Shah to visit the Soviet Union;
3. Exchanges between the Soviet Embassy in Tehran and the Iranian government in the final months before the Islamic Revolution.

Although the difficulties described above precluded the possibility of gathering a larger body of evidence in the context of doctoral research, the documentation obtained, to the extent that acquisition was possible, has permitted a fresh evaluation of critical episodes, providing both a complement and counterweight to other archival materials available in the Western world. The author gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the Research Committee at the British Institute of Persian Studies for enabling these preparatory research trips to Moscow.

Persian Language Sources

The pursuit of archival research in Iran itself was impractical due to political considerations. Fortuitously, Iranian diplomatic materials – often in the Persian original – are extensively reproduced in the British and Soviet sources and a substantial quantity of (internal) Pahlavi-era documents have been made available by the regime that overthrew it. Specifically, several volumes of documentation from the SAVAK archive (Pahlavi-era counterpart to the KGB formed in 1957) are devoted exclusively to Soviet-Iranian relations. Although the documents are neither systematically presented nor disinterestedly selected – their purpose partly being to show the *ancien régime* in a unfavourable light – the editorial bias does offer the positive benefit of highlighting facts that Western sources may have been inclined to suppress. This unique advantage is shared by another valuable collection, the *Asnad-e Laneh-ye Jasusi* ('Documents from the Nest of Spies', being papers requisitioned by hardline students during the U.S. Embassy hostage crisis of 1979-1980), which preserve a number of fascinating documents that would otherwise be unavailable. A third Persian language primary

source has been the collected speeches of the Shah, in particular, speeches to Soviet politicians on state occasions. These offer a useful illustration of issues that were seen by the Iranian side as important, however, it is necessary to bear in mind that their warmth of tone belies the Shah's private views, which less official Iranian accounts suggest were somewhat more cynical. As the monarch stressed to his entourage on a trip to Moscow in 1965:

“If you want something, like bananas for example, just mention it aloud in your room. Generally there are microphones hidden in the walls and the next day, if not sooner, your wishes are granted. I experienced it myself, on my first visit to Russia [in June 1956], I felt like having a banana and wished for it aloud. There was no one in my room, but the next morning a banana was on the table.”²⁰

The survey of documentary resources has been complemented by the opportunity, on two separate occasions in Switzerland, to conduct interviews with Mr. Ardeshir Zahedi (Foreign Minister of Iran, 1968-1972 and latterly Iranian Ambassador to the United States.) Mr. Zahedi kindly provided a copy of his Persian memoirs, which afforded some unique perspectives albeit these cannot be accepted uncritically due to their author's close personal association with the Shah. A second and invaluable resource has been the wide variety of Persian-language materials available at the University of St Andrews as part of the Iranian Studies Collection. Of particular benefit were the memoirs and biographies of some prominent and lesser-known Tudeh (Communist) party members. One such source, a recent interview by an Iranian historian with former Tudeh party activist Abdollah Argani, has shed critical light on a particular case study (the assassination attempt on the Shah in February 1949.) Finally, a number of Iranian political histories have offered greater detail on specific areas where the Western diplomatic record is insufficiently comprehensive. Prime Minister Ahmad Qavam's delegation to Moscow in 1946 and Dr. Mohammad Mosaddeq's speeches in the Majles are two such examples used in this thesis.

²⁰ F. Sepahbody: *Accompanying the Shah on a trip to Communist Russia in The Iranian*, 25 April 2003

INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

‘Let us not forget that the roots of human action are, as a rule, countlessly more intricate and varied than we may later seek to explain them, and rarely clearly delineable.’

- DOSTOEVSKY, *THE IDIOT*

It is a readily observable feature of history that there exists a pronounced tendency, among a variety of actors, to ascribe or infer certain immutable characteristics to political entities: to reify the state.¹ The potential pitfalls of such a proclivity, however, do not lie solely in the reductionism it implies. Indeed, proponents of the unitary state-as-actor in international relations theory have advanced persuasive models to explain why states do often behave in a coherent and unified fashion.² At issue rather, is that the formation and perpetuation of political narratives, by acting as a collective constraint on those who subscribe to them, may create a reality capable of enduring independently of changes in circumstance. When this perceived ‘reality’ acts to structure (mis)understanding both of the state and of the individuals from whom it is composed, the conduct of that state’s affairs or the specifics of its diplomacy are prone to be viewed in an equally prescriptive manner; inaccurately and, more often than not, unfavourably. As Muriel Atkin has pointed out in her interrogation of the myths in Soviet-Iranian relations, the imputation to Tsarist, Soviet and indeed modern Federal Russia of ‘quasi-instinctual obsessions’ – originating in Peter the Great's alleged ambition to secure a warm water port on the Persian Gulf – to a significant degree shaped both Pahlavi policy making toward the USSR and Western assessments of the same.³ In common with the several political myths upon which Pahlavi state-building was predicated, the Soviet threat provided a very real reference point against which the Iranian elite could situate its genesis, justify its continuance and frame its policies.⁴ Ardeshir Zahedi,

-
- 1 As Graham Allison has pointed out apropos the Cuban missile crisis ‘treating national governments as if they were centrally coordinated, purposeful individuals provides a useful shorthand for understanding policy choices and actions.’ G. Allison, *Essence of Decision* (1999 second edition), p3
 - 2 See 'State as a Person' in the *Review of International Studies*, Volume 30, Issue 2 (2004), pp255-316.
 - 3 Muriel Atkin (1990) *Myths of Soviet-Iranian Relations* in N. Keddie and M. Gasiorowski (eds.): *Neither East nor West: Iran, the Soviet Union and the United States*, p111.
 - 4 The term ‘myth’ is used throughout in this thesis to denote the political utility of historical

Foreign Minister of Iran from 1968 to 1972 and whose membership of the Pahlavi elite spanned some four decades, perhaps captures this procedure most clearly in his rationalisation of the 1953 coup against Dr. Mohammad Mosaddeq:

‘The most important thing of all was the danger of communism. The Tudeh [Iranian communist party] was becoming stronger by the day and had also infiltrated the army and security forces. Later we saw just how close they had come to a coup d’etat and seizing power; even several officers close to my father [General Fazollah Zahedi, Prime Minister of Iran following the 1953 coup] had become members of Tudeh. If the 27th of Mordad [19th of August 1953] had not happened, the Tudeh would easily have got rid of Mosaddeq, just as the communists had got rid of Edvard Beneš in Czechoslovakia a few years earlier.’⁵

As will be evidenced throughout this dissertation, the myth of Soviet territorial pretension was a thesis to which senior Iranian politicians not only subscribed, but of which they were immensely successful proponents. The Shah's brand of nationalism, as Ramazani has argued, was broadly inseparable from the threat of Soviet imperialism.⁶

Iranian conviction in the immutability of Russian ‘objectives’ was paralleled by the similarly fixated nature of Russian attitudes toward Iran, which exhibited considerable continuity between the Tsarist government and its revolutionary successor. In particular, while the prevalence of ‘orientalist’-type perceptions among Tsarist officials has already been established, the degree and virulence with which such views persisted in private under Soviet rule was equally notable.⁷ In the writings of Ivan Sadchikov (Soviet Ambassador to Iran 1947-1953), for instance, Mohammad Mosaddeq is presented to Moscow as the architypal ‘wiley’ Iranian, whose untrustworthiness and not infrequently

consciousness. For Iranian leaders, enduring ‘truths’ in respect of Russia may be said to have held an immediacy and relevancy that could be brought to bear on the present, whose perceived realities tended to strengthen the underlying narrative. For the relationship of myth-making to existential threats, see Ricoeur, *Myth as the Bearer of Possible Words* in *A Ricoeur Reader*, 1991, p484.

5 *Khâterât-e Ardeshir Zâhedi (Memoirs of Ardeshir Zahedi)*, Vol. 2, p196. For an account of Edvard Beneš’ fate, see E. Táborický, *Beneš and The Soviets* in *Foreign Affairs*, 27 (1948-1949), p302.

6 R. Ramazani (1975): *Iran's Foreign Policy 1941-1973*, p440.

7 Said’s critique of orientalism identifies a mode of thought that suggests an ‘enduring reality’ and that gave rise to a discourse justifying Western control of the orient. E. Said (1995), *Orientalism*, p333. See F. Kazemzadeh: *Russia and Britain in Persia, 1864-1914: A Study in Imperialism (passim.)*

bewidering 'histrionics' merited a dismissive, unconstructive and ultimately obstructive policy response; a tendency by no means confined to Soviet officialdom.⁸ A particularly striking example can be found the memoirs of Soviet Foreign Minister Alexei Gromyko, whose brief verdict on the twenty-two years of Pahlavi-Soviet relations over which he presided opens with the following:

'A number of times a swarthy individual, of not great height, came to visit Moscow. Having become acquainted with him a little more closely, it was possible to discern that he was educated. Over the course of several decades he determined not only the internal, but also the external policy of Iran, our neighbour. This was the Shah of Iran, Mohammed Reza Pahlavi [who] ascended the throne in 1941 after his father, Reza Shah Pahlavi, abdicated: the Majlis had selected him for the Iranian throne following the internal upheaval of 1925 [sic], as a result of which the country became a petty-bourgeois dictatorship.'⁹

An unhelpful adjunct to prevailing official attitudes were the constraints to which senior Soviet personnel on the ground in Iran (themselves often not specialists in the region) found themselves subject, and which arguably diminished their access to, and thus ability to adequately understand, Iran's elite and broader society.¹⁰ On one revealing occasion, in 1973, the First Secretary at the Soviet Embassy openly lamented his lack of access to the Iranian government beyond formal contacts with the Foreign Ministry and asked his U.S. counterpart whether he might consider including him on cocktail party invitations.¹¹ Although the KGB undoubtedly enjoyed its occasional successes in developing highly placed contacts, the range of official or even extra-official Iranian contacts emerge from Russian sources as surprisingly limited: a sympathetic bureaucrat

8 In 1974 for instance, the American ambassador to Iran, reporting on Iranian reaction to delays in the delivery of U.S.-manufactured weaponry, reassured his superiors that 'Iranians are quick to perceive a conspiracy [...] we are dealing here with Oriental thought-processes [sic].' *Foreign Relations of the United States* (hereafter 'FRUS'), 1969-1976, Vol. 27: *Backchannel Message*, 4 September 1974 (1).

9 A. Gromyko, *Pamyatnoe*, Vol. II, p176. The analysis is at best disingenuous. See Ervand Abrahamian, (1982), *Iran between Two Revolutions*, pp116-7.

10 See O. A. Westad (2005), *The Global Cold War*, p70-1. Westad argues that, following the Sino-Soviet debacle of the 1950s, more experienced diplomats became a 'lost generation', sidelined in favour of a younger cadres with little experience abroad. For restrictions on Soviet personnel in Iran, see S. Khrakhmalov (2000), *Memoirs of a Military Attaché*, p170-1. See also *Asnad-e Laneh-ye Jasusi* (Documents from the Nest of Spies), Vol. 48, *Memorandum of Conversation*, 3 April 1978, pp72-3.

11 *Asnad-e Laneh-ye Jasusi*, Vol. 47, *Memorandum of Conversation*, 9 April 1973, §3, pp52-3.

visiting the Soviet cinema; a low-ranking Majlis deputy; popular wisdom from tradesmen in the bazaar.¹² Moreover, Moscow would often peremptorily require termination of contact with ‘interesting’ people on the grounds that they were suspected as SAVAK agents.¹³ Nor was the dearth of information implied by these challenges a phenomenon limited to Soviet officials. Until modest numbers of Iranians began to receive technical training in the Soviet Union from the mid-1960s, experience of the USSR was in effect confined to carefully stage-managed official visits, invariably complemented by relaxing diversions to the USSR's top beauty spots.¹⁴ Meanwhile, the coverage enjoyed by officialdom and the Iranian public alike with respect to their northern neighbour was distinctly bipolar in nature. On one side of the divide stood Soviet Embassy-sponsored pamphlets and newspapers, which, complemented by the strenuous exertions of clandestine radio, extolled the achievements of the Soviet people and the disinterested character of socialist assistance to developing nations.¹⁵ In turn, the Iranian government press sought to counter the effects of Soviet propaganda by presenting its readership with a singularly unsympathetic portrayal of life across the border – a ‘scorching hell.’¹⁶

As such accounts suggest, a central feature of Soviet-Iranian relations during the period under review was the persistency of its narratives, exacerbated by their resistance to re-interpretation, mutually reinforcing character and political efficaciousness. In the context of the period under review, these observations were first and foremost true of the Shah's personal fixation with Soviet ‘objectives’, rooted in the Azerbaijan crisis of 1946 that appeared to evidence them so unambiguously and which had – in common with the premiership of Mohammad Mosaddeq – posed the gravest challenge to royal

12 For the successes and failures of Soviet espionage in Iran, see G. Khazhakyan (2010): *Breaking Cover – Undercover Agents Gevork and Gohar Vardanyan* (in Russian); *Foreign Intelligence in Post-War Iran* in *Essays on the History of Russian Foreign Intelligence* (in Russian), Vol. 5, 1945-1965, p378-9; V. Vinogradov (1998), *Diplomacy: People and Events* (in Russian), p391.

13 See S. Khrakmalov (2000), *Memoirs of a Military Attaché* (Russian source), pp25-6.

14 For evidence of the latter point, see Soviet Foreign Ministry's complaint to officials in Yalta that the royal entourage's ‘no doubt relaxing’ cruise on the Black Sea had overrun by three days. АВПРФ (Foreign Affairs Archive of the Russian Federation), ф.94, оп.45., п.131, д.6.

15 Khrushchev argued that the economies of countries such as Iran were ‘subordinated to the mercenary interests of foreign monopolies’ and that their industrialisation was being ‘deliberately impeded.’ See his speech to the United Nations General Assembly in 1960 (*Official Record*, 15th Session, pp68-84.)

16 See Soviet TASS translation of article series in *Tehran-e Mosavvar* newspaper: Chapter One, n91.

prerogatives.¹⁷ Indeed, Soviet support for separatist movements in Tabriz and Mahabad during World War II may be said to have painfully tested not only the internal coherence of Iran as a polity, but Iran as a concept in its own right. The Shah felt a personal weight of responsibility to restore the glories of Iran's ancient civilisation against this fragile and humiliating background.¹⁸ From the Soviet side, a comparable conviction persisted that the Shah's 'royal camarilla' was straightforwardly complicit in the historic mission of the USSR's enemies to threaten its periphery and proscribe its economic presence in the Middle East.¹⁹ It also emerges strongly from the Soviet archival evidence that a popular narrative – though not necessarily always the dominant one – remained firmly convinced in the USSR's internationalist mission to extricate countries such as Iran from the predations of neo-imperialism, and that Soviet aid thereby stood in positive contrast to Western 'assistance' whose sole purpose was 'to strengthen the shameful colonialist condition of countries in the region.'²⁰

On the basis of the foregoing observations, the theoretical framework for this thesis fundamentally argues for a conception of statehood that recognises the centrality of historical experience in diplomacy. Its methodology differs in this respect from that offered by Shahram Chubin and Sepehr Zabih in their analysis of Soviet-Iranian relations, which places its primary emphasis on 'the content and outcome of foreign policy rather than on the perceptions, motivations and decision-making process giving rise to it.'²¹ The approach offered here, by contrast, aims to describe the Soviet-Iranian relationship as a product of its causes rather than its effects. It concurs substantially with Ramazani's plea for historical context in the study of foreign policy; that detailed, chronologically-framed, empirical source work constitutes a complement to the work of theorists, not its antithesis.²² With respect to the theories themselves, such an approach purposefully resists the temptation to analyse the Soviet-Iranian relationship through

17 See A. Ansari (2012), *The Politics of Nationalism in Modern Iran*, p132-3. For archival evidence of the tussle for constitutional supremacy between the Shah and his Prime Minister in 1953, and the Majlis' unsuccessful attempts to reconcile the two sides, see conversation between Soviet Ambassador and Deputy Rafi'i in ABPPФ, ф.094, о.65, п.403, д. № 033, л.83: *Record of Conversation*, 6 April 1953. See also Iran Political Diaries, Vol. 14: *Iranian Political Trends from the Departure of the British Legation to the End of the Iranian Year, March 20, 1953*, p11.

18 R. Ramazani, *op. cit.*, p439.

19 See A. Gromyko, *op. cit.*, p198

20 Soviet government's draft note to the government of Iran, 6 January 1956 (see Chapter Two.)

21 S. Chubin and S. Zabih (1974): *The Foreign Relations of Iran*, p10.

22 R. Ramazani (1975): *op. cit.*, p20.

any particular conceptual prism; rather, an attempt is made to demonstrate that, whilst individual theories hold considerable explanatory power, no single framework is sufficient or satisfactory in isolation. Thus, realism (most visibly the Shah's build-up of military power in order to 'deter' the Soviet Union in what he viewed as an anarchic international context exacerbated by the complacency of the West), institutionalism (discernable in the rational, mutually self-interested improvement of economic and political relations between both parties in spite of broader disagreements and the sharpness of public rhetoric), liberalism (demonstrably neither regime was an impenetrable 'black box' but rather a shifting configuration individuals and private groups representing the interests of a particular subset of society), and constructivism (fundamentally witnessed in the less tangible cocktail of historical sensitivities, myth and belief systems that characterised and to varying degrees structured the actions of both regimes); all these are salient and applicable to the period under review.²³ To the extent, however, that this thesis questions – although it does not reject – rational actor theories and chooses to emphasise the ontological anxieties of leaders and human motivations as the primary determinant of their actions, its approach and conclusions hold more in common with the latter two theories than the former, notwithstanding the apparently 'realist' presentation of several episodes surveyed.

Three issues will be explored by this introduction with a view to building on the above. First, in surveying a key debate in international political theory regarding the relationship between structure and agency (whether greater explanatory power is afforded by envisaging 'the state' as the sum of its parts or as 'a whole' that governs its constituent elements) an argument is made for the ascendancy of personal agency within Soviet-Iranian relations but exercised within the structural restraints of circumstance and domestic prerogatives: leaders make history, to paraphrase Marx, but rarely on their own terms.²⁴ Secondly, an attempt is made to assess the notion of rationality in international politics, namely, the widespread claims of individual actors (or indeed states) to 'rational' conduct, and their similarly notable disposition to identify 'irrational' behaviour in others. The outcome in turn is to emphasise the role of

23 A. Slaughter (2011): *International Relations, Principal Theories* in R. Wolfrum (Ed.), *Max Planck Encyclopedia of International Public Law*.

24 K. Marx (1851): *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, p3.

perception (and misperception) in decision making, and to argue for an understanding of 'state' behaviour as the complex product of individual competition and often conflicting priorities: the fine line between rationality and incomprehensibility may be profitably interpreted as a function of viewpoint. Finally, and connectedly, an attempt is made to describe and evidence the impact of emotion in diplomacy and its role in shaping and developing the political myths that arise from historical experience.

Structure and Agency

At the core of the tendency to reify the state, outlined above, lies a temptation to adopt structure as a starting point for judgements about their constituent parts. Attribution of intentionality to the whole – 'the Soviets did *x*' – thus effaces to some degree the complexity and internal controversy that may have lain behind any individual decision. A striking illustration of this point is provided in a remarkable letter from Joseph Stalin to Ja'far Pishevari, the leader of the successionist Azerbaijan Democratic Party during World War II. Writing shortly after the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Iran, Stalin appraised a clearly disillusioned Pishevari of his reasoning, namely that 'the presence of Soviet troops in Iran undermine the basis of our liberationist policy in Europe and Asia [...] if Soviet forces can remain in Iran, then why should not British forces remain in Egypt, Syria, Indonesia, Greece – and the Americans in China, Iceland and Denmark?'²⁵ The passage suggests that the Soviet occupation of northern Iran was not the unequivocal exemplar of Russian expansionism apparently witnessed. Indeed, the evidence assessed in Chapter One of this thesis suggests that Stalin's (undeniable) instigation of Pishevari's movement was primarily attributable to its utility as economic leverage. Nikita Khrushchev subsequently upbraided Stalin and Molotov for their handling of the crisis and its consequences. Addressing the Communist Party Central Committee in June 1957, Khrushchev noted: "We poisoned the Persians' mood. Their Shah [...] says he cannot forget what we wanted to do. And who was in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs? I can't remember, but Molotov was one of Stalin's chief foreign policy advisers." Molotov retorted, perhaps accurately, that: "It wasn't my suggestion."²⁶

25 The letter, held in Russia's State Archive for Foreign Relations (ф.6, с.7, оп.34, д.544, л.8-9) was first identified by Natalya Yegorova. See *The Iranian Crisis, 1945-1946: Newly Declassified Archival Materials* in the Russian journal *Новая и новейшая история*, 1994, № 3.

26 See Yakovlev, A. N. (Ed.): *Molotov, Malenkov, Kaganovich. 1957* (in Russian), p532.

The theme of shifting and indeed competing bureaucratic priorities within the Soviet government has been explored by Galia Golan.²⁷ The central insight, which can be witnessed at several junctures in the history of Soviet relations with Iran, is that the nominally pyramidal nature of Soviet power – with the Party as a ‘superstructure’ reflecting and channeling the will of the proletariat – in practice gave rise to a parallel system of governance.²⁸ In theory, each government structure involved in foreign policy, mostly obviously the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defence, Trade and the KGB, was controlled by the relevant political branch of the Central Committee, to which it submitted proposals for action and to whose recommendations it deferred. In practice, the relationship between these bureaucracies and their political masters was far from harmonious, and policy often resulted from negotiation and compromise between them.²⁹ The picture is further complicated by the influence of parastatal actors in Soviet foreign policy such as the various academic institutes established by the Central Committee under the USSR Academy of Sciences umbrella, and whose members often assumed crucial roles that cut across the responsibilities of other, more ‘official’ channels. In the Soviet-Iranian context this situation is exemplified by Yevgeny Primakov’s frequent involvement in intelligence missions in the 1970s and as a key negotiator in the Middle East, for example with the K.D.P. in Iraqi, despite his official title of Deputy Chairman of the Institute of World Economy and International Relations.³⁰ Finally, it is clear that some Soviet actors, notably KGB agents within Iran, were often a law unto themselves. While the ideological pronouncements of their political superiors may have served as the cue and framework for their activities, no hard evidence exists that the more dramatic attempts at interpreting them – including indirect KGB involvement in at least one assassination attempt on the Shah (discussed in Chapter One below) – resulted from any direct order, and indeed, were a source of considerable embarrassment to their diplomatic colleagues.

A further, important consideration with respect to Soviet foreign policy, and also

27 G. Golan (1990), *Soviet Policy Making in the Middle East: from World War Two to Gorbachev*

28 *Ibid.*, p5-6

29 See, for example, the internal debate regarding Iran’s adherence to the Baghdad pact, below p84-85

30 Prior to taking up the position, Primakov (a fluent Arabic speaker) was special Middle East correspondent for *Pravda*, in which capacity, according to one Russian scholar of the period, he became ‘virtually the representative of [...] the Central Committee’ in the region. See: R. A. Medvedev (2013): *Post Soviet Russia: A Journey Through the Yeltsin Era*.

highlighted by Golan, is posed by internal divisions regarding the Soviet Union's role vis-à-vis the Third World. Indeed, competing narratives within the Soviet elite were of particular relevance to the early 1970s and the Shah's response to perceived Soviet expansionism in the Middle East prompted by the departure of the British. In that context, Brezhnev's notion of the 'divisibility' of détente with the West – the claim that peaceful coexistence with the West was not incompatible with support for revolutionary movements in areas of Soviet interest or more widely – can be viewed as reflecting three factors: first, a desire not to 'lose the initiative' in the Third World to other, more radical actors (in particular the Chinese³¹) and deflect the criticism of others (notably Cuba) for lack of leadership; secondly, and more obviously, the intensely competitive approach of the U.S. toward the region; and thirdly, a desire not to alienate those of the regime (namely the military) with a vested interest in maintaining Soviet power projection or who opposed détente on ideological grounds.³² The practical result of détente's 'divisibility', at least prior to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, was arguably a significant dualism in Soviet policy. On the one hand, rhetoric toward and in several instances active assistance for 'national liberation' movements in what may be termed the 'arms-length' Third World – areas of strategic interest as bargaining chips versus the U.S. or for their naval facilities but not of crucial military significance – the Horn of Africa and Yemen being good examples.³³ And on the other hand, a notably more restrained and cautious policy toward the 'near' Middle East, where a desire not to provoke an increased Western presence (or invasion) and maintain Soviet influence, preferably at minimal cost, took precedence over ideological aspirations. The latter tendency is clearly visible in the rhetoric of détente 'doves' Kosygin and Andropov, whose efforts to promote a less confrontational approach toward Iran and restrain the more narrow revolutionary tendencies of their colleagues are discussed in chapter four and the conclusion of this dissertation, respectively.

Whilst the existence of competing power structures and priorities within the Soviet state

31 See for instance Chinese involvement in Oman with the PFLO in 1971. S. Page (1985), *The Soviet Union and the Yemens: Influence in Asymmetrical Relationships*, p113; and J. E. Peterson, *Guerilla Warfare and Ideological Confrontation in the Arabian Peninsula*, World Affairs, Vol. 139, No. 4 (Spring 1977), p289, n43.

32 G. Golan, *op. cit.*, p24-25

33 W. Andersen (1984): *Soviets in the Indian Ocean: Much Ado about Something – But What?* in *Asian Survey*, Vol. 24, No. 9 (Sept. 1984), p926

are now widely appreciated and explored in the literature, however, it is important to note that such analyses are *post hoc*, drawing on archival materials and personal accounts that were not available to the actors involved. Similarly, whereas the archival evidence surveyed in this dissertation reveals the often florid internal debate and individual idiosyncrasies that underlay Soviet foreign policy, such nuances would not have been obvious to Iranian politicians at the time. In fact, arguably the reverse was true; the Shah's personal disposition toward identifying conspiracies was actively supported through weekly briefings provided to him by the CIA and MI6.³⁴ The inevitable focus therefore on the *manifestations* of Soviet decision making – that is, on the assortment of verbeage and action that apparently constituted Soviet policy toward Iran – suggested continuities and tended to diminish the ways in which power might have been manipulated or exercised within those structural constraints of the communist state.³⁵ For the Shah and those around him, invectives against the U.S. presence in Iran and Soviet actions in the wider region were neither conditioned by circumstance nor the result of conflicting bureaucratic and political priorities but rather symptomatic of a broader structure. The mix of policies resulting from the détente's 'divisibility' acted to reinforce a perception of the Soviet Union as a fundamentally expansionist state, which in turn served as a prism through which to interpret the behaviour of its constituents.³⁶ In sum, the 'collective illusion' of the Soviet state acting, to borrow Robert Gilpin's phrase, was real and immediate for the Pahlavi elite.³⁷

If however, the Iranian and Soviet elites saw the relationship between the state and its leaders as 'mutually constitutive' they had good reason to do so.³⁸ To the extent that the leaders of both states exhibited an ability to channel the behaviour of members towards a certain goals, the equation of personality with policy was an understandable conceit. In this regard Stalin's letter to Pischevari recalls Ernst Gellner's description, writing on the emergence of nationalism, of the state as being created 'suitable for the conditions

34 A. Milani (2011), *The Shah*, p363 and p475, n36-37.

35 D. Dessler, *What's At Stake in the Agent-Structure Debate?* in *International Organization and Global Governance* ed. Kratochwil & Mansfield, 1994, p391.

36 A. Wendt, *The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations Theory* in *International Organisation*, Vol. 41, No. 3, 1987, p337.

37 R. Gilpin, *The Richness of the Tradition of Political Realism* in R. Keohane (ed.) *Neorealism and Its Critics*, p318

38 A. Wendt: *op. cit.*, p305

prevailing.³⁹ To the extent that political actors may trim their sails to circumstance, the role of agency, even when faced with what Engels has identified as ‘uncontrolled forces [...] more powerful than those that are planned’, often survives undiminished.⁴⁰ The history of Iranian-Soviet relations is replete with circumstances that have disposed their respective politics, often in the most unpromising of circumstances, to the critical agency of individuals.⁴¹ And indeed, leaving aside what Brezhnev generously styled the two states’ ‘differing assessments of international life’, through their common drive to impose political conformity – both among their elites and in society more broadly – both Soviet and Iranian leaders may be rightly said to have, following Foucault, to have governed by structuring the possible field of action for others; the state was an instrument at the disposal of the ruling elite.⁴² Membership of the Pahlavi or Soviet elite entailed acceptance of an obligation to act jointly on behalf of collective beliefs, irrespective of whether one privately subscribed to them or not intellectually.⁴³ And as the Shah once instructed his ambassador in Washington to maintain, ‘there are no intellectuals in Iran; these are all Marxists.’⁴⁴

Yet neither Soviet nor Iranian leaders were themselves entirely free agents. As Gramsci recognised, if the state is defined in terms of the administrative coercion at the disposal of the ruling class, then the basis of that coercion must be accounted for, as manifested in the constituent institutions through which the hegemonic order is perpetuated. Leaders and elites cannot survive in isolation from their social underpinnings and the social structure of their state.⁴⁵ Domestic prerogatives undoubtedly governed the Shah’s decision to assume ownership of the White Revolution’s land redistribution programme

39 E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p48. See also Machiavelli’s advice of ‘matching actions to the conditions of the times.’ J. Atkinson and D. Sices: *op. cit.*, pp134-36.

40 Quoted in David Cooper (2002): *World Philosophies*, p342.

41 D. Byman & K. Pollack, *Let Us Now Praise Great Men: Bringing the Statesman Back In*, *International Security* 25:4 (2001), p160.

42 A. Callinicos, *Making History*, p24. For Brezhnev’s 1963 state visit to Iran, see Chapter Three. See also analysis in *Laneh-ye Jasusi*, Vol. 7, *Decision Making in Iran*, (Tehran A-132, 22 July 1976), p9, which argues that the *Rastakhiz* party, created by the Shah in March 1975, was ‘primarily a mechanism for communicating policy guidance from central government to the public.’

43 A. Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, p219. A cogent example is provided in the fall from grace of Mir Abbas Hoveyda. See V. Vinogradov (1998), *Diplomacy: People and Events*, p404.

44 Note to Ardeshtir Zahedi. Quoted in A. Milani, *op cit.*, p475.

45 R. Cox in Augelli & Murphy (Eds.): *Gramsci in International Relations*, p51; A. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (1971), p176.

of 1963.⁴⁶ They also underlay a broader tension existing between economic development and the government's quest to meet the weaponry requirements of a military from which it derived its chief support – an observation also substantially true of the Soviet Union.⁴⁷ Defining the state in terms of its leadership likewise fails to account for the apparent paradox, identified by Alexander Wendt, that groups are capable of possessing a structural reality distinct from that of their members. Once a joint commitment exists to a particular policy, group members become subject to strong constraints on their action and the group structure is therefore said to 'supervene' on individual intentions.⁴⁸ The concept is applicable to the Shah's momentous decision to pursue Iranian participation in the Baghdad Pact. On the one hand, the Eisenhower doctrine's logical corollary in mutual security guarantees and the implicit expectation for Western-led improvement of Iran's defensive capability became an important point of leverage over the Shah's Cold War allies. Having adhered to the Pact, on the other hand, the strength of Western reaction to subsequent attempts by Iran to consider accommodation with the USSR imposed a clear constraint on the Iranian government's diplomatic room for manoeuvre. As one U.S. ambassador bluntly informed the Shah, responding to a proposed purchase of Soviet military equipment, it was 'difficult to be a little bit pregnant'; acceptance of Russian aid would be inevitably followed by an inability to 'put the lid back on Pandora's box.'⁴⁹ Thus, Western reinforcement of the Shah's apprehensions vis-à-vis Moscow's intentions, and in equal measure, the Shah's vested interest in strengthening Washington's emergent regional security thesis produced a framework for Soviet-Iranian relations that did indeed 'supervene', and demonstrably so, on a variety of foreign policy decisions.

Rationality and 'Rational' Actors

As alluded to above, a central preoccupation of International Relations theory consists in the search for an adequate means of describing state behaviour or action at the

46 J. Bill, *Modernization and Reform from Above: The Case of Iran* in *The Journal of Politics* 32 (1)

47 See the paper on Soviet Foreign Policy in FCO 28/1094, where the British Ambassador in Moscow argues (p2) for greater awareness of the interaction between domestic and external policy in the USSR and points out (§8) that 'there is more or less continuous debate [...] between economists and scientists within the leadership who want more money immediately to support certain machinery or instruments, and the military who want more and better arms.'

48 A. Wendt, *op. cit.*, p301.

49 FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. 22: *Telegram from the Embassy in Iran*, 7 July 1966, §11.

collective level without the need to ‘reduce’ it to its constituent elements. One major theory seeking to address this question is that of the Rational Actor Model.⁵⁰ The approach posits that states are unitary in the sense of possessing beliefs about their environment that engender certain desires, on the basis of which leaderships are enabled to make intentional choices in a rational manner with intent to maximise the expected utility of their actions. Given a particular set of circumstances and all other factors being equal, states will pursue the most favourable outcome or ‘equilibrium’; a strategy from which there is no logical incentive to deviate.⁵¹ The permissible boundaries of ‘rational’ choice are thus limited to situations that reward effective choices and punish inefficient ones. Accordingly, rational choice theorists emphasise the potency of external factors – of structural considerations that transcend political boundaries and individual proclivities – and their limiting effect on state action. Kenneth Waltz, for instance, in his three-fold theory of international politics, identifies systemic disparities in capability and power as the most cogent explanation for state behaviour.⁵² Such a schema would indeed appear, superficially, to explain the Shah’s rapid militarisation drive of the 1970s: it was felt that Iran should achieve military ‘credibility’ in order to deter the threat of Soviet invasion.⁵³ Similarly, fears of an American ‘monopoly’ in the Middle East substantially motivated the provision of Soviet military assistance to otherwise ‘bourgeois’ nationalist regimes such as that of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, despite the adverse political consequences involved for local Communist parties.

The primary challenge to the rationalist model consists in the question of whether, how and for whom state action, even if accepted as unitary in nature, may be characterised as ‘rational.’ With respect to Iran’s militarisation, for instance, the apparently rational and beneficial equilibrium achieved in political relations between Iran and the Soviet Union at the end of the 1960s (Chapter Three), crowned by a significant series of economic collaborations, was significantly undermined by Iran’s weaponisation programme and the tension to which it gave rise. Indeed, the Shah’s emergent security hypothesis may be said to have produced a set of behaviours that ran substantially counter to the

50 For an assessment of the field and its possible limitations, see Stephen M. Walt, *Rigor or Rigor Mortis? Rational Choice in Security Studies*, *International Security*, Vol 23, No. 4 (1999), p5

51 *Rational Choice Theory and Politics*, *Critical Review*, Vol. 9, Nos. 1-2 (Winter- Spring 1995), p10.

52 Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the State and War*, particularly p16; 80-1; 159-165.

53 FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. E4: *Shah’s Views on Procurement of Military Equipment*, 19 March 1970, §6

‘rational course’ as perceived by third parties. At a 1969 meeting in the White House, for instance, the Shah and Henry Kissinger exchanged the following views:

‘Referring to Arab countries in the area, the Shah said that many of them were now in the hands of unprincipled bandits who either for their own purposes or in the misbegotten belief that Communism was a wave of the future were disposed to cooperate with the USSR. He saw the Soviets gaining domination of the area through a pincer movement [...] He must, therefore, have the capability to defend himself without outside assistance [...] he must have an "over-kill" capability so that should anyone be tempted to attack Iran they would think twice or even three times. The Secretary asked whether Iran was not already much stronger than Iraq and would it not be madness for Iraq to contemplate attacking Iran. The Shah answered that "those fellows in Iraq *are* mad.”’⁵⁴

And indeed, the scepticism and in some cases surprise with which Western officials viewed this shift in the Shah's strategic thinking was matched by the incredulity of Soviet leaders, who believed the Shah's apprehensions to have been instigated by the Western media, with the objective of causing Iran ‘to play the role of an American Trojan Horse with its belly loaded not only with soldiers but with weapons for distribution to other states.’⁵⁵ In short, while the rational choice proposition that ‘within a feasible set of actions compatible with the constraints, individuals choose those they believe will bring the best results’ is substantially correct from the perspective of the individual concerned, such beliefs may diverge significantly from the rational expectations of others.⁵⁶ And as Sherman Kent, director of the U.S. Office of National Estimates at the time of the Cuban missile crisis, has pointed out, the Rational Actor Model is a reliable one provided that a given situation is viewed through the unique perspective of the agent one is analysing.⁵⁷ For the Shah, pursuit of a strong and credible military capability was entirely rational, but nevertheless differed significantly from the U.S. government's more cautious approach (later abandoned by the Nixon

54 FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. E4: *Memorandum of Conversation*, 22 October 1969. Emphasis in original.

55 *Asnâd-e Lâneh-ye Jâsusi*, Vol. 47, *Memorandum of Conversation with Soviet First Secretary*, 9 April 1973. Soviet suspicions in this respect were indeed correct. See Chapter Four, n43.

56 J. Elster, quoted in A. Callincos, *Making History*, p78.

57 G. Allison, *Essence of Decision*, p81.

administration), which initially envisaged a 'rational increase in military potential without limiting unduly the resources available for economic development and social welfare.'⁵⁸ The Shah's rationalisation may be said to have ultimately won the debate.

A third, albeit sympathetic critique of the Rational Actor Model is supplied by Robert Jarvis in his work on the role of perception in international politics. Jarvis' central objection in many respects supports Kent's observation; that the attribution of rationality assumes all the facts relevant to a given situation are available to participating parties and, furthermore, that such information is perceived correctly by both sides. Thus, if all involved actors were accurately cognisant of the each other's position, their respective behaviours would indeed be perceived as 'rational.' Decision makers will thus benefit, Jarvis argues, by making explicit the process and framework from which their decisions arise.⁵⁹ In the case of Soviet-Iranian relations, however, almost the precise opposite may be said to have occurred. To select one of many possible examples, the acrimonious breakdown of the 1959 Soviet-Iranian negotiations (Chapter Two) demonstrated that the participants, far from seeking to engage with their interlocutor's rationale, viewed each other's negotiating position as almost total anathema. Khrushchev was incensed at the Shah's 'surprising and provocative' decision to sign a Bilateral Pact with the United States just as the Shah was confused and irritated by the Soviet side's apparently unyielding insistence on 'paper articles'; the Soviet-Iranian Friendship Treaty of 1921. From a careful analysis of such episodes it emerges that the inability or unwillingness to perceive accurately is influenced by a variety of factors: personal predisposition, ideology, external considerations, domestic imperatives. These less quantifiable constraints, Jarvis concedes, may diminish the role of rationality in decision-making: 'Rational or not, people interpret incoming information in terms of what is of concern to them at the time the information arrives.'⁶⁰ Furthermore, any attempt to divorce decision-making analysis from its situation-specific pressures or historical context and thus isolate an 'actor's perceptions as the immediate causes of [their] behaviour', is undermined by the observation that such constraints ('sub-goals') are substantially responsible for the differing ways in which constituent

58 FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. 22: *Special Talking Paper Prepared in the Department of State*, 3 June 1964.

59 Jarvis, R. (1976): *Perception and Misperception in International Politics Ibid.*, p43.

60 Jarvis, *op. cit.*, p204. See also G. Allison, *Essence of Decision*, p5.

parts of the state may work toward a common objective.⁶¹ Most significantly, as Jarvis recognises, the tendency toward single-minded pursuit of (or subservience to) sub-goals can often be detrimental to the overall strategy: an observation applicable *passim* to Soviet and Iranian foreign policy during the period covered by this dissertation.

Emotion and Narrative

For proponents of the Rational Actor Model, the ephemeral nature of human emotion may prove a unwelcome variable. Insofar as a lack of obvious measures may render emotions difficult to meaningfully quantify or isolate, their potential influence demands to be counteracted or diminished rather than accounted for.⁶² Hans Morgenthau, for example, in his highly influential text *Politics Among Nations* viewed emotion as a negative force and argued that collective emotionality, as exhibited by states, stands in inverse proportion to societal and political maturity: ‘the greater the stability of society and the sense of security of its members, the smaller are the chances for collective emotions to seek an outlet.’⁶³ Morgenthau's concerns would have been familiar to Plato, who famously has Socrates expel poetry from the Republic on the grounds that it ‘feeding and watering the passions instead of drying them up: she lets them rule, although they ought to be controlled, if mankind is ever to increase in happiness and virtue.’ The ‘honeyed muse’ thus merits exclusion from the hypothetical state as the antithesis to the ‘law and reason of mankind.’⁶⁴ Emotions are, nevertheless, a pervasive force in history. In what might be considered a classic of international relations analysis, Thucydides' account of the Peloponnesian War (431-401BC) reminds us that ‘what made war inevitable was the growth of Athenian power and the fear which this caused in Sparta.’⁶⁵ Indeed, and as demonstrated above with respect to Soviet-Iranian relations, the perception of existential pressure promoted the search for greater security and control, thereby affecting policy choices.⁶⁶ The concept of deterrence assumes a fundamental role in realist interpretations of the international arena: the inculcation of

61 *Ibid.*, p45.

62 N. Crawford, *The Passion of World Politics: Propositions on Emotion and Emotional Relationships* in *International Security*, Volume 24, No. 4 (Spring 2000), p118. See also E. Hutchinson and R. Bleiker, *Fear No More: Emotions and World Politics*, *Review of International Studies* (2008), 34.

63 H. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations* (1948), p123

64 Plato, *The Republic*, Penguin Classics (1955), pp601-2

65 Italics added. Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, translated by Rex Warner (1954), p49.

66 J. Hymans, *The Psychology of Nuclear Proliferation: Identity, Emotions and Foreign Policy*, p34

fear is designed to prevent certain behaviours. As Kenneth Waltz argues, ‘fear of unwanted consequences stimulates states to behave in ways that tend toward the creation of balances of power.’⁶⁷

Such analyses held particularly crucial relevance for the psychological conduct of the Cold War. U.S. diplomat George Kennan's ‘long telegram’ of 1946, where he famously described the Soviet leadership as ‘impervious to the logic of reason and highly sensitive to the logic of force’, interpreted Russian behaviour as, at core, evidencing fearfulness and concluded that America's policy toward the Soviet Union be formulated appropriately.⁶⁸ Emotional perception – identified by David Hume as ‘impressions’⁶⁹ – hold a particular significance for the conduct of Soviet-Iranian relations in this respect. The projection and attribution of emotion (or conversely, de-emphasis and denial) featured centrally in the assessments of both sides. And indeed, the archival evidence is replete with British and American complaints of the ‘blue moods’ to which the Shah was apparently prone and his disposition toward identifying hidden conspiracies.⁷⁰ In equal measure, the emotive character of responses by Western officials to any Iranian suggestion of rapprochement with Moscow consistently clouded judgement as to why Tehran may have contemplated such a move; the Shah's military requirements were perceived to be ‘emotional rather than logical.’⁷¹ While the favoured explanation for Iranian ‘emotionalism’ was often simple blackmail, a close reading of the diplomatic record reveals the Shah's understandable anxiety at the apparent expendability of other U.S. ‘strong men’ abroad (such as President Diem in South Vietnam) and the inadequacy of Western commitments in countering the Soviet military presence by which he believed Iran to be progressively encircled.⁷² A central challenge with emotion then, lies in its propensity to be discounted or improperly perceived. And as already stated above, both Soviet and Western diplomats shared an unfortunate tendency to

67 Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (1979), p118.

68 Moscow Embassy Telegram #511, reproduced by Thomas Etzold & John Gaddis (Eds) in *Containment: Documents on American Policy and Strategy 1945-1950*, p61

69 D. Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, (OUP 1978), T II.3.3, p415

70 See for instance FRUS, 1961-1963, Vol. 18: *Memorandum of Discussion*, 6 December 1963; FRUS, 1968-1972, Vol. E-4, *Memorandum of Conversation with the Shah*, 1 June 1970, §6.

71 FRUS, 1955-1957, Vol. 12: *Telegram from the Embassy in Tehran*, 18 December 1957.

72 See FRUS, 1968-1972, Vol. E-4: *Memorandum of Conversation*, 1 April 1969, p3.

construe Iranian ‘emotionality’ as a product of innate character rather than of specific circumstances.

An emotion that arguably plays a more significant role than fear, throughout this dissertation, is that of pride. The Iranian experience of occupation during World War II had left, as the successive Soviet leaders found to their cost, a ‘residue of sensitivities’ whose latent presence proved both difficult to avoid and a perennial curb on available policy outcomes.⁷³ Nor was the mistrust engendered by history focussed exclusively on the Soviet Union. At times of strain in the U.S.-Iranian relationship, the Shah often referred to the alleged lack of assistance provided by the United States during the Azerbaijan crisis.⁷⁴ Indeed, Iranian officials in private often showed themselves deeply mistrustful of the U.S.⁷⁵ In this context, as British Ambassador Peter Ramsbotham noted in his dispatch on the 1971 celebrations at Persepolis to mark the two thousand five hundredth anniversary of monarchy in Iran, the Shah sought thereby to efface ‘past humiliations’, motivated by a determination ‘that the modern Persian Empire shall command respect from even the super powers.’⁷⁶ From the Soviet perspective also, as seen in Khrushchev's remarks quoted above, a keen sense of wounded pride at the manner of the USSR's departure and progressive exclusion from Iranian politics also underlay much of Soviet policy. This is clearly evidenced in Soviet archival evidence as through the infrequent but often ill-advised outbursts of Soviet leaders and officials during the period, who often evinced a private sense of disillusionment with the Centre's policy choices. Comments in this respect by the KGB's most celebrated undercover agent in Iran, Gevork Vardanyan, in a 2006 interview with the Russian newspaper *Vremya*, are instructive:

‘At that time [the Soviet occupation of northern Iran from 1941 to 1946], with our help, Iranian Azerbaijan became democratic. Kurdistan rose up. My father [Ivan Agayants, also a prominent KGB intelligence officer in Iran] said that “we

73 FRUS 1968-1972, Vol. E-4: *Memorandum of Conversation with Asadollah 'Alam*, 17 June 1971, §7.

74 See record of grievances 'uncorked' by Shah in FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. 22: *Telegram from the Embassy in Tehran*, 31 August 1965, §9b. See also the revealing list of grievances intimated to the American Ambassador by Asadollah in FRUS 1968-1972, Vol. E-4: *Memorandum of Conversation with Asadollah 'Alam*, 17 June 1971, §4.

75 See conversation between Hoveyda and Soviet Ambassador in V. Vinogradov, *op. cit.*, p.396.

76 FCO 17/1517: *A Dynasty Blessed by the Gods*, 15 October 1971, §8.

must consolidate this.” The Prime Minister of Iran at that time however, was Qavam es-Saltaneh, a very cunning individual. At first glance he pursued a pro-Soviet policy. For show, he concluded [an oil] agreement with us but said that parliament ought to ratify it. “While Soviet forces remain in Iran, I can't submit this to parliament, because the deputies might refuse to agree. When you pull out your forces, I promise you, it will be ratified”, he said. My father warned Moscow that it was necessary for us to pay off some of the deputies, but they paid no attention to this and withdrew our forces. Within a matter of days the Iranians had viscerated the democratic governments of Kurdistan and Iranian Azerbaijan. Parliament refused to ratify the [oil] agreement, because at that time the British and Americans had already succeeded in bribing the deputies. And they threw us out of everywhere. We lost everything in Iran.⁷⁷

As the above passage suggests, a key arena for the impact of emotion is that of narrative. Emotive language is an inseparable adjunct to the formation of state narratives and, as the Shah's speech at the tomb of Cyrus the Great in 1971 strikingly illustrated, also indispensable to their maintenance. The impact of emotion, however, does not necessarily deminish or undermine the validity of the narratives thereby promoted, even if the passage of time may cause them to appear incongruous.⁷⁸ Underlying narratives in Soviet-Iranian relations were similarly capable of emotively colouring perceptions of the opposite party's actions or intentions. As described in Chapter Four, a simple diplomatic *faux pas* by a low-ranking Soviet official, even with respect to minor issues, was capable of triggering latent suspicions and reinforcing elite narratives.⁷⁹ The potency of such reactions, in these cases and more widely, was undiminished by the temporal distance from the specific historical circumstances that gave rise to the relevant narrative. Thus, the long history of Russian-Iranian antipathy (explored in the following section) rendered it more likely that otherwise positive encounters could be negatively perceived; historical precedent and analogy acted to unfavourably dispose perception and provide an restrictive framework for diplomatic interaction. The Shah could never bring himself to believe in Soviet professions of

77 'Our man in Tehran', 4 May 2006: www.vremya.ru/2006/77/13/151309.html, accessed 23.04.13.

78 Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (1971), p78

79 FRUS, 1968-1972, Vol. E4, *Increasing Russian Pressures Against Iran*, 1 June 1970.

disinterested economic assistance, just as Soviet officials privately derided the Shah's assurances that Iranian involvement with America was a 'temporary matter.' Given the highly personalised nature of politics in both the Soviet Union and Iran during the period, and in a context where power was highly centralised and civil society weak, it is therefore critical to remain receptive to the emotional power of narrative.⁸⁰

Conclusion

A central concern of this thesis, then, is to argue for an understanding of Soviet-Iranian relations based on an awareness of its historical antecedents. Over and above the relative applicability of any particular concept in international relations theory, this thesis seeks to argue for the potency of narrative and historical experience as they underlie the political consciousnesses of political groups and individuals. Irrespective of the extent to which such narratives may be factually accurate, or indeed embellished and imagined, their genesis and development allow us to form a subjective appreciation and understanding of the stances, policies and actions that result from them.⁸¹ To this contention, however, must be added an important caveat: that the power of narrative was neither constant nor applied unitarily across the Soviet or Iranian leaderships of the period. Even at the highest levels of government, narratives were frequently contested, and this fact complicates any straightforward reading of Soviet or Iranian actions.⁸² To reify the state, then, is misleading insofar as the state is not reducible to any single element but rather represents the collective expression of its constituent components and prevailing conditions; a 'complex institutional ensemble.'⁸³ Notwithstanding the structural constraints of society or the forces of circumstance however, it follows that state power and policy is actualised through the action, reaction and interaction of the specific agents located within that ensemble. Thus, to speak of 'the state' in isolation from the human agency through which its actions are realised, is problematic; it should indeed be no surprise that the individual, as some theorists have noted, 'stubbornly

80 D. Byman & K. Pollack, *Let Us Now Praise Great Men: Bringing the Statesman Back In*, *International Security* 25:4 (2001).

81 For this argument see A. Ansari, *op. cit.*, Preface, IX-X.

82 See for instance the 1966 debate within the U.S. government over the possibility of 'a little loosening' in relations with Iran. FRUS 1964-1968, Vol. 22, pp300-304.

83 Marx, *Capital*, Volume 1, p100.

refuses to be written out.’⁸⁴ A significant underlying theme of this dissertation, accordingly, will be to observe that what in fact constituted ‘the state’ for both Iranian and Soviet leaders was the behaviour and discourse of the individual personalities from which their respective governments were composed and by whom they were represented.⁸⁵ And as Wittgenstein, in common with Dostoevsky, realised, the inscrutability of human nature frequently eludes definition:

‘We say of some people that they are transparent to us. It is, however, important as regards this observation that one human being can be a complete enigma to another [...] "I cannot know what is going on in him" is above all a *picture*. It is the convincing expression of a conviction. It does not give the reasons for the conviction. *These* are not at hand.

If a lion could talk, we could not understand him.’⁸⁶

84 C. Wight, *State Agency and Human Activity* in *Review of International Studies*, 30 (2004), p275

85 A. Wendt, *op. cit.*, (2004), p289.

86 L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (2010 edition), Fragment xi, p235. Emphasis in original.

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

A chicken is not a bird, Persia is not a foreign country.

- TSARIST-ERA APHORISM

From North to South Persia is ours: we are neither minors needing a guardian
nor lunatics needing a keeper.

- HABLUL MATIN NEWSPAPER, TEHRAN, SEPTEMBER 1907

In order to appropriately frame the period covered by this thesis, it will be of benefit to offer an overview of Soviet-Iranian relations as they unfolded prior to the accession of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi to the throne. These tumultuous years for Iran, encompassing the decline of the Qajar dynasty and the rise of Reza Shah, were the scene of intense power competition and consequently a formative period for the many successes and tensions that came to characterise bilateral ties in subsequent years. Given the Iranian preoccupation with the ‘spectre’ of Russian interference however, as outlined in the introductory section above, a useful starting point – albeit not the formal beginning of relations – is presented by the Russo-Persian war of 1722-1723: Peter the Great’s invasion of northern Persia that culminated in the enfeebled Shah Tahmasp II ceding sovereignty of Persian-controlled towns in the Caucasus, together with the provinces Gilan, Mazanderan and Golestan in return for Russian assistance in restoring him to the throne. While it has been tempting for some scholars to portray this episode as a manifestation of Peter the Great’s alleged drive toward ‘free waters’ and commerce with India, the evidence suggests the underlying motives were more practical than expansionary in substance. St Petersburg sought to ensure that, as the Safavid empire declined, their Ottoman rivals would not benefit from the political fragmentation of their southern neighbour by gaining access to areas of significant commercial interest to Russia, and more specifically, the Caspian littoral.¹ The Peace Treaty signed in September 1723 provided a formal exposition of St Petersburg’s motives:

¹ For a modern recapitulation of the ‘free waters’ argument, see R. Mathee (2012): *Persia in Crisis: Safavid Decline and the Fall of Isfahan*, p226.

‘Let it be known that, insofar as for the past several years great disorders have arisen in Persia, and certain subjects of that country have risen in rebellion against His Highness the Shah, visiting significant destruction not only upon Persia but even daring to inflict murder and pillagery upon subjects of His Imperial Majesty, being engaged in trade with Persia by virtue of the ancient friendship and treaty existing between our nations; and insofar as His Highness the Shah, on account of the disorders that have arisen within his country, was not in a position to exert due authority over the rebels; wherefore, His Imperial Majesty [...] unwilling to permit the further spread of those rebels toward Russia’s borders or allow his Highness the Shah to fall as their ultimate victim, employed his own arms against them, freeing certain towns and localities on the shores of the Caspian that had been the subject of extreme oppression and occupying them with his own forces for the defence and protection of His Majesty the Shah’s true subjects.’²

An early precedent is thus demonstrated for Russian imperial intervention in Iran based on two clear objectives that will recur throughout this dissertation: protecting Russia’s borders from threats based on Iranian territory, and inhibiting third parties from gaining influence inside Iran at Russia’s expense. The intense rivalry that subsequently unfolded during the ‘Great Game’ between Russia and Britain, whose intrigues and predations in pursuit of forestalling the other’s imperialist expansion found a natural geographic locus in Iran, can in many respects be understood as the successor to, and logical extension of, Russo-Ottoman rivalry.

The resolution of Britain and Russia’s competing pretensions to predominance in Persia attained their most humiliating manifestation, from the Iranian point of view, in the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907. The central purpose of the document was in effect to codify the boundaries of respective influence between the two powers in Persia, with each side formally abrogating any right to pursue its commercial interests (or support

² S. Bronevski: *Historical Abstracts on Relations between Russia and Persia, Georgia and the Mountainous Nations of the Caucasus, from the Times of Ivan Vasil’evich onwards*, St. Petersburg Institute of Orientalism, 1996, p125-6. (In Russian, author’s translation.)

that of others) in the geographic preserve of other; it would, in the words of the British Minister in Tehran ‘prevent future difficulties and dissensions.’³ There was, indeed, no doubting the political utility of the Convention for the Powers involved. Britain’s need to economise on military expenditure in India required, in the words of Edward Brown (a British orientalist and ardent supporter of Iran’s Constitutional movement) that ‘the ancient bogey of Russian invasion should be exorcised.’⁴ And similarly, for both governments, the increasingly assertive disposition of Germany in Europe, exemplified by the Moroccan crisis of 1905, acted as an inducement to strengthen Anglo-Russian entente. But while Britain feared German expansionism in political terms, the threat from the Russian perspective was perceived as commercial. Any development that held out an opportunity for German penetration in Iran (specifically a railway connection from Baghdad) posed a potential risk to the preferential position enjoyed by Russian traders.⁵ In a now familiar pattern, the prospect of any undesirable foreign influence met with stern resistance from St Petersburg. Indeed, Russia’s somewhat flexible interpretation of the 1907 Convention – guaranteeing non-intervention in Iran’s internal affairs ‘so long as’ no injury should accrue to its interests – was supported by Tsar Nicholas II, who firmly denounced an Iranian government proposal to hire Belgian officers to train its army in the following terms: ‘Since it is harmful to Russia, it is therefore impermissible: we are the masters in the North of Persia.’⁶

The full implications of this line of thinking found their clearest expression in the obstacles encountered by Morgan Shuster, a U.S. customs officer with a reputation for diligence, engaged by the Iranian Majles in May 1911 and granted broad powers to

³ Text of the Convention in J. C. Hurewitz (ed.), *The Middle East and North Africa in World Politics*, New Haven, 1975, pp538-41. British Minister diplomatic note of September 1907 quoted in E. Browne, *The Persian Revolution*, p191-2.

⁴ E. Browne, *The Persian Revolution*, p193

⁵ See F. Kazemzadeh: *Russia and Britain in Persia, 1864-1914: A Study in Imperialism* (Yale University Press, 1968), p594. By contrast, the British Foreign Minister appeared unconcerned by the Ottoman government’s plans for a branch line from Baghdad to the Persian frontier. See *Commons and Lords Hansard*, HC Deb 07 March 1911 Vol. 22 cc1005-6: ‘Baghdad-Khanikin Trade Route.’ The Tsarist government later reached an agreement with the Germans whereby Russia would apply to construct the Iranian side of the proposed Baghdad-Tehran railroad in return for a German guarantee against the imposition of any preferential trade tariffs. See Советско-иранские отношения в договорах, конвенциях и соглашениях (*Soviet-Iranian Relations in Treaties, Conventions and Agreements*), Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1946, p54.

⁶ Quoted in *ibid.*, p613

bolster the country's flagging revenues.⁷ Shuster's determination not to recognise Anglo-Russian 'spheres of influence' and to doggedly pursue vested interests (in one fateful instance taking possession of a house that the Imperial Bank of Russia claimed as collateral against the debts of its occupant) placed his administration on a collision course with the St Petersburg, which, acting on the belief that 'Persians only bow to force' exacted a heavy price for Shuster's obstinacy by occupying Tabriz in order to apply pressure for his removal. The excesses of Tsarist officials during this occupation – culminating in the execution of a leading religious figure (the chief Mojtahed of Tabriz) on the holy Shi'a day of Ashura – made an indelible impression on the minds of leading Iranians of the day.⁸ Prime Minister Qavam es-Sultaneh, for example, under pressure from the Soviet government in negotiations at the end of World War II, responded to Stalin's accusation that Iran was 'hostile' towards the USSR by pointing to the 'brutal actions' of Russian troops in Tabriz in 1911, raising 'in particular' the hanging of Mirza Ali Tabrizi, the Mojtahed in question.⁹

Late Tsarist-era policy toward Iran also saw the emergence of two important trends that were to become a pronounced feature in later years. The first was commercial: Russia's desire to match the successes of British oil exploration in the south of Iran culminated in a concessionary zone between Tabriz and Jolfa (now in Armenia), with Tsarist authorities having the right to exploit any oil or coal deposit within sixty miles either side of a railway built along the same route.¹⁰ Although the concessionary area of ten thousand square miles was relatively paltry by the standards of the time (and subsequently renounced by the Bolshevik regime upon gaining power) the agreement provided a notable precursor to the Soviet government's renewed demands thirty years later and described in Chapter One of this thesis. A second feature was the often chaotic implementation of policy. Subject to the whims of one man, the Tsar's ambassadors not infrequently found that their regent or his ministers would support the wayward activities of more radical personnel (notably Vice Consuls) over the head of the

⁷ Full account in *ibid.*, p584-591

⁸ *Ibid.*, p651

⁹ See *Mirzâ Ahmad Khân al-Saltaneh: dar durân-e Qâjârihâ va Pahlavi*, Vol. 2, p383. For a contemporary account of Russian actions in Tabriz, see the *New York Times*, 28 December 1911.

¹⁰ Kazemzadeh, p675; *New York Times*, 23 February 1911.

Legation, a challenge well described in Kazemzadeh's detailed work on the period.¹¹ As will be seen in Chapter 2, a degree of continuity with this particular feature can be identified in the similarly dualistic nature of policy towards Iran under the Soviet regime. For successive Iranian politicians, the disconcerting contrast between Moscow's outward professions of friendship and goodwill on the one hand, and its intermittent support for more radical levers of policy – hostile radio propaganda, threatening diplomatic notes, apparent support for various oppositionary factions both within Iran and abroad – on the other, lent itself to the conclusion that the former was mere charade while the latter reflected true underlying policy.

Iran's relations with post-Revolutionary Russia

Given the unenviable reputation garnered by the 'regency of robbery and coercion' it overthrew, the newly-incumbent Bolshevik regime found itself almost immediately confronted by an uncomfortable policy dilemma. As Lenin and Stalin publicly declared within a month of the October Revolution:

'We announce that the treaty of the division of Persia is torn up and destroyed. As soon as military operations [connected with World War I] cease, our forces will be withdrawn and Persians furnished with the right to free determination of their fate [...] Not from Russia and the Revolutionary government should you expect enslavement, but from from the predatory European capitalists, who are waging the current War in order to divide your country and who have turned your homeland into their shameful and plundered colony.'¹²

In the diplomatic exchanges that followed – most notably in a wide-ranging and idealistic sixteen point plan for the opening of a 'new era' in relations authored by Georgy Chicherin, Commissar for Foreign Affairs – the Bolshevik leadership sought to contrast itself with the British and crucially, by abrogating all previous 'unequal' agreements, provide Iranian leaders with a vested interest in the regime's survival

¹¹ See for instance in *ibid.*, p656-7

¹² Soviet-Iranian Relations in Treaties, Conventions and Agreements (in Russian), p59: *Declaration of the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, V. I. Lenin and of the People's Commissar for National Affairs, I. V. Stalin, to all working muslims of Russia and the East*, 3 December 1917r.

through the emerging Russian civil war.¹³ It was in the latter respect however, as Chicherin subsequently lamented, that matters ‘did not turn out’ as hoped for. Taking advantage of the chaos ensuing from the dissolution of Tsarist Russia, Britain sought to address the vacuum by introducing the ill-fated Anglo-Persian Agreement of 1919, a policy energetically pursued by Lord Curzon. The Soviet government’s violent denouncement of the Agreement, a ‘knavish and piratical act’ designed to ‘wring the last juices from unhappy Persian workers’, charged that the ‘hirling Persian government’ had sought to conceal Chicherin’s sixteen-point plan from its people and ominously warned of the Red Army’s immanent approach.¹⁴ The declaration never reached Tehran; the Soviet Representative charged with conveying it was ‘captured on the way by British gangs and Russian counterrevolutionaries’ and promptly executed.¹⁵ Indeed, as the subsequent Bolshevik landing at Anzali (and coterminous declaration of the short-lived Soviet Socialist Republic of Gilan¹⁶) made clear, Bolshevik authorities ultimately shared two fundamental concerns of their Tsarists predecessors: first, to ensure that the influence of other world powers in Iran should not pose a threat to Russian borders; and second, to maintain a means of leverage within Iran itself as insurance against the unfavourable policies of Tehran.¹⁷ The Anzali landing was also accompanied by a curious piece of diplomatic acrobatics, which was to reemerge in later years: Chicherin felt obliged to inform his Iranian counterpart that the mission’s commander had acted ‘on his own initiative without orders from Moscow.’¹⁸ The assertion may be considered disingenuous; the history of Russian-Iranian relations is replete with examples of wayward elements enacting their own agendas to the ‘embarrassment’ of the Centre.¹⁹ The tension between such geopolitical necessities on the one hand, and the genuinely-

¹³ Ibid., p65-7: *Declaration to the Persian Governments and People*, 26 June 1919.

¹⁴ Ibid., p70-1: *Declaration to the Workers and Peasants of Persia by the People’s Commissar for Foreign Affairs*, 30 August 1919.

¹⁵ Ibid., p72: *Telegram from the People’s Commissar for Foreign Affairs to Persia’s Minister of Foreign Affairs*, 5 June 1920.

¹⁶ Cosroe Chaqueri (2005), *The Soviet Socialist Republic of Iran, 1920-1921: Birth of the Trauma*

¹⁷ This was seen most clearly in Bolshevik support for the *Jangali* (‘Forest’) rebel movement in Gilan, an organisation that drew the majority of its support, perhaps ironically, from those sections of society whose commercial success had been undermined by (Tsarist) Russian trade. See E. Abrahamian: *The Causes of the Constitutional Revolution in Iran*, *IJMES* 10, 1979, p391, 394

¹⁸ В. Генис (2000): *Красная Персия: большевики в Гиляне 1920-1921 – документальная хроника* (V. Genis: *The Bolsheviks in Gilan 1920-1921 – A Documentary Chronicle*, p68.

¹⁹ Cf. for example the late 16th century exploits of Russian Cossack rebel Stenka Razin. F. Kazemzadeh *Iranian relations with Russia and the Soviet Union, to 1921* in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, 7, p314.

held belief that Iran could and should benefit from the ‘disinterested and unfeigned sincerity’ of post-Revolutionary foreign policy on the other, found a somewhat awkward compromise in the Soviet-Iranian Treaty of 1921, negotiated by Iran’s maverick Ambassador to Russia, Moshaver-ol-Mamalek (Aligholi Masoud-Ansari.) While the document was chiefly concerned with a recapitulation of the Soviet government’s earlier-stated principles and assurances, it incorporated two articles that were to have a critical bearing on subsequent relations: the first (Article 5) forbade the formation on the signatories’ respective territory of any group ‘whose object is armed struggle against Persia or Russia’; the second (Article 6) provided the Soviet government with the unilateral right to invade Iran in the event that the Iranian government, having been made aware of any such groups, was ‘not in a position to avert the danger.’²⁰ The agreement, signed five days after the change of regime in Tehran following the Cossack-led coup of Reza Khan, was not concluded with the new government’s consent. Rather it would appear that the Iranian ambassador, eager to see that his considerable labours bore fruit and taking advantage of the power vacuum, took what we might nowadays be called an executive decision. This fact raises a critical question in the context of this dissertation: why did the incoming Pahlavi regime not seek to nullify the 1921 treaty on the grounds that it was concluded by a diplomatic representative of the government they had ousted? There were three factors: first, Russian troops were yet to evacuate Iran following World War I; secondly, the newly-installed regime was in a position of domestic political weakness and could ill afford to antagonise Moscow; thirdly, and most importantly, the 1921 agreement was substantially more favourable to Iran than the existing treaties it replaced.²¹

On the strength of the Treaty’s more positive aspects – particularly with respect to free trade – relations attained a stable and even prosperous level during the years that followed; in the period 1929-1933, commercial exchanges with the Soviet Union accounted for some thirty five percent of Iran’s trade volume.²² The unhappy issue of

²⁰ Soviet-Iranian Relations in Treaties, Agreements and Conventions, p75-6

²¹ The author is indebted for these latter observations to Dr. Oliver Bast, paper delivered during a conference entitled ‘Empires and Revolutions: Iranian-Russian Encounters since 1800’ (Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS, London, 12-13 June 2009.

²² See N. M. Mamedova: *Russia ii. Iranian-Soviet Relations (1917-1991)*, *Encyclopedia Iranica* (<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/russia-ii-iranian-soviet-relations-1917-1991> accessed 02.08.13)

articles 5 and 6, however, together with the repressive measures adopted by Reza Shah against Iranian communists, were subsequently to give rise to a significant deterioration in relations. Iran sought to argue, on its accession to the League of Nations, that the organisation's founding Charter – enshrining the principle of respect for sovereignty and non-interference in the affairs of other countries – rendered Russia's right of armed entry into Iran under the 1921 Treaty obsolete. Furthermore, as the original document reveals, the Treaty had only been signed into law by the Majles on the basis of assurances by the Soviet Representative in Tehran, Theodore Rothstein, that articles 5 and 6 (which Iranian lawmakers considered to be 'vaguely worded') were only intended for application to 'cases in which preparations have been made for an active and armed struggle against Russia or the Soviet Republics allied to her, *by the partisans of the regime which has been overthrown* or by its supporters among those foreign Powers which are in a position to assist the enemies of the Workers' and Peasants' Republics.'²³ The official Soviet record of treaties concluded with Iran (published in 1946), by contrast, failed to record the existence of the Annex at all. The only identifiable reference to it on the part of the Soviet regime was made in 1959, when an article in *Pravda* dismissed Iranian references to it as 'baseless' and an attempt by certain circles to 'free their hands for implementing military cooperation plans with aggressive circles in the USA.'²⁴ It was indeed manifest that, even if the articles 5 & 6 had initially been intended in a narrower sense to guard against the use of Iranian territory by White Russians or their allies at a point when that specific risk demonstrably existed, the potentially wider application of these provisions to any foreign presence on Iranian soil perceived as inimical to Soviet security offered a means of diplomatic leverage that Moscow was reluctant to forego. The growth of German influence inside Iran, actively encouraged by Reza Shah in order to counteract British and Soviet influence, furnished the first fateful opportunity for the Treaty's invocation.

²³ *League of Nations Treaty Series*, 1922, Volume IX, No. 268: *Treaty of Friendship between Persia and the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic*, 26 February 1921, p410-3. Emphasis added.

²⁴ See *Pravda*, 15 March 1959, p5 ('Неуклюжие Попытки Иранского правительства избавиться от договорных обязательств.' С. Голунский)

CHAPTER ONE | SOVIET-IRANIAN RELATIONS FROM 1941 TO 1953

CONTENTS

- INTRODUCTION
- 1941-1946: THE ALLIED INVASION AND ITS AFTERMATH
- 1946-1948: THE POST-WAR ENVIRONMENT
- 1949: THE FAILED ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT ON THE SHAH
- 1951-1953: DR. MOHAMMAD MOSADDEQ AND THE SOVIET UNION
- CONCLUSION

Introduction

As the historical survey offered above has suggested, relations between Iran and the Soviet Union at the outset of the period under review may be justly characterised as strained. Drawing on the archival materials outlined in the historiographical section, this chapter will seek to evidence how the ‘bitter experiences’ of Iranian statesmen with their significant Northern neighbour during the turbulent years under review in this chapter both consolidated and complicated the Tsarist-era legacy; an ingrained suspicion of, instinctive unease with and latent antipathy toward Russian leaders. Most prominently, the disastrous dénouement of the Red Army’s invasion of northern Iran, and the precipitate unravelling of the Azerbaijan People’s Government in Tabriz – whose separatist demands the Soviet occupation had actively facilitated – constituted a serious setback for Soviet policy in Iran.¹ The subsequent extension of Moscow’s influence over the Iranian Tudeh (Communist) Party, responsible for often violent political agitation at critical junctures and whose more radical members were (it will be shown) directly complicit in a 1949 assassination attempt on the Shah himself, served to further entrench perceptions of the Kremlin’s underlying policies and pretensions vis-à-vis Iran. It is argued that these factors, viewed in the context of Soviet policy elsewhere in the world at the time, played a decisive role in convincing the young and politically insecure Mohammad Reza Shah of the benefits held out by military assistance from the United States, whose own interest in what subsequently came to be termed the ‘Northern

1 The nature and extent of the Soviet vision for ‘Southern Azerbaijan’ – and indeed all northern Iranian provinces – is set out in a remarkable Politburo directive in July 1945 to Mir Jafar Baghirov (First Secretary of the Azerbaijan SSR Communist Party.) *Cold War International History Project*, Record ID 112021.

Tier' – a line of defence against Communist expansion of which Iran was a crucial component – was developing rapidly.²

The inevitable corollary of America's evolving strategic view of, and deepening involvement in, Iran was a heightened sensitivity – buttressed and reinforced to sustained effect by the Shah personally – to any possible move by the Soviet Union to establish a greater position of influence in Iranian politics. An attempt is made to trace the genesis and interplay of U.S. and Iranian apprehensions in this respect, from the immediate post-War environment through to their final apotheosis in the coup d'état against Dr. Mohammad Mosaddeq. The latter's storied removal from the post of Prime – Minister following a chaotic series of events orchestrated partly by the CIA – was predicated principally on the former's alleged solicitation of Soviet support and apparent reliance on the Tudeh Party, the excesses and ulterior ambitions of which the West concluded Mosaddeq was either unable or unwilling to control.³ Recognising the profound and lasting consequences of this episode for subsequent Soviet-Iranian relations, and indeed for Iranian history more broadly, this chapter will offer a fresh insight on Mosaddeq's final months as premier on the basis of Russian archival materials detailing the Prime Minister's interaction with Soviet diplomatic representatives. Critical examination of these documents will reveal that ingrained distrust between Mosaddeq's administration and the Kremlin, combined with a fundamental incompatibility of their respective motives, ultimately precluded any meaningful or mutually-beneficial cooperation between them; an irony sharpened by the clear conviction on the part of the British and Americans that precisely the opposite was the case. Of broader significance, the documents lend further support to an argument (well made elsewhere by Houshang Chehabi) that Mosaddeq, through his increasingly bold attempts to elicit assistance from both the Soviet Union and America by effectively pitting one side against each other – or as Moscow saw it, 'blackmail' – must be considered a substantial factor in the Prime Minister's downfall.⁴ And finally, it will be suggested, the cautious and superficial nature of Moscow's 'moral support' for the

2 The Turco-Pakistani agreement formed the initial component of what was to become the Baghdad Pact. When it was signed, in March 1946, the Shah was twenty-seven years old (b. 26 October 1919.)

3 A detailed documentary examination of the CIA's role has now been made available as George Washington University's *Electronic Briefing Book No. 435*, posted 19 August 2013.

4 Jamil Hasanli (2006): *USSR-Iran: The Azerbaijan Crisis and the Beginning of the Cold War*, p473

Mosaddeq administration (mirrored by its ambivalent attitude toward the Tudeh Party) arguably constituted a further failure of policy caused, as in Azerbaijan, by the opportunistic pursuit of Soviet interests to the exclusion of Iranian political realities.⁵

1941-1946: The Allied Invasion and its Aftermath

It was the British Minister in Tehran, Sir Reader Bullard, who broke the news of Operation Barbarossa to his Soviet counterparts early in the morning of June the 22nd, 1941. The first reaction was disbelief. Indeed, so mistrustful were the Russian officials of their British counterparts that they covertly dispatched their newly-appointed press attaché, Daniil Komissarov, to the Tehran telegraph office to seek independent confirmation from Moscow.⁶ The full-scale invasion of the Soviet Union by Hitler's forces made the presence of Axis nationals in Iran, who had established a significant economic presence encouraged by Reza Shah's government, an unwelcome security threat: Iran not only offered a potential base from which to attack the Baku oil fields, but also represented the only safe all-weather supply route to the Soviet Union and was to become a key transit route for lend-lease supplies.⁷ Komissarov himself, in his memoir *Iran - A View on a Troubled Past*, is categorical both about the nature of the challenge faced, and the reluctance of Reza Shah's government to address it. Nazi spies and saboteurs, he asserts, were present in all Iranian provinces, particularly in Tehran and areas bordering the USSR.⁸ The Soviet Union's official representation to the Iranian government on the subject ran to an unprecedented ten pages, and provided specific details, for instance, German agents allegedly posing as employees of Mercedes.⁹ The British in turn had three concerns. First, the presence of Axis

5 For an enlightening discussion in this respect, see M. Behrooz, *Tudeh Factionalism and the 1953 Coup in Iran* in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 33, No. 3 (August 2001): 363-82.

6 D. S. Komissarov (1985): *Iran: View on a Troubled past*, p103-5 (Russian source.)

7 Even before the Anglo-Soviet invasion, the British Embassy documents record held a meeting of military attachés on the 2nd of July to examine the possibility of transit trade through Iran and, in particular, 'to see how the transport system of Persia can be exploited [...] to act as a channel of supply to Russia.' *Iran Political Diaries* (IPD), Vol. XI: *Intelligence Summary No. 15*, 26 July 1941.

8 Komissarov, *ibid.*, p105. Komissarov further alleges that he discovered 'ten to twelve' Germans at the Shah Hotel in Chalus, accompanied by 'high-ranking Iranian faces', who spoke German. *Ibid.*, p108.

9 See: Советско-Иранские Отношения в договорах, конвенциях и соглашениях (Soviet-Iranian Relations in Treaties, Conventions and Agreements), USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1946, p159.

vessels stationed at Bandar Shahpur were an obvious threat to their interests.¹⁰ Second, a trade agreement existing between Iran and Germany – signed before the war for over a hundred thousands tons of Iranian exports – now constituted an unwelcome component of the Axis war effort. Third and mirroring the Soviet government’s note, a number of the German specialists in Persia were ‘credibly believed’ to be military officers, with ‘no real connexion with the firms by whom they were nominally employed.’¹¹

Repeated representations by the British legation to the Iranian government requesting a cessation of non-essential economic cooperation with Germany and information on Axis nationals in Iran finally met, on the 19th of August, with ‘counter proposals on an extremely limited scale, coupled with a refusal to supply written details.’ Soviet diplomats had also laid out their own demands on three occasions: on the 26th of June, 19th of July and finally the 16th of August, the latter being made jointly with the British.¹² Reza Shah, however, ‘remained deaf’ :

‘Wherefore the Soviet Government was obliged to utilise its right, enshrined in the Soviet-Iranian agreement of 1921, article six, to bring its forces into Iran for the protection of its interests against the real threat posed by German fascists, who were preparing a base in Iran for an advance on the USSR.’¹³

On the morning of the invasion (25th of August 1941), Reza Shah sent for British and Soviet representatives. He seemed to the former in a state of shock, having been ‘ill-informed by his ministers and living in a world of unreality.’¹⁴ It is, indeed, a striking irony of the period that the reign of Reza Shah, itself enabled by the advance of his Russian-trained Cossacks from Qazvin to Tehran, was eventually terminated by the threat of the Red Army to do likewise; a fact not lost on his son and successor.

The Allied incursion presented an unique opportunity for Soviet policy, both in terms of

10 These were subsequently found to have explosives on board. IPD, Vol. XI., p429.

11 IPD, Vol. XI, *Annual Report for 1941*, 17 June 1942

12 *Ibid.*, *Intelligence Summary No. 17* (10 - 23 August 1941)

13 Komissarov, *ibid.*, p105.

14 IPD, Vol. XI: *Annual Report for 1941*, 17 June 1942.

the potential to enhance their prestige and influence and also with a view to counteracting the well-established position of the British in southern Iran. In particular, as the British records spell out, ‘the people of Azerbaijan, the peasants of Gilan and Mazanderan and the Turkomans of north east Persia [were] fruitful soil for Soviet propaganda, having long-standing grievances against the Persian government.’¹⁵ Political commissars under the command of the Red Army, in concert with Soviet Embassy and cultural officials, embarked on an extensive ‘hearts and minds’ campaign (indeed, evidence suggests that preparations were even made in this respect prior to the invasion.)¹⁶ A central role in promoting Soviet influence and coordinating propaganda efforts was accorded to the Iranian Society for Cultural Ties with the USSR – a ‘counterblast’ to the British Council – whose activities included the establishment of various commissions: for literature and publications; for medicine and public health; for theatre, cinema, sport and even tourism.¹⁷ Its inaugural meeting, held in the main hall of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tehran on the 30th of October 1943, benefitted from the presence of many prominent personalities, among them the then Prime Minister Ali Soheili and Mohammad Sa’ed, Ambassador to Moscow (1938-1942), later himself to become Prime Minister.¹⁸ The Society's premises in Tehran also housed a library and radio broadcasting station.¹⁹ At the diplomatic level too, Russian consular representation was greatly expanded during the initial phase of the occupation. New consulates-general were opened both within the Soviet ‘zone’ at Tabriz and Mashad, with consulates at Rasht, Gorgan and vice-consulates at Rezaieh, Maku and Nowshahr, and also in the British zone, with a consulate at Kerman and vice-consulates at Bandar-Shah, Isfahan and Ahwaz.²⁰

15 IPD, Vol. XI: *Intelligence Summary No. 18* (24 August to 24 September 1941.)

16 According to an account provided by Mikhail Pikulin, the Mashhad-based editor of the Soviet wartime propaganda paper *Axbar-e Tazeh-ye Ruz* (News of the Day), a series of the courses 'to prepare for wartime propaganda work' were held in Moscow in September 1940, and attended by two fluent Persian speakers, both of whom subsequently worked under him on the staff of *Axbar-e Tazeh-ye Ruz*. Pikulin, M (1985): *At the Post of a Newspaper Editor*, p131

17 IPD, Vol. XII: *Intelligence Summary No. 2* (3 to 16 January 1944); Komissarov, one of the founding members records the date of its inaugural meeting as the 30th October 1943. The Society (Иранское Общество Культурных Связей – ИОКС) had branches (known as ‘Houses of Friendship’) in Esfahan, Rasht, Tabriz and Rezaieh (Urumieh) and Mashhad. See Komissarov, *op cit.*, p118

18 Komissarov, *op. cit.*, p118

19 Komissarov, *op. cit.*, p119

20 IPD, Vol. XI: *Report on Political Events of 1942*, 26 March 1941, §91.

As the occupation entered its third year, however, the disparity in troop numbers between the two occupying powers became a notable feature. Whereas the uniformed British Army contingent had by 1943 been significantly reduced to less than five hundred, the Red Army had some sixty thousand personnel on the ground and were observed to be actively encouraging separationist ambitions in Iran's Kurdish areas. Curiously in light of subsequent developments, initial British reaction toward this latter development was in fact sympathetic. 'It seems probable [the Russians] are anxious to have friendly tribes on the frontier between Azerbaijan and Turkey in the event of the military situation in the Caucasus deteriorating', averred Sir Reader Bullard, concluding that the Iranian government had 'exaggerated' the extent of the disorders.²¹ If prior to 1944, however, the size of the Red Army could be justified by the need to defend and supply Russia, the opening of the Black Sea route to Sevastopol by the end of the same year effectively negated Iran's importance as a crucial supply route. The Red Army, irrespective of these changed circumstances, was observed to steadily tighten its grip on the Soviet-occupied zone and agitate more openly in support of Azeri autonomy: denying entry to government troops to the region; forcing the closure of gendarmerie posts; preventing the police from quelling unrest and cutting the telegraph lines with Tehran. The request, made 'loudly' and concurrently, was for an oil concession in the north of Iran comparable to Britain's in the south. Unsurprisingly the British Embassy was alarmed by this development, taking a view that 'Soviet exploration of North Persian oil would unquestionably spell the end of Persian sovereignty in that area.'²² And as the U.S. Chargé d'Affairs in Moscow astutely noted: 'the oil in northern Iran is important, not as something Russia needs, but as something that might be dangerous for anyone else to exploit.'²³

The Soviet government's goals in respect of oil were energetically pursued by Mikhail Kavtaradze, the Soviet Union's Deputy Commissar for Foreign Affairs, who was dispatched to Tehran in September 1944 with the task of pressing Stalin's personal demand for the concessionary zone.²⁴ In an audience with the Shah, Kavtaradze let it

21 *Ibid.*, §83.

22 IPD, Vol. XII: *Annual Report for 1944*, 9 March 1943, §6.

23 Quoted in E. Abrahamian (1982), *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, p210.

24 The British Embassy suggested that Kavtaradze was sent to negotiate a concession covering northern Iran 'from Azerbaijan to Quchan', that is, the entirety of Iran's northern frontier with the Soviet Union.

be known that Stalin ‘was not satisfied with the present state of Soviet-Iranian relations.’ When the Shah proposed that the government would consider the Soviet application in line with other concession applications, Kavtaradze was unimpressed: “‘But that is quite different. These applicants are companies; this is the Soviet Government.’”²⁵ The Commissar’s high-pressure tactics however, culminating in an extensive and visibly Soviet-orchestrated campaign of demonstrations against Prime Minister Sa’ed, and ultimately the latter’s resignation, failed to advance his mission’s objectives. On the contrary, Kavtaradze’s intervention ‘rallied support even among former critics of the Prime Minister [...] and hardened public opinion against Russia.’²⁶ An influential (and pro-British) member of the Majles, Sayyed Ziya od-Din Tabataba’i, issued an impassioned denunciation of Russian methods, comparing the Soviet need for a ‘protective belt’ in the northern Iran to the Nazi concept of *lebensraum*.²⁷ Prime Minister Sa’ed’s letter of resignation, he wrote, ‘is an historical document that breaks the heart: it is a document that should be read to future generations in Iranian schools.’²⁸ Meanwhile in the Majles, galvanised by the crisis, a certain Dr. Mohammad Mosaddeq tabled and carried a significant bill making it illegal for any Iranian government to grant an oil concession to foreign governments or companies.²⁹ In an emotional appeal to lawmakers, the future Prime Minister set out the rationale for a policy that he styled ‘negative equilibrium’:

‘Prior to Shahrivar 1321 [the Allied invasion of Iran] the Soviet Union’s policy options in Iran were limited. If a person chose to adhere to that government’s ideology they were sentenced to prison or the firing squad. [...] Subsequently however, the USSR’s policy toward Iran has changed [...] and seeing as ‘political conditions’ have changed, our policies too ought to change. Ever since [the Allied invasion], whatever the Allies have wanted collectively or demanded

IPD, Vol. XII: *Intelligence Summary No. 39* (9-15 October 1944)

25 FO 248/1439, *Bullard to Foreign Office*, October 1, 1944, §3

26 IPD, Vol. XII: *Intelligence Summary No. 41* (23 - 29 Oct 1944) The crowds protesting against Sa’id were reportedly ‘collected in Soviet lorries from their homes with the promise of reward and were quite openly shepherded and protected by Russian troops.’ See also Jamil Hasanli, *op. cit.*, c. 75-6.

27 IPD, Vol. XII, *Annual Report for 1944*. Sayyed Zia was elected as Deputy for Yazd with British assistance. See admission in: FO 248/1439, *Bullard to Embassy in Moscow*, February 26, 1944, §3.

28 FO 248/1442, *Statement by Sayyed Zia’o’-d-Din [sic] Tabataba’i*, December 20, 1944, p10

29 Foreign Relations of the United States (hereunder abbreviated to FRUS), 1944, Volume V., *Ambassador in Iran (Morris) to the Secretary of State*, 3 December 1944. See also appendix to IPD, Vol. XII, *Intelligence Summary No. 46* (27 November - 3 December 1944).

singularly, we have said nothing and accepted it. One side's lack of respect and our acquiescence in their demands has given the other side the right to feel entitled to equal treatment. Sooner or later our statesmen will be telling us that the country's policy is such-and-such and we must do whatever they say. Yet this will not be accepted by patriotic statesmen. Those who desire for the advancement and progress of their homeland will struggle against any policy that is not in their country's interest. [...] Gentlemen, it behooves us to pursue the same policies of our forebears. Even if their level of knowledge cannot be compared to our own, their convictions were stronger and thus they succeeded, for more than a century, in preserving the integrity of this country between the policies of two opposing powers and bequeathing us the resources that have now become the subject of such sustained interest and attention.³⁰

Mosaddeq's motivation for the bill, as he later informed the Majles, was an editorial in Britain's *Times* newspaper censuring as 'regrettable' the Soviet government's decision to press its oil demands without having first informed her allied partners.³¹ In speaking of an 'unwritten obligation to consult', the article gave the unfortunate impression that the allies were bound to dispose of Iran's oil resources by tacit mutual agreement.³²

Irrespective of the law's passing – which Kavtaradze promptly labelled 'a mistake'³³ – it became clear that Soviet authorities in Azerbaijan were already engaged in 'surreptitious experimental borings' and further, it was alleged, importing Soviet goods for sale in order to obtain the rials needed to finance and arm elements sympathetic to their goals.³⁴ The extent of those goals was, indeed, ominously apparent from an Iranian Note of protest to the Soviet Embassy on the 5th of November 1944:

‘According to a report received from Tabriz, the Soviet authorities in Azerbaijan have taken steps to build a medical college and it is understood that they propose

30 Quoted in H. Kirmani.: *Az Shahrivar 1320 tā Fajā'ih-ye Āzerbayjān va Zanjān (From Shahrivar 1320 to the Disaster of Azerbaijan and Zanjan)* Vol. 2, p577-8.

31 FO 248/1442, *Bullard to Foreign Office*, December 22, 1944, §2

32 *The Times*, 3 November 1944, p5 (article wording verified by author at British Library archives.)

33 FO 248/1442, *Bullard to Foreign Office*, 14 December 1944 (Soviet Embassy circular *Dust-e Iran*.)

34 IPD, Vol. XII: *Annual Report for 1944*, §164.

to set up other colleges, such as for engineering and agriculture. If this is true, since the Iranian Government has hitherto given no permission to any Government to take such measures on Iranian soil, it may be presumed that the Soviet authorities have acted on their own initiative; an intervention in Iranian internal affairs that is not accepted by the Iranian government, nor is it expected that the Soviet Government, as a friend and ally of Iran, should have given permission for it.’³⁵

Concerns subsequently intensified when the Azerbaijan Democratic Party, newly-formed of erstwhile Tudeh members and with full Soviet backing, published its manifesto for local autonomy.³⁶ Given the Red Army’s military grip on the region, Tehran stood little chance of imposing its writ, and the Azerbaijani National Assembly was duly convened in Tabriz in November 1945.³⁷ Meanwhile, Iran’s Kurdish population had declared a republic of their own centring on the town of Mahabad, following an uprising which also bore over hallmarks of Soviet inspiration.³⁸

The turning point in this deteriorating state of affairs came with the narrow appointment as Prime Minister of Ahmad Qavam, whose support among the left and presumed antipathy toward the Shah (by whose father he had been exiled to Europe and then placed under police surveillance for eleven years) facilitated an opportunity for talks in Moscow. It became apparent, however, that the neither side was willing to cede any significant ground. In a two-hour audience with Stalin, Qavam stated that self-governance for Azerbaijan was ‘not consistent with’ Iran’s independence:

‘Insofar as is possible within the country’s laws, we are prepared to make concessions including that, in certain government appointments such as city

35 FO 248/1439: *Yâddâsh-t Beh Sefârat-e Etehâd-e Jamâhir-e Shuravi*, 5 November 1944

36 For documentary evidence of the Soviet leadership’s intentions, see Note 1.

37 IPD, Vol. XII: *Review of the Principal Events in Persia, 1945*, §5.

38 Agitation for Kurdish independence had begun following the inauguration of the Mahabad branch of the Iran-Soviet Cultural Society. Furthermore when the movement’s leader Qazi Mohammad appeared in Tabriz, according to one British report, ‘he was greeted with the ‘Kurdish Hymn to Stalin’ in which Stalin was extolled as the saviour of Kurdistan.’ FO3 71/4550: *Kurdish Demonstrations*, dated 16 May 1945. See also E. Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, p219.

governors, city mayors and even the governor general accept suggestions of a regional committee established under the oversight of central government.³⁹

Stalin, for his part, was manifestly unwilling – as the Tsarist authorities before him – to accept such a situation in the absence of a commitment toward a less ‘hostile’ attitude toward Russia, that is to say, a greater economic and political stake in Iran. The ensuing joint communiqué, published on the 5th of April 1946, reflected an artful compromise. First, the Red Army was to withdraw within six weeks of the 24th of May 1946; second, differences regarding the level of autonomy to be accorded Iranian Azerbaijan would be settled in a ‘peaceful manner’; and crucially, third, legislation for a joint Soviet-Iranian oil company would be ‘presented for the approval’ of the Majles within seven months.⁴⁰ Qavam and the Soviet Ambassador exchanged detailed notes defining the nature of the joint company and its operating conditions: a fifty year lease on an equal profit-sharing basis.⁴¹ Since the lease’s ratification was contingent on an elected Majles, and in view of the fact that the previous Majles had enacted a law postponing elections until the withdrawal of all foreign forces, realisation of the agreement thus became contingent on the Red Army’s departure; an impressive feat of diplomacy for which the Shah permitted his Prime Minister no credit.⁴² Qavam had secured the departure of Soviet forces from Iranian territory without the latter losing face and apparently without any intervention on the part of the West, although the exertions of Hussein Ala’ – Iran’s energetic Ambassador to the United Nations – undoubtedly played a key role.⁴³ (Although President Truman would subsequently claim he ‘personally saw to it that Stalin was informed that [he] had given orders to our military chiefs to prepare for the movement of our ground, sea and air forces’, the Shah, by contrast, recalled the U.S. Ambassador in Tehran, George Allen, informing him bluntly that the United States

39 Quoted in *Mirzâ Ahmad Khân al-Saltaneh: dar durân-e Qâjârihâ va Pahlavi*, Vol. 2, p376-80.

40 *Ibid.*, p227; IPD, Vol. XIII: *Annual Political Report on Persia, 1946*, 5 February 1947, §5-6.

41 Full text in Советско-Иранские Отношения в договорах, конвенциях и соглашениях, p162-3.

42 The Shah's account expressed displeasure that the oil agreement was 51% in favour of Russia, ignoring the fact that the proposed deal was substantially favourable to Iran by the standards of the time. Iran's share of Anglo-Iranian Oil Company operations during the late 1940s was merely 18%. See: M. R Pahlavi, *The Shah's Story*, p45, N. Keddie (2006), *Modern Iran*, p124.

43 Iran’s complaint to the Security Council was tabled just one day prior to Qavam’s arrival in Moscow. The Soviet delegation (headed by Andrei Gromyko) famously walked out after their proposal to postpone discussion of Iran’s complaint until after Qavam’s negotiations in Moscow was voted down. Harbutt, F. J.: *The Iron Curtain: Churchill, America and the Origins of the Cold War*, p242-6.

wouldn't 'go to war with Russia for your sake.'⁴⁴ Neither of these opposing recollections is substantiated by documentary evidence.⁴⁵)

Notwithstanding the Red Army's withdrawal, the Soviet-supported Pischevari regime in Tabriz remained fully operational. It became, indeed, progressively clear that Russian authorities intended to exert leverage through this channel to secure greater representation of pro-Soviet parties in the new (15th) Majles in order to secure the passing of the oil agreement. Accordingly, on the 2nd of October 1946 the Soviet Ambassador made known his impatience for elections. Tudeh activists followed suit by initiating a concerted series of strikes and wider agitation in a bid to bolster their profile.⁴⁶ The campaign – a combination of mass rallies, organised strikes and vocal demands to arm the trade unions – proved to be a gross miscalculation. Disquieted by the Tudeh's increasingly boisterous disposition, the Prime Minister took steps to curb its influence, including the effective exile of his pro-Soviet Chief of Staff, Mozzafar Firuz, to Moscow as ambassador.⁴⁷ An illustration of the tactics employed by Tudeh is provided in a remarkable note Qavam received from his Firuz, dated May 1946:

'Don't forget that you are only Prime Minister because of Pischevari and his army. If you allow the Shah's agents into Azerbaijan, he'll remove you as being no longer necessary to him. Our government ought to see in Pischevari and in democratic Azerbaijan our reserve forces against reaction.'⁴⁸

The elections did indeed, as Firuz predicted, provide the central government with the necessary pretext to order government troops into Azerbaijan and restore security. While the Shah again refused to permit his Prime Minister any recognition for the course of events, it would appear that Qavam himself actually signed the order.⁴⁹ Tabriz was recaptured on the 13th of December and the Democrat regime collapsed, its leaders fleeing across the border to the Soviet Union. It took the central government just one week to re-establish full control, leading the British Minister, Sir Reader Bullard, to

44 See *New York Times*, 25 August 1957 versus M. R. Pahlavi, *The Shah's Story*, p46

45 J. Philipp Rosenberg *The Cheshire Ultimatum: Truman's Message to Stalin in the 1946 Azerbaijan Crisis*, *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 41 (1979), pp933-940

46 IPD, Vol. XIII: *Military Attaché's Intelligence Summary No. 8*, 3-9 March 1947.

47 E. Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, p237

48 Quoted in Jamil Hasanli, *op. cit.*, p530, n42

49 See E. Abrahamian, *op. cit.*, p239-240.

conclude with considerable satisfaction that ‘the Russians have once again misjudged imponderables and underrated the ineptitude of their puppets.’⁵⁰

Arguably however, the most prominent and detrimental effect of Soviet actions in Azerbaijan in fact arose from the mismanagement and alienation of the Iranian political elite, epitomised by Kavtaradze's treatment of Mohammed Sa'ed and underlined by Ambassador Sadchikov's underestimation of Ahmad Qavam. The extent of the damage in this respect is illustrated in a scathing summation provided by Tahmoures Adamiyat, Iran's Second Secretary in Moscow (1945- 1946):

‘During the Second World War, Iran was faced with all the difficulties of a country under foreign occupation. We were unable to move our troops into the North. They carried off our grain, our flocks, our sheep, our cattle. They cut down our forests and took the timber away on their ships. They kept falsely declaring that they had brought corn flour for us. In every aspect of political and state decision making, they openly forced the implementation of their views, making clandestine arrangements and constantly provoking people.’⁵¹

Indeed the shortcomings of Soviet ‘clumsy tactics’ were sharply highlighted by Lieutenant-Colonel Geoffrey Wheeler, who served as the British Press Councillor in Tehran between 1946 and 1950, who observed that Soviet attempts since 1917 to extend their influence in the Middle East more widely had been characterised by setbacks, ‘the result partly of Western opposition, partly of Middle Eastern nationalism, and perhaps most of all of Soviet miscalculation, crudeness of method and precipitancy.’⁵² So unpopular did Kavtaradze in fact make himself in Iran, that his name was popularly rendered as *Kavtârzâdeh* – hyaena spawn.⁵³

The Post-War Environment

If Soviet ambitions in Middle East had suffered a setback in Iran, the Iron Curtain was

50 IPD, Vol. XIII: *Annual Political Report on Persia, 1946.*

51 T. Adamiyat, *Gashti bar Gozashte*, p31-32

52 Geoffrey Wheeler, *Russia and the Middle East in Political Quarterly*, 1957, Issue 28, No. 2, p127.

53 IPD, Vol. XII: *Intelligence Summary No. 44* (13-19 November 1945)

successfully descending over Europe. From the Iranian perspective in particular, the uncertain environment of the post-war world was brought into sharp relief by the Communist takeover in Czechoslovakia on the 25th of February 1948, from which ‘disquieting implications’ were drawn.⁵⁴ The sense of international unease was underlined by the subsequent signing, on the 17th of March 1948, of the Brussels Treaty (a precursor to NATO), swiftly followed on the 25th of March by President Truman's speech to Congress calling for conscription.⁵⁵ The dangers that the latter identified were, indeed, already familiar to Iran:

‘The tragic death of the Republic of Czechoslovakia has sent a shock throughout the civilized world. Now pressure is being brought to bear on Finland, to the hazard of the entire Scandinavian peninsula. Greece is under direct military attack from rebels actively supported by her Communist dominated neighbors. In Italy, a determined and aggressive effort is being made by a Communist minority to take control of that country. The methods vary, but the pattern is all too clear.’⁵⁶

Spurred by these observations, the President began to elaborate a security thesis that would hold profound implications for the future trajectory of Iran's relations with the U.S. and the Soviet Union. The Truman Doctrine advocated the provision of financial aid primarily to Greece, but also more significantly to Turkey, whose future ‘as an independent and economically sound state is clearly no less important [...] to the preservation of order in the Middle East.’ The speech called more broadly for assistance for ‘free peoples’ of that region to be made available ‘primarily through economic and financial aid.’⁵⁷ In the case of Iran however, an exposed geo-political position, combined with a febrile domestic political environment and challenging internal

54 IPD, Vol. XIII: *Annual Report for 1946*

55 Concurrently, secret talks were underway in Washington between the U.S., the U.K. and Canada where the North Atlantic Treaty was conceived. See Cees Wiebes and Bert Zeeman: *The Pentagon Negotiations March 1948: The Launching of the North Atlantic Treaty International Affairs*, Vol. 59, No. 3 (Summer, 1983), pp. 351-2, footnote 4.

56 Truman Library – Public Papers: *No. 52: Special Message to the Congress on the Threat to the Freedom of Europe*, 17th March 1948. Retrieved from www.trumanlibrary.org on 25/5/11

57 The intent of the speech was thus to persuade congress to authorise financial aid to Greece and Turkey to prevent their falling into the Soviet sphere. See Yale Avalon Project, *President Harry S. Truman's Address before a Joint Session of Congress*, 12 March 1947. http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/trudoc.asp, accessed 23/5/11.

security situation – aspects often emphasised by the Shah – guided the kind of aid offered. Thus an agreement was reached, and signed on the 6th of October 1947, to replace the already substantial U.S. gendarmerie mission in Iran (GENMISH) with an expanded army mission (ARMISH), its purview being to enhance the efficiency of the Iranian army with respect to its ‘organisation, administrative principles and training methods.’⁵⁸ The existing American mission, under the control of Major General Ridley and Colonel Schwarzkopf, had been in place since late 1942. Its purpose, enshrined in a formal agreement a year later, had been ‘to advise and assist the Ministry of Interior in the reorganization of the Imperial Iranian Gendarmerie’ with U.S. officers, crucially, having precedence over Iranian Gendarmerie officers of the same rank. According to the provisions of the Agreement, the American chief of the Mission was also entitled to recommend to the Iranian Minister of Interior ‘the appointment, promotion, demotion, or dismissal of any employee of the Gendarmerie’ with no other authority having ‘the right to interfere.’ Finally, Iran undertook that no officers of other countries could serve in the Gendarmerie while members of the U.S. military mission were thus employed.⁵⁹ The motivation behind these provisions, retained in the 1947 agreement, was clearly elucidated in its text; it concerned ‘the extension of the Truman Doctrine’ to include Iran as ‘a bastion in both the political and strategic sense, which, if breached, would [lead to] Soviet domination of the entire Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East.’⁶⁰

The implications of a strengthened American military presence were, naturally, not lost on Moscow. The increasing interest of U.S. policy makers in Iran, exemplified by the agreement of October 1947, was viewed both as a political challenge to Russia's influence in Iran and a military threat to the southern borders of the Soviet Union. The agreement's signing also coincided, unhappily from Moscow's point of view, with the Majles' outright rejection of the proposal for the joint Soviet-Iranian oil agreement –

58 See: *United States, Department of State, Treaties and Other International Acts, Series 1650-16*, Document 99 (Washington, D.C., 1947), No. 1666, at pp3-4. For the strength of the existing GENMISH, see IPD (1946-1951): *Intelligence Summary No. 17* (1st - 6th May 1947), 16 May 1947. Also M. Ricks, *U.S. Military Missions to Iran, 1943-1978: The Political Economy of Military Assistance in Iranian Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 3/4 (Summer - Autumn, 1979), p173

59 See: *United States, Department of State, Executive Agreement Series, Nos. 351-400* (Washington, D.C., 1944), at p6. See also M. Ricks, *op. cit.*, p168

60 These remarks were made in the context of the Pentagon Talks of 1947 between the United States and the U.K. concerning the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean. FRUS, 1947, Vol V: *The Pentagon Talks of 1947: Memorandum by the Chief of the Division of South Asian Affairs*, 5 November 1947.

somewhat damagingly, it emerged, to have been called ‘The Stalin Oil Company’ – less than three weeks later.⁶¹ In an official response to the development, Iran’s Prime Minister, Ibrahim Hakimi, was informed in a note from Moscow that ‘this hostile action’ on the part of the Majles ‘while preserving the British oil concession in the south’ constituted ‘an act of crude discrimination against the USSR’ making clear that the Iranian government bore ‘responsibility for the consequences.’⁶² The situation further deteriorated when it became public that the Iranian parliament had embarked upon negotiations for an American loan to purchase U.S. military equipment. A Iranian purchasing team visited Washington in May 1947 leading to a provisional agreement in June for a loan of \$25 million, to be used for the purchase of excess U.S. military stores.⁶³ The loan was issued on generous terms: 2.5% interest to be repaid over twelve years starting in 1951.⁶⁴ Although referred to publicly as a credit, since the terms of the agreement bore obligations for Iran in terms of interest, constitutionally it required authorisation from the Majles – secured on the 31st of January 1948.⁶⁵

Parliamentary approval of the credit led to a flurry of diplomatic exchanges. A Soviet diplomatic note, timed to coincide with the debate itself, alleged that ‘strategic preparations’ were being made on Iranian territory in violation of Article 5 of the Soviet-Iranian treaty of 1921. It specifically accused General Grow, chief architect of the arms credit agreement, of establishing a ‘monopoly’ over leadership roles in the imperial army for American military officials; of furnishing Iran with military equipment ‘in excess of its requirements’; of assisting in the construction of an ‘enormous airbase’ at Qom; and of coordinating reconnaissance flights over Soviet frontier posts. ‘These actions’, it concluded, ‘constitute a threat to the Soviet Union’s borders.’⁶⁶ The Iranian response, submitted to the Soviet government on the 4th of February 1948 and published in the government newspaper *Ettela’at* the following day, was authored by Prime Minister Hakimi. The Soviet government had, he argued in a lengthy and uncompromising note, ‘no right to concern itself with Iran’s internal

61 IPD, Vol XIII, Intelligence Summary No. 43 (21st - 28th October 1947), not dated.

62 Jamil Hasanli, *op. cit.*, p465

63 IPD, Vol. XIII: *Quarterly Report*, 31 December 1947, §37

64 IPD, Vol. XIII: *Intelligence Summary No. 24* (18 - 24 June 1947)

65 IPD, Vol. XIII: *Monthly Report for February 1948*, 6 March 1948

66 Foreign Relations Archive of the Russian Federation (ABPIPF), ф.0566, оп.10, п.230, д.267, л.27

affairs’, affirming that Iran would build air bases ‘wherever it pleased.’ As for the army, Hakimi pointed out acerbically, ‘it is in need of modernisation and new equipment, since not only were Iran’s military stocks depleted in the course of World War II but, as the Soviet Union knows better than anyone else, great damage was inflicted on the Iranian army in this respect.’ Having addressed these points, the Prime Minister took the opportunity to ‘draw the Soviet Government’s attention to certain truths which are, in contrast to the claims made in [the Soviet Government’s] note, quite irrefutable’, namely that the USSR had furnished ‘every conceivable kind of material and moral support to opportunists and traitors’ within Iran during the Allied occupation; had subsequently ‘granted asylum’ to the latter in the Soviet Union in spite of ‘strenuous’ Iranian protests, permitting them ‘to form a detachment on Soviet territory with the intention of invading Iran’ and putting ‘all the necessary means at their disposal’; and finally, continued to tolerate anti-Iranian radio broadcasts, which, ‘beyond any doubt are transmitted from a single point in the Caucasus under the direct supervision of the Azerbaijan Democratic Party.’ These actions, Hakimi concluded, did constitute a violation of Article 5 of the Soviet-Iranian Treaty of 1921 and Iran therefore ‘called upon the Soviet government to terminate their unfriendly activities.’ The Soviet Foreign Ministry retorted that Hakimi’s counterattack had been ‘dictated in its entirety’ by the U.S. Embassy’s Press Attaché.⁶⁷

In the midst of this robust exchange however, the Iranian Prime Minister made a curious admission. Iran, he stated, had approached the Soviet Union regarding the purchase of arms, but the price on offer was ‘not attractive.’⁶⁸ This remarkable statement appeared to bear witness to a desire on the part of the Iran not to alienate the Soviet Union entirely, the U.S. military agreement notwithstanding. And indeed similarly, on the opposite side of the border, Moscow’s support for the Azeri Democratic forces in exile was not quite as fulsome as Hakimi felt bound to believe. Available archival evidence suggests that, in reality, Moscow took active steps to marginalise the discredited ADP, shifting toward the Tudeh Party as the preferred vehicle for furthering their interests in Iran; a fact that Mir Jafar Bagirov, chief Soviet architect of the Azeri separatist regime,

67 ABПРФ, ф.0566, оп.14, п.311, д.201, л.71-77; IPD, Vol. XIII: *Monthly Report for February 1948*.

68 ABПРФ, ф.0566, оп.14, п.311, д.201, л.73

openly criticised.⁶⁹ In view of this apparent policy change it has been suggested, not altogether implausibly, that Pischevari's sudden demise in a 'road accident' (June 1947 just inside Soviet Azerbaijan) was orchestrated by the Soviet secret police.⁷⁰ While this remains impossible to verify, it is undoubtedly the case that Pischevari's energetic efforts to regroup his forces for an incursion into Iranian Azerbaijan – precisely his occupation at the time of the car crash – were inconvenient in light of the Soviet leadership's primary aim, evidenced by the shrillness of the accusations made in its note; to stabilise its southern borders and to avoid providing any further pretext for establishment of a long-term U.S. military presence. The evidence also supports a contention that Moscow had always seen Pischevari as expendable. In conversation with Ahmad Qavam during their negotiations in March 1946, Molotov had in fact proposed that, if an understanding could be reached between the two governments regarding an oil concession, then Pischevari 'could die or become ill.'⁷¹ Following Pischevari's demise, Soviet authorities appear to have confiscated his writings, including the two-volume manuscript of his *History of the Democratic Movement in Iranian Azerbaijan*. The leader's body was buried, unceremoniously, in an unmarked grave at his country house north of Baku.⁷²

Notwithstanding the Soviet Government's tactical shift away from the ADP, the prevailing environment – as suggested by the above – remained one of profound distrust and official displeasure on both sides. The U.S. military assistance package, which Moscow rightly suspected as the first step in what was to become an extensive and long-standing arrangement, triggered a significant deterioration in relations, whose potential seriousness found reflection in the notably more conciliatory tone of an Iranian note delivered to the Russian Embassy on the 22nd March 1948. The document pointed out that Iranian policy toward the Soviet Union was based on the UN Charter and emphasised a desire to maintain friendly relations with all countries, 'particularly the USSR', on the basis of reciprocity. This attempt to ease the pressure met with no success. The Soviet ambassador and his First Secretary were conspicuous by their

69 *Khaterat-e Siyasi-ye Fereydoun Keshavarz* (Tehran, 2000), p66-7

70 The Secretary of the Azerbaijan Communist Party's Central Committee, in a 1954 report to Moscow on the position of the ADP, characterised the circumstances of Pischevari's demise as 'highly dubious.'
Jamil Hasanli, *op. cit.*, p482

71 ABПРФ, ф.94, оп.37, п.362, д. 1, л.27: *Record of Conversation*, 23 February 1946

72 Jamil Hasanli, *op. cit.*, p482

absence from the Shah's annual levée (held two days later on March the 24th) and a formal reply to the note followed on March 27th, again quoting the U.S.-Iranian Agreement of October 1947 in refutation of Iran's assurances, which it compared 'with similar denials in 1941 about Axis agents in Persia.'⁷³ The prevalent feeling continued to be, in the words of one observer, 'apprehension about possible Russian action', lent credence by the increased hostility of Soviet broadcasts emanating from the Caucasus.⁷⁴

The February 1949 Assassination Attempt on the Shah

It was in this febrile context that, on the 4th of February 1949, an attempt was made on the life of the Shah. The would-be assassin was a young man called Nasser Fakhr-Araï, an unemployed and disgruntled former paper mill technician.⁷⁵ As the Shah mounted the steps to the law school at Tehran University, which was celebrating its nineteenth anniversary, Fakhr-Araï, posing as a press photographer (having obtained his journalist's pass through his paper mill connections) shot the Shah several times at close range hitting the king in his cheek, hat and shoulder before the revolver jammed. The assailant promptly met his demise at the hands of the imperial bodyguard.⁷⁶ It was an extraordinarily lucky escape for the Shah and the authorities' response was predictably swift and uncompromising: martial law was immediately imposed and a large number of arrests were made.⁷⁷ The following day, Dr. Manouchehr Eqbal, in his capacity as Acting Interior Minister, made a statement to an emergency session of the Majles. He announced that a notebook had been found among the possessions of the deceased in which, it was alleged, Fakhr-Araï 'admitted he was a member of the Tudeh Party, in spite of the fact it was controlled by the USSR.'⁷⁸ Although the formulation appeared in fact to betray the assassin's ambivalent attitude towards the Tudeh Party's alleged sponsors, the implication drawn was one directly pointing to a Tudeh-led plot, conducted by extension with Moscow's prior knowledge if not active blessing. To underline the point, the Soviet book shop and cinema in Tehran were raided by armed soldiers and promptly closed down.⁷⁹

73 IPD, Vol. XIII: *Monthly Report for March 1948*, 5 April 1948

74 IPD, Vol. XIII: *Monthly Report for February 1948*, 6 March 1948

75 M. Sanjabi (2002): *Panj Golouleh Baraye Shah*, p86

76 M. R. Pahlavi: *Mission for my Country*, p103

77 FRUS, 1949, Vol. VI: *Sommerville to the Secretary of State*, 4 February 1949

78 FRUS, 1949, Vol. VI, *Sommerville to the Secretary of State*, 15 February 1949; IPD, Vol. IX, *Monthly Report for February 1949*, 1 March 1949.

79 АБПРФ, ф94., оп.38, п.103, д. № 013-ИР л.31, Soviet note of protest dated 17 February 1949.

British and American reactions to the incident were swift to concur with Dr. Eqbal's analysis. The British Embassy reported the Tudeh Party to have assembled 'its most active members' in Tehran on the day of the shooting 'under the pretext of anniversary celebrations.'⁸⁰ The head of the Iranian gendarmerie at Tabriz, it is further alleged, told the British Consul he had 'certain' knowledge of a plot to kill senior army officers and of preparations for 'Azerbaijan democratic forces' to cross over from the Soviet Union had the attempt succeeded. And most seriously, the report suggests 'foreknowledge of [...] events among Tudeh employees at the Kerej [sic] sugar factory and in the town of Mianeh, whence arms had recently sent by lorry to Tehran.' This evidence, the official concluded, 'leaves little room for doubt that the attempt [...] was intended to be a signal for the instigation of wide-spread social disorder.'⁸¹ The U.S. Chargé d'Affairs reached a similar if rather more guarded conclusion: 'the weakness of the government and general lack of cohesion are such that if the Shah had been assassinated, complete chaos would have ensued, creating a situation of which the Soviet Government would have known how to take advantage.'⁸²

Soviet officials were appalled. In a strongly-worded rebuke, delivered privately by ambassador Mikhail Sadchikov to Foreign Minister Hekmat and subsequently published in the Russian daily *Izvestiya*, Eqbal's speech to the Majles was denounced as 'a slanderous fabrication [...] a mendacious and provocative action designed to worsen Soviet-Iranian relations for the benefit of certain foreign circles.'⁸³ Officially-sanctioned analyses went on the offensive, drawing inferences of their own between an allegation, on the one hand, that 'in Iran nowadays there is not single ministry [...] where Western advisers do not call the shots', and on the other, that 'the only document found on the

80 Sanjabi, M. T. (2002), *Panj Golouleh Baraye Shah*, p41. The 'anniversary celebration' was yearly protest held in remembrance of Dr. Taghi Erani, a German-educated Marxist intellectual arrested under Reza Shah who died in jail on the 14th Bahman 1318 (4th of February 1940). See CIA: *The Tudeh Party, Vehicle for Communism in Iran*, 18 July 1949, p3. Kianouri had moved the celebration forward, he claims, so that it would coincide with a Friday (i.e. weekend in Iran). *Khaterat-e Nuraddin Kianouri* (1371 / 1992), p184

81 IPD, Vol. XIII: *Monthly Report for February 1949*, 01.03.1949, p512-3. Karaj is an industrial suburb of Tehran. Mianeh, located 470km northwest of Tehran, was a stronghold of the Azerbaijan Democrat forces under the Pischevari regime. It's famous bridge (*Pol-e Dokhtar*) was partially destroyed by a bomb during a failed attempt to halt the advance of the imperial army on Tabriz in December 1946.

82 FRUS, 1949, Vol. VI: *Chargé in Iran (Sommerville) to the Secretary of State*, 17 February 1949

83 *Izvestiya*, № 9877, 15.02.1949, p3 (Soviet newspaper.)

deceased was a journalist pass for the reactionary newspaper *Parcham-e Islam* [Flag of Islam], which is close to pro-British clerical circles.⁸⁴ The latter claim sought to implicate prominent cleric Ayatollah Kashani, whose brother-in-law, cleric Said Abdolkarim Shirazi, owned the publication in question.⁸⁵ One official Soviet history even went as far as to suggest the assassination was ‘organised by the American and British intelligence agencies’, an assertion tenuously supported by the discovery that Fakhr-Araï's lover, a lady by the name of Mohin Eslami, was the daughter of the gardener at the British Embassy.⁸⁶ The ‘harsh, false and exaggerated’ nature of the Soviet claims elicited an equal and opposite reaction in the Iranian press.⁸⁷ Particularly strident was the newspaper *Tehran-e Mosavvar*. Under the prominent headline ‘I was a Soviet Spy in Iran’, the paper commenced a remarkable serialisation, which ran for no fewer than forty eight weeks (May 1949 to April 1950), following the alleged adventures of ‘Hussein’, a repentant Tudeh Party member, who recounted having been ‘deceived by Soviet propaganda’ in 1920, signing a dubious contract with a drunken Russian lieutenant in Qazvin, and his subsequent dispatch to Soviet Azerbaijan for training in the art of codes and cyphers. Hussein's subsequent travelogue was used as a platform for a series of unflattering observations on life in the Soviet Union, ranging from the state of its rail system to the black market, endemic corruption, gulags and the even prevalence of syphilis. Its centrepiece is a pointedly lurid account of an excursion to a collective farm called ‘The Red East’, where Hussein discovers that ‘in a village of no more than eight hundred people there were fifty in jail [...] all of them unfortunate peasants who had ended up there as a consequence of the law against sabotage or

84 *New Times*, № 11, March 1949, p11 (Soviet periodical); *Pravda*, 10 February 1949 (Soviet newspaper.) This official viewpoint is repeated almost verbatim in several Soviet official sources, see for example: M. Ivanov: Study on the History of Iran (Russian source), p456; *The Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, 2nd Edition (1953), Vol. 18, p480

85 Sanjabi, M. T. (2002), *Panj Golouleh Baraye Shah*, p48

86 V. Kamarov (1981): *At the Forefront of the Struggle to Defend the Interests of Iran's Workers (Essay to mark the 40th year of the Tudeh Party's founding)* in *Historical Issues of the Communist Party Central Committee*, № 10, p98 (in Russian.) Neither allegation bears scrutiny. Far from being an Anglophile, Kashani had twice been imprisoned by the British (during World War II for alleged axis sympathies) and was to become the first leading cleric to join Mosaddeq's oil nationalisation campaign against the British. In point of fact, Kashani was later denounced by Sir George Middleton, *de facto* British Ambassador in Tehran at the height of the nationalisation crisis, as a 'sly, corrupt, anti-Western demagogue.' (FO 371/98602, Middleton to Bowker, 28 July 1952) Irrespective of Kashani's alleged involvement, if a nefarious British plot had indeed been purposely conceived to destabilise Iran and thereby enhance Western influence, as the Soviet press appeared to suggest, it is difficult to see how removal of the Shah would have furthered such an objective.

87 АВПРФ, ф94., оп.38, п.103, д. № 013-ИР, л.73-4.

tardiness in their work.’⁸⁸ The moral of Hussein's ill-fated venture, made repeatedly throughout, was clear: ‘Do not speak frivolously of freedom. For as the old adage teaches us, the sated cannot understand the hungry; those who have not seen the Soviet Union for themselves do not understand what freedom really is.’⁸⁹

Given the further deterioration in relations these uncompromising public and private recriminations undoubtedly reflected, establishing the facts of the failed assassination attempt is critical to assessing the incident's broader impact. Most instructive for this purpose are the memoirs of leading Iranian Tudeh members at the time, and in particular, recent revelations by the Party's then Deputy Head of Inspection (in effect responsible for party discipline), Abdollah Argani.⁹⁰ Argani was subordinate in his role to Nuraddin Kianouri, an ambitious and influential member of the party and brother-in-law to key Central Committee member, Abdul Samad Kombakhsh.⁹¹ The Shah's would-be assassin, Nasser Fakhr-Araï, was Argani's childhood friend and house mate; a ‘hot headed adventurer’ with a complex family background, who had grown disaffected with the ‘chaos’ of Iran in general and with perceived corruption among the political elite in particular.⁹² When Fakhr-Araï expressed his desire to assassinate the Shah, Argani took up the idea. In the aftermath of the failed Soviet experiment in Azerbaijan the Tudeh was, as Argani remembered, subject to extreme pressure from the authorities:

‘The government was intent on getting rid of us. They would often come on some pretext or other to take away members for questioning and carry out inspections. They would shoot at our party headquarters from inside their patrol cars.’⁹³

Argani's somewhat naïve logic ran that, with the Shah dead, other contenders for power (named as former Prime Ministers Ahmad Qavam and Zia'eddin Tabatabai, Chief of the General Staff Ali Razmara, the Shah's twin sister Ashraf Pahlavi, the Shah's brother

88 АБПРФ, ф94., оп.48, п.375, д. № 171-ИР, л.223. The author compares this situation favourably to Tehran, 'where there are merely a thousand prisoners for a population of one million.'

89 *Ibid.*, л.332

90 Interview with historian Mohammad Sanjabi (2002) in *Panj Golouleh Baraye Shah*, pp55-153

91 *Ibid.*, p75

92 *Ibid.*, p86-87

93 *Panj Golouleh Baraye Shah.*, p84

Prince Ali Reza and Dr. Mohammad Mosaddeq) would be 'at each other's throats' such that the Tudeh could quietly take the opportunity to regroup and strengthen its position. Argani mentioned his friend's plan to Kianouri, who in turn undertook to raise the matter with the Party's Central Committee. In Kianouri's account, when he subsequently spoke to Party General Secretary Reza Radmanesh and his deputy Feridoun Keshavarz regarding the plan, Radmanesh responded as follows:

'Our party is against assassination on principle and we don't accept it as a means for revolutionary advancement. Having said that, if someone wants to kill the Shah, we're not about to go and tell him.'⁹⁴

Kianouri claims to have then reflected this advice in his response to Argani, whose wording both parties agree on: 'This is nothing to do with us [the Tudeh], do whatever you like.'⁹⁵ Keshavarz, on the other hand, has firmly denied that any such conversation between Kianouri and the Central Committee conversation took place:

'About four months before the shooting, Kianouri proposed to a meeting of the Central Committee that we should provide the Organisation Commission (i.e. him) with sufficient funds to acquire a house, printing press, salaried cadres and a car. Because, according to him, the party would soon be forced into hiding. He suggested that everyone sell their houses and donate the proceeds to the party.'⁹⁶

In Keshavarz's view, Kianouri was in fact a 'double agent connected with [Lieutenant Haj Ali] Razmara' (then chief of Staff and subsequently Prime Minister.) Keshavarz maintained that Kianouri personally orchestrated the assassination attempt in order to rid himself of senior and 'more popular' party cadres: 'didn't his masters – Stalin, Beria and Bagirov – do the same thing with their own 'comrades'?'⁹⁷

This interpretation appears implausible. Had Kianouri intended such an outcome, he

94 'Ma keh nemitavanim beravim be Shah ettela' bedahim.' *Khaterat-e Nuraddin Kianouri*, p183

95 *Panj Golouleh Baraye Shah*, p85; *Khaterat-e Nuraddin Kianouri*, p183

96 Dr. Fereydoun Keshavarz in conversation with Shahrokh Vaziri, quoted in Sanjabi (2002), p40.

97 *Panj Golouleh Baraye Shah*, p42

might reasonably have been expected to have taken more convincing steps to destroy documentary evidence and evade capture prior to events unfolding.⁹⁸ On the other hand, key parts of Kianouri's account of his movements on the day of the assassination have been shown to be factually questionable.⁹⁹ While the true sequence of events may never be determined, what does seem indisputable is that Kianouri did not seek to discourage his protégé, Argani, who went on to purchase the revolver used by Fakhr-Araï, a fact of which Kianouri was by his own admission aware.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, Argani has sought to lay the blame for the episode at his mentor's doorstep. 'I was young', he explained, 'fiery and inexperienced [...] Kianouri ought to have rejected my suggestion and prevented me from acting on it, but not only did he not do this, he implicitly welcomed it.'¹⁰¹ Yet here also Argani is too demure by far. Although indeed relatively young (twenty six) at the time, the party's Inspection Commission (*komissiyun-e taftish*), within which Argani held the position of Assistant Head of Enforcement (*mo'aven-e entezarat*), under Kianouri, was a powerful body closely linked to the Central Committee, with whom it regularly exchanged members.¹⁰² Similarly worth of note is the fact the party cell (*houzeh*), of which Argani and Kianouri were both members, was convened in the house of Abdul Samad Kombaksh, who, in addition to his Tudeh Central Committee membership and familial ties to Kianouri, was identified by a CIA analysis at the time as 'the principle liaison agent with the USSR.'¹⁰³ In his memoirs, curiously enough, Kianouri himself confirms that Kombaksh was indeed a member of the Soviet Communist Party (CPSU) throughout his youth and 'more than anyone else enjoyed their particular trust.'¹⁰⁴ Thus, while there remains no hard proof to support a claim of Soviet complicity in the failed plot, available evidence does point strongly towards Kianouri and his associates as comprising a faction within the party, whose nascent radicalism may have found support from Moscow at the expense of European-educated left-wing intellectuals such as Radmanesh and Keshavarz.¹⁰⁵ This line of argument is

98 *Ibid.*, p44; *Khaterat-e Nuraddin Kianouri* (1371 / 1992), p184.

99 See e.g. n1 in *ibid.*, p49, where a former regime intelligence minister contradicts Kianouri's account.

100 *Panj Golouleh Baraye Shah*, p88; *Khaterat-e Nuraddin Kianouri*, p183-184

101 *Panj Golouleh Baraye Shah*, p85

102 *Ibid.*, p76; CIA: *The Tudeh Party: Vehicle for Communism in Iran*, 18 July 1949, p17: the

Commission was responsible for monitoring the conduct of party members and controlled its finances.

103 CIA: *The Tudeh Party: Vehicle for Communism in Iran*, 18 July 1949, p9

104 *Khaterat-e Nuraddin Kianouri* (1371 / 1992), p53

105 For brief biographies of the latter, see: CIA: *The Tudeh Party: Vehicle for Communism in Iran*, 18

July 1949, p24. Keshavarz has suggested that Kambaksh and Kianouri "gradually changed the Tudeh

further supported by Kianouri's remarkable survival and subsequent rise through party ranks, despite strenuous criticism of his involvement in the Fakhr-Araï debacle.¹⁰⁶

Unfortunately for Soviet-Iranian relations more broadly, the reality of the assassination attempt, and the protagonists' indisputable connection to the Tudeh Party had compellingly revived the spectre of Soviet interference and communist intrigue. And crucially for Iran's foreign relations as a whole, the incident had lent fresh impetus to a narrative in which the Iranian and U.S. governments had begun to identify a mutual political advantage. The American Chargé d'Affairs in Tehran, acting under instructions, suggested to the Shah that the time was 'opportune' for the Iranian Government to refer Soviet interference to the U.N. Security Council and proposed that the American government would make a parallel declaration in this case.¹⁰⁷ In response, the Shah suggested a more effective deterrent to Soviet aggression could be provided if 'in any statement which the U.S. government might make regarding the non-inclusion of [...] Iran in [the] proposed Atlantic Pact, it could be made plain there had been no lessening of [their] determination to resist aggression anywhere.'¹⁰⁸ In which connection, 'the Shah said the situation in Iran as it existed just prior to the [assassination] attempt provided the best possible opportunity for Communism to make headway [...] He went on to say he hoped he had the sympathy of the US as a great nation struggling for freedom and independence of the world. In this struggle, he added, Iran was a most important element [...] gateway to the greatest oil resources in the world.'¹⁰⁹ The Shah's representations were, the evidence suggests, rewarded by a subtle but significant shift in American perceptions of Iran's strategic vulnerabilities and importance in the Middle East.¹¹⁰ This heightened sensitivity, succinctly expressed by a report from the American

party of Iran into a tool of Soviet policy." Quoted in Maziar Behrooz (2000), *Rebels With A Cause: The Failure of the Left in Iran*, p24

106 *Panj Golouleh Baraye Shah*, p55-6.

107 FRUS, 1949, Volume VI: *Chargé in Iran (Sommerville) to the Secretary of State*, 16 February 1949

108 *Ibid.*, the NATO treaty was signed on the 4th April 1949, and discussions on the Alliance's extent – including the possibility of Greece and Turkey – were ongoing at the time, hence the Shah's comment. In the event, Greece and Turkey acceded on the 15th of February 1952. See:

<http://www.nato.int/docu/update/2002/02-february/e0218a.htm>

109 FRUS, 1949, Vol. VI: *Chargé in Iran (Sommerville) to the Secretary of State*, 14 February 1949

110 It is worth noting in this connection that the attempted assassination of the Shah in February 1949 was preceded the successful assassination of the Egyptian Prime Minister, Nukrashi Pasha (by the Muslim Brotherhood in December 1948) and his successor. These events underlined the weakness of the more 'liberal' monarchical tradition in the Middle East faced by poor internal security and a rise in assertiveness by radical elements. See D. Reid: *Political Assassination in Egypt, 1910-1954* in *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (1982), p638f.

Ambassador in Tehran would hold profound implications for Soviet-Iranian relations:

‘The Russians do not play for fun: they play for keeps. When they were erased out of [Iranian] Azerbaijan they departed with the greatest reluctance and certainly with every determination to return [...] this possibility [...] merits active and vigilant apprehension.’¹¹¹

The balance of evidence however, presents a rather more nuanced picture. Far from being resurgent, as the CIA was privately convinced, the Tudeh in fact found itself in a position of desperate weakness; subject to increasingly repressive controls and successfully infiltrated by government double agents.¹¹² The failed assassination attempt on the Shah not only revealed clear rifts within the party's leadership, but also highlighted the inability of senior figures such as Keshavarz to restrain radicals like Kianouri, whose disastrous adventurism had dealt a serious blow to the party's ability to operate in Iran; it was now outlawed. In the official Soviet version, the incident had thus provided both ‘a pretext’ for the repression of ‘the national-democratic movement’ and an unwelcome vehicle through which the Shah could advance his long-held desire for constitutional reform.¹¹³ For Moscow, such reform was synonymous with a tightening of the Shah's grip on power, to the general advantage of the West, and specifically by ‘removal from the agenda’ of items tabled by pro-Soviet members of the Majles aimed at limiting British and American influence.¹¹⁴ Faced with a wholesale crackdown that rudely exposed the fragility of its carefully cultivated local proxy, Moscow was left with little option but to salvage the remains of the party's Central Committee. Of its twenty-four members, only a handful evaded capture, most prominently Radmanesh and Keshavarz, who appear to have taken sanctuary in Soviet safe houses and were subsequently smuggled across the Caspian Sea in Soviet-Iranian Fisheries Company vessels.¹¹⁵ Indeed, the palpable sense of frustration on the part of Soviet officials at the

111 FRUS, 1949, Vol. VI: *Ambassador in Iran (Wiley) to the Secretary of State*, 16 March 1949

112 See Dr. Keshavarz's memoirs quoted in *Panj Golouleh Baraye Shah*, p44

113 See e.g.: M. S. Ivanov: *A Recent History of Iran* (Moscow, 1965), p141. As the U.S. report saw matters, the ‘Shah's view is that of a man who has long been determined on a course of action, who has been waiting for the most propitious moment to put it into effect.’ FRUS, 1949, Vol. VI.: *Chargé in Iran (Sommerville) to the Secretary of State*, 17 February 1949

114 *New Times* (Russian Source), № 11, March 1949, p11; *A History of Iran* (Moscow, 1977)

115 *Panj Golouleh Baraye Shah*, p47; CIA: *The Tudeh Party: Vehicle for Communism in Iran*, 18 July 1949, p12; both men were sentenced to death by a military court *in absentia* (*ibid.*, p24 & p26)

turn of events found expression in the words of a reportedly furious Ivan Sadchikov, who upon receiving news of the assassination attempt was heard by one of his staff to remark, “what is one to expect from these idiots?”¹¹⁶

‘Dancing on a tightrope’: Dr. Mohammad Mosaddeq and the Soviet Union

Mohammad Mosaddeq came to power with a popular mandate to nationalise the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. In doing so, he sought to implement the final clause of a decree promulgated by the Majles when it finally rejected Prime Minister Qavam's tactical agreement with the Russians for a joint oil company. At the time the Bill was first read, in October 1947, the clause in question was presciently viewed by the British with a degree of seriousness:

‘The Government are charged in all instances where the rights of the people of Persia in the sources of the country's wealth, whether above or below ground, have been impaired, especially regarding the oil in the south, to undertake the necessary measures with a view to redeeming the rights of the nation.’¹¹⁷

Any notion however, that the British would easily surrender the AIOC – a crucial profit-making interest at a time of severe financial constraint for the United Kingdom – quickly faltered as it became clear, first, that the Company was capable of effectively securing an embargo on Iranian oil products and, second, that Dr. Mosaddeq would be not be successful in securing American support as a stop-gap for government finances, despite sustained pressure on the administrations of Harry Truman and latterly Dwight Eisenhower.¹¹⁸ So potentially damaging was the latter failure – culminating in January 1953 with the suspension of American military and budgetary aid for three months – that Mosaddeq allegedly kept the letter from President Eisenhower informing him of the decision hidden under his pillow.¹¹⁹ Against the background of these failures, it has been

116 L. M. Vasilyev (1954): *The Path of Soviet Imperialism*, p275. Vasilyev was a defector from Soviet Union and thus interpreted the remark as confirming Soviet foreknowledge of the assassination attempt. The evidence suggests it was more probable, however, that Sadchikov's remark rather reflected his awareness of the attempt's immanent and detrimental consequences for the ability of Moscow to assert political influence in Iran through the Tudeh.

117 IPD, Vol XIII: *Intelligence Summary No. 43* (21 - 28 October 1947)

118 For a representative illustration, see 1953 exchange of letters dated between Mosaddeq and Eisenhower in *The Department of State Bulletin*, Volume XXIX: No. 732: July 6, 1953, pp74-77

119 FRUS, 1952-1954, Volume X: *Iranian Political developments from the end of March to the Overthrow of the Mosaddeq regime on Aug 19th, 1953*, §16

argued, the Prime Minister increasingly sought to leverage the support of other political forces – more specifically, the Tudeh party – in an attempt to consolidate his position; a trend that stood in inverse proportion to the waning popularity of his administration among both his own nationalist constituency and the country more broadly. This apparent reality was most obviously exemplified by the prominent role of the Tudeh Party in the riots of July 1952, which in effect forced the Shah to re-install Mosaddeq following a short interlude with Qavam as Prime Minister.¹²⁰ The effect on Western observers at the time, as archival evidence broadly attests, was to create the impression that the Tudeh party might itself constitute a viable (and naturally unappetising) alternative to the National Front's rule.¹²¹ The point was well illustrated in the U.S. Embassy's retrospective report on the events of 1953: 'Although the regime appeared to have the means – martial law and plenary power backed up by the security forces – for controlling completely all channels for political expression [...] it was nevertheless having increasing difficulty in demonstrating a large measure of public support for itself. It was in this respect that the Tudeh party had its opportunity.'¹²² The apparently unnerving implications of that opportunity were earlier made explicit in a telegram from Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary, to his U.S. counterpart:

'The Tudeh party has grown in strength as a result of the policies which Musaddiq [sic] has followed since he took office. Now he has been returned to power after public disturbances in which the Tudeh party cooperated with his followers. The Tudeh are therefore in a good position to make embarrassing demands upon him which he could probably not refuse. Even his supporter [Ayatollah] Kashani, according to our information, is worried about his weakness to the Tudeh.'¹²³

Western convictions were further strengthened by the autocratic tendencies of the Prime Minister, who Eden also argued had 'at the expense of the Majles, judiciary, security

120 E. Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, pp 270–1

121 National Security Council, *United States Policy Regarding the Present Situation in Iran*, NSC 136/1 dated November 20th, 1952, p1. George Washington University, National Security Archive: <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB126/iran521120.pdf>, retrieved on June 2nd 2011

122 IPD, Vol XIII: *Iranian Political Developments from the End of March to the Overthrow of the Mosaddeq Regime on August 19th, 1953*.

123 FRUS, 1952-1954, Volume X: *British Embassy to the State Department*, 9 August 1952

forces, the clergy, the bazaar and the court, deprived these institutions of some of their inherent strength as barriers to Communism.’ Recently declassified documents present the final logical stage in the argument:

‘[The Tudeh Party] has recently expended much effort explaining to its members why Mosaddeq should be supported in his feud with the Shah, obviously fearing severe restrictive measures against it should a new Prime Minister appear [...] should Mosaddeq himself disappear from the scene, the Tudeh could conceivably seize control in his name.’¹²⁴

Reinforcing this conception for American officials was the reality on the ground that the Tudeh, apparently given greater freedom by the Iranian security forces, was capable of physically endangering American interests. On one particularly noteworthy occasion in the southern city of Shiraz, Tudeh elements succeeded in ‘redirecting’ street mobs toward the offices and homes of U.S. technical personnel ‘with destructive and near tragic consequences.’ Most damagingly from Mosaddeq’s point of view, U.S. diplomats concluded from the incident that the free reign apparently afforded to the Tudeh was in fact a deliberate ploy, sanctioned by the Prime Minister personally, in order ‘to illustrate the type of public opinion which would become dominant unless the U.S. provided the kinds and amounts of assistance [Mosaddeq] thought necessary.’¹²⁵

The immediate role of America in the subsequent coup of 1953 and the profound consequences this event held for subsequent Iranian history has, of course, been exhaustively documented and analysed elsewhere.¹²⁶ With the progressive release of Western intelligence documents, a reasonably full and desanitised picture now exists of Anglo-American strategy and actions both up to and during the coup, even if the actual

124 State Department, *Measures which the United States Government Might Take in Support of a Successor Government to Mosaddeq*, March 1953, pp 5-6. GWU National Security Archive: www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB126/iran530300.pdf, accessed 02.06.11.

125 IPD, Vol XIII: *Iranian Political Developments from the End of March to the Overthrow of the Mosaddeq Regime on August 19th, 1953*, §14-15.

126 See *The New York Times*, 16 April 2000; M. J. Gasiorowski and M. Byrne (2004), *Mohammad Mosaddeq and the 1953 Coup in Iran*; Francis Gavin, *Politics, Power, and U.S. Policy in Iran, 1950–1953* in *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 1999, Volume 1, Issue 1; Mary Ann Heiss (1997), *Empire and Nationhood: The United States, Great Britain, and Iranian Oil: 1950–1954*.

extent to which CIA dollars contributed to the broader trajectory of events remains a mute point.¹²⁷ By contrast, the extent of the Soviet Government's interaction with and alleged support for the Mosaddeq regime has received less scrutiny. This is despite the clear fact that apprehensions regarding the extent of Tudeh party support for the Mosaddeq administration (and by extension the Soviet Union at one remove) were critical in persuading Western observers of the necessity for supporting the eventual coup. Suspicions were particularly galvanised by the mysterious peripatetics of the Soviet Ambassador, Mikhail Sadchikov, who left Iran for Moscow on the 3rd of June 1953, announcing a leave of four weeks 'to visit his ailing wife.' His return a week later by special airplane however, and his subsequent, 'closely guarded' conferences he held with Prime Minister Mosaddeq gave particular cause for concern.¹²⁸ In the absence of any press release, the U.S. Chargé d'Affairs in Tehran resorted to conjecture, even speculating that Moscow might be attempting 'to obtain Iranian support for Red China and related Soviet objectives.'¹²⁹

The Soviet archival evidence, then, is of benefit in addressing a hiatus in existing histories and permitting a fresh examination of the final days of Mosaddeq's role, with some important implications for Soviet-Iranian relations more broadly during the period under discussion. Available documents paint a vivid picture of an increasingly embattled Mosaddeq, apparently desperate to secure Soviet support in pressuring Britain to loosen its blockade and extricate Iran from its deteriorating financial position, yet at the same time anxious to avoid the public impression of direct Soviet support wherever possible, or indeed to furnish Moscow with any pretext for interference in Iranian internal affairs. The effect of this strategy on his Soviet counterparts, in a now familiar pattern, was a parallel reluctance to offer concrete assistance unless tangible political gains were on offer in return, namely and explicitly, closer ties between Iran and the Soviet Union at the expense of the West. Perhaps the most striking evidence of the resulting impasse emerges in archival materials from April 1952, which document the Soviet Ambassador's secret and failed negotiations with Ayatollah Kashani for the sale of

127 This point is well made by Gasiorowski and Byrne, *op. cit.*, p259

128 IPD, Vol. XIII, Document No. 273 (American Source), *Iranian Political Developments from the End of March to the Overthrow of the Mosaddeq Regime on August 19th, 1953*: §17

129 FRUS, 1952-1954, Volume X, *Chargé in Iran to the Department of State*, 16 June 1953.

Iranian oil to the USSR. On the 11th of April 1952, the Soviet Foreign Minister, Andrey Vyshinski wrote to Stalin to report on the progress of the talks:

‘Kashani made a request to Sadchikov [the Soviet Ambassador in Tehran] that, in the case of the negotiations regarding the sale of oil being concluded successfully, we provide the Iranian government with an assurance that this sale will not be utilised as a means or pretext for interference in the internal affairs of Iran; and that, if Iran is subjected to external pressure as a result of selling us oil, we will not abandon Iran and provide the requisite financial assistance.’¹³⁰

The Soviet leadership was evidently unimpressed with this formulation. Although the central decision making body – the Politburo – did ‘sympathise with the position in which Iran finds itself’, and indeed instructed their Ambassador to obtain more detailed proposals with regard to the oil sale, they were manifestly unwilling to provide the Iranian government with the assurance it sought. The Politburo's directive to the Foreign Ministry thus instructed: ‘If Kazemi [Iranian Foreign Minister] raises the issue of our making assurances that the purchase of Iranian oil will not be used to interfere in Iranian internal affairs, then you must categorically avoid discussion of this topic, stating that such a proposal is lacking in any basis.’¹³¹

As can be discerned in the above exchange, a significant factor for Iranian politicians in engaging with Soviet representatives was the fresh and sobering memory of Russian interference during and after WWII. Conversely, the Soviet Government's refusal to provide explicit commitments against interference undoubtedly reflected Moscow's own sensitivities regarding Western involvement in Iran. The latter issue was once again demonstrated in the violent displeasure expressed by Soviet leaders when, less than two weeks later, it emerged that Mosaddeq's government had agreed to resume acceptance of American military aid, ironically in the face of objections from Foreign Minister Kazemi that the assurances the Iranian government was required to make in order to access that aid would ‘provoke the Russians.’¹³² The Politburo's note of protest to the

130 Jamil Hasanli, *op. cit.*, p474

131 *Ibid.*, p475

132 FRUS, 1952-1954, Volume X, *Ambassador in Iran to the Department of State*, 19 April 1952, §2

Iranian Foreign Ministry, delivered several weeks later in May, was explicit:

‘The Soviet Government considers it essential to draw the Iranian Government’s attention to the fact that, by agreeing to the acceptance of so-called American assistance, and in this connection assuming certain obligations toward the U.S., the Iranian Government has effectively embarked on a path of collaboration with the U.S. Government in implementing its aggressive designs against the Soviet Union. Such action on the part of the Iranian government cannot but be viewed as incompatible with good-neighbourly relations.’¹³³

The agreement with the Americans heightened and focused the Soviet leadership’s latent suspicions about Mosaddeq’s reliability as a partner, reinforced by the memory (which remained somewhat raw) of the Prime Minister’s leading role, as a deputy in the 14th Majles of 1944, in tabling and carrying the bill that had effectively prevented the Soviet Union from obtaining its desired oil concession.¹³⁴ Turning to 1953 therefore, it was as a direct consequence of this pre-existing strain in relations that, far from aiding the Mosaddeq administration, the Soviet Government, itself in the midst of a difficult leadership transition following the death of Stalin, took a substantially less forthcoming attitude than the West leaders suspected.¹³⁵ In fact, Moscow sought to take advantage of the Iranian Government’s increasing financial and domestic political weakness in order to force concessions on the issues they saw as most pressing at the time, namely, renewal of the Soviet-Iranian fisheries concession, favourable resolution of outstanding financial issues and, above all, enhancing the security of the porous Soviet-Iranian border.¹³⁶ On the latter question, as Soviet documents quite remarkably reveal, negotiations between Mosaddeq’s Foreign Minister Hossein Fatemi and Soviet representatives were still underway in Tehran up to 1pm on the 15th of August 1953; less than twelve hours before General Nassiri delivered the Shah’s infamous decree

133 Jamil Hasanli, *op. cit.*, p476

134 АВПРФ, ф.094, о.п.65, п.403, д. № 033-ИР, л.78-9: *Record of Conversation*, 5 April 1953.

135 Stalin's death (5 March 1953) was announced in *Pravda* on the 6th of March 1953, p1.

136 For negotiations surrounding renewal of the Soviet-Iranian Fisheries Concession, see: АВПРФ, ф.094, о.65, п.403, д. № 033-ИР, л.8-46. For the financial and border negotiations: АВПРФ, ф.094, о.65, п.403, д. № 031-ИР, л.1-20.

dismissing his Prime Minister and signalling the initial coup attempt.¹³⁷

It may appear somewhat counterintuitive that Moscow would opt, at a critical moment, to withhold practical assistance from the Iranian government in respect of its ‘anti-colonialist’ struggle that Moscow had, of course, actively supported at the United Nations.¹³⁸ The policy position at which the Soviet government arrived becomes less surprising however, when one considers the tactics that Mosaddeq employed. The most striking example is provided in a conversation held with the Soviet Ambassador on the 30th of March 1953. The Prime Minister presented the latest in a series of requests for Soviet financial assistance, in this instance proposing to barter Iranian crude in exchange for 100,000 tons of sugar:

‘Mosaddeq stated that he does not want to play hide and seek with us and intends to quite openly explain the goal of his proposition, which is to force the other side [the British] to purchase Iranian oil on the basis of conditions favourable to Iran. The agreement is [...] necessary for the Iranian government as a means of counterpressure. Mosaddeq underlined his thinking several times. [...] They are threatening Iran with aircraft and naval vessels, said Mosaddeq, and we for our part will threaten them with an agreement to sell oil to the Soviet Union in return for sugar. Mosaddeq hopes that we will meet with the Iranian government’s wishes, helping Iran to preserve her independence and not succumb to the pressure to which she is exposed. [...] Mosaddeq said that he would await our answer for five days. If we will agree to help him, then he asks that we give him a response by Saturday. If we do not provide him with an answer within this timeframe, he will consider our answer to be negative. In that case, he will lose all hope and be obliged to enter into negotiations with the other side and hear what they have to offer him.’¹³⁹

The Prime Minister’s blunt proposal in effect presented his Soviet counterparts with two unappealing alternatives: (1) fail to support the ailing Mosaddeq administration and it

137 M. J. Gaziorowski (1991), *U.S. Foreign Policy and the Shah, Building a Client State in Iran*, p17

138 Alan W. Ford (1954), *The Anglo-Iranian Oil Dispute of 1951-1952: A Study of the Role of Law in the Relations of States*, p152.

139 АВПРФ, ф.094, оп.65, п.403, д. № 033-ИР, л.74: *Conversation with Dr. Mosaddeq*, 30 March 1953

will be obliged to reach an accommodation with the British; or (2) agree to provide support in order that the British may then feel obliged to reach an accommodation with Mosaddeq. Either way, British influence was to be preserved. Given the Iranian government's desperate need, Moscow's almost inevitable refusal only served to further increase mistrust and tension between the two sides. Nowhere is this deterioration more keenly demonstrated than in an extraordinary conversation between Ambassador Sadchikov and Dr. Mosaddeq on the 11th of June 1953. The meeting, as noted above, gave particular cause for suspicion to the British and Americans. Specifically, the absence of any press statement regarding the content of the conversation – as the American source put it, 'no leaks' – strengthened the perception that Mosaddeq was negotiating for Soviet support to protect his increasingly exposed position.¹⁴⁰ In reality, it emerges, almost precisely the opposite was the case. As the archival record shows, Moscow, far from offering the practical support Mosaddeq's administration so desperately needed, in fact sought to exploit the Prime Minister's weakness to force negotiations on the Soviet-Iranian border, offering in return to release an unspecified number of Iranian subjects evidently held in the USSR for violating it. Sadchikov drew the Prime Minister's attention to specific protests on the subject made via the Iranian Ambassador in Moscow. Mosaddeq's reply was uncompromising:

'[He] stated that he knows nothing about this [...] If indeed such notes and verbal statements have been made, then he will agree to take back those Iranian subjects on whose behalf the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or Iranian Embassy have petitioned. As regards the remainder, their return to Iran is undesirable as they are provided with work in the Soviet Union one way or another, whereas in Iran they will be unemployed. If the Soviet authorities forcibly deport them to Iran then the Iranian authorities will naturally be forced to accept them, but as a retaliatory measure [sic] Iran will deport to the USSR an equal number of the Soviet citizens living in Iran.'¹⁴¹

Having received this 'strange and unexpected' reply, Sadchikov next attempted to draw Mosaddeq on the border issue itself. The reaction was similarly unforthcoming:

140 FRUS, 1952-1954, Volume X, *Chargé in Iran to the Department of State*, 16 June 1953, §7

141 АВПРФ, ф.094, оп.65, п.403, д. № 033-ИР, л.111: *Conversation with Dr. Mosaddeq*, 11 June 1953

‘The Iranian government [Mosaddeq said] is burdened with all sorts of troubles at the moment, even leaving aside the border issue [...] until these are resolved, he does not consider it expedient to open negotiations on the Soviet–Iranian border. To do so would yet further compound and complicate the position of his government, which fact, at a time when Iran is preoccupied with the struggle against Britain, would only benefit the British.’¹⁴²

Sadchikov however, was apparently anxious to elicit a more positive response. Pursuing his argument more forcefully, he noted that ‘having served for many years in Iran and knowing the feelings of the Iranian people in relation to the Soviet Union, I am certain that settlement of border disagreements will be perceived positively.’ At this juncture, Sadchikov reported, Mosaddeq ‘became tearful.’ The Prime Minister retorted that ‘he knew best what was in the interests of Iran and the Iranian government’; that the Iranian people’s thinking was ‘identical to his own’; finally that ‘this [Moscow’s hardened attitude toward Iran] was all a result of the death of great Stalin [*sic*] and how “he knew in his heart that this would happen.”’ In view of this less than propitious turn of events, the unfortunate ambassador began to make his excuses to leave. Mosaddeq asked him to remain seated. “What are we going to tell the press?” he asked. There then followed, in Sadchikov’s account, a half-hour discussion wherein Mosaddeq not only prevailed on the ambassador to refrain from any press statement but also asked the latter to inform his superiors back in Moscow that he considered dialogue on the border issue to be ‘exhausted’; that as far as he was concerned their conversation had ‘not taken place’ and should be ‘consigned to oblivion.’ Sadchikov, with barely-disguised irritation, concluded his report by describing Mosaddeq’s performance as a ‘highly-strung blend of deceitfulness, cunning, hypocrisy and histrionics.’¹⁴³

While the Soviet ambassador’s experience undoubtedly bore fresh witness to the ingrained suspicion between the two parties, it would seem that a significant motivation behind Mosaddeq’s dramatic behaviour was anxiousness to avoid providing the West or domestic pro-Western elements with further ammunition against him. In what perhaps

142 *Ibid.*, л.113-114

143 *Ibid.*, л.114-5

represents one of the profoundest ironies of the period however, by successfully seeking not to publicise the nature of his exchange with Sadchikov, the Prime Minister achieved precisely the outcome he sought to avoid: his secrecy led American officials to suspect and warn of collusion between the two parties when in actual fact the opposite was true. And the Soviet leadership too, it may with some justification be argued, again both misjudged and mishandled another opportunity to expand their influence inside Iran, falling prey to the comfortable conceit, popularised by British diplomats and indeed subsequently by the Shah, of dismissing Mosaddeq's behaviour as irrational rather than as a product of circumstances over which they might have had a significant influence had they elected to do so.¹⁴⁴ That this should have been the case was primarily due to a narrow preoccupation with the resolution of specific bilateral issues in a manner that was both untimely and indeed unhelpful to the Mosaddeq administration, whose needs were somewhat more basic; as the Prime Minister at one stage bluntly appraised the Soviet Ambassador, 'we have no money.'¹⁴⁵ Equally, however, the evidence strongly suggests that Mosaddeq alienated the Soviet Union by so openly seeking to utilise relations as a 'counterpressure' against the West in place of pursuing any meaningful rapprochement. The Prime Minister's conduct of foreign relations in this respect, it may be observed, substantially mirrored his approach to domestic politics, aptly described at the time by a former Iranian Ambassador in Moscow as 'dancing on a tightrope.'¹⁴⁶

Conclusion

In assessing the overall trends during this crucial period for Soviet-Iranian relations, and indeed for modern Iranian history more broadly, this chapter has sought to evidence the largely reactive and opportunistic nature of Soviet policies toward Iran, and the consequences of their failure. Compounded by an unfortunate mix of pressure tactics, poor timing, and over-concern for the bureaucratic or legalistic aspects of relations at the expense of broader political gains, the practical implementation of Soviet policy ultimately strengthened an underlying historical narrative, outlined in the introduction to this thesis, that proved both convincing and attractive to the Shah and his emerging

144 See IPD, Vol. XIII: *Military Intelligence Summary No. 3* (13-19 January 1947) where Mosaddeq is described as 'hysterical and demented'; FRUS, 1969-1972, Vol. E-4: *Memorandum of Conversation*, 30 May 1972, where the Shah concurs with President Nixon's view that Mosaddeq was 'nuts.'

145 АВПРФ, ф.094, оп.65, п.403, д. № 033-ИР, л.78: *Conversation with Dr. Mosaddeq*, 5 April 1953

146 АВПРФ, ф.094, оп.65, п.403, д. № 033-ИР, л.60: *Conversation with Hamid Sayyah*, 23 Feb 1953

supporters. The thesis of Soviet grand design and long-range strategic ambition, which stood in contrast to the somewhat more prosaic reality of the Moscow's desire to prevent a Western military presence on its borders and secure a greater economic stake in Iran, engendered precisely the outcome that Soviet policy makers sought to avoid: an expanded military western presence on the USSR's southern borders. As seen, the primary cause for suspicion and distrust between the two sides originated in the Azerbaijan crisis and its aftermath. While the truth surrounding the actions and inclinations of Ahmad Qavam is, as Ervand Abrahamian has pointed out, so 'shrouded in a fog of half truths and misleading innuendos' as to make a sober assessment of the facts problematic, for the immediate the purposes of this thesis what can be stated with some certainty is that both pro-Soviet figures and the wider Tudeh Party apparatus, as Mikhail Kavtaradze before them, grossly miscalculated in their efforts to force the Prime Minister's hand.¹⁴⁷

Notwithstanding the Soviet leadership's clear and sustained interference in Iranian affairs with respect to the Azerbaijan Crisis, this chapter has concluded that, while it is not possible on the basis of existing evidence to support a claim of direct Soviet government complicity in the Tudeh-linked assassination attempt on the Shah, it is nevertheless clear that the Soviet Embassy's apparent links to the party's more radical elements, exemplified by the activities and subsequent career of Nuraddin Kianouri, turned out to be a strategic error. Not only had the failed assassination led to the proscription of the party inside Iran, but resultant infighting between Moscow's protégés and the more traditional left-wing intellectuals such as Fereydoun Keshavarz seriously limited the party's effectiveness as a potential tool of Soviet policy. And indeed, as one scholar of the Tudeh party has shown, the battle for ascendancy between the two wings continued unabated in their Muscovite exile.¹⁴⁸ A further and more obvious consequence of the Tudeh leadership's having been driven out of the country was the corresponding reduction in its ability to correctly judge and respond to events inside the country; a problem that resurfaced in the Party's disastrous response to the Islamic

147 E. Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, p239

148 C. Chaqueri: *Did the Soviets play a role in founding the Tudeh party in Iran?* in *Cahiers du Monde Russe*, 40/3 (1999), p526

Revolution of 1979.¹⁴⁹

Turning to events of Dr. Mohammad Mosaddeq's premiership, this chapter has sought to present the factual documentary record for the Prime Minister's relationship with Moscow in the light of its fateful consequences. The importance of such an investigation is sharpened by the profound impact that the perceived character of the alleged relationship held for the subsequent development of Soviet-Iranian relations, as evidenced by the extensive mythologisation by the Shah's regime, upon regaining power, of Mosaddeq's alleged subservience to Soviet interests.¹⁵⁰ In his memoir *An Answer to History*, written in exile following the 1979 revolution, the Shah states that he personally saw 'postage stamps printed in the name of the People's Iranian Republic', which was allegedly to be proclaimed by the Tudeh following Mosaddeq's putative elimination.¹⁵¹ General Fazollah Zahedi, the man appointed by the Shah to succeed Mosaddeq, subsequently expressed his appreciation for America's 'moral' support in successfully 'rescuing Iran from the very brink [of a] Communist abyss.'¹⁵² Though the validity of such claims may of course be questioned, their impact on the future trajectory of Pahlavi foreign policy can hardly be discounted.

By contrast, the archival evidence points to the Soviet leadership's guardedly ambivalent and, in the final account, resolutely unsupportive approach toward the Mosaddeq's administration. The Kremlin's objectives vis-à-vis the nationalist movement, recorded in a series of directives to the MGB Residency in Tehran during May and August 1951, were initially 'to assess the possibility of using nationalistically-inclined circles in Iran, [...] and other opponents of Anglo-American dominance, for the benefit the USSR [...] with the goal of weakening American and British influence.'¹⁵³ The challenge with such a strategy lay in the fact that Mosaddeq, energetically seeking to implement his long-cherished principle of neutrality (as proposed to the Majles in

149 Full discussion in Chapter Four.

150 It bears reemphasising here that use of the term 'myth' is not intended to suggest that one assessment or other of Soviet involvement is invalid, but rather to underline its utility from a political point of view. See: Ansari (2012) *The Politics of Nationalism in Modern Iran*, ix

151 M. R. Pahlavi (1979), *Réponse a l'Histoire*, p70

152 FRUS, 1952-1954, Volume X: *Ambassador in Iran to Department of State*, 27 August 1953, §1.

153 *Essays on the History of Russian Foreign Intelligence*, Vol. 5: *Foreign Intelligence in Post-war Iran (1945-1953)*, pp365-381 (in Russian.) The MGB was the predecessor agency to the KGB, 1946-1953.

1944) did not share Moscow's objective of weakening Western interests *per se*. Rather, his goal was to ensure that no single country's political or economic ambitions, including those of the USSR, could dictate the interests of Iran as he conceived them. Thus, while Soviet policy makers were swift to identify Mosaddeq's rise to power and the apparent growth in nationalist feeling against the West as a development with the potential to enhance Soviet influence, the Prime Minister himself viewed relations with the USSR in more opportunistic terms.¹⁵⁴ The fundamental incompatibility of these two approaches led directly to the impasse of June 1953. It is likely that, had Moscow acceded to Mosaddeq's pleas for assistance, the financial position of his government would have been considerably alleviated. At the same time, neither side appears to have fully appreciated the profound impact their abortive flirtation would have the U.S. leadership's regional apprehensions. "If", as Eisenhower told the National Security Council in March 1953, "I had \$500,000,000 of money to spend in secret, I would get \$100,000,000 of it to Iran right now."¹⁵⁵

A postscript from the Soviet Archives will be of benefit in framing the following chapter of this thesis. On presenting his credentials to the imperial court on the 1st of August 1953, the newly-appointed Soviet Ambassador to Iran, Anatoly Lavrent'yev (Sadchikov having evidently been replaced for mishandling Mosaddeq and failing to advance Moscow's objectives with respect to border demarcation) found that the Shah wished to discuss technical assistance and expressed 'admiration' for Soviet completion of the Volga-Don Canal. The Shah, it transpired, had personally order a documentary film regarding the canal to be brought for him by the Soviet Embassy.¹⁵⁶ Similarly revealing for the future trajectory of Soviet-Iranian relations was a conversation between the Acting Minister of Court and Lavrent'yev on the 13th of August. The former bizarrely requested the latter's attendance as a 'guest of honour' for a dinner at the Sa'adabad Palace to be held on the 19th of August, that is, after the impending coup were it to have succeeded. Invitations to the dinner, the Minister announced, had already been issued; the ambassador's absence would naturally 'surprise the guests and create an

154 For further evidence of this tactic, see the trade agreement with Hungary, the sale of oil to whom was used to exert pressure on the Americans. FO G.10115/2, No. 49, 13 February 1952, §15.

155 FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. X: *Discussion at the 135th Meeting of the National Security Council*, p698

156 АВПРФ, ф.094, оп.65, п.403, д. № 033-ИР, л.130: *Conversation with the Shah*, 1 August 1953

unfavourable impression in society.’ Lavrent'yev felt unable to respond this ‘peculiar’ proposition and excused himself on the basis of prior commitments, reporting back to his superiors that: ‘I did not wish to commit myself to anything, nor indeed to oppose myself to the court.’¹⁵⁷

157 АВПРФ, ф.094, оп.65, п.403, д. № 033-ИР, л.162: *Conversation with the Acting Minister of Court*

CHAPTER TWO | SOVIET-IRANIAN RELATIONS FROM 1954 TO 1959

‘Meanwhile, in growing volume, there have been siren voices sounding behind the curtain. The Communists too, it seems, can be nice to monarchs.’

- BRITISH AMBASSADOR TO IRAN TO FOREIGN OFFICE, ANNUAL REVIEW FOR 1956

‘In terms of a response to Iran’s joining the Baghdad Pact, the proposed press article 'Pie with an American Filling' does not concern us unduly, however, it must be borne in mind that its publication would give rise to a fresh round of slanderous attacks on the Soviet Union, particularly on the part of those Iranian newspapers mentioned in it. Such a campaign would not benefit us, as it could create an unfavourable context for the Shah's forthcoming visit to Moscow.’

- HEAD OF SOVIET FOREIGN MINISTRY EASTERN DEPARTMENT TO MOLOTOV, 29TH OF MAY 1956

CONTENTS

- INTRODUCTION: THE BACKGROUND TO THE BAGHDAD PACT
- SOVIET RESPONSES TO THE BAGHDAD PACT
- THE SHAH'S STATE VISIT TO THE SOVIET UNION
- THE AFTERMATH OF THE IRAQI COUP AND THE QARANI AFFAIR
- THE SECRET NEGOTIATIONS FOR A TREATY OF NON-AGGRESSION
- CONCLUSION

Introduction: The Background to the Baghdad Pact

The fall of Mohammad Mosaddeq’s administration notwithstanding, there remained on the part of the West, and in the minds of U.S. politicians in particular, a wider strategic concern at the underlying weakness of Middle Eastern monarchies in general, and the susceptibility of Iran to communist penetration more specifically. As the previous chapter has pointed out, the reality of Iran's exposed geopolitical position was also appreciated by its sovereign, who did not demure from emphasising his country’s putative vulnerabilities in pursuit of a firmer American commitment to military aid. Shortly before the Shah's state visit to the U.S. in December 1954, for example, the State Department received an ‘advance copy’ of a memorandum subsequently delivered in person by the Shah to President Eisenhower.¹ Its core argument ran as follows:

¹ Foreign Relations of the United States (hereafter 'FRUS'), 1952-1954, Vol. 10, *Secretary of State to the Embassy in Iran*, 13 December 1954

‘The problem weighing most heavily on my mind at present [...] is that of the security of Iran. We have over 1,600 miles of border with Russia. Although relations now with our northern neighbour are at least formally correct, we have no reason to believe that international Communism has abandoned its long-range objectives of converting Iran into a Communist corridor to the Persian Gulf, the Middle East and South Asia.’²

The Shah's note proceeded to set out ways in which the Soviet Union might try to ‘take over’ Iran and concluded that the antidote to Communist ambitions lay primarily in raising the Iranian Armed Forces ‘from their presently weak state.’ Referring to budgetary limitations, the Shah warned that ‘our common objective of maintaining Iran as an economically and politically stable country will not be achieved unless the situation regarding its armed forces is remedied [as it has] practically no defensive capabilities.’ Seeking to strengthen the latter case in the regional context, the letter made the case for a ‘carefully calculated balance’ of Iranian military strength against that of Pakistan and Turkey, and by implication, an equal footing in terms of American assistance received. In the absence of such a balance, the Shah argued, Soviet forces ‘could easily outflank Turkey by seizing Iran’ and that the consequence would thus be to ‘turn the Persian Gulf into a Communist sea [and the Russians will then] be in a position to seize the major oil fields of the Middle East.’³ The memorandum closed by underlining Iran's willingness to play a ‘proper role’ in promoting the security of the Middle East, emphasising that Iran was ‘the key’ to such a defence.⁴

The case made by the Shah was, as he no doubt appreciated, persuasive insofar as his views closely mirrored those of the U.S. leadership, evident from private National Security Council discussions of the period.⁵ The principal difference between the two

2 FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. 10, *Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs to the Secretary of State*, 5 December 1954 (at Tab A.)

3 The specific U.S. interest the Shah had in mind here was surely Aramco's contract in Saudi Arabia. Ibn Saud allegedly consented to the contract, signed in 1936, because the USA was ‘the furthest away.’ Desmond Wright: *Defence and the Baghdad Pact* in *Political Quarterly* No. 28 (Issue 2), 1957, p162

4 FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. 10, *Memorandum for the Secretary of State*, 5 December 1954 (at Tab A.)

5 ‘[The present] situation presents us with an opportunity to carry out NSC policies of advancing the Iranian military position and encouraging Iran to adhere to regional defence arrangements.’ FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. 10, *Secretary of State Dulles to the Secretary of Defence (Wilson)*, 8 November 1954. For the origins of US policy in this respect, see *Draft Statement of Policy Proposed by National*

sides' positions however, consisted in the fact that, whereas the Shah desired the enhancement of military aid in order that Iran might 'contribute its share' to a regional security arrangement, the Eisenhower administration chiefly had in view the geopolitical advantage of adding Iran to its line of defence against Communism in the Middle East – subsequently to become known as the 'Northern Tier' – with Iranian capabilities being built up within the framework of that alliance.⁶ In sharp contrast to the Shah's ambitions, it was felt that the primary role of the Iranian Armed Forces should entail, as a State Department Memorandum put it, 'defensive delaying capabilities'; the ability to temporarily withstand a Red Army attack until more capable assistance arrived. Crucially, American involvement would not extend to a full-scale provision of modern weaponry. Indeed, as the same Memorandum cautioned: 'We do not want to develop a military establishment in Iran which would be a burden on the national [Iranian] economy.' The clear intention was that, following the successful resolution of the oil dispute with Great Britain, Iran's increased revenues could make a 'major contribution toward supporting the armed forces, thereby reducing reliance on foreign aid.'⁷ In short, the U.S. administration saw the provision of military equipment as a preferably minimal outlay justified by the principal goal – a defensive alliance – whereas the Shah desired that such an alliance be preceded by, or at least subsequently entail, a significant strengthening of Iran's armed forces. It was a difference of opinion with critical future consequences.

Meanwhile, an equally significant shift of foreign policy was underway in Moscow. The Stalinist world view had sharply polarised the international stage into the forces of imperialism and its adversaries, and the lack of flexibility this implied was further exacerbated by a tendency to view its own policy failures through the same ideological prism. Hence the failure of Azerbaijan in 1946 was attributed in equal measure to Western imperialist intrigue and the machinations of bourgeois elite interest, as personified by Ahmad Qavam.⁸ With reference to the Middle East more broadly, there

Security Council, 14 March 1951 (approved by President Truman 26 February 1951), 1(b), (c), 3(a).

6 The 'Northern Tier' consisted in Pakistan, Iran, Iraq and Turkey, whereas the 'Southern Tier' initially comprised Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Jordan, under Cairo's direction – or at least until Nasser's decision to conclude an armaments agreement with Czechoslovakia in 1955.

7 FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. 10: *Memorandum for the Secretary of State*, 9 December 1954

8 See M. S. Ivanov (1952): *An Outline of Iranian History*, (Soviet State Political Literature), p49

had existed a tendency for political elites to be viewed uncritically as national bourgeoisies engaged in oppressing their respective proletariats; socially monogenous, faithful agents of their Western imperialist masters. As Geoffrey Wheeler, who served as the British press councillor in Tehran between 1946 and 1950, argued, for early Soviet foreign policy there was thus no intermediate solution between retention of power by the pro-Western bourgeoisies and revolutionary seizure of power by local Communist parties.⁹ Following Stalin's death however, a fundamental shift began to take place. While the essential aims (expansion of Soviet influence and reduction of Western influence) and the predilection for certain methods (diplomatic pressure, broadcast propaganda) remained broadly unchanged – an assertion borne out by the Iranian experience described in this chapter – there can be no doubt that the political outlook of the Soviet Union had developed greater sophistication. A 1956 editorial in the influential journal *Soviet Orientalism* spelled out the nature of the change:

‘A characteristic of today's world is the participation in it of all patriotically and anti-imperialistically inclined representatives of widely varying social strata and religious and political convictions [...] all of them are united in their aim of freeing their countries from the colonial yoke.’¹⁰

The practical implications of this shift lay in the increased willingness of Soviet policy makers and their local proxies to make common cause, albeit opportunistically, with sections of society that would in previous years have been considered too ‘bourgeois’; ideological affiliation assumed a lesser importance next to potential for preventing, disrupting or undermining the capitalist West's politico-military control of its ‘colonial hinterland.’¹¹ As evidenced in the previous chapter, the seeds of this trend were already evident in the ‘moral’ support afforded by the Soviet Union to the National Front, reflected in the actions of the Tudeh, which, although initially hostile toward Mosaddeq, became ready to ‘play the game’ by siding with the National Front notwithstanding the distinctly non-proletarian character of its membership.¹² As the present chapter will seek

9 Geoffrey Wheeler, *Russia and the Middle East* in *Political Quarterly* 1957, Issue 28, No. 2, p134

10 *Soviet Orientalism*, 1956, No. 5 (USSR Academy of Sciences Press)

11 Oles M. Smolanski (1991), *The USSR and Iraq: The Soviet Quest for Influence*, p14

12 IPD, 1951-1953, *Iranian Political Developments from the End of March to the Overthrow of the Mosaddeq Regime on August 19th, 1953*: §6.

to evidence, this trend not only continued but strengthened in the sense that the Soviet leadership actively sought to accommodate with the Shah's regime itself: by actively restraining official ire with respect to the Baghdad Pact; through the invitation for the Shah to tour the Soviet Union in 1956; and finally by successfully initiating negotiations for a Treaty of Non-Aggression in 1959. As will be shown, the degree of Iranian responsiveness to such moves varied in line with broader regional considerations (such as the overthrow of the Iraqi monarchy) and in line with doubt over the U.S. government's own loyalties (exemplified by the Qarani affair of 1958.) It will be suggested that Soviet-Iranian relations during the period cannot be understood in isolation from these latter two events.

Nevertheless, the Soviet leadership's profound irritation at Iran's emerging defensive alliance with the West, betrayed by Khrushchev privately in 1956 and energetically reflected in the hostile asseverations of the clandestine Soviet media that Moscow found it expedient to maintain; and at the diplomatic level, a reemergence of the same flawed and high-pressure negotiating strategy that had failed in 1944, 1946 and 1953, conspired to undermine any substantive prospect of rapprochement. This chapter will thus argue that the experimental and dualistic nature of the Soviet government's post-Mosaddeq policy towards Iran, embarking upon what the British described as a 'relentless sweetness and light' campaign towards the Shah and his regime, but retaining the blunter instruments of diplomacy as insurance against an unfavourable outcome, served only to sharpen official incertitude regarding the Soviet Union's 'long-range' aspirations.¹³ Conversely, the Iranian government's ambiguous and not infrequently evasive policy responses to the Kremlin's overtures – the Shah's decisive pursuit of Iranian adherence to the Baghdad Pact, combined with a periodic preference for leveraging Soviet-Iranian interactions as a bargaining chip in relation to U.S. military assistance – inevitably had a deleterious impact on relations with Moscow.¹⁴ Ultimately therefore, and as argued in relation to Soviet experiences with the Mosaddeq administration, the broadly incompatible nature of these approaches not only failed to address and ameliorate underlying tensions existing between the two governments, but in fact exacerbated them.

13 IPD, 1954-1965, Political Summary for 2nd Quarter of 1958, §11.

14 *Ibid.*, Political Summary for 4th Quarter of 1955 (1017/1/56)

Soviet Responses to the Baghdad Pact

The stated goal of the Baghdad Pact, a Cold War alliance modelled on NATO and ratified by Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan and the United Kingdom over the course of 1955, was defence and security cooperation. While the Pact was nominally intended to ‘complement’ a much earlier agreement between Turkey and Iraq signed in 1946, which envisaged collaboration in areas such as tackling cross-border crime, its true blueprint was the American-sponsored Turco-Pakistani Agreement of April 1954, the text of which called for determining possible ‘ways and extent of cooperation [...] should an unprovoked aggression occur from outside.’¹⁵ Membership was open to ‘any other State actively concerned with the security and peace of this region.’¹⁶ In the case of Iran, whereas the record shows that U.S. Secretary of State Foster Dulles strongly favoured Iranian participation – despite the reservations of existing Pact members (Turkey, Pakistan, Iraq and Britain)¹⁷ – the State Department ultimately tried to delay Iran’s ratification of the Pact over concerns that, following the conclusion of an arms deal between the Soviet Union and Egypt, Moscow might view the Iranian decision as a retaliatory move brought about by Western pressure.¹⁸ The Shah however, chose to ignore Washington’s advice and, in an important illustration of his emerging ascendancy over the functions of government, let it be known through his Prime Minister, Hossein Ala, that it was a case of ‘now or never’; the Shah intended, Ala affirmed, to call a joint session of the Foreign Affairs committees of the Senate and the Majlis and ‘lay before them his decision without at this time asking for advice.’¹⁹ A contemporary British report assessed the atmosphere in the following terms:

‘The large majority of Persians were opposed to Persian adherence [to the Pact].

The Shah, however, became increasingly keen on joining and the picture has

15 See Behçet K. Yeşilbursa, *The American Concept of the 'Northern Tier' Defence Project and the Signing of the Turco-Pakistani Agreement, 1953-54* in *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (July, 2001), p87; for the 1946 Treaty between Iraq and Turkey see *United Nations Treaty Series*, Vol. 37, No. 580, p293 (Protocol 2, Article 5.)

16 See *American Foreign Policy, 1950-1955, Basic Documents*, Vol. 1, *Department of State Publication 6446*, General Foreign Policy Series 117 (Government Printing Office, 1957.)

17 For Iraqi concerns, see FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. 9, *Memorandum of Conversation*, 18 May 1953, §5; for Pakistani concerns, see *ibid.*, *Ambassador in Turkey to Department of State*, 17 September 1953; for Turkish concerns, see *ibid.*, *Ambassador in Turkey to Department of State*, 30 November 1953; for British concerns, see FO371/106937, *Minute*, 1 January 1954.

18 FRUS, 1955-1957, Vol. 12, *State Department to the Embassy in Iran*, 6 October 1955

19 *Ibid.*, *Embassy in Iran to the Department of State*, 8 October 1955

been one of an adroit and determined jockey (the Shah) leading an apathetic and recalcitrant horse (Persian public opinion) up to a fence which it is not really sure it wants to jump.²⁰

On the 8th of October 1955, the Shah delivered his speech from the throne marking the ceremonial opening of the Senate and formally declared Iran's intention to join the Baghdad Pact.²¹ On the 12th of October, Prime Minister Ala submitted the bill of ratification to the Senate, thereby making the Iranian government's decision final.²²

Given the clear implications of the Pact for the security of the USSR, the reaction from Moscow was swift and unsurprising in its condemnation. Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov summoned the Iranian Chargé d'Affairs to warn that the Soviet Union attached 'serious significance' to Iran's adherence.²³ A written representation followed stating that Iranian adherence to an 'aggressive' bloc, orchestrated by Britain and the United States, would violate the Soviet-Iranian Treaty of 1921 and undermine peace in the Middle East.²⁴ The Soviet Ambassador was recalled to Moscow in protest.²⁵ An initial Iranian response, published in the *Ettela'at* newspaper on the 16th of October, countered that the government had exercised 'its sovereign right to take whatever measures it considers expedient or necessary to preserve its independence and protect its borders.' Adherence to the Baghdad Pact, it asserted, 'was an entirely natural step.'²⁶ As Soviet archival evidence reveals, the ensuing diplomatic exchanges became increasingly acrimonious. An Iranian government note on the 10th of December 1955, describing the Pact as 'directed exclusively toward the lawful defence against attack in the interests of peace and wider security', framed Iran's adherence in the context of Soviet 'aggression' during World War II: the Soviet Union had, it stated bluntly, intended 'to separate off' the northern provinces of Iran. The accusation prompted an expansive five-page response, approved at Central Committee level, in which the Soviet leadership launched an uncompromising rebuttal. Iran, the text alleged, was 'closing its eyes to reality' in

20 IPD, 1954-1965, *Political Summary for 3rd Quarter of 1955*

21 FRUS, 1955-1957, Vol. 12, Editorial Note referencing Telegram 603 from Tehran, 8 October 1955

22 *Ibid.*, Telegram 622 from Tehran, 12 October 1955

23 *Ibid.*, Telegram 880 from Moscow, 13 October 1955

24 IPD, 1954-1965, *Annual Review for 1955*.

25 АБПРФ, ф.05956, оп.3, п.511, д.1000, л.249: *Speculation in the Iranian Press*.

26 АБПРФ, ф.05956, оп.3, п.511, д.1000, л.231: *Iranian response to Soviet Government's Note*

denying the ‘aggressive character of the Baghdad military bloc’, which constituted a ‘tool for the colonial enslavement of economically underdeveloped countries in the Near and Middle East.’ And with respect to World War II:

‘The entry of the USSR's forces onto Iranian territory in August 1941 was precipitated by the danger of Iran's territory being turned into a bridgehead for military action against the USSR, connected with the plots and intrigues of Nazi agents residing within Iran. [...] If the Soviet Union had not taken this step, and if the pro-Hitler faction in Iran had prevailed, then Iran would eventually have fallen on the side of Nazi Germany, and would have been crushed, sharing the fate of other Nazi satellites; the Iranian nation would have borne heavy casualties and deprivations. Wherefore the entry of Soviet forces, far from constituting ‘aggression’, was rather Iran's salvation. [...] Similarly baseless are the statements contained in the Iranian Government's Note regarding the Soviet Union's supposed interference in Iran's internal affairs [...] These baseless statements are apparently necessary in order to deflect public attention from the terrorist tactics deployed against the country's [...] progressive and democratic elements, and implemented by the Iranian authorities with the assistance of their armed forces. The Iranian Government cannot and should not expect sympathy and support for these actions on the part of the Soviet Government or Soviet people; such reprisals deeply offend our sense of humanity.’

The draft concludes by placing ‘responsibility on the Iranian government for the possible consequences proceeding from [its] participation in this military grouping.’²⁷ The unprecedented tone and length of the Soviet response made clear that Iran's adherence to the Baghdad Pact, and the direct reference to past Soviet actions by which the decision was justified, had unleashed a broad swathe of latent antipathies. The most revealing fact about the Soviet draft Note however, was that it never reached Iran. Instead, twelve days later, Molotov brought forward a ‘corrected’ draft that was composed, as the cover note affirms, ‘in line with an exchange of views within the CPSU Central Committee’ and considerably milder in tone – not to mention shorter –

27 АВПРФ, ф.6, оп.15, п.12, д. № ИР-011, л.3-10: *Draft Note*, 6 January 1956

than its original.²⁸ The threat of ‘consequences’ had been dropped in favour of more restrained formulation pointing out that Iran's adherence to the Baghdad Pact, and the ‘unacceptable and baseless accusations’ against the Soviet Union contained in the earlier Iranian Note, stood in contradiction to the professions of friendship which accompanied it.²⁹ The drafting process thus highlighted divisions in the Soviet leadership; a compromise appears to have been reached between the airing of official displeasure and providing some latitude for future rapprochement. An indication of the underlying rationale behind the shift in tone was evidenced in a subsequent Foreign Ministry memorandum to the Central Committee. In its response to the ‘corrected’ Soviet note, Molotov informed his superiors, the Iranian government had ‘once again attempted to justify Iran's adherence to the Baghdad Pact with references to its allegedly defensive character.’ Nevertheless, the Foreign Minister concluded, ‘in view of the forthcoming visit to the USSR by the Shah of Iran and the possibility of holding negotiations with him in Moscow [...] the Ministry of Foreign Affairs does not consider it expedient to engage in further debate with the Iranians on this topic.’³⁰

The Shah's State Visit to Soviet Union

Despite his momentous decision to join the Baghdad Pact and thus decisively align Iran with the West, it remains a remarkable fact of history that the Shah of Iran became the first serving member of any royal family since the Russian Revolution to be invited to tour the Soviet Union.³¹ Given that the initial approach had been made prior to the events described above (in June 1955 by Marshal Voroshilov, then Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet) the fact that the invitation remained at all was perhaps surprising. Credit in this respect was given to the efforts of Iran's newly appointed Ambassador to Moscow, Abolhassan Mas'ud-Ansari, who took up his post in December 1955 with the explicit mission, according to the Iranian press, of ‘mollifying the Soviet leadership's displeasure at Iran's adherence to the Baghdad Pact.’³² Given the visit's potential utility in easing tensions with Moscow, it became increasingly clear that

28 *Ibid.*, п.12: *Molotov to Communist Party Central Committee*, 22 January 1956

29 *Ibid.*, п.14: *Soviet Government to the Government of Iran*, 28 January 1956

30 *Ibid.*, п.17: *Molotov to Communist Party Central Committee*, 14 April 1956

31 IPD, 1954-1965, Political Summary for 2nd Quarter of 1956, §17. See FRUS, 1955-1957, Vol. XII, *Telegram from the Embassy in Iran to the Department of State*, 2 July 1955

32 АВПРФ, ф.05956, оп.3, п.511, д.1000: *Article in Ettela'at published 24 December 1955*

Shah felt it necessary to take up the invitation. The British and American governments, consequently, found themselves caught between two unappetising policy alternatives. On the one hand, cancellation of the visit would inevitably be represented by the Soviets as Iran yielding to imperialist pressure; ‘a line of argument which would find fertile ground here on which to fall.’ Equally, were the tour to go ahead, it was felt that worse challenges might arise. As the British Embassy in Tehran feared, ‘the Shah’s judgement is not so good as his intentions: he might become confused and make unfortunate statements, or his replies might be deliberately distorted and used for propaganda.’³³ British concerns in this respect were based on that fact that, at the time of the original invitation in June 1955, the Shah had allegedly responded by asking the British Embassy ‘to think out all the questions that the Soviet Government might put to him and provide him with the answers.’³⁴ The monarch even requested that the Foreign Office Sovietologists be summoned from London to provide coaching.³⁵

Following Iran’s adherence to the Baghdad Pact however, the evidence points to the Shah becoming significantly more assertive. Shortly after the visit was formally announced in April 1956, a member of staff from the British Embassy was approached by the military governor of Tehran, who intimated the Shah’s ‘concern’ regarding what ‘action might be taken [...] to counter the propaganda effect of an offer [of Soviet aid] made during the visit.’³⁶ The Embassy suspected this ‘gambit’ was timed to coincide with the the second meeting of the Council of the Baghdad Pact, held in Tehran from the 16th to the 19th of April 1956.³⁷ Indeed, a month earlier, during a conversation with the U.S. Secretary of State, the Shah had remarked on the difficulty in justifying the Pact to the Iranian public in light of the fact that neutralism ‘seemed to be a successful game’, pointing out that the Egyptian Ambassador had ‘boasted of blackmailing both sides to Egypt’s advantage.’ The Shah then requested ‘perhaps \$75 million a year for the next three years’, a figure the surprised Secretary denounced privately as ‘excessive.’³⁸

33 The National Archives of the UK (TNA): Public Record Office (PRO), FO 371/120752, *British Embassy in Tehran (Roger Stevens) to Eastern Department*, 14 February 1956: §2

34 FO 371/120752, *British Embassy in Tehran to Eastern Department*, 11 April 1956.

35 *Ibid.*, quoting 1942/28/550, 30 June 1955.

36 *Ibid.*, in section 4 (iii).

37 See IPD, 1954-1965, Political Summary for 2nd Quarter of 1956, §15.

38 FRUS, 1955-1957, Vol. XII: *Memorandum of Conversation between Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and Secretary of State Dulles [held at] Governor General’s Residence, Karachi, March 9, 1956*

The potential for employing the Soviet invitation as leverage vis-à-vis the West strengthened when, a month before the visit was due to commence, an announcement was made that the Shah and Queen Soraya would be accommodated in the Kremlin itself during their tour.³⁹ The impetus for this unprecedented decision had again resulted from the efforts of Mas'ud-Ansari, who, apparently acting on his own initiative, had dropped a 'broad hint' that such a gesture would be appreciated by the monarch and his entourage. As the British Councillor in Tehran, John Russell, memorably noted, even in Tsarist times visiting dignitaries were never accommodated in the Kremlin itself, 'except for Napoleon, who hardly counts as a guest.'⁴⁰ Under the Bolshevik regime, the Kremlin no longer functioned as an official residence, with its most suitable building, the Great Kremlin Palace, having being reconfigured in 1934 for use by the Supreme Council of the USSR.⁴¹ It even emerged that, in order to provide the Shah and his Queen with accommodation of a suitable standard, bathrooms had to be specially constructed. The publicity benefits of such a move from the Soviet point of view were, of course, clear. Indeed, the Iranian Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs, Kazemi assessed the gesture as 'unlikely to be have been made out of disinterested politeness.' And to underline the point, the Shah, who received the news while on state visit to Turkey, insisted that the UK and US governments be immediately informed.⁴² Several days later, in an apparently connected statement, he was quoted as follows:

'You have given the Turks 450 planes and Iran only 2 ... How can the U.S. be so casual about our needs? Our position, my position personally, is greatly exposed. The Soviets are planning a most elaborate reception. If they make and publicise great offers without strings, where do I stand with my people? I do not trust the Soviets, but my people are desperate for aid, progress and development. They are impatient. Gold from any hand glitters than same. Tempting offers are bound to result in pressures.'⁴³

That the Shah had in mind the value of Soviet blandishments in extracting a further

39 FO 371/120752: *John W. Russell in Tehran to Eastern Department*, 21 May 1956

40 FO 371/120752: *John W. Russell in Tehran to Eastern Department*, 19 May 1956, §3-4

41 For an overview: www.kremlin.museum.ru/eDepartmentmlin/buildings/BKD/, accessed 02/07/2011

42 FO 371/120752: *John W. Russell in Tehran to Eastern Department*, 2 May 1956, §4-5

43 FRUS, 1955-1957, Vol. XII: *Memorandum*, 22 June 1956: Tab A, §15 (Ellipsis in the original.)

tranche of financial assistance from the U.S. Government received additional confirmation in a memorandum delivered by the Iranian Ambassador in Washington, Ali Amini, less than a week before the Shah's departure for Moscow.⁴⁴ In his letter, Amini observed that, when it came to financial aid, the United States 'had not treated Iran any better than some countries which are neutral' and bluntly suggested 'positive action' before the trip.⁴⁵ At the same time, Iranian officials were at pains to reassure the West regarding the character of the visit. On the 27th of June, for example, the Minister of Information publicly affirmed that the trip was 'in no way shape or form a step intended to lead Iran away from the West.'⁴⁶ This was followed, much to the Soviet leadership's grave displeasure, by an article in the state-controlled *Ettela'at* newspaper praising the help given to Iran by the West and 'distorting' the principles of Soviet Foreign Policy, with particularly unflattering criticism reserved for the Russian support of Nasser's Egypt. The offending polemic, written by the paper's editor and prominent pro-government journalist Touraj Farazmand, characterised rapprochement with the Soviet Union as an 'alliance with the devil.'⁴⁷ This defiant tone was mirrored in official rhetoric several days later when the veteran Iranian diplomat, Ali Asghar Hekmat, made a speech to the Majlis, in which he noted that "Iran has never committed acts of aggression against anyone, in stark contrast to our northern neighbour, which has repeatedly done so." Iran's decision to join the Baghdad Pact was thus made, "with the simple intention of defending itself from aggression."⁴⁸

It was equally evident, however, that Iranian politicians were not ignorant of the possible advantages afforded by more stable relations with Moscow. Writing on the eve of the Shah's departure, the *Ettela'at* newspaper – now striking a somewhat different note – attached 'great significance to possible negotiations on the transit route from Iran to Western Europe through Soviet territory' since the transit of goods to Europe via this route would be 'two times cheaper' for Iran than the Red Sea route from

44 *Ibid.*, quoting Central Files, 788.5-MSP/6-2256 (not printed).

45 *Ibid.*, n2. This somewhat blunt approach had its precedent four months earlier: the U.S. had provided Iran with \$20 million from the President's Fund for 'political reasons', namely an attempt to prevent the Shah from being swayed by Nehru's arguments for neutralism during his state visit to India. *Ibid.*

46 АВПРФ, ф.5956, оп.3а, п.512, д.1000, л.80

47 *Ibid.*, л.93; see obituary by, *Touraj Farazmand Dargozasht*, 10 January 2006: www.bbc.co.uk/persian/arts/story/2006/06/060610_jb_mb_tourajfarazmand.shtml

48 *Ibid.*, л.100

Khorramshahr.⁴⁹ The timetable for the visit itself placed particular emphasis on the technical advances made by the USSR, including excursions to the newly-constructed Stalingrad Hydroelectric Station, an area of mechanised cotton production in Tajikistan, and a steel foundry outside Kiev.⁵⁰ At seventeen days in total, the trip was also an extensive one, with an entourage to match. Although the Foreign Minister, Aligholi Ardalan, was not in attendance, the Economics Minister Ebrahim Kashani and Senator Mohammad Sa'ed (the former Prime Minister) did feature in the imperial suite, together with a sizeable contingent of senior army figures, including Generals Jahanbani and Yazdanpanah, both of whom had undergone military studies in Russia.⁵¹

Yet if interest in Soviet technical and military advances was strong, Khrushchev did little to lighten the baggage of latent suspicions the Iranian delegation brought with them. Ardeshir Zahedi, who was present in the Shah's entourage as his personal adjutant, recounted an exchange between the two leaders during a formal dinner in the Kremlin's St George Hall. The First Secretary – allegedly emboldened by a surfeit of vodka – unleashed an uncompromising tirade, airing precisely the same irritations that Foreign Ministry officials had striven successfully to conceal earlier that year:

““We ask you to be friends with us and, in turn, you solicit our friendship. But at the same time you antagonise us. Should we so wish, we are capable of attacking Iran and swallowing you. Whatever forces you put together or military alliance you may form, you would be powerless to stand against us. You should know that the Soviet Union cannot remain indifferent in the face of these pacts.””

Rising to his feet, the Shah ordered a glass of vodka for himself. Vodka having been brought, Ardeshir Zahedi recalled his response as follows:

“Today is a good day. It is a good thing that we came here today and heard these words. We now know that we have not been mistaken in our assessment [of

49 АБПРФ, ф.05956, оп.3а, п.512, д.1000, л.66

50 A. Masoud-Ansari, *Maruri bar Panjah Sal-e Tarikh*, p84; FO 371/126842, Enclosure EP1942/7: *Soviet News* [Soviet Embassy Newspaper in London], dated July 2, 1956: ‘Shah of Iran and Queen Soraya in the Soviet Union.’

51 A. Zahedi, *Khâterât-e Ardeshir Zâhedi*, Jeld-e Dovom, p22

you]. In these past few days we have heard sentiments from you that could have led us to be mistaken, and believe that your policies have changed. Your words made a positive impression on us. Today, however, you have exposed yourself. Hitherto you have assured us that such words and thoughts belonged to the time of Stalin. Now we see that, on the contrary, you harbour the very same thoughts and speak the very same language. It was for this very reason that we joined the Baghdad Pact and I would emphasise that, if someday you wish to attack us, then the Iranian nation will defend their country to the last drop of blood.”

The Shah then drank his vodka, placing the empty glass upside down on the table. The Iranian delegation departed the following morning.⁵²

While Zahedi's account must be approached with a degree of caution – the passage clearly aims to portray the Shah in a positive light – the First Secretary's outburst would not have been unusual given the prevailing atmosphere of the time. Indeed, the episode bears a close resemblance to a similarly brusque encounter involving the Soviet Leader and a British Army General just three weeks earlier.⁵³ Khrushchev, a self-styled straight-talking Ukrainian peasant's son, was famously abrasive in his interactions with certain foreign leaders and not known for mincing his words. Khrushchev's warning, if it was in fact delivered in the form Ardeshir Zahedi has alleged, was most likely intended as a factual reminder of the Soviet Union's superior military capabilities designed to preempt and restrain Iranian enthusiasm for further military cooperation with the West. Evidence to support this assessment is provided in the extensive tours of the Soviet naval and air bases incorporated into the Shah's visit, and by the Iranian Ambassador to Moscow's recollection that Marshal Zhukov, Minister of Defence and Chief of the Soviet Armed Forces ‘personally explained their latest weaponry to the Shah.’ Khrushchev may thus have been trying, as Zahedi conceded, ‘to bring the Shah of Iran to his senses.’⁵⁴

52 A. Zahedi, *Khâterât-e Ardeshir Zâhedi*, Volume II, p25-26

53 See A. Orlov: *A “Hot” Front in a Cold War* in *Studies in Intelligence*, Winter 1998 – 1999: 'In the midst of his toast, he [Khrushchev] turned to General Twining and said, "Today we showed you our aircraft. But would you like to have a look at our missiles?" "Yes," the General responded. "Well, we will not show them to you," replied Khrushchev. "First show us your aircraft and stop sending intruders into our airspace. We will shoot down uninvited guests. We will get all of your Canberras [long-range reconnaissance aircraft.] They are flying coffins.'"

54 A. Zahedi, *Khâterât-e Ardeshir Zâhedi*, Volume II, p27

Whatever the intended effect, the encounter was a diplomatic and political disaster. Far from emphasising the benefits of cooperation with the Soviet Union and distancing himself from the excesses of his predecessor, Khrushchev apparently ensured that the Shah and his entourage returned home all the more firmly convinced of a disturbing continuity in Soviet policy toward Iran; of political and territorial ambitions disingenuously concealed behind a charade of friendship. And indeed, whether or not Zahedi's account is accepted as factual (and in either case the account stands an important reflection on the Iranian elite's underlying apprehensions) the months following the visit did indeed see a noticeable shift in Soviet policy toward Iran. This was signalled in the abrupt recall of the Soviet Ambassador and his replacement by Nikolai Pegov, a senior Party figure and then Secretary of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet.⁵⁵ The Foreign Ministry was instructed to present, on behalf of the Supreme Soviet, the Shah's daughter Princess Shahnaz and her husband Ardeshir Zahedi with conspicuously expensive gifts on the occasion of their marriage, which took place two months following Pegov's appointment.⁵⁶ This shift in emphasis away from the Central Committee executive and toward the USSR's legislative branch as the primary enactor of policy toward Iran appeared to be an attempt to detoxify the brand, and conceivably, to address the egregious damage wrought by Khrushchev's alleged remarks. The strategy met, privately at least, with little success. Zahedi recalled that the Ilyushin passenger aircraft presented to the Shah by the Soviets on the occasion of the visit was promptly given away to his brother in law, Mohammad Khatam. The monarch had, he wrote, 'taken his anger with the Russians to heart.'⁵⁷ And indeed the Shah, responding to a farewell speech from Marshal Voroshilov, had firmly rebuffed criticism of the Baghdad Pact, pointing out that, if Iran found it necessary to take measures for its own defence, this was due to 'our bitter experience of the past.'⁵⁸

The Aftermath of the Iraqi Coup and the Qurani Affair

Events surrounding the state visit to the Soviet Union provided in many respects a forewarning of the Shah's increasing and personal dissatisfaction with the perceived

55 See *Guide to the History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, 1898-1991* (entry for Pegov, Nikolai Mixailovich.) <http://www.knowbysight.info/PPP/04525.asp> (accessed 17.05.2013.)

56 АБПРФ, ф.94, оп.45, п.131, д.6, л.42-3: *Foreign Ministry to Nikolai Pegov*, 26 October 1956

57 *Khâterât-e Ardeshir Zâhedi*, Volume II, p28.

58 Quoted in an enclosure to FO 371/120752: *The Shah Makes His Point*, *The Economist*, July 21, 1956.

lack of benefits accruing to Iran from its adherence to the Baghdad Pact. It was a grievance, moreover, that some Western observers privately recognised as legitimate.⁵⁹ As the British ambassador noted in his review for 1957, a key calculation made by the Shah when joining the Pact was that 'given Iran's exposed strategic position he would be entitled to receive massive military aid', an objective that had 'not been fulfilled according to expectation.'⁶⁰ The ambassador's report manifested a growing concern that Iran's connection with the West was becoming somewhat atrophied; that the Baghdad Pact 'honeymoon' was, as he put it, 'over.'⁶¹ This observation held true for both sides: the Shah's persistent emphasis on strengthening the Iranian armed forces, irrespective of domestic economic considerations, had evidently begun to breed cynicism in his would-be benefactors. The U.S. ambassador to Iran, Selden Chapin, also writing at the end of 1957 and identifying a trend with critical future consequences, framed the policy dilemma in the following terms:

'The situation is complicated by fact that Shah's interest in military forces is in part emotional rather than logical. We can never really hope to convince the Shah that any level of military forces will be adequate to what he imagines are his requirements. His psychological bias renders him immune to logical persuasion in this field.'⁶²

If the Shah was dissatisfied with the public level of Western commitment toward Iran in general, private apprehensions regarding the reliability of U.S. support for his throne in particular were also sharply focussed by the so-called Qarani affair, a military plot uncovered in January 1958. General Qarani was among several Iranian officers who had

59 The U.S. ambassador, Seldon Chapin, writing in December 1957, conceded there was 'a legitimate basis for Shah's desire for modern equipment and aircraft to maintain his domestic and international prestige [and] there is some merit in the position that Iran should not be too clearly differentiated [in] comparison with Turkish and Pakistan.' FRUS, 1955-1957, Vol. 12: *Telegram from the Embassy in Tehran to the Department of State*, 18 December 1957.

60 IPD, 1954-1965, Annual Review for 1957 (not dated, 10112/58). The head of the Near Eastern section at the State Department concurred: it was 'perfectly obvious that Iran [...] assumed that adherence would be followed by increased aid. FRUS, 1955-1957, Vol. 12: *Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (Allen) to the Under Secretary of State (Hoover)*, 22 June 1956.

61 IPD, 1954-1965, *Annual Review for 1957* (not dated, 10112/58) Indeed, in his Annual Review for the following year, Geoffrey Harrison openly criticises the Baghdad Pact for its 'non-committal wording.' *Ibid.*, 21 January 1959.

62 FRUS, 1955-1957, Vol. 12: *Telegram to the Department of State*, 18 December 1957.

worked against the administration of Prime Minister Mosaddeq and was promoted, following the 1953 coup, to the army's Vice-Chief of Staff for Military Intelligence, a senior role which also entailed oversight of civilian intelligence gathering.⁶³ It would appear the immediate motivation for Qarani's approach to the U.S. Embassy (to gauge American support for the possibility of political change) was the imminent arrival in Tehran of Foster Dulles, the U.S. Secretary of State; and also, somewhat more speculatively, rumours that the Shah was shortly to embark on a reorganisation of the military that would unfavourably impact on Qarani himself.⁶⁴ In conversation with the U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission and Airforce Attaché on the 22nd of January 1958, Qarani sought to highlight the incumbent government's lack of popular support among 'the Iranian people', whose consequent susceptibility to increased Soviet 'wooing' would place the latter in a position to overthrow the government. Qarani's position was hence that 'an urgent a change of governments be brought about now by a pro-Western group rather than waiting for the Soviets to take advantage of the present unrest and discontent of the people.' The conspirators, which included Esfandiar Bozorgmehr – a former Minister of Propaganda under Prime Minister Zahedi – asserted that they had a group of some two thousand American-educated Iranians at their disposal, who were 'ready to form from its membership the nucleus of a new government.' It was suggested that, as an intermediary step, the U.S. should approach the Shah to emphasise the need for him to reign not rule.⁶⁵

That opposition figures such as Qarani would seek to approach Western embassies for their support was in itself neither surprising nor particularly new.⁶⁶ Rather it was the unfortunate error of the U.S. ambassador, after details of the conversation were leaked to the press, to attempt to exculpate his staff to Iran's Minister of Foreign Affairs by acknowledging they had 'listened' to the 'plotters' but that it was felt that their plans

63 M. J. Gasiorowski, *The Qarani Affair and Iranian Politics in International Journal of Middle East Studies* (1993: 25), p629

64 FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol. 12, *Embassy in Tehran to the Department of State*, 10 February 1958.

65 FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol. 12: *Memorandum for the Record*, 6 February 1958.

66 When the Iranian Foreign Minister suggested that the American Embassy should 'scrupulously avoid any contact' with opposition elements, the Ambassador retorted: "What would the Iranians say if their Embassy in Washington were told to have no contact with the Democrats [...] we are not prepared to shut ourselves up in a kind of ivory tower." FO 371/133009: *Secret Minute*, 3 March 1958, §3.

were 'fuzzy' and amounted to little.⁶⁷ He thus succeeded in confirming, from the Iranian government's perspective, not only that there had indeed been a plot but that the U.S. Embassy, by not reporting it as such to the authorities, had effectively abetted it. The Shah made a 'great show of indignation.'⁶⁸ As Foster Dulles himself conceded, 'the nature of [our] contacts with opposition elements [...] and manner of confirmation by the Ambassador, may have raised serious doubts in minds of the Shah and the Government of Iran regarding the intentions of US toward present government.'⁶⁹ The mood was further soured by the emergence of a letter, ostensibly written by Foster Dulles to Selden Chapin but in actual fact a KGB forgery designed to buttress imperial insecurities, which cited the Shah's 'nebulous' attempts at reform as evidence that he was 'about as successful as a politician as he is a husband' – an allusion to his impending (but not yet public) divorce from Queen Soraya.⁷⁰

Both the Shah and the Americans, however, had subsequent cause to feel increasingly nervous. General Qassim's Iraqi coup on the 14th of July 1958, in which the ruling monarchy was violently deposed, deeply shocked Iran's ruling elite and indeed had, as the newly-appointed Foreign Minister Ali Asghar Hekmat conceded in conversation with the U.S. Secretary of State, made a 'great impact' on Iranian public opinion.⁷¹ It prompted a series of 'panic' measures on the part of the government, including mass military promotions and a call by the Ministry of the Interior for local authorities 'to pay special attention to local grievances and petitions.' The Shah himself initiated a series of monthly press conferences, to which all major newspaper editors were invited, where he addressed them 'at length' on his vision for Iran's economic progress.⁷² Of particular concern for Iranian politicians was the Iraqi revolutionary regime's apparent

67 FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol. 12: *Embtel 1637*, 27 February 1958.

68 FO 371/133009, *Secret: Army Officers Plot*, 4 March 1958. Qarani was later sentenced to two years' imprisonment for 'abuse of power, interference with civil affairs, and concealment of certain events from higher authorities': see BBC News Monitoring enclosure, (final) paper in *ibid*.

69 FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol. 12, *State Department to the Embassy in Iran*, 28 February 1958.

70 The original text of the letter (preserved in FO 371/133009) reveals that it was deliberately back-dated to 8 October 1957 (a month when U.S.-Iranian tensions were running particularly high.) A copy was passed to the American Ambassador by the Minister of Foreign Affairs on the 2nd of March, who had received it 'from a Senator or Deputy', and copies had also mysteriously appeared on the desks of all Tehran newspapers the day before. FO 371/133009: *Secret Minute*, 3 March 1958. For KGB authorship of the forgery, see: C. Andrew and V. Metrokhin (2005), *The World Was Going Our Way: The KGB and the Battle for the Third World*, p171.

71 FO 371/133010: *From New York (Secretary of State) to Foreign Office*, 25 September 1958, §2.

72 IPD, 1954-1965: *Political Summary for 3rd Quarter of 1958*, 31 October 1958.

vulnerability to domestic communist elements. A report prepared by the CIA at the time, while conceding there was no conclusive evidence that Qassim himself was a Communist, nonetheless offered a bleak outlook:

‘Iraq is the scene of a determined and so far effective Communist drive toward power [...] We doubt [Qassim’s] ability to stem the movement toward a Communist takeover of his regime [...] he has shown himself unwilling or unable to take effective action against the steady drive of Iraqi Communists and their Soviet backers to consolidate a growing position of power within the country and the government.’⁷³

Hekmat, raising a concern that was to be of important consequence in later years, expressed his concern at ‘attempts which the Iraqi radio was making to stir up the Kurdish tribes in Iran, urging them to unite with Iraqi Kurds.’⁷⁴ Dwight Eisenhower too, illustrating the extent to which U.S. and Iranian regional conceptions coincided, argued that a Kurdish uprising could act as a precursor for a full Communist takeover in Iraq; ‘the result would be to outflank both Iran and Turkey and to provide the Soviets with their long-desired land bridge to the Middle East.’⁷⁵ A unified and USSR-supported Kurdish homeland would, in other words, breach the geographic integrity of the Northern Tier by connecting Soviet Armenia with northern Iraq – and thus the Gulf.

1959: The Secret Negotiations for a Non-Aggression Treaty with the Soviet Union

The Shah's decision to secretly enter into negotiations for a Treaty of Non-Aggression with the Soviet Union in December 1958 must thus be seen against a background of resentment at the perceived inconstancy of American policy toward Iran, coupled with a heightened sense of geopolitical and personal insecurity resulting from the revolution in Iraq.⁷⁶ Although the U.S. government did ultimately make steps to address the situation

73 FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol. 12: *Special National Intelligence Estimate: The Communist Threat to Iraq*, dated February 17, 1959, §1 & §6. With respect to Qassim's alleged Communist sympathies, CIA analysts thought it was 'more likely that he is an Iraqi nationalist who believes he needs Communist support to protect himself against the designs of the UAR and the Western powers.' (*Ibid.*, §1)

74 FO 371/133010: *From New York (Secretary of State) to Foreign Office*, 25 September 1958, §9.

75 FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol. 12: *Memorandum of Discussion*, 15 January 1959

76 The Shah made these points clearly with Western diplomats at several audiences during the crisis. See for instance FO 371/140797: *From Tehran (Sir Geoffrey Harrison) to Foreign Office*, 29 January

by formulating a more explicit commitment, the proposal brought forward – an Iranian-American Bilateral Pact – was considered by the Shah to be insufficient for effectively countering the perceived Soviet threat:

‘In the form [it] was presented to us it lacked the significance we wanted, and we felt it was not giving us the necessary guarantees [...] Feeling militarily ridiculously weak, and without such guarantees as, for example, NATO countries have, we allowed ourselves to enter into negotiations with the Russians.’⁷⁷

The immediate impetus for the visit of the Soviet negotiating team to Tehran however, seems to have lain precisely in the Iranian Government's willingness to contemplate signing the Bilateral Pact (and thereby substantially enhancing military ties.) Archival evidence demonstrates that the Soviet leadership first became aware of Iran's intention on the 31st of October 1958: a proposed visit to Iran by Marshal Voroshilov for March 1959, evidently proposed only a week earlier ‘in return’ for the Shah's state visit to the USSR, was promptly cancelled; a note delivered personally by Alexei Gromyko to the Iranian ambassador in Moscow expressed the view that such a visit would ‘create a false impression’ and spoke of the need to ‘reassess the current status’ of Soviet-Iranian relations.⁷⁸ At the same time, the Soviet government again drew attention to Iran's legal responsibilities, on this occasion to the ‘neutrality guarantee’ implicit in a Soviet-Iranian Treaty of October 1927.⁷⁹ The response by Iran's Foreign Minister, Ali Asghar Hekmat, was predictably uncompromising:

‘Quite apart from the fact that Article 3 of this Treaty does not forbid the

1959, §6: '[He] resented what we [...] were doing for India, Yugoslavia, Turkey and even Afghanistan. He referred rather bitterly to America's link with last year's Qarani plot and said they might well do the same thing again. He had got nothing from siding openly with the West three and a half years ago and indicated that he was determined to try another tack.' See also specific irritations outlined in FO 371/140797: *From Tehran to Foreign office*, 2 February 1959.

77 Mohammad Pahlavi, *Mission for My Country*, p122.

78 *Chap dar Iran dar Revayat-e SAVAK, Vol. 3: Soviet Government Note to the Government of Iran*, dated 31 October 1958, p84-5.

79 АБПФ, ф595-б, оп.3а, п.157, д.261, л.51: Iranian Foreign Minister's Speech [to the Majlis], 13 February 1959. Article 3 of the Treaty in question (Treaty on the Guarantee of Neutrality between USSR and Iran, signed on the 1st of October 1927) commits both sides against ‘either *de facto* or formal participation in any political union or agreement directed against the maritime or territorial security of the other Party.’ *Soviet-Iranian Relations in Treaties, Conventions and Agreements* (USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1946), p99. The Soviet Note of 31 October hence referred to the Bilateral Pact as ‘directly threatening the security of the USSR's southern borders.’

signatories from concluding agreements with the aim of strengthening their defences and preserving their security, the Iranian government will take whatever measures it feels it necessary to adopt in its own interests and will not permit the interference of any foreign government in its internal affairs.’⁸⁰

In contrast to 1956 however, and faced with the potentially significant expansion of U.S-Iranian military ties, the Soviet government no longer felt in a position to mollify their language. In an audience with Hekmat on the 15th of December 1958, Pegov gave the latter to understand that the Iran's signing of the Bilateral Pact ‘would lead to serious consequences.’⁸¹ A note followed on the 29th of December 1958, which gave further rein to the Kremlin's antipathy. Describing the rationale behind the Bilateral Pact is described as ‘obsolete’, it proceeded to unambiguously warn that Iran would ‘run the danger of annihilation in the event of hostilities.’ To emphasise the point, the note proceeded to call for ‘realism’ on the part of Iran in forming a ‘comparative appreciation’ of the two countries' relative military capabilities.⁸² The unprecedentedly forthright nature of threat would seem to have been further motivated by the fact that, although the Iranian government had sought to provide Moscow with assurances in respect of the Pact's nature, it had ‘not shown them the text’, in the absence of which the Soviet government resorted to conjecture, specifically that the agreement in view ‘would give the American naval forces the right to enter the Persian gulf and to be stationed off the Iranian coast.’⁸³ The note concluded with an offer to avert what it described as a ‘dangerous turn’ in Soviet-Iranian relations:

‘The Soviet Government is ready to exchange views with the Iranian Government on [...] the best means of pursuing a policy of peace and neutrality with guarantees for national security and territorial integrity [...] If the Iranian Government really wants to preserve friendly relations with the Soviet Union and does not proceed to carry out measures for military cooperation with third powers damaging to Iranian-Soviet relations and threatening the security of the

80 *Ibid.*, п.59

81 *Ibid.*, п.72

82 FO 371/140797: *From Tehran to Foreign Office*, 7 January 1959, §4 & 6.

83 *Ibid.*, §11

Soviet Union, then the Soviet Government is ready to join the Iranian Government in searching for ways of improving their relations.’⁸⁴

A Soviet negotiating team arrived in Tehran on the 27th of January 1959. Although the question of where precisely the initiative for this sudden development arose was later to become the subject of heated dispute, the evidence points to the Soviet government having advanced the proposal for negotiations.⁸⁵ Indeed, although the Shah would later claim to have ‘taken the initiative’⁸⁶ with respect to the invitation, an Iranian source close to the matter at the time suggests that the stronger impetus came from Moscow:

‘In his most recent audience with Foreign Minister Ali Asghar Hekmat, the Soviet Ambassador [Nikolai Pegov] let it be known that Khrushchev wishes for either he himself or one of his deputies, including [Marshal] Voroshilov, to be invited to Iran by the Iranian government on an official visit; and that negotiations be held with leading state officials regarding the establishment of improved relations and the proposed provision of a loan to Iran [...] Notwithstanding the Shah’s personal inclination toward inviting one of the Soviet leaders to Iran, the announcement of Pegov’s proposals have created a grave problem for the government since the Americans are strongly against negotiations of any sort or enhanced relations with the Soviet Union.’⁸⁷

Further evidence of high-pressure tactics from the Soviet side was provided by a two-week delay in the arrival of the Russian delegation – composed of the Soviet Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs (Vladimir Semenov), the head of the Ministry’s Middle Eastern Division (Alexei Pavlov) and Ambassador to Iran (Nikolai Pegov) – which appeared deliberately timed to coincide with a Baghdad Pact Council meeting convened simultaneously in Karachi.⁸⁸ A report by the Iranian Ambassador to Moscow, Abolhassan Mas’ud-Ansari, and dated shortly before the arrival of the Soviet

84 *Ibid.*, §15 & 16; a ‘vague but generous aid package’ was allegedly also offered by the Soviet side.

FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol. 12: *Department of State to the Embassy in Tehran*, 16 January 1959

85 АБПФ, ф.5956, оп.3а, п.157, д.261, л.107-111: *Statement by Foreign Minister*, 12 February 1959

86 FCO 371/140799: *Conversation with H.I.M.*, 3 February 1959, §7.

87 *Chap dar Iran dar Revayat-e Asnad-e SAVAK*, Vol. 3, Document No. 4859-3-2, 4 Bahman 1337

88 FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol. 12: Document 56: *Editorial Note*: ‘the sixth Session of the Baghdad Ministerial Council began on January 26 [1959] and concluded on January 28.’

delegation, recorded the apparent result of Moscow's blunt strategy. The Iranian Foreign Ministry, he wrote, 'has received a directive from the government requesting that conclusion of any military agreement with the U.S. should be avoided as the Soviet leadership intend to react severely to any such [move] on the basis of the 1921 treaty [of Friendship].' Reflecting differences of opinion within the Iranian government, the ambassador added his personal view that 'the present circumstances [were] highly suitable for rapprochement with the Soviets and the Iranian government ought not to miss the opportunity.'⁸⁹ The initial proposals advanced by the Iranian side, in the first draft of the treaty, were balanced as follows:

Iranian Side

1. Undertaking not to allow Iranian territory to be used 'as a base for aggression' against the Soviet Union;
2. Iranian government not to conclude the Bilateral Pact with the U.S.

Soviet Side

1. Guarantee of Iran's integrity and independence, 'including a reference to both direct and indirect aggression' (i.e. hostile Soviet media campaigns);
2. Articles 5 and 6 of the 1921 treaty 'to be recognised by Russia as obsolete.'⁹⁰

There was no doubt that the draft, as envisaged above, held significant advantages for Iran; the Shah himself considered its wording 'very favourable.'⁹¹ In particular, it contained no explicit requirement that Iran should withdraw from the Baghdad Pact.⁹² And in terms of its content, as was privately recognised, the text effectively did little more than recapitulate the earlier Iranian-Soviet Agreement of 1927.⁹³ The Shah was apparently forced onto the defensive however, when his Minister of Court, Hussein Ala, barely a day after the arrival of the Soviet delegation, divulged the existence of the negotiations to British and Pakistani officials and intimated – accurately – that the talks

89 *Chap dar Iran dar Revayat-e Asnad-e SAVAK, Vol. 3, Document No. 4954-3-2, 9 Bahman 1337*

90 FO 371/140797: *From Ankara to Foreign Office*, 30 January 1959.

91 FO 371/140798: *From Tehran to Foreign Office*, 7 February 1959, §1(a)

92 FO 371/140797: *From Ankara to Foreign Office*, 30 January 1959, §7

93 See n79 above.

were in their 'final stages.'⁹⁴ Ala's motive in breaking the news was ostensibly due to his being 'extremely worried at the turn of events'; that he had been 'unable to move the Shah' who was in a 'very depressed state of mind.'⁹⁵ On the other hand, a former British Ambassador to Tehran, Sir Roger Stevens considered it 'significant' that the negotiations should have been revealed by Ala – 'corrupt and devotedly loyal' – and that there was, as he saw it, a 'large element of bluff' in the turn of events.⁹⁶ The U.S. State Department's assessment went much further, describing Ala as 'basically senile' and 'largely responsible for the blackmail tactics being employed.'⁹⁷ The suspicion of blackmail was, indeed, one shared by President Eisenhower.⁹⁸ Others close to the scene disagreed. 'I am convinced', the British ambassador in Tehran reported, 'that the Shah has not (repeat not) been bluffing.'⁹⁹

Western concerns primarily centred on the precedent such an Agreement would set for a member of a 'Free World' defence organisation to enter into a non-aggression pact with the Soviets. The Turkish government similarly felt that a non-aggression treaty would threaten their own country by creating 'another at least doubtful' country on their borders, and 'give great encouragement to Russia and to pro-Russian elements in Iraq.'¹⁰⁰ As already noted, with General Qassim's Iraq increasingly pro-Soviet in orientation, the 'Northern Tier' concept was in serious danger of dissolution.¹⁰¹ And Iranian neutrality would have added further strength to sentiments expressed by the Pakistani authorities during the Baghdad Council meeting with regard to 'the small value obtained by belonging to the Baghdad Pact in comparison with neutralist countries like India and Afghanistan.'¹⁰² The Eisenhower administration decided it was

94 FO 371/140798: *From Tehran to Foreign Office*, 7 February 1959: §4.

95 FO 371/140797, *From Tehran to Foreign Office*, 28 January 1959, §2.

96 FO 371/140797, *From Karachi to Foreign Office*, 30 January 1959.

97 The official quoted is William Rountree, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, in conversation with Secretary of State, J. Foster Dulles. FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol. 12: *Telephone Call*, 29 January 1959.

98 In a conversation with Secretary of State Dulles held on January 30, Eisenhower described the situation as 'disturbing [...] instead of taking a firm position and doing things right [the Shah] is engaging in blackmail. Neither the Pres[ident] nor the Sec[retary of State] will play that way.' FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol. 12: *Department of State to Embassy in Iran*, 30 January 1959, n2.

99 FO 371/140797: *From Tehran to Foreign Office*, 31 January 1959.

100 FO 371/140797: *From Ankara to Foreign Office*, 30 January 1959.

101 The U.S. eventually acquiesced in Iraq's withdrawal from the Pact on the 24th of March 1959. See FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol. 12: *Operational Guidance Concerning Iraq*, 18 February 1959, §13.

102 FO 371/140797: *From Ankara to Foreign Office*, 30 January 1959, §4.

time for a 'high level message', and a personal letter from the President was duly delivered to the Shah on the 31st of January 1959 contrasting Soviet foreign policy, which 'history demonstrates [...] has repeatedly used "friendship" pacts to lull prospective victims and make them less alert to their danger' with the history of U.S.-Iranian relations, characterised by U.S. 'determination to help Iran in the preservation of its independence and integrity.' In stating however, that the same 'need not depend on any particular provision of formal agreements between us', the letter crucially failed to address the Shah's underlying quest for a more concrete Western military guarantee.¹⁰³ As grateful as he was for U.S. assistance, the Shah informed the U.S. ambassador, it was 'not enough [...] therefore he was negotiating a non-aggression pact with the USSR to give Iran additional security.'¹⁰⁴

A key turning point in the episode appears to have come several days later when, at a luncheon attended by the Shah, the British ambassador and the British Minister of Defence, Duncan Sandys, the latter 'were able to bring home to His Majesty the full implications of his actions.'¹⁰⁵ In a subsequent report to the Foreign Secretary, Sandys listed the arguments he employed. Making clear that the Baghdad pact might not be able to 'survive the shock' of Soviet-Iranian entente, Sandys' central point ran as follows:

'The proposed Treaty must be looked at from the Russian stand-point. What did [they] hope to get from it? They were certainly not afraid of Persian aggression. What they hoped to obtain was, first, an immense propaganda victory; and, secondly, the weakening, if not the complete dissolution of the Baghdad Pact. Having obtained these immediate benefits, the Russians would have nothing more to gain from the agreement with Persia. They would quickly find some pretext for complaining that Persia was not honouring her side of the bargain [and] would start up again their subversive propaganda. The net result would be that Persia would, on the one hand, have gained no security from Russia, while, on the other hand, she would have isolated herself from her friends.'¹⁰⁶

103 FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol. 12: *Department of State to the Embassy in Iran*, 30 January 1959

104 See *ibid.*, at n3, quoting Telegram 1431, 31 January 1959.

105 IPD, Vol. 14, 1954-1965, p643.

106 FO 371/140799: *Minister of Defence to Foreign Secretary*, 4 February 1959, §7(f)

Evidence that Sandys' line of reasoning may have had a crucial impact is provided in a remarkable document recording a conversation on the same night held between the British Counsellor in Tehran, Sir John Russell, and the Shah at Princess Ashraf's birthday party. The Shah abruptly remarked that he 'did not know when they [the Soviets] were leaving but he would not be seeing them again.' When asked whether a 'change of ground' on the Soviet side would tempt him to re-open negotiations, the Shah said, 'NO, they are finished' (capitals in the original text.) Russell even recounted that they 'drank a toast to the intransigence of the Soviet negotiators.'¹⁰⁷ The impact of pressure from western leaders was, indeed, facilitated by miscalculation on the part of the Russian delegation. A careful reading of the Soviet version of events suggests that the counter draft to Iran's proposed text of the treaty, submitted shortly after the delegation's arrival, failed to accommodate Iranian leaders' underlying objectives. In the first instance it expanded the definition of 'non-aggression' to preclude the construction or use of military bases in Iran by any third party; a move that would undoubtedly have entailed cessation of several joint U.S.-Iranian projects. And critically, it demurred on the question of articles 5 and 6 of the 1921 treaty, whose proposed removal was 'not entirely comprehensible to the Soviet side in as much as, according to available information, the conclusion of a military agreement between Iran and the USA envisages the potential stationing of U.S. troops on Iranian territory.' Having established, however, following an audience with the Shah on the 3rd of February – the day after Sandys' intervention – that such an approach was unacceptable to the Iranian side, the delegation sought further instructions from Moscow.¹⁰⁸ And although the Soviet government was forthcoming, unexpectedly ordering acceptance of Iran's original terms after a delay of two days, the opportunity was no longer available: the Shah 'had decided to sign the bilateral agreement with the Americans.'¹⁰⁹

The Soviet delegation thus shared significant responsibility for the breakdown of the talks. In particular, the documentary evidence substantially suggests that the main point of difference was the Soviet delegation, as the Shah later put it, having 'stuck rigidly to

107 FO 371/140799: *Conversation with H.I.M.* 3 February 1959.

108 *Pravda*, 'On Soviet-Iranian Relations', 13 February 1959, p5.

109 FO 371/140798: *Tehran to Foreign Office*, 7 February 1959.

Articles 5 and 6 of the 1921 treaty.’¹¹⁰ This aroused suspicion in light of the fact that, as Russell pointed out to the Shah, the Rothstein Protocol to the 1921 Treaty (which explicitly limited the circumstances under which the Soviet government had the right to send troops into Iran) had been omitted from an official 1957 Soviet publication on Iran.¹¹¹ Such an omission was questionable given that, as noted in the historical introduction to this thesis, the Iranian Majles had only agreed to ratify the 1921 treaty on the basis of the assurances given in Rothstein's letter.¹¹² The apparently deliberate suppression of the Protocol, as Russell suggested to the Shah in their conversation, was explained by ‘the Soviet intention to maintain articles 5 and 6 intact for application against the use of Iran by any power whom they chose to consider hostile and aggressive, i.e. today the United States.’¹¹³ That the Soviets should have been ‘so legalistic in clinging to these two paper articles’ was therefore a clear tactical error in view of the Iranian side’s unambiguous insistence on their annulment. And as the British Defence Minister himself conceded: ‘If the Russians had straight away accepted the Shah's conditions, he would almost certainly have gone ahead and signed the non-aggression treaty.’¹¹⁴ Moreover, an agreement with Moscow to annul the 1921 Treaty was not merely a matter of geopolitical security but also one of economic advantage at a time of severe budgetary constraint:

‘From what the Shah said, it emerged fairly clearly that the immediate cause of the present crisis is financial embarrassment. Half the public expenditure planned in next year's budget is military and the Shah fears that this will cause a public outcry [...] a non-aggression treaty, by removing the danger of Soviet attack, would enable the Shah to reduce his forces in the North and thus reduce his defence budget [...] if the [the Soviet government’s] legal right of entry were removed he could divert [...] the troops tied up on the Khorasan frontier, who were anyway destined to useless destruction by the Red Army.’¹¹⁵

110 FO 371/140799: *Conversation with H.I.M. (Sir John W. Russell)*, 3 February 1959, §5.

111 FO 371/140799: *From Foreign office to Tehran*, 23 February 1959. The Russian publication in question was *Modern Iran – A Handbook* (Soviet Academy of Sciences, 1957)

112 See also discussion by W. Reisman: *Termination of the USSR's Treaty Right of Intervention in Iran in The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 74, No. 1 (Jan., 1980), p147f.

113 FO 371/140799: *Conversation with H.I.M. (Sir John W. Russell)*, 3 February 1959, §5

114 FO 371/140799: *Minister of Defence to Foreign Secretary*, 4 February 1959, §8

115 FO 371/140799: *Minister of Defence to Foreign Secretary*, 4 February 1959, §5 and §6(b)

And as suggested above the Shah had certainly felt, in the months leading up to the negotiations with the Soviets, that the U.S. had ‘taken us for granted’; that the West, as he asserted in conversation with the British ambassador, had treated Iran ‘as a concubine and not as a wife.’¹¹⁶ The balance of evidence thus suggests that the Shah was in fact serious about rapprochement with the Soviet Union. The ‘Free World’, as noted by British Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd in the margins of a Sandys' report, had indeed had ‘a narrow squeak.’¹¹⁷ The Soviet government, by return, were outraged – perhaps understandably so – at what appeared to be Iran’s ‘two-faced policy.’¹¹⁸ An official Soviet postmortem of the negotiations alleged, for example, that the Iranian Foreign Minister, Ali Asghar Hekmat, when asked some nine days prior to the delegation's arrival whether the Iranian government would refrain from signing the Bilateral Pact with America, responded that it would.¹¹⁹ Hekmat himself strongly denied this charge; both the official Iranian Foreign Ministry communiqué and the Foreign Minister's subsequent statement to a closed session of the Majlis carefully avoided suggestion of any initiative from the Iranian side.¹²⁰ Whatever the true sequence of events, it was clear that Hekmat was in no mood to assume responsibility for the unfavourable turn of events, the blame for which ‘needless to say [lay] with the government of our neighbour.’ Responding to the concerns of parliamentarians regarding the Soviet government's obvious anger, Hekmat drew a literary allusion:

‘Gentlemen, Iranian history shows that the will of others cannot be forced upon Iran through threats and intimidation. Iranians, as their history teaches them, understand that a person does not die twice. And if the mortal hour should come, then better to face it bravely. Better to die honourably and free than live in disgrace and dishonour.’¹²¹

116 FO 371/140797: *Tehran to Foreign Office*, 28 January 1959 and FO 371/140799: *Copy of Minute by Mr. D.A.H. Wright to Sir Geoffrey Harrison*, 30 January 1959.

117 Covering note to FO 371/140799, *From Tehran to Foreign Office*, 11 February 1959.

118 *Pravda*, ‘On Soviet Iranian Relations’, 13 February 1959, p6.

119 The allegation was made in an article in the Soviet journal *International Life*, No. 1, 1961

120 АБПРФ, ф5956, оп.3а, п.157, д.261, л.97-98: *Statement by Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, 12 February 1959 and л.107: *Statement by Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs*, 16 February 1959. In point of fact, Ardeshir Zahedi has claimed that Hekmat was instrumental in persuading the Shah of the necessity for the negotiations. (Interview with author, Montreux, June 2012.)

121 A reference to the final words of Rostam, a preeminent hero of Firdowsi's epic *The Shahnameh*, in response to an emissary of an Arab invader of Iran, Sa'd. D. Davis, *The Persian Book of Kings*, p324.

Conclusion

As the case studies presented in this chapter have sought to illustrate, the increasingly executive authority exercised by the Shah over the apparatus of Iran's government, particularly in respect of foreign and military affairs, became noticeably more pronounced during the period.¹²² Although there were dissenting voices, on balance for Western observers the Shah continued to constitute 'the main element of stability in the country.'¹²³ Indeed, the reforms toward which the Shah was 'hesitantly moving', as the American Ambassador candidly reported in October 1958, 'provide[d] grounds for cautious optimism that the regime may with luck and skill consolidate its position and is not inevitably doomed.'¹²⁴ Yet such 'stability' came at a specific price. It was dependent, first and foremost, on the loyalty of the army, fear over whose allegiance was plainly highlighted by the sweeping promotions brought forward in the months following the coup in Iraq.¹²⁵ The provision of modern weaponry was instrumental in maintaining that loyalty.¹²⁶ The promise held out in this respect by the Baghdad Pact thus played a key role in convincing the Shah in his decision to join; hitherto it was felt that, the U.S. Army Mission notwithstanding, Iran had 'sat firmly on the fence between the Soviet Union and the West.'¹²⁷ The strategic shift sat uncomfortably, however, with wider budgetary considerations. As the Shah put it privately the Selden Chapin, the American Ambassador, 'how can you reconcile adherence to a Pact, which in the long run is going to cost Iran more money, [with the fact that we] already have a deficit?' This was an inconsistency, he stressed correctly, on which Soviet propaganda and sympathisers were 'likely to harp to harmful effect.'¹²⁸

Ultimately, as in previous years, the Shah's strategy proved a successful one. Overall

122 The Shah allegedly told the cabinet that he was 'the fountainhead of all authority' in Iran and expected to kept informed 'in detail' regarding the activities of government. FO 371/12705: *Internal Situation in Iran*, 23 July 1957.

123 IPD, 1954-1965, *Annual Review for 1961*, 3 January 1962; for an alternative view, see the remarkably candid U.S. assessment recorded in FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol. 12: *Special National Intelligence Estimate*, 26 August 1958.

124 FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol. 12: *Embassy in Iran to the Department of State*, 11 October 1958

125 FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol. 12: *Embassy in Iran to the Department of State*, 11 October 1959.

126 FO 371/140799: *Minister of Defence to Foreign Secretary*, 4 February 1959, §4: '[The Iranian Government were] insistent that, for the sake of the morale of the Army, upon whose support the Shah's position ultimately depends, adequate supplies of up-to-date equipment must be provided.'

127 FO 371/140798: *Research Department Briefing Paper by F.D.W. Brown*, 29 January 1959, §8.

128 FRUS, 1955-1957, Vol. 12: *Embassy in Iran to the Department of State*, 5 October 1955, §2.

American assistance to Iran under the Mutual Security Programme during the 1950s was considerable at just under US \$700 million for the period 1950-1958, of which a substantial but, significantly, decreasing percentage consisted in economic aid.¹²⁹ Although British observers in particular found what they saw as the Shah's 'ingratitude' and progressively more ambitious requests for American assistance 'hard to believe', what appears to have been at issue during the period, as elsewhere, was not the level of American aid *per se*.¹³⁰ Nor was the central challenge, as the State Department consistently argued, that the Shah's personal vision for Iran's defensive requirements stood in awkward apposition to their own assessment, although this was undoubtedly the case.¹³¹ Rather, as this chapter has suggested, it was the question of a clear-cut security guarantee that was fundamentally at issue. The Shah's state visit to the Soviet Union had demonstrated, in the first instance, that Soviet leaders were profoundly reluctant to relinquish even an implicit military option in their dealings with Iran; a fact evidenced by the startling vitriol of unpublished Soviet documents, possibly reflected by Khrushchev's alleged warning at dinner in the Kremlin. Compounding this unfavourable state of affairs, the pronounced resentment at what the Shah perceived as American involvement in the Qarani affair was clearly evident, as was the 'shock and fright' caused by the brutal demise of the neighbouring monarchy in Iraq.¹³² Another key factor was a suspicion, prompted by the proposals brought forward by Anthony Eden for a neutral zone in Central Europe, that the Western powers might 'come to some kind of arrangement' with the Soviets and leave Iran 'out on a limb'; a possibility to which the Shah was highly sensitive.¹³³

The apparent legitimacy of these concerns however, failed to detract from the impression, gained by both the Soviets and the Americans as a result of the Shah's apparent decision to initiate negotiations with the Soviet Union, that blackmail was

129 FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol. 12: *Memorandum from the Joint Chiefs of Staff*, 9 June 1958, §d(3)

130 FO 371/140799: *Minister of Defence to Foreign Secretary*, 4 February 1959, §5

131 FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol. 12: *Secretary of State Dulles to the Department of State*, 25 January 1959.

132 FO 371/140799: *Denis Wright to Sir Geoffrey Harrison*, 30 January 1959; for the Iraqi coup, see FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol. 12: *National Intelligence Estimate*, 26 August 1958.

133 FO 371/140797: *Tehran to Foreign Office*, 2 February 1959, §1(d); FO 371/140799: *Copy of Minute by Mr. D.A.H. Wright to Sir Geoffrey Harrison*, 30 January 1959, §(e). For details of Eden's proposals, see *Time Magazine*: The Paris Conference – Neutral Zone, 30 December 1957.

being employed against them.¹³⁴ Commenting on the crisis, a former U.S. Ambassador to Iran (1946-1948), George Allen, told Secretary of State Foster Dulles that the Shah was ‘the best blackmailer he knew of.’¹³⁵ The British Ambassador similarly detected ‘an element of Dutch auction’ in the Shah's strategy.¹³⁶ The analysis in this chapter has suggested that this impression may well have been mistaken. While it was clear the Iranian government saw nothing fundamentally wrong with the familiar tactic of playing both sides – an assertion supported by the approval with which Shah viewed Nasser's apparent successes in this respect for Egypt – the decision to engage in dialogue with Moscow appeared to be motivated by a genuine concern at the perceived inadequacy of Western assurances set against what was felt to be both a present and immediate Soviet threat. In such a context, the opportunity presented by the sudden willingness of the USSR to negotiate was attractive. And from the Soviet point of view, as argued in the introduction to this chapter, neither the Shah's position as a ruling monarch nor his pro-Western orientation now presented insurmountable blocks to political dialogue, albeit the ideological prism through which senior officials tended to view Iran – as a tool of imperialism engaged in perpetuating the ‘shameful colonialist condition’ of the Middle East and aiding the West in its suppression of the region's ‘national-liberation movements’ – had changed little in private.¹³⁷

The conduct of the talks, and manner of their eventual breakdown, greatly added to the very same risk which the the negotiations were designed to mitigate. Indeed it appeared unlikely, concluded the British Embassy, that Krushchev would ‘ever forgive the Shah for what he regards as a deliberate act of duplicity.’¹³⁸ Responsibility for this unfavourable dénouement notwithstanding, the resultant recriminations were symptomatic of a broader underlying issue. As also argued in the previous chapter with respect to Mosaddeq's negotiations with Soviet representatives, the inability to reach agreement was principally caused by a fundamental incompatibility of objectives and an ingrained distrust between the two governments. This was evidenced, from the Iranian

134 FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol. 12: *Embassy in Tehran to the Department of State*, 30 January 1959: 'While we can not read Shah's mind, we believe the Shah's motive [...] was primarily blackmail.'

135 FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol. 12: *Account of the 394th Meeting of the NSC*, 22 January 1959.

136 FO 371/140797: *From Tehran to Foreign Office*, 2 February 1959, §3.

137 АВПРФ, ф.6, оп.15, п.12, д. № ИР-011, л.3-10: *Draft Note*, 6 January 1956

138 IPD, Vol. 14, 1954-1965, p644.

side, by insistence on the removal of provisions in the 1921 Treaty (which had furnished the legal basis for the Soviet invasion of Iran during World War II), and from the Russian side, by the strongly negative character of Moscow's response to the Iranian Foreign Minister's suggestion that 'friendship with the Soviet Union should not constitute a stumbling block to friendship with other governments.'¹³⁹ Though the case advanced by the Iranian side in relation to the 1921 Treaty was certainly not without legal merit, the fixation with this aspect of negotiations – one side insisting on the Treaty's relevance, the other on its inoperability – effectively hindered engagement with the Soviets government's principal aim, namely, to secure specific guarantees regarding the extent and character of U.S. military presence in Iran. And as the documentary evidence shows, by the point when the Soviet delegation had belatedly accepted that a *quid pro quo* in relation to the 1921 Treaty represented the only means through which to achieve their objective, the offer had already been rescinded.

The Shah's *volte face* was unlikely however, to have been solely due to the persuasive rhetoric of Western politicians or the deficiency of Soviet negotiators. An important clue is provided in the discrepancy between the U.S. Bilateral Pact in its draft form and final version. As records of telephone conversations between Eisenhower and J. Foster Dulles from mid-1958 show (that is, prior to the Non-Aggression Treaty negotiations), the President had been reluctant to permit any 'special arrangements' with Baghdad Pact member states that might exceed the terms of the so-called Mid East Resolution (also referred to as the 'Eisenhower Doctrine') of 1957.¹⁴⁰ Eisenhower specifically ruled out any treaty with Iran, believing that 'our Mid-East friends are currently tense and fearful [...] tending to make them more emotional than thoughtful'; and that the United States 'need not be in a hurry to exchange marriage vows.'¹⁴¹ The Bilateral Security Pact however, concluded between Iran and US in March 1959, amounted to precisely such an vow. Its key provision stated that: 'In the case of aggression against Iran, the Government of the United States of America [...] will take such appropriate action, including the use of armed forces, as may be mutually agreed upon [...] in order to

139 АБПФ, ф595-б, оп.3а, п.157, д.261, л.109: *Statement by Ali-Asghar Hekmat*, 16 February 1959.

140 FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol. 12: *Memorandum of Telephone Conversation*, 28 July 1958, n2.

141 FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol. 12: *Eisenhower to Dulles*, 27 July 1958.

assist the government of Iran at its request.’¹⁴² In effect, the Shah had obtained the assurance he had sought, namely, an explicit commitment to defend Iran in the event of an armed Soviet incursion. The U.S. Embassy in Iran had argued strongly against the move. The argument advanced by the Ambassador, Edward Wailes, was prescient:

‘Repeated experiences with [...] appeasement show that its adoption and execution would foreordain another, and probably more serious, crisis, within one year at most. Shah’s appetite for soldiers and military hardware is unrealistically unlimited [...] The Embassy believes that the primary dangers to Shah’s regime are internal, not external, and that useless military expenditures weaken rather than strengthen it.’¹⁴³

142 Ralph H. Magnus (ed.), *Documents on the Middle East* (Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1969), p84.

143 FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol. 12: *Embassy in Tehran to the Department of State*, 30 January 1959, §3

CHAPTER THREE | SOVIET-IRANIAN RELATIONS FROM 1960 TO 1971

‘As for our neighbour, the Soviet Union, we are ready to have friendly relations. It is necessary in fact to forget the past, and that is why we are ready to think of it no more and to base our relations on respect, friendship and good-neighbourliness. We have proved our goodwill in various ways.’

- MOHAMMAD REZA PAHLAVI, PRESS CONFERENCE, 26TH OF NOVEMBER 1960

‘There is apparently not a drop left in the jar of Mr. Amini's sense. The only thing coming from this jar is the stinking smell of decay, which has long poisoned the atmosphere of Soviet-Iranian relations. This is the usual process when an anti-popular government is in trouble: it always blames Moscow.’

- EDITORIAL IN COMMUNIST DAILY IZVESTIYA, 27TH OF JULY 1961

CHAPTER CONTENTS

- INTRODUCTION – A FRESH NADIR
- A NECESSARY THAW
- THE STATE VISIT OF PRESIDENT BREZHNEV TO IRAN
- SOVIET-IRANIAN ECONOMIC ENGAGEMENT AND THE ESFAHAN STEEL MILL
- 1966: THE CRISIS OVER SOVIET ARMS
- 1967: THE SOVIET-IRANIAN OIL AGREEMENT AND ITS IMPLICATIONS
- CONCLUSION

Introduction – A Fresh Nadir

As the proceeding chapter has argued, the immediate cause for the demise of the Non-Aggression Treaty negotiations of 1959 was at root one of the mutually incompatible assurances sought by the parties involved. Particularly anathema to the Soviet delegation was the Iranian side's insistence that any agreement reached should not ‘run counter’ to their obligations in relation to other governments; whereas, the possible implications of such commitment remained ill-defined.¹ More damagingly, the acrimonious unravelling of the talks yet further entrenched conviction on each side of the other's duplicity and insincerity, undermining any positive value the talks might have held. The Soviet leadership, it became progressively clear, viewed the outcome

¹ Архив Внешней Политики Российской Федерации (Russian State Archive for Foreign Affairs, hereafter АВПРФ), ф5956, оп.3а, п.157, д.261, л.109: *Statement by Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs*, 16 February 1959

with a keen sense of grievance. As Khrushchev wrote to the Shah, Moscow had ‘trusted Iran's word’ that the Bilateral Pact with the United States would not be signed:

‘This confidence was misplaced. Soviet-Iranian negotiations [were] ruptured not by the fault of the Soviet Government [...] the Iranian Government signed the military agreement with the United States, which was as a surprise and a provocation to the Soviet Union.’²

The verbal *démarche* delivered by the head of the Soviet delegation in advance of its abrupt departure from Tehran on the 11th of February 1959, published in *Pravda* two days later, was unprecedented in its detail: some four thousand words in Russian. Charging Iran with ‘cancelling out’ the trend toward improvement in relations, the Kremlin placed a particularly dark interpretation on the breakdown of negotiations:

‘The unfriendly conduct of the Shah-in-Shah's government bears an indisputable relation to their collusion with certain foreign powers, who envisage making use of Iranian territory as a springboard for aggression against the Soviet Union [...] Such collusion signifies nothing other than an about-face in the Iranian government's policy, leading Iran into the ranks of those who oppose the Soviet Union [...] no agreeable conclusion can follow from this.’³

As the recriminations mounted, reinforced by a particularly venomous press campaign in the Soviet media, the Iranian government felt compelled to act. In a private Aide-Mémoire to the Soviet Foreign Ministry at the end of April, the Iranian ambassador in Moscow delivered what appears to have been an appeal for calm:

‘The Shahinshah's Government does not wish to engage in rehearsing the various steps and background that culminated in [...] the Soviet delegation's visit

2 The National Archives (TNA): The Public Record Office (PRO): FO 371/149769: *From Tehran (Guy Millard) to Foreign Office, 27 September 1960*, summarising Khrushchev's recent letter to the Shah.

3 Text in *Pravda*, ‘On Russian-Iranian Relations’, 13 January 1959, p5. Use here of the word ‘springboard’ (*platzdarm*) is purposely intended to recall Article 6 from the Soviet-Iranian Treaty of 1921, which explicitly warns against the use of Iranian territory as a ‘base for military action’ against Russia. See: *League of Nations Treaty Series*, 1922, Vol. IX, No. 268, p403.

to Iran [...] All these events are now in the past and judgement of them belongs to history. If however the Government of the USSR – as it stated in its Aide Mémoire of the 28th of December 1958 – is really concerned [...] with the goal of preserving friendly relations between our two countries, and of working together with our Government, then it must be asked by what route the Soviet Government wishes to achieve this. Surely the route chosen by the Soviet Government [...] the unacceptable and unjust statements of senior government figures, or the unseemly broadcasts by Soviet radio stations [...] cannot be the way to attain its supposed objective.’⁴

When this attempt toward conciliation failed to produce any results however, the Iranian Government appeared to sanction stronger action. The Iranian media, monitored closely by the Soviet TASS agency in Tehran, struck back robustly against what it saw as the illicit propaganda published by the latter.⁵ In one instance, it was observed, the *Jahan* newspaper even called for Iranians working at the Soviet Embassy to be ‘seized and sent to the gallows.’ Worse, on the 9th of May 1959, an Iranian member of staff tasked with distributing the Soviet Embassy's *Axbar* bulletin was accosted by a policeman in the course of his duties and ‘hit in the face.’ Five days later, the same employee was arrested together with his chauffeur and allegedly pressured ‘to sign a statement confessing that they been ordered by top Embassy officials to deliver anti-government leaflets and publications.’ All this had happened, in the version of events presented personally by the Soviet Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs to Ambassador Abolhassan Mas’ud-Ansari, ‘with the full knowledge of the Iranian authorities’ who were attempting to create ‘intolerable conditions for the work of Embassy.’ In this connection, the note further alleged, repeated representations to Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs had failed to stem death threats ‘of clear inspiration’ to Embassy staff.⁶ Although the Russian Archives contain no record of any formal Iranian response to this unprecedented set of accusations, which were accompanied by a direct warning of a break in diplomatic relations, a note addressed two weeks later to the Head of the Soviet

4 ABПРФ, ф.94, оп.48, п.136, д.012, л.32: *Aide-mémoire*, 30 April 1959.

5 TASS, the *Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union*, was the USSR's centralised agency for monitoring, collation and distribution of local or international news. The Foreign Ministry was provided with a systematic and extensive series of relevant translations from the Iranian press by its bureau in Tehran.

6 ABПРФ, ф.94, оп.48, п.136, д.011 л.17-18: *Verbal Note*, 28 May 1959.

Foreign Ministry's Middle East Department by Ambassador Ansari provides an insight into the immense delicacy of the situation:

‘In relation to your conversation with me yesterday at the reception in the Kremlin regarding the arrest of two Soviet Embassy employees in Iran, I would ask you to re-check the report that you have received, because I have received confirmation yesterday both by telegraph and in writing of their release. It seems to me there may be a regrettable misunderstanding here? Please do let me know. If contrary to my expectations these two gentlemen remain under arrest, I will take the appropriate measures from my side.’⁷

Notwithstanding the resolution of this apparently grave diplomatic crisis, the underlying strain remained palpable. Fundamentally, as seen from Moscow and as the Soviet Ambassador Nikolai Pegov protested at an audience with incoming Iranian Prime Minister, Jafar Sharif-Emami, Iran's about-face in its dealings with the Russian delegation ‘constituted an affront to Soviet prestige.’⁸ A particular target of Soviet ire was Sharif-Emami's immediate predecessor, Manouchehr Eqbal, whom Radio Moscow held to be a ‘filthy spy of Western imperialism’, asserting that he had ‘personally torpedoed’ the negotiations.⁹ The latter charge was not, it must be noted, without justification. An analysis of Iranian Government opinion at the time of the negotiations, attributed to the Turkish Foreign Minister and based on first-hand meetings, clearly identifies that Eqbal was not in favour of rapprochement.¹⁰ Indeed, as Sharif-Emami acknowledged in a frank conversation with the British Counsellor in Tehran, the increase in Soviet ill-will was largely attributable to their delegation's ‘treatment’ in Iran, and in particular, to Eqbal having ‘gone out of his way to show his hostility to them.’¹¹ In point of fact, Eqbal's virulently anti-Soviet views were aired publicly in a speech he made on National Uprising Day in August 1960, shortly before his replacement as Prime Minister. A BBC News Monitoring report, preserved in the British archives, carries the following editorial note on the speech's contents:

7 ABПРФ, ф.94, оп.48, п.136, д.2, л.53: *Ansari to Pegov*, 13 June 1959.

8 FO 371/149769: *Tehran to Foreign Office*, 4 October 1960, §2.

9 FO 371/149769: *Tehran to Foreign Office*, 13 September, 1960.

10 FO 371/140797: *Ankara to Foreign Office*, 30 January 1959, §3.

11 FO 371/149769: *Tehran to Foreign Office*, 8 October 1960, §3.

‘Eqbal was heard to say that a Soviet leader received 20,000 tomans a month whereas a Soviet worker received only 250 tomans – so much for Soviet equality; that thousands of people were rotting in Soviet prisons; that Khrushchev was forgetting the forced labour camps when he said his labourers would only work for four hours a day in future; and that Khrushchev could not bear to see Iran prosperous. Apparently addressing the Russians, Eqbal said: You tell lies, you commit injustices, you are highwaymen and robbers.’¹²

Prime Minister Emami opted to set a rather different tone. Against what he characterised as the ‘unnecessarily belligerent’ attitude of the previous administration, he strove to restore a modicum of normality in relations.¹³ Emami's more accommodating attitude was witnessed, for instance, in the number of Iranian government officials attending the 1960 October Revolution celebrations held at the Soviet Embassy, in marked contrast to previous years.¹⁴ In effecting this change, the incoming Prime Minister undoubtedly sought to reflect wider public concerns. As one British official admitted, there existed ‘a very large body of opinion’ that considered Iran simply could not afford to be on poor terms with her significant northern neighbour.¹⁵ In military as well as domestic political terms, Iran was in a conspicuously weaker position than her Baghdad Pact neighbours and hence, as the Shah himself argued, an attractive target for Soviet propaganda.¹⁶

Insofar as military guarantees were concerned, the Shah was belatedly prepared to offer, in a letter to Khrushchev in August 1960, an assurance that Iran would not ‘permit missile bases of a Foreign Government to be established on Iranian soil.’ In adding a significant caveat however, namely, that the Iranian government nevertheless reserved the right to acquire weapons, including missiles, in the same manner as any country, the assurance did go far enough for Moscow.¹⁷ And in any event, the Soviet President's real concern, indicated in his eventual response, was not with missile bases *per se*, but rather

12 FO 371/149768: *Rizaiyeh Radio in Persian*, broadcast on 19 August 1960.

13 FO 371/149768: *Tehran to Foreign Office*, 9 September 1960, §3.

14 FO 371/149770: *Tehran to Foreign Office*, 10 November 1960, §2: ‘The Prime Minister, the Minister of Court, the Foreign Minister and several other members of the Cabinet, together with the President of the Senate and the speaker of the last Majles were all present and stayed for most of the reception.’

15 FO 371/149768: *Tehran to Foreign Office*, 2 August 1960, §7.

16 FO 371/149769: *Tehran to Foreign Office*, 24 September 1960.

17 FO 371/149768: *Iranian Offer of 'Assurances' to the USSR*, 12 August 1960.

what Khrushchev saw as the broader implications of the Bilateral Pact:

‘In this connection, I attach importance to the use of Iran's airspace by the U.S. Air Force, which exploits it for espionage flights [...] Attention is also drawn to the aerial manoeuvres of October 17, which took place under the aegis of the Bilateral Agreement, when aircraft operated with napalm arms and gave an exhibition of atomic bombing.’¹⁸

Yet if the military situation was far from satisfactory, there was evidence that Soviet leaders took consolation in the fragility of Iran's internal economic and political situation. The U.S. journalist Walter Lipmann, in his celebrated interview with Nikita Khrushchev for the *New York Herald Tribune* in April 1961, reported the Soviet President's frank appraisal of Iran's prospects:

‘He said that Iran has a very weak Communist Party but that nevertheless the misery of the masses and the corruption of the Government was surely producing a revolution. “You will assert”, he said, “that the Shah has been overthrown by Communists, and we shall be glad to have it thought in the world that all progressive people in Iran recognise we are the leaders of the progress of mankind.” [...] In his mind, Iran is the most immediate example of the inevitable moment in history in which he believes so completely.’¹⁹

It would appear that this, to say the least, unfavourable section of the interview was initially suppressed by the Iranian Foreign Ministry. When approached for an explanation by an Iranian Senator, one Foreign Ministry official allegedly responded that Khrushchev's remarks were ‘very bitter and repugnant to us and it was not in our interest that the thought of the people should be stirred up by them.’²⁰ The private effect

18 FO 371/149770: *Tehran to Foreign Office*, 10 November 1960 (the 17th of October was airforce day). Evidence that overflights of the Soviet Union operating from Iran were indeed happening is discernible in FO 371/149768: *Mr Guy Millard to Foreign Office*, 2 August 1960: ‘I think the omission [from the Shah's letter to Khrushchev] of [an] assurance about flights is a gain.’ (§5)

19 FO 371/157618: *Tehran to Foreign Office*, 27 April 1961: *Extract from New York Herald-Tribune, April 18, 1961: An Interview with M. Lipmann*. For the full interview text see: *Survival* (International Institute for Strategic Studies), Volume 3, Issue 4 (1961), pp154-158.

20 FO 371/157618: *Tehran to Foreign Office*, 1 May 1961.

of Khrushchev remarks, inevitably, was a further deterioration in relations, a situation that worsened yet further when Prime Minister Ali Amini came to power.²¹ Lacking a coherent political programme and indeed an elected Majlis, Amini sought to 'gain time' with an ambitious agenda for reform.²² In doing so, he earned himself the strident opposition of a still-potent political force in Iranian politics, the National Front, not least by having co-opted some of the latter's own ideas for reform.²³ At the same time, the Amini administration proved itself 'much less receptive than was its predecessor to Soviet enticements.'²⁴ As a result, Communist radio outlets began to actively incite revolt against the new Prime Minister, who was held to be a 'servant of the United States.'²⁵ In the most serious incident, it was alleged by the Iranian newspapers *Setareh-ye Iran* and *Ettela'at*, Moscow Radio made common cause with the National Front in advance of one particular demonstration (21st of July 1961) by calling upon 'the peasants from around Tehran and elsewhere in the provinces to go into the city to take part in the protests.'²⁶ The *Ettela'at* article also reported that the Soviet military attaché, Colonel Kouzmenko, was witnessed moving by car among the demonstrators.²⁷ The Soviet Ambassador, summoned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, explained somewhat improbably that the attaché 'merely happened to be there at the time', having been en route to his summer residence outside the capital.²⁸ The Soviet media on the other hand, responding to the accusations of interference, made little attempt to disguise their views:

'These broadcasts contained the truth about Iran, the truth about the pillaging of the Iranian people by the foreign predators who have a free hand with Amini's blessing. This is the same truth which is well known to the people of Iran and which the present rulers of Iran would like to keep hidden.'²⁹

21 FO 371/157618: *Tehran to Foreign Office*, 27 April 1961. A proposed 'good will' mission to Moscow, to have been headed by Sharif-Emami, was postponed indefinitely as a result of the Lipmann interview. See also article by *Time Magazine*, 'Iran: Time, Gentlemen, Please', 9 June 1961.

22 Iran Political Diaries (hereafter 'IPD'), 1954-1965: *Annual Review for 1961*, dated January 3, 1962

23 Foreign Relations of the United States (hereafter 'FRUS'), 1961-1963, Vol. XVII: *Memorandum From Robert W. Komer to President Kennedy*, 4 August 1961.

24 FRUS, 1961-1963, Vol. XVII: *Paper Prepared for the Iran Task Force* (undated, but prepared for meeting of the same held on 2 August 1961), §8.

25 *Ibid.*, under 'Political' sub-heading.

26 FO 371/157618: *From Tehran (Chancery) to Foreign Office*, dated July 26, 1961, §4

27 FO 371/157618: *From Tehran (Chancery) to Foreign Office*, dated July 26, 1961, §5

28 'Russia Accused of Meddling in Iran', *The Times*, July 24, 1961; FO 371/157618: *From Tehran (Sir Geoffrey Harrison) to Foreign Office*, 1 August 1961. The audience took place on the 23rd of July.

29 FO 371/157618, *BBC News Monitoring: 'Izvestia' on Iranian Anti-Soviet Provocation*, 27 July 1961.

The Foreign Ministry formally protested to the Soviet ambassador, in an audience reportedly lasting three hours, that such broadcasts were ‘incompatible with friendship.’³⁰ In an indication of the seriousness with which the episode was viewed, an editorial in *Ettela'at* took grave exception to what it saw as this ‘careful mincing of words’, accusing the Minister of ‘over-indulgence in diplomatic decorum’ and demanding that Soviet interference in Iran's internal affairs be referred to the United Nations.³¹ It was certainly true that the incident appeared to reflect a preference, from the viewpoint of Soviet policy makers, for offering moral support to dissident elements, irrespective of their ideological provenance and thereby apply pressure to the Shah's administration, at a time of severe economic strain, with the medium-term goal of undermining ties with the West and thereby restoring greater balance in relations with Moscow. Indeed, it would be hard to understate the disquiet with which the state of affairs was seen from both within Iran but also for U.S. politicians, whose alarm is recorded in a memorandum written for President Kennedy by Robert Komer – ‘Blowtorch Bob’ of Vietnam fame³² – a member of the National Security Council:

‘The gut problem is still political - how to keep in power a regime which still seems by far the best bet for achieving a controlled revolution in Iran [...] we are treading the thin edge of potential disaster for which Khrushchev sits patiently waiting [...] we must treat this as a crisis situation [...] desperate times call for desperate measures.’³³

This somewhat hawkish assessment notwithstanding, the present chapter will argue that, at a time of comparatively diminished Western attention to the Middle East – not least in the context of the Cuban Missile Crisis and the war in Vietnam – the Shah's regime ultimately opted to steer a more neutral course between the interests of the West and

30 FO 371/157618: *Tehran to Foreign Office*, 24 July 1961.

31 FO 371/157618: *Tehran to Foreign Office*, 26 July 1961, §5.

32 Komer joined the U.S. National Security Council following a fifteen-year career in the CIA and served on the U.S. National Security Council from 1961-1962. He later headed the notorious Phoenix counter-insurgency program in Vietnam (a targeted assassination programme directed a members of the NLF, or *Việt Cộng*.) Komer owed his nickname to Henry Cabot Lodge, the U.S. ambassador to South Vietnam, who was reported to have said 'that arguing with Mr. Komer was like having a flamethrower aimed at the seat of one's pants.' See: *Robert Komer, 78, Figure in Vietnam, Dies* obituary by Tim Weiner in the *New York Times*, April 2000.

33 FRUS, 1961–1963, Vol. 17: *Robert W. Komer to President Kennedy*, 4 August 1961.

those of Moscow, maintaining the political support of the former and achieving a significant improvement of relations with the latter. Thus and remarkably, against the singularly impropitious background outlined above, a constructive equilibrium was obtained in relations with the Soviet Union. Since the underlying convictions of the Iranian elite in respect of the USSR remained fundamentally unchanged however, (as did the Soviet leadership's suspicions of Iran) the balance achieved was a precarious and temporary one. And as the Shah continued to see matters, the pressure to his regime came not in fact from opposition groups *per se* but rather from 'the Communists, with [National Front] partisans and allies being largely [their] willing dupes.'³⁴ It was a conception that would have momentous consequences in the years ahead.

1961 - 1963: A Necessary Thaw

The 'desperate measures' proposed by Robert Komer, coupled to the U.S. decision to decisively back the Amini administration, led to a package of \$15 million dollars in budgetary assistance designed to stabilise its finances.³⁵ By the end of August 1961, the American Ambassador, Julius Holmes, felt able to speak in more positive terms:

'Barring some unforeseen development [...] I anticipate [Amini] remaining in office for a considerable period, providing that we continue the help we are giving him. Without this he has frankly said he could not have survived.'³⁶

The so-called 'Mosaddeq-ist' elements of the urban middle class, for their own part, continued to be hamstrung by their lack of unity and inability to agree upon a political programme beyond functioning as outlet for general discontent. Furthermore, these groups continued to be 'quietly but effectively repressed', as the chief of Iranian intelligence services, Hassan Pakravan, reassured Western diplomats: 'at least for the immediate future there is no reason to feel uneasy.'³⁷ The clandestine Soviet radio stations, on the other hand, continued to roundly denounce the 'disgraceful atrocities' visited upon National Front demonstrators by the security forces. Indeed, the July 1961

34 FRUS, 1961–1963, Vol. 17: *Embassy in Iran to the Department of State*, 6 June 1961.

35 FRUS, 1961–1963, Vol. 17: *Copy of Letter to the American Ambassador*, 11 August 1961.

36 FRUS, 1961–1963, Vol. 17: *Ambassador to Iran to the Acting Assistant Secretary of State for N. Eastern and S. Asian Affairs*, 27 August 1961.

37 FRUS, 1961–1963, Vol. 17: *Paper by Robert W. Komer*, 20 October 1962.

disturbances were only put down by what the British euphemistically characterised as ‘prompt and severe action.’³⁸ Moreover, to the extent that the ‘flood of hostile propaganda’ bore, as the British ambassador conceded, a direct relationship to the ‘brittleness of the internal situation’, it became increasingly clear that continued rule without a Majles and the Shah’s close personal association with the burgeoning reform programme held considerable perils.³⁹ But whereas Western representatives ‘spoke emphatically of ministerial responsibility and Shah’s need for protection from public criticism of the necessary but unpalatable acts of government’, the Shah took a sharply different view. Referring to the absence of ‘responsible’ political parties and Iran’s lack of ‘real’ parliamentary tradition, the consequence of free elections would be, he asserted, an ‘irresponsible Majlis composed of self-seeking politicians.’ The choice thus lay between the risks of democracy and ‘rule by decree without Parliament for two or three years while reforms went forward.’⁴⁰ While such a scenario was, as the British and American ambassadors candidly agreed, ‘preferable to another rigged election’, the Shah would not only bear the burden of unrest in the country but also be obliged to deal with ‘what most Iranians (including himself) feel is the less than satisfactory state of their country’s relations with both the USSR.’⁴¹

It was in the pressing context of a need for greater domestic stability, therefore, that a fresh rapprochement with the USSR was sought under Asadollah Alam, appointed as Prime Minister in July 1962. A key court confidante and firm advocate of improved relations with the Soviet Union, Alam took steps to address one a central point of tension between the two countries: he offered an unilateral commitment on foreign missile bases.⁴² The Soviets at first ‘balked’ then counter-proposed with a text that was, it would curiously appear, substantially similar to that rejected by the previous Iranian administration seven months earlier.⁴³ In both instances, and with significant implications for the wider Cold War, the Soviet side pushed for the inclusion of one

38 FO 371/157618, *BBC News Monitoring: Observer in Izvestia on Iranian Anti-Soviet Provocation*, 27 July 1961, p2; IPD, 1954-1965, *Annual Review for 1962*, 14 February 1963.

39 IPD, 1954-1965, *Annual Review for 1961 (Sir Geoffrey Harrison)*, 3 January 1962.

40 FRUS, 1961-1963, Vol. 17: *Embassy in Iran to the Department of State*, 31 October 1961.

41 FRUS, 1961-1963, Vol. 17: *Political Prospects for Iran*, 7 September 1962, §4.

42 FRUS, 1961-1963, Vol. 12: *Memorandum from Robert W. Komer of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs*, 14 September 1962.

43 The originally proposed Soviet text is in: FO371/164190: *Tehran to Foreign Office*, 9 February 1962.

specific clause; to the effect that, although foreign-operated missile bases would not be established on Iranian territory, Iran could reserve the right to acquire weapons *under its own control* on Iranian territory. Robert Komer of the National Security Council considered this ‘very interesting’:

‘Think of Cuban analogy. What if Sov[iet]s were able to say “we recognize right of a country on our border to have missiles under its own control, but US won't allow this right to Cuba.” [...] I'm glad Holmes talked [the] Iranians out of any such statement.’⁴⁴

The analogy was prescient, coming as it did shortly before the Cuban Missile Crisis. Seen from Moscow's point of view, assurances were felt necessary not only in respect of foreign-controlled missile bases but also against the prospect of ‘Iranian’ weapons systems that might be under American control in practical terms. The latter state of affairs was, it must be remembered, already a reality in neighbouring Turkey.⁴⁵ The key danger for the Iranian side therefore was that, if a clause explicitly describing Iran's right to possess weapons ‘under its own control and supervision’ were included in Alam's exchange of notes, the Soviets would be able to object to any equipment that required technical assistance from Western personnel, since ‘supervision’ was a term naturally open to a variety of interpretations.⁴⁶ The inclusion of such a clause would further, as the U.S. ambassador notably pointed out, preclude the deployment of nuclear warheads in Iran ‘should these ever be involved’ since such weapons would naturally remain in U.S. custody. The clause was thus omitted in the final text.⁴⁷ There can however be little doubt that, with the delivery of Alam's undertaking on missile bases, a rubicon had been crossed in terms of Soviet-Iranian relations. In finally meeting the implicit Soviet demand during the 1959 negotiations – a written assurance against the use of Iranian territory to militarily threaten the USSR's borders – the declaration acted

44 FRUS, 1961–1963, Vol. 12: *Memorandum*, 14 September 1962.

45 The official announcement of the Jupiter IRBM deployment in Turkey ran: ‘In addition to provision of the missiles themselves, the United States will extend training assistance to enable the Turkish armed forces to man and maintain the missile under the operational control of SACEUR [Supreme Allied Commander Europe – an American 4-star general.]’ Quoted in Nur Bilge Criss (1997): *Strategic nuclear missiles in Turkey: The Jupiter Affair, 1959–1963*, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 20:3, p112.

46 FRUS, 1961–1963, Vol. 12: *Memorandum*, 14 September 1962.

47 For the text of the declaration, delivered by Foreign Minister Abbas Aram to the Soviet Embassy on 15 September 1962, see: Department of State, Central Files, 788.56300/9-1562.

as a catalyst for renewed efforts to improve economic and political ties. It was a task lent further urgency by Iran's deteriorating political environment during the course of 1963.⁴⁸ And unlike in earlier years, the Kennedy administration was disinclined to act upon the Pentagon's clarion calls apropos the fragility of Iran's internal security, nor was the president in any mood to be pressurised by Iran's nascent detente with Moscow.⁴⁹ Approached by the Department of Defence regarding possible measures to ameliorate the situation, the President's reportedly responded "hell no."⁵⁰

1963: The State Visit of Brezhnev to Iran

President Kennedy was, in fact, planning a rapprochement of his own. His conciliatory speech of June 1963, calling for a 'fresh start' in relations with Moscow, and the subsequent nuclear test ban treaty – signed just over a month later in the Kremlin Grand Palace to the strains of Gershwin's 'Love walked in' – had further added to a growing sense of optimism among Soviet leaders.⁵¹ The apparently favourable turn in U.S.-Soviet relations, combined with the febrile Iranian political environment of 1963, presented a policy opportunity in Iran that was not lost on Moscow. And from the Iranian perspective too, the invitation extended to Leonid Brezhnev (then Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet but an increasingly obvious candidate as Khrushchev's successor) was no doubt partly motivated by the appreciation that such a move was not only unlikely to meet with American resistance, but also held out significant promise with respect to economic cooperation in areas of mutual interest. Thus, on the eve of Brezhnev's arrival in Tehran (16th of November 1963, precisely one

48 See Ali M. Ansari (2001) *The Myth of the White Revolution: Mohammad Reza Shah, 'Modernization' and the Consolidation of Power* in *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (Jul., 2001), p20. FRUS, 1961–1963, Vol. XVIII: *Telegram to the Embassy in Tehran*, 28 January 1963, n3. The June protests followed the arrest of Ayatollah Khomeini for speaking out against land reform and voting reforms allowing for the emancipation of woman.

49 Lyman Lemnitzer, the senior U.S. Army general ultimately responsible for American military assistance and operations in Iran at the time, reported in June 1963: 'In view of the mounting dissatisfaction among an increasing number of diverse and geographically dispersed elements in Iran, the current threat to internal security is greater than at any time since the Shah was forced to flee [...] in August 1953.' Lemnitzer recommended as countermeasures: (i) the supply of U.S. food aid to tribal areas; (ii) to 'expedite' police training in riot control; and (iii) 'special psychological operations assistance' by the U.S. Information Agency (i.e. a broadcast media campaign.) FRUS, 1961–1963, Vol. XVIII: *Memorandum from V. H. Krulak of the Office of the Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency and Special Activities of the Joint Chiefs of Staff*, 13 June 1963.

50 Quoted in Stephen McGlinchey (2012): *Building a Client State American Arms Policies Towards Iran, 1950-1963* in *Central European Journal of International and Security Studies*, Vol. 6, Issue 2, p40.

51 W. Taubman (2004): *Khrushchev: The Man and his Era*, p603-4

week before Kennedy's assassination) 'Radio Iran Courier' (*Peyk-e Iran*, broadcasting from East Germany) sought to underline the potential opportunities on offer:

'In recent months a favourable situation and atmosphere has been created for the expansion of relations and the establishment of Iran-Soviet good-neighbourly relations [...] the Iranian rulers should, instead of following their blind class prejudices, instead of carrying out the enslaving orders of their imperialist masters, make use of this favourable situation, which can provide very sincere aid with no strings attached.'⁵²

The willingness to adopt a more pragmatic approach toward Iran was duly reflected in Brezhnev's speech at a banquet at the Golestan palace, attended by the Shah and the heads of the Warsaw Pact missions. Drawing on the example of Soviet relations with Afghanistan, Brezhnev emphasised – in what must have appeared to Iranian leaders as a refreshing departure from Khrushchev's approach – that 'differing assessments of international life' no longer constituted 'an insurmountable obstacle to co-operation':

'Different social orders and ways of life exist in the USSR and Afghanistan. However, despite this relations between the Soviet Union and Afghanistan [are developing] very well. These relations are built [...] on the principles of peaceful coexistence of States with different social systems. It goes without saying that these principles may be fully applied in relations between all States with different social systems. This is our firm belief, and the general line of the foreign policy of the Soviet Union is based on it.'

In his reply, the Shah took up this theme and, mirroring Brezhnev's own words, sought to play down the significance of Cold War alignment, highlighting a reciprocal willingness on the part of Iran to pursue a more independent policy:

'[Our] slight difference in political systems and different approaches to one or other international problem need not be an obstacle to the establishment and

52 FO 371/170382: BBC News Monitoring report, *Radio Iran Courier in Persian*, 17 November 1963.

development of good neighbourly relations [...] when I say that it is in our interests and is our desire to live in good-neighbourliness with such a good neighbour as the Soviet Union, these words are the expression of our independent policy.’⁵³

Several days later, addressing a joint session of the Senate and Majlis, Brezhnev went further, sounding a conciliatory note on recent Soviet-Iranian history. In doing so he implicitly recognised that the impact of Soviet apologism for (and Khrushchev's actively unrepentant attitude toward) past Russian actions in Iran continued to cast a long shadow over Iranian government attitudes in relation to the Soviet Union.⁵⁴ Khrushchev's future successor, by contrast, took a different view:

‘I do not want to stir up the past or to recall temporary complications that there have been in relations between our countries. Water which has once left a stream will not return to it. I will only say that we in the Soviet Union have always been pleased when we have managed to remove these complications and to settle Soviet-Iranian relations in the normal way.’⁵⁵

Leonid Brezhnev's visit – as Moscow Radio was quick to point out – was strictly-speaking the first by a Soviet head of state to Iran in the history of relations between the two countries.⁵⁶ Furthermore, in an highly symbolic gesture, Brezhnev laid a wreath at the tomb of Reza Shah and observed a minute's silence – a point of protocol that Soviet Ambassador, Anatoly Lavrent'yev, had studiously avoided ten years earlier.⁵⁷

53 FO 371/170382: *BBC News Monitoring Report, Speeches given by Brezhnev*, 18 November 1963, (c).

54 In an exchange of letters between Khrushchev and the Shah in 1960, for example, Khrushchev expressed himself 'deeply surprised' by the Shah's reference to Soviet actions during WWII, which he insisted had been 'a military necessity [...] based on Treaty rights [...] designed to prevent Iranian territory from being used by German forces for the invasion of the Soviet Union. It had not been a hostile action.' FO 371/149769: *Tehran to Foreign Office*, 27 September 1960.

55 FO 371/170382: *BBC News Monitoring Report: Brezhnev's Speech to the Senate and Majlis, Tehran home service 05.50 GMT*, 21 November 1963, received in archives 27 November 1963, at Tab (b).

56 FO 371/170382: *BBC News Monitoring Report: Text of Commentary by Shams al-Din Rahimov: Moscow [Radio] in Persian at 18.30 GMT*, 16 November 1963, Tab (d).

57 FO 371/170382: *BBC News Monitoring report: Arrival and Engagements (Abstract of reports), Moscow [Radio] in Russian, 12.30GMT*, 17 November 1963. For Lavrent'yev's refusal to lay a wreath see АВПРФ, оп.65, п.403, д. №. 033–И Р , л . 134: *Record of Conversation with Head of the Protocolary Department at the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, 1 August 1953.

This careful exercise in diplomatic decorum and wilful amnesia was matched, however, by significant progress on practical matters of mutual interest. In point of fact, the first sixteen months of Alam's premiership leading up to the visit had seen the signing of a number of significant Irano-Soviet agreements: to finally delimit their mutual border, codify transit arrangements and enhance trade.⁵⁸ The most substantive of these (signed in Tehran on the 27th of July 1963) – was an economic and technical agreement, providing for the joint construction of a hydro-electric dam across the Aras river on Iran's north-eastern border with Russia. As a result of Brezhnev's visit, Moscow further undertook to build grain silos, revive Iran's fishing industry in the Caspian by dredging the port of Bandar-e Pahlavi (modern day Bandar-e Anzali), and to extend a credit of US \$35 million in economic assistance.⁵⁹ The overall value of the package was valued by internal Iranian government correspondence at some US\$250 million dollars.⁶⁰ In a pattern that was to become a significant point of benefit in subsequent years, repayment of the credit was achieved by means of a barter arrangement for Iranian cotton and dried fruit.⁶¹ Indeed, the arguments in favour of enhanced trade with the Soviet Union were clear in the sense that, whereas the Soviet Union manufactured a wide variety of goods required by Iran (namely, industrial and agricultural equipment), Iran was a key producer of raw materials required by the USSR's more industrialised economy. Under the initial trade quotas agreed by Alam in 1962, for example, Iran was to export cotton, wool, hides, rice and lead-zinc ores in return for Soviet machinery, cars, tractors, sugar and chemicals. To facilitate this exchange, the transit agreement provided for a 25% discount on rail freight charges in the respective territories.⁶² And as Brezhnev accurately reminded the Senate and Majlis:

58 The initial agreement on trade quotas was concluded shortly after Alam took up office, in August 1962; instruments of ratification of the Transit Agreement were exchanged in Moscow on November 5, 1962; the Frontier Control Agreement was ratified in Tehran on November 5, 1962 (FCO 371/175718: *Tehran to Foreign Office, 'Irano-Soviet Relations: 1962-1964*, 2 September 1964; IPD, 1954-1965, *Annual Review for 1962*, 14 February 1963.) Brezhnev referred effusively to the border agreement in a speech during his visit, leading a British Foreign Office official to note (correctly) in the margin of the document: 'It took 6 years.' The fact, however, only served to emphasise the positive change in Soviet-Iranian relations that had taken place under Alam.

59 FO 371/170382: *Tehran to Foreign Office: President Brezhnev's Visit to Iran*, 30 November 1963.

60 *Chap dar Irân beh Revâyat-e SÂVÂK, Ketab-e Panjom, Ravâbet-e Irân va Shuravi*: Document 300N/526, dated 22 Aban 1342 / 13 November 1963.

61 FO 371/170382: *BBC News Monitoring Report: Radio Iran Courier*, 17 November 1963. Tab (a).

62 FO 371/175718: *Tehran to Foreign Office: Irano-Soviet Relations', 1962-1964*, 2 September 1964, §2.

‘During the first years after the great October Socialist Revolution, when the economy of our country was incomparably less developed, our countries engaged in extensive and all-round trade with profit to both sides. Now that the Soviet Union has become one of the greatest industrial Powers in the world the opportunities for mutually profitable economic co-operation [...] are, of course, many times greater.’

So eager was Brezhnev in his speech to emphasise Soviet goodwill toward Iran, that he even took the opportunity to announce an ambitious plan to divert Siberian rivers (which ordinarily flow into the Arctic) to the Volga basin and hence to the Caspian in order to arrest its falling water levels.⁶³ The Shah himself, in an audience with the British Ambassador after the visit, confessed that Brezhnev ‘could not have been nicer’ and moreover had made no attempt to coax Iran away from her Western allies; he felt the Russians now ‘recognised where Iran stood and were prepared to accept her as she was.’⁶⁴ Equally remarkable however, was the manner of the public reception that greeted Brezhnev’s arrival in Tehran, recorded in a field report by the SAVAK:

‘The welcome accorded to Brezhnev by the people has been unprecedented among all official visits by heads of state to date. Even during the visits of Queen Elizabeth and Eisenhower the crowds of well-wishers did not reach a fifteenth [sic] of that gathered along the Shahanshah and Brezhnev’s route [through Tehran] yesterday. As reported by special agents who were themselves standing among the crowd at various points along the route, ninety percent of the crowd had come of their own free will to watch the motorcade and Brezhnev’s carriage pass by. The majority of shop owners along the route, unlike in the past, even allowed people into their premises so they could get higher than street level. [...] Ordinary people and members of the lower and middle classes showed extraordinary emotion and [...] an unfortunate rumour has arisen among the people that, because Brezhnev lent out of the carriage to answer well-wishers’ questions while the Shahanshah sat demurely in the back, that the

63 FO 371/170382: *BBC News Monitoring report: Brezhnev's Speech to the Senate and Majlis, Tehran home service 05.50 GMT, 21.11.63.*

64 FO 371/170382: *Tehran to Foreign Office, 30 November 1963: p4.*

Shahanshah was saddened by the manner of the people's reception of Brezhnev since the king and queen's own parades have never previously been greeted with such a degree of enthusiasm.⁶⁵

No doubt partly due to the success of Brezhnev's visit (and the political advantage which the document also alleges that the Tudeh Party attempted to derive from it) the Shah remained intensely wary of the Soviet Union. Nor indeed had the success of Brezhnev's visit diminished Soviet mistrust of the Shah. Communist radio stations in particular continued to be highly sensitive and critical of Western influence in Iran. In one revealing instance, Radio Iran Courier responded robustly to a speech made by the American ambassador, Julius Holmes, 'carefully-timed' to coincide with Brezhnev's arrival, wherein he had pledged American support against any 'malign system imposed by force on others.'⁶⁶ Protesting this 'ugly political gesture', the station charged the Iranian government with serving colonial interests by providing the U.S. with an 'arena to stage their propaganda.'⁶⁷ The fact and timing of Julius Holmes' speech, however, appeared more indicative of the unease with which the developing Soviet-Iranian rapprochement was viewed in the West. 'It would be unwise', reported the British ambassador, 'to assume from the Shah's and his government's reactions to Brezhnev's visit that their loyalties can be taken any more for granted today than in the past.' The Shah, he added as if by way of explanation, 'is a man of moods and suspicions.'⁶⁸

1964-1965: Soviet-Iranian Economic Engagement and the Esfahan Steel Mill

There can be little doubt that the conclusion of Khrushchev's chairmanship of the Soviet Communist Party opened up new possibilities in Soviet-Iranian relations. Notwithstanding the latter's confident prediction in 1961 that Iran was to experience an 'inevitable moment in history', the Shah's regime continued to stubbornly defy his expectations. Against the background of a serious and widening Sino-Soviet split at the time, the leadership in Moscow had actively sought to cultivate a longer-term, and less

65 *Chap dar Irân beh Revâyat-e SÂVÂK, Ketab-e Panjom, Ravâbet-e Irân va Shuravi*: Document 300-N/550, dated 27 Aban 1342 / 18 November 1963.

66 FO 371/170382: *Tehran to Foreign Office*, 30 November 1963, p5

67 FO 371/170382: *BBC News Monitoring report, Radio Iran Courier*, 17 November 1963.

68 FO 371/170382: *From Tehran (Sir Denis Wright) to Foreign Office, 'President Brezhnev's Visit to Iran'* (EP103138/27), dated November 30, 1963, p6

overtly dogmatic position with respect to the Middle East; a policy shift exemplified by the clear shift in rhetoric accompanying Brezhnev's visit.⁶⁹ Indeed, the Soviet economic delegation that arrived in September 1965 to discuss plans for construction of a steel mill was described by the Shah as 'manifesting an almost unbelievable cordiality.'⁷⁰ This shift was justified in ideological terms by the need to develop the Iranian proletariat to a material level where it would become amenable to socialism, hence the significant increase in economic aid and, in stark contrast to previous years, even mild support for the Shah's reform programme.⁷¹ Cynicism on the part of the West at this more nuanced approach was expressed by the British ambassador, Sir Denis Wright, who characterised Soviet intentions in the following terms:

'They may well have estimated that the Shah's current programme of reform carries the seeds of its own destruction in the opposition and dissension it creates at various levels of Persian society and in the disillusionment that may ensue [...] from administrative shortcomings. Accordingly, it may not be too fanciful to suggest that the Russians see it to be in their own interest overtly to encourage the Iranian Government to pursue their reform programme without the distraction of Soviet hostility.'

The overall objective was thus, in Wright's analysis, to manoeuvre the Soviet Union into a position where it might be able to 'step in to help those who stand ready to exploit the resultant confusion' of any future revolution.⁷² The ambassador's analysis would appear to be at least partly corroborated by a Tudeh document obtained by the CIA in 1965, in which Soviet policy objectives were described as 'cultivating the land' in advance of the Shah's inevitable demise and the imposition of socialism.⁷³ Indeed, as early as 1959, a Tudeh informer warned his SAVAK handler that the Soviets were 'even willing to

69 Oles M. Smolanski (1991), *The USSR and Iraq: The Soviet Quest for Influence*, p14; for details on the Sino-Soviet split see W. Taubman (2003): *Khrushchev: The Man and his Era*, p605-6

70 FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. 22: *Embassy in Iran to the Department of State*, 9 September 1965.

71 FO 248/1620: *Tehran to Foreign Office*, 2 November 1966, §11.

72 FCO 371/175718: *Irano-Soviet Relations: 1962-1964*, 2 September 1964, §4.

73 FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. 22: *Telegram from the Embassy in Iran to the Department of State*, §8(2), quoting document CAS NIT-6894 (no date given.) Despite a Freedom of Information request and subsequent formal appeal to the CIA, the author has regrettably been unable to obtain this document.

suspend their threatening propaganda to dupe the western world.’⁷⁴ Such private justifications were no doubt partly intended to assuage the concerns of Tudeh party rank and file (both within Iran itself, and its no less vocal contingent in exile), whose plenum of January 1965 the same year continued to stress the necessity ‘to fight for the overthrow of the existing anti-national and anti-democratic regime.’⁷⁵ Just as the Soviet Embassy had sought to distance itself from Tudeh's more extremist elements in 1949 however, the official line taken with the party inside Iran continued to evidence Moscow's preference for tempering the party's ambitions in the service of broader political and economic goals.

Iran's improving ties with her significant northern neighbour were not, however, merely a logical corollary of greater restraint in Soviet policy nor product of economic good sense. The shift also reflected increasingly strained relations with the United States. Particularly detrimental in this respect was ongoing litigation in the U.S. surrounding the Gudarzian affair.⁷⁶ The latter, an Armenian-Iranian residing in the United States, had fraudulently contrived to obtain control of bank accounts belonging to the Shah's brother and sister, apparently through the use of forged documents.⁷⁷ The affair had, as the State Department privately acknowledged and evidently without exaggeration, ‘incensed the Shah more than any previous incident in U.S.-Iranian relations during the past ten years.’⁷⁸ The constitutional inability of the State Department to intervene in the legal proceedings against Gudarzian proved immensely damaging given that it coincided with the ‘passage’ through Iran's parliament of a Bill extending immunities and privileges to American military personnel in the country.⁷⁹ By the candid admission of one American official, the Shah had ‘rammed [the Bill] through the Majles, at our insistence and with considerable risk to his domestic position.’ Washington should, he predicted, ‘expect difficulties in relations so long as the Shah [feels] he has been obliging our requests whereas we do not lift a finger to keep his family from being

74 *Chap dar Irân beh Rivâyat-e SAVAK, Vol. 3: Ankabut-e Sorkh*: Document 5463-3-2, dated 7 Esfand 1337 / 26 February 1959.

75 See *Political Parties of Foreign Countries: A Guide* (Moscow, Political Press Publishers, 1967), p133.

76 FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. 22, *Memorandum for Secretary of State*, 19 December 1964

77 FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. 22: *Embassy in Iran to the Department of State*, 5 November 1964; see also, *Memorandum for President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs*, 18 February 1965.

78 FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. 22: *Memorandum for Secretary of State*, 19 December 1964, § 2.

79 FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. 22: *Embassy in Iran to the Department of State*, 4 November 1964.

harassed unjustly in our courts.’⁸⁰ The episode thus, in unwelcome conjunction with existing grievances over the U.S. Government's perceived failure to ‘understand’ Iran's military needs, conspired to place the Shah in a ‘blue mood’, leading Armin Meyers, the new U.S. Ambassador in Tehran to warn his superiors of the need to furnish ‘evidence [that] Washington still loves him.’⁸¹

Given such a context, the more cooperative shift in Soviet policy both enabled a rapid succession of developments. At the diplomatic level, the Soviet Legation in Tehran opened an economic bureau to assist in the implementation of technical aid.⁸² No less significantly, the Irano-Soviet Cultural Society in Tehran resumed its provision of Russian lessons, with an allocation of scholarships for Iranians to study in the USSR.⁸³ These moves toward positive engagement culminated in the Shah's state visit to the Soviet Union in June 1965, the first for nine years, which was marked, as the Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Aram pointedly informed the American Ambassador in Tehran following his return, by the ‘unusual warmth’ of the reception; a recollection borne out by first-hand accounts.⁸⁴ The most notable aspect of the visit was the renewal of a previous Soviet offer to build a steel mill in Iran (SAVAK documents reveal that the proposal was raised as early as September 1960), and which in turn led to a Soviet delegation being invited to Iran to examine the possibility.⁸⁵ An outline agreement was swiftly concluded on the 5th of October 1965, whereby the Soviet side undertook to construct a steel foundry in exchange for the construction of a natural gas pipeline to deliver Iranian gas to the southern Soviet Republics.⁸⁶ The arrangement undoubtedly represented an improvement on the terms of earlier discussions, which had evidently

80 FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. 22: *Memorandum for Secretary of State*, 19 December 1964, § 2.

81 FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. 22: *Embassy in Iran to the Department of State*, 25 November, 1965 (1830Z).

82 FCO 371/175718: *Irano-Soviet Relations: 1962-1964*, 2 September 1964.

83 *Ibid.*, p5 (chronology for January 1964.)

84 FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. 22, *Embassy in Iran to the Department of State*, 4 July 1965. Chronology on p5. For a light-hearted eyewitness account by an Iranian diplomat, see Farhad Sepahbody: *Accompanying the Shah on a Visit to Communist Russia*, 25 April 2003 (<http://iranian.com/History/2003/April/FS/p.html>, accessed 21.02.13.)

85 FO 371/180792: *Soviet Aid to Iran*, 11 August 1965; *Chap dar Iran dar Revayat-e Asnad-e SAVAK*, Vol. 3., p360. The proposed collaboration was also raised during president Brezhnev's visit in 1963. FO 371/170382: *Sir Denis Wright to Foreign Office*, 30 November 1963.

86 FO 371/180792, *Soviet Aid to Iran*, 11 August 1965, §1. The pipeline was completed in October 1970, see FCO 17/1513, *Iran: Annual Review for 1970*, 5 January 1971, p7. The full agreement, signed in Moscow three months later in January 1966, is reproduced in *International Legal Materials*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (May, 1966), pp419-424.

envisaged an initial capital outlay by the Soviet side, followed by Iranian repayment at 2.5% interest.⁸⁷ Indeed, as the Shah argued (and previously interested Western consortia reluctantly conceded), the Soviet offer amounted to a ‘virtual gift’ since the steel mill would be paid for in natural gas that was otherwise wasted through flaring.⁸⁸ And in broader terms, there continued to be a strong economic argument for an indigenous Iranian steel-making facility. It was estimated at the time that Iran imported half a million tonnes of steel annually, a figure with the potential to rise markedly.⁸⁹ Notwithstanding the strength of the economic case however, the project was not without its challenges. As one Soviet Embassy official in Iran at the time later admitted, the mill itself was inconveniently positioned in relation to the raw materials its operation required. Thus ‘securing the smooth operation of the facility’ entailed the separate construction of iron ore and coal mines in Vaqf and Kerman, respectively 500km and 800km away from Esfahan, and in order to bridge this substantial logistical gap, over 1,000km of new railtrack needed to be laid.⁹⁰

The merits or demerits of the plant’s construction were, however, largely beside the point. For Moscow, the Esfahan project presented a golden opportunity to crown the growing rapprochement with a flagship collaboration, and at the same time, showcase the practical advantages of engagement with the USSR to the wider region. And for the Shah and indeed many Iranians, the steel mill was a less a question of economic necessity than a point of national pride; a tangible symbol of Iran’s modernisation programme and a specific aspiration that it was felt the West had consistently frustrated.⁹¹ Comments in this regard made by Prime Minister Hoveyda to an American business representative in Tehran, and recorded in a telegram apparently intercepted by SAVAK, were highly revealing of the transition in official thinking:

87 FO 371/149769, *From Tehran (Sir Guy Millard) to Foreign Office*, 4 October 1960, §6.

88 FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. 22: *Embassy in Iran to the Department of State*, 25 November 1965 (1550Z), §4. See also in this respect FO 371/180792, *Soviet Aid to Iran*, 11 August 1965, §5.

89 FO 371/180792, *Soviet Aid to Iran*, dated August 11, 1965, §3.

90 Krakhmalov, S. (2000): *Memoirs of a Military Attaché*, p186 (Russian source.)

91 FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. 22: *Embassy in Iran to the Department of State*, 25 November 1965 (1550Z), §4. See also FO371/180792, *Soviet Aid to Iran*, 11 August 1965, §2

‘It is as if the Americans have lost their famed dynamism. We wanted to work together with them on building the steel mill [...] but they were neglectful of this matter and the Russians took the opportunity. We have achieved more with the Soviets in the course of a few months than we have with the Americans in eight years. [...] Our foreign policy has changed, yes, but it is now more stable. We have a common border of four thousand kilometres with the Russians and it is only natural that we should have a mutually beneficial relationship with them. [...] The Soviet offer attracted our attention in two respects: speed of implementation and ease of repayment. The Americans didn’t attach much importance to this subject, which they ought to have in a country like Iran that is developing rapidly.’⁹²

Thus, the firm emphasis placed by the Iranian side on the need for accelerated economic development - a concept with which Soviet industrialists would have been comfortably familiar - explained the lack of success on the part of the Americans in forestalling the project’s realisation. In this respect it was clear that Hoveyda’s bullish attitude very much reflected the official line:

‘Now that Soviets have made attractive offer, the Iranians are somewhat irritated by Western admonitions regarding the dangers of dealing with the Soviets. Shah points out to virtually every listener that students in U.S. demonstrate against him, students trained in England almost assassinated him this spring, so what worse can happen if he sends technicians to be trained in Russia in connection with steel mill?’⁹³

And indeed, as Abbas Aram's personal secretary Farhad Sepahbodi subsequently

92 *Chap dar Irân dar Revâyat-e Asnâd-e SÂVÂK, Vol. 5: Ravâbet-e Irân va Shuravi*. Document 702/1241, dated 5 Bahman 1344 / 25 January 1966.

93 *Ibid.*, Document 100: *Telegram from the Embassy in Iran to the Department of State*, 13 September 1965. See also IPD, 1954-1965: *Annual Review for 1965*, 5 January 1965 (chronology at p8.)

recalled, the Soviet side had jokingly argued the very same point during the bilateral talks in Moscow:

““Why don't you send more Iranian students to our country? They'll just study harder. You have forty thousand in America and they return as nasty leftist troublemakers. Instead, send them to us and we guarantee you that they will return to Iran as good capitalists.””⁹⁴

1966: The Crisis over Soviet Arms

The increasingly confident character of Iran's economic engagement with the USSR was undoubtedly a function of the Shah's developing ‘irritation’ with the West and reflected, in turn, the mounting domestic political pressures for Iran to adopt a more neutralist position in its foreign policy.⁹⁵ The spectre of Soviet infiltration, however, continued to prove itself an effective means to extract concessions from Washington. Nowhere was this procedure more bluntly evidenced than in the Shah's decision to consider the purchase of arms from the Soviet Union, a development that first came to light in July 1966.⁹⁶ When the American Ambassador, Armin Meyer, first raised the subject, the Shah began by emphasising that his approach to the Soviets was not intended as a threat but rather that the motivation was one of ‘basic economics.’ If Western oil consortia failed to increase their off-take of Iranian crude to a level that met with what the Shah saw as the country’s requirements, then Iran would have ‘no choice but to look to sources of supply other than traditional suppliers.’⁹⁷ In plainer language, the asking price for U.S. arms was felt to be too high: a curious reversal of the situation faced by Prime Minister Hakimi in 1947 when he informed the Majles that the decision to purchase American arms owed to the unattractiveness of the Soviet offer.⁹⁸

The high cost of U.S. military equipment, and the stiff terms on which that equipment

94 F. Sepahbodi, *Accompanying the Shah on a Visit to Communist Russia*, *The Iranian*, 25 April 2003

95 FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. 22: *Embassy in Iran to the Department of State*, 7 July 1966, §14

96 FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. 22: *Embassy in Iran to the Department of State*, 7 July 1966, §2

97 FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. 22: *Embassy in Iran to the Department of State*, 7 July 1966, §4

98 See Chapter One, n69.

was provided, owed partly to congressional restrictions on the military assistance budget, and partly to the size of the government's existing credit to Iran, amounting to some US\$400 million at the time. The most prominent difficulty faced by U.S. policy makers however, was a reluctance (or practical inability) to offer purchase credits at lower than the market rate of 5.5%.⁹⁹ By contrast, the Soviets were offering terms of 2.5% over ten years, with repayment in natural gas, 'exploitation of which has long been futilely asked by the Iranians of [the Western-run] oil consortium.'¹⁰⁰ The Iranian complaint centred particularly on the proposed cost of F-4 fighter jets and Hawk anti-aircraft missiles, which the Shah felt were necessary to defend Iran's gulf oil installations against threats from Iraq and Egypt, both of which possessed Soviet SAMs (surface-to-air missiles) and MiG fighter jets.¹⁰¹ Although conceding that the vulnerability identified by the Shah was indeed genuine, the challenge for the public U.S. position, as an article in the *New York Times* spelled out at the time, was that a concessionary arms deal to Iran would be hard to justify in the context of the Vietnam war. It was felt that those allies who could afford arms ought pay for them. Iran, with its US\$600 million annual oil revenue, fell into this category.¹⁰² And given the sensitivities of the time, the Shah's approach to the Soviet Union also had a broader (and negative) psychological impact on American officials. The U.S. Ambassador, for example, reacted strongly to the Shah's suggestion that the American people could be 'persuaded of the wisdom' of Iran purchasing non-sensitive arms from the Soviet Union: 'I said this is simply not realistic. On contrary, the fact that he has been such an admired and responsible friend is likely to cause the added bitterness of jilted lover.'¹⁰³

It was, indeed, a high-risk strategy. Responding to the crisis the U.S. Secretary of Defence, Robert McNamara, asserted – and not for the first time in U.S.-Iranian relations – that it 'would not be proper for the United States to be blackmailed.' The Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, even went so far as to assert that he 'would not object to

99 FRUS, 1964-1968: Vol. 22.: *Memorandum for President Johnson*, 21 May 1966.

100 *Ibid.*: *Embassy in Iran to Department of State*, 13 September 1965, §3A; 3 July 1966, §7 and §9; 29 April 1967, §1G.

101 *Ibid.*: *Embassy in Tehran to the Department of State*, 28 November 1965, §6.

102 FO 248/1632: *Arms for Iran from the USSR*, (*New York Times*), 19 December 1966.

103 FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. 22: *Embassy in Iran to the Department of State*, 11 July 1966, §11.

a little loosening' in U.S. ties to the Shah.¹⁰⁴ The Joint Chiefs of Staff, as in previous years, took a firmly opposite view, considering it essential to maintain U.S. military primacy in Iran and exert every effort to prevent the Soviets 'gaining a foothold.'¹⁰⁵ This would entail, in effect, capitulation to the Shah's demands.¹⁰⁶ The final position reached, at the decision of President Johnson, was somewhere in between these two extremes. The Shah's demands would be partially met by a scaling down of costs for the Hawk missiles and accelerated delivery schedule on the F-4 fighter jets.¹⁰⁷ The Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence for International Affairs, Townsend Hoopes, was dispatched to Tehran to deliver this news and to reiterate, not for the last time, the limitations on military assistance imposed by Congress.¹⁰⁸ The Shah's strategy had thus scored a qualified success, but only narrowly. Once again, an unhelpful impression of bluff had been formed vis-à-vis the Shah's approach to Moscow. This was lent credence by the observation that, just as the potential admission of Soviet military personnel to Iran was unnerving for the U.S. government, so too, it was suspected, would the prospect of selling sensitive equipment to a country with a heavy U.S. military presence be unpalatable to the Soviet government.¹⁰⁹ Accordingly, while the development was initially viewed with some alarm, the relatively measured U.S. reaction, in contrast to previous episodes, reflected an increasing acceptance of Iran's engagement with the Soviet Union, a relationship that was now seen as something to be managed rather than actively prevented. In this vein, one of President Johnson's advisors offered the following postmortem on the arms crisis:

'While the Shah will increasingly move toward a position more independent of us, we have managed to keep him from jumping too quickly this time. Some independence is to be expected and is healthy. We just want to be sure he doesn't

104 *Ibid.*: *Memorandum for President Johnson*, 29 July 1966, §3 and Footnote 3.

105 *Ibid.*, *Memorandum for Secretary of Defence McNamara*, 1 August 1966, §3(a).

106 FRUS 1964-1968, Vol. 22: *Embassy in Iran to the Department of State*, 25 July 1966. The Shah's demands may be summarised as follows: (i) a mark down of the F-4 jets; (ii) significant reduction in the price tag for a battalion of Hawk anti-aircraft missiles; (iii) expedited delivery of both the latter.

107 *Ibid.*: *Memorandum for Secretary of State and Secretary of Defence*, 2 August 1966.

108 The U.S. position in this respect had been laid out clearly by Lyndon Johnson in his letter to the Shah regarding the proposed Soviet arms deal on (See *ibid.*, *Letter to the Shah of Iran*, 20 July 1966.)

109 *Ibid.*: *Letter to Vice President Humphrey*, 27 July 1966. For the existence of CIA installations in Iran, see *ibid.*, *Memorandum*, 23 August 1967.

go too far too fast and get us in hot water. For the moment, we've succeeded.'¹¹⁰

1967: The Soviet-Iranian Oil Agreement

In the event, the Iranian government did decide to purchase military supplies from the Soviet Union, albeit equipment that did not fall into the category of what Prime Minister Hoveyda termed 'prestige products.'¹¹¹ In other words, the purchase of MiG jets and surface-to-air missiles was ruled out, however, orders were placed for items such as armoured personnel carriers, anti-aircraft guns, jeeps and trucks.¹¹² Although the Americans expressed concern at the magnitude of the transaction, the decision, Hoveyda sought to reassure the American Ambassador in January 1967, was 'heavily conditioned' by the ease of repayment.¹¹³ As in the case of the Esfahan steel mill, this was to be almost entirely in natural gas, delivered through the pipeline then under construction. That Iran should opt to finance purchases from the Soviet Union through this route made natural economic sense; it not only, in effect, deferred payment for goods and services by three years but preserved valuable foreign exchange by engaging Russia in a 'triangular' trade relationship, whereby Iran was, in practice, materially or financially compensated for hydrocarbon transit sales to Eastern Europe.¹¹⁴

Significantly, the Shah began to emphasise a secondary strategic benefit from trading with the Soviet Union in this manner. There existed, it was thought, 'some advantage' in keeping the U.S.S.R. partially dependent on Iran for a commodity like gas.¹¹⁵ Whereas Iran, owing to the expense involved, was not in a position to finance pipelines to Europe, the integrity of the Soviet Union as a whole depended in no small measure on Moscow's ability to diversify its existing hydrocarbon resources in order to maintain hegemony over, and ensure the dependency of, its European satellites.¹¹⁶ Minutes of a meeting in June 1969, for example, between the British Embassy's Commercial

110 *Ibid.*: Memorandum for President Johnson, 31 August 1966.

111 *Ibid.*: Embassy in Iran to the Department of State, 24 January 1967, §5

112 *Ibid.*: n1, referencing Telegram 2820 from Tehran, 10 January 1967.

113 *Ibid.*: Embassy in Iran to the Department of State, 24 January 1967.

114 *Ibid.*, §5: the Soviet side had initially requested a 30% down payment, a proposal which Hoveyda 'flatly rejected' on the basis that sufficient gas would be available after the pipeline's completion. For the 'triangular' trade thesis, see FO 17/382: Sir Denis Wright to Foreign Office, 18 May 1967, §3(c).

115 FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. 22: Embassy in Iran to the Department of State, 15 February 1967, §8.

116 FCO 28/639: Visits of Presidents of Hungary and Czechoslovakia, 9 December 1969, §4.

Counsellor and a representative of the Iranian Mining & Engineering Group (the National Iranian Oil Company's contracted pipeline constructor) sheds further light on the arguments made in Iranian government circles, prominent among which were that: (i) it was thought the Baku oil fields were dying and that within four years the Soviet Union would become a net importer of oil; and (ii) the Esfahan steel-for-gas deal 'would give the Russians – feeling increasingly menaced by China – an additional vested interest in Iranian stability.' Thus, for the Iranian leadership, the transfer of Iranian gas to the Caucasus represented more than simply a means of payment; it was a political tool, by which the Soviet leadership could be the more deeply invested in Iran's stability and economic progress.¹¹⁷ As a separate British dispatch also reported:

'He [the Shah] maintains that, although his mistrust of Soviet intentions and objectives has not diminished [...] agreements of this kind in fact give Iran some diplomatic leverage with the Soviet Union since the latter will come to rely for the performance of their own economic goals on the supplies of Iranian gas.'¹¹⁸

It was undoubtedly this line of thinking that underpinned a subsequent, and in political terms, remarkable development in Irano-Soviet relations. The Joint Communiqué on Economic Cooperation, signed in Tehran on the 15th of April 1967, went much further than any previous agreement of its kind.¹¹⁹ It not only affirmed the desire of both sides to substantially increase the delivery of gas to Soviet Azerbaijan by doubling the pipeline's capacity, but also announced that the National Iranian Oil Company would 'cooperate' with the U.S.S.R. to explore and exploit oil in Iran's 'free zones', by which was meant those areas recently relinquished by, or outwith the concessionary remit of, the Western-based consortia.¹²⁰ The agreement, if translated into practice, would have constituted not only an appreciable enhancement of the Soviet Union's economic

117 FO 17/862, Folios 1 (§2) & 2 (§2(c)), dated respectively 22 May 1969 and 23 June 1969.

118 FCO 17/382, Folio 39: *Iran / Soviet Union Economic Agreement*, 25 April 1967, §5.

119 FCO 17/351: *Annual Report on Iran [for 1967]*, 3 January 1968. See chronology for April on p11.

120 *Ibid.*, §1 (ii) and (iii). The Consortium was a group of some sixteen British, American and French oil companies formed under General Zahedi's government (20 September 1954) following the conclusion of a compensation agreement (5 August 1954) with the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (See FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. 10, pp1046-1051.) The Consortium secured a concession of an hundred thousand square miles over a period of twenty-five years, with a requirement that the area of operations be halved by the end of the the period, hence why some areas around Kirmanshah and Shiraz had recently been relinquished. See discussion in Z. Mikdashi (1966), *A Financial Analysis of Middle Eastern Oil Concessions, 1901-1965*, p299-303.

foothold in Iran but also, as seen through Western eyes, the realisation of Russia's 'historic dream' sought since the Majles threw out Prime Minister Qavam's proposed oil agreement in October 1947.¹²¹ The British were particularly concerned that areas in Southern Iran and the Gulf, including areas recently relinquished by the Consortium would, *ipso facto*, fall into the category of free zones; an impression greatly strengthened by a remark attributed to the Minister of Court, Asadollah Alam, to the effect that while the Soviet Union's initial concessionary area was likely to be in the Caspian basin, exploitation in the south of Iran 'might come later.'¹²²

Several weeks later, the Shah confirmed in an audience with the British ambassador that he had indeed decided to allow the Russians to prospect around Shiraz and Kirmanshah, and deliberately so, since 'he did not want it thought' that the Russians could only operate in northern Iran: dividing Iran into spheres of influence as had occurred in 1907 was, he said, 'unconscionable.'¹²³ The Shah proceeded to show considerable irritation when the ambassador suggested he consider the 'possible effects' on the market of Iran selling oil northwards:

'Would the Western oil companies [he asked] undertake not to increase their off-take of oil from Libya, Saudi Arabia or Kuwait? If they were prepared to give a guarantee of favourable treatment for Iranian oil he would be ready not to sell Iranian to the USSR.'¹²⁴

This revealing statement provided further illustration of how the Shah continued to view relations with the Soviet Union. Namely, that economic cooperation with the Soviet Union could be selectively and expeditiously deployed in order to jolt the West, and in particular its vested business interests, from what some Iranian officials saw, not without reason, as their inadequate attention to Iran's needs. It would be a mistake, however, to assume that such a strategy was universally popular. In point of fact, the

121 IPD, Vol. XIII, *Intelligence Summary No. 43* (21 - 28 October 1947); For the Shah's own exposition of Russia's 'historic dream', see: FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. 22, *Embassy in Tehran to the Department of State*, 23 May 1967, §11.

122 FCO 17/382: *Iran / Soviet Union Economic Agreement*, dated April 25, 1967, §4.

123 FCO 17/382: *Sir Denis Wright to Foreign Office*, 18 May 1967, §2; FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. 22: *Embassy in Iran to the Department of State*, 23 May 1967, §11.

124 FCO 17/382, *Sir Denis Wright to Foreign Office*, 18 May 1967, §3.

proposed oil deal was later subjected to a number of caveats. Dr. Sari Asfia, head of the Plan Organisation and close confidant of prime minister Hoveyda, privately let it be known that, should the Russians wish to increase their off-take of Iranian natural gas as envisaged in the protocol, or uplift oil, they would have to finance the additional pipe involved.¹²⁵ And in a separate conversation, Dr. Manouchehr Eqbal, the former prime minister (1957-1960) and at the time a senior executive in the N.I.O.C, disavowed any involvement in the oil agreement, stressing that he was out of the country at the time it was signed. Furthermore, he intimated, concessionary areas in southern Iran were 'unlikely' to be granted unless the Soviet side would be prepared to operate on a reciprocal basis, that is, Iranian companies could explore for oil in the southern Soviet states should they so wish.¹²⁶ Eqbal was, as evidenced in the introduction to this chapter, well-known for his anti-Soviet views. Finally, in August, confirmation came from the Prime Minister himself that, since the Consortium had now 'promised' to increase its oil off-take from Iran, there was 'far less urgency' in obtaining increased revenues from alternative sources.¹²⁷

By placing the episode in its wider regional context, the underlying dynamic behind and motivation for exploring oil arrangements with the U.S.S.R. becomes more obvious. Notwithstanding what the Shah regarded as discriminatory Western arrangements with, for example, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, the Iranian government had enjoyed a substantial revenue increase as a consequence of the recent Arab-Israeli war and the ensuing Arab oil boycott, and that therefore, as the British ambassador put it, 'trouble developed.'¹²⁸ In effect, the unprecedented oil windfall of 1966 had demonstrated, to the Iranian government's mind, what the Consortium were actually capable of delivering. By extension, and with important consequences that will be explored in the following chapter, this observation had the effect of raising future expectations on which ambitious plans for economic growth were then based; whereas, the Consortium sought to argue that oil off-take at 1966 levels was neither practical politically (that is, in

125 FCO 17/382: *Iran / Soviet Union Economic Agreement*, 25 April 1967, §3; for a biography of Dr.

Asfia see entry in A. Milani (2008): *Eminent Persians: 1941-1979*, Vol. 2, pp 92-95.

126 FO 17/382, Folio 43: *Irano-Soviet Relations*, 27 May 1967, §3.

127 FCO 17/382: *Visit of Iranian Prime Minister to Moscow*, 10 August 1967, §8.

128 FCO 17/351: *Annual Report on Iran*, 3 January 1968, §14.

relation to their wider regional commitments) nor sustainable economically.¹²⁹ There also existed a clear desire, witnessed in negotiations with the Consortium at the end of 1966, for Iran to 'get into the business' of marketing oil not under the Consortium's direct control in order to diversify the government's revenue streams.¹³⁰ Economic engagement with Moscow, therefore, presented an attractive means both of reducing dependency on the Consortium, to whose production quotas fluctuations the Iranian economy was indeed vulnerable, and at the same time, apply targeted pressure to the West.¹³¹ In this connection, and following a now familiar theme, as an Iranian government report leaked to the U.S. Embassy allegedly concluded, 'the only way to get one's way with the Americans is to be difficult.'¹³²

Conclusion

The archival evidence, particularly from the Soviet side, leaves little doubt as to the grave damage inflicted on relations by the abortive 'Friendship and Non-aggression Pact' negotiations of 1959. One notable passage, from an official statement made to the Iranian foreign minister by the Soviet delegation before their departure from Tehran, and subsequently published in the Communist daily *Pravda*, was particularly mordant:

'We now see that, on the part of the Shah-In-Shah's government, all this was nothing more than an ill-intentioned game calculated, above all, to mislead public opinion in Iran [...] True, in the course of both official and unofficial meetings, and even today, we have listened to no few verbal assurances of friendship and good intentions, spoon-fed to us by individuals responsible for Iran's foreign policy in relation to the USSR. But as a wise Persian adage says, talking about halva doesn't sweeten one's mouth.'¹³³

Given the level of animosity thus aroused, it might be expected that Communist elements would have sought to take advantage of Iran's deteriorating internal situation

129 FCO 17/351: *Annual Report on Iran*, 3 January 1968.

130 FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. 22: *Briefing Memorandum for Acting Secretary of State*, 25 October 1966.

131 See Shah's comments in *ibid.*: *Embassy in Iran to the Department of State*, 2 November 1966, § 11.

132 *Ibid.*, *Embassy in Iran to the Department of State*, 2 March 1966, §1. 'It is clear that there is now concerted campaign to increase oil off-take and obtain wanted military equipment from West, coupled with threat to reorient trade patterns if traditional orientation does not yield desired results.'

133 (*Ba halva halva goftan dar dahan shirin nemishevad.*) *Pravda*, 13.2.1959, p5.

during the early 1960s. And indeed, this chapter has presented evidence that they endeavoured to do so. 1961 in particular saw Soviet broadcast hostility (both clandestine and official) at a peak, with stations such as *Radio Iran Courier* (broadcasting from Eastern Europe) and the *National Voice of Iran* (broadcasting from Soviet Azerbaijan) capitalising the considerable unrest in Iran, and seeking to emphasise exploitation of Iranians by “foreign monopoly capital.”¹³⁴ Yet as Iranian politics progressed fitfully through the Shah's ‘directed revolution’, Soviet policy makers found themselves presented in many respects with the same dilemma facing American interests: a lack of viable alternatives.¹³⁵ The Shah's position was still widely viewed as precarious. In March 1962 the American Ambassador, Julius Holmes even went as far as to inform his superiors that, through continued support of the monarchy, the U.S. was ‘obliged to lean on a weak reed.’¹³⁶ The awkward fact remained however, that no ‘moderate’ elements existed to bridge what Holmes diplomatically identified as the ‘gap between the neo-Mosaddeqists of the urban middle class and more traditional [...] elements of society’:

‘The former elements, while highly vocal and critical, possess no unity among themselves. They are not so strong, nor are they likely [...] to able to take power here without important military collaboration. The only singleness of purpose they have is to take over. They cannot agree on a political programme.’¹³⁷

The resultant Soviet policy in Iran, as argued above and indeed mirrored elsewhere in the Middle East, appears to have been a greater acceptance of its ‘national-bourgeois’ regime, a shift which entailed the gradual replacement of overt propaganda activities with more restrained criticism of ‘reactionary’ elements and a parallel effort to expand the USSR's foothold in the region through the promotion of generous and ‘disinterested’ economic assistance. The latter element was naturally juxtaposed to the inherent ‘dangers’ of Western aid, which was presented in contrast to its Soviet equivalent as having innumerable strings attached.¹³⁸ The role of the Tudeh party became

134 FO 248/1620: *Soviet Policy in Iran* (Paper by British Embassy, Tehran), 2 November 1966, p1, §2.

135 FRUS, 1961-1963, Vol. 22: *Memorandum*, 13 June 1963, §4(a).

136 FRUS, 1961-1963, Vol. 22: *Embassy in Iran to the Department of State*, 7 March 1962

137 FRUS, 1961-1963, Vol. 22: *Ambassador in Iran to Assistant Secretary of State*, 27 August 1961.

138 FO 248/1620: *Soviet Policy in Iran*, 2 November 1966, p1, §5. As the paper highlights, this

substantially less relevant in furthering Moscow's objectives on the ground. This arose partly in consequence of the party's effective decimation during the late 1950s, partly due to inevitable disillusionment among the surviving rank and file in the face of the new softening in Soviet policy toward the Shah, and partly due to the National Front having emerged, despite its lack of internal coherence, as a more potent oppositionary force.¹³⁹ In point of fact, Prime Minister Hoveyda, briefing the British Counsellor in Tehran regarding his official visit to Moscow in 1967, remarkably claimed the Russians had disavowed any connection with the Tudeh in Iran and even asserted that 'for all they cared he could arrest and imprison all of them.'¹⁴⁰

As this chapter has sought to demonstrate, the Soviet 'softening' was reciprocated from the Iranian side. In this regard, the clear fissures that emerged in the relationship with the U.S. may be said to have both presaged and promoted greater cooperation with the Soviet Union, extending even to the limited purchase of military equipment. Privately, American officials were willing to admit that Soviet policy had become more 'sophisticated' and that it might indeed be possible, as the State Department's Country Director for the Soviet Union privately admitted to a British official in Washington, for Iran 'to have better relations with the Soviet Union without being swallowed the bear.'¹⁴¹ Practical evidence for this shift was widely evidenced by the plethora of barter agreements entered into by Iran with Soviet and Eastern Bloc nations during the period.¹⁴² Although burgeoning ties with the USSR, as the machinations surrounding the purchase of Soviet arms in 1966 bore witness, continued to represent an effective bargaining chip with the West, there was growing evidence of its wider pragmatic potential, particularly in respect of Iran's industrialisation drive; a point consistently emphasised in the rhetoric of Soviet leaders.¹⁴³ The shift in policy saw its physical realisation through some significant joint projects: the Aryamehr steel mill at Esfahan; a machine tools manufacturing plant in Arak; the trans-Iranian trunk gas pipeline from

constituted a significant shift from earlier Soviet attitudes, since during the 1950s their policy to Iran was largely 'conditioned by the belief that the Shah [...] was likely to disappear, and it therefore aimed to ensure the regime that followed him was sympathetic to the Communist line.' (*Ibid.*, §2.)

139 *Ibid.*, §11; E. Abrahamian (1999), *Tortured confessions* p92.

140 FCO 17/382: *Visit of Iranian Prime Minister to Moscow*, 10 August 1967, §3.

141 FO 371/186675: *British Embassy in Washington to Foreign Office*, 8 September 1966, §3.

142 See for instance FO 17/382: *Supplemental Trade Agreement*, 19 January 1967.

143 See in this connection Podgorny's speech in FCO 17/1219, *Irano-Soviet Joint Communiqué* (BBC New Monitoring translation from *Echo of Iran*, Vol. XVIII, No. 67, 31 March 1970, p3, paragraph 3.)

Khuzestan to Astara; a hydro-electrical dam on the Aras river bordering Soviet Azerbaijan. The importance attached to these achievements found clear expression in the Shah's speech to the Soviet Premier, Dmitri Kosygin, during his 1968 visit to Iran:

'The independent policy of Iran and the interests of the Iranian nation necessitate, to the greatest extent possible, the improvement and expansion of industry and agriculture. We are grateful for the many instances of your earnest collaboration with us. At this very moment, several huge projects are in the process of being realised through by our working together. We have been able to demonstrate collaboration in areas of common interest; [...] your assistance in relation to the steel mill has been a particular cause for our happiness and gratitude. From our side we will endeavour as far as we can to assist your economy in cases where the need may arise, for instance with the construction of the important Trans-Iranian Gas Trunkline. Such mutual cooperation can not only continue but even expand daily.'¹⁴⁴

Notwithstanding the stability achieved, as it were 'publicly', in relations during the period under review in this chapter, the Shah's private views on the Soviet Union remained far from positive.¹⁴⁵ While such expressions of scepticism were undoubtedly useful in reassuring the Shah's Western allies that Iran's fundamental orientation remained unchanged, it was nevertheless clear that the Shah's underlying belief in the 'long range' objectives of the Soviet Union remained unshaken, with the objectives themselves being consistent with those of Tsarist times.¹⁴⁶ Supporting this view were, as illustrated in this chapter, the undiminished clandestine propaganda broadcasts from the Caucasus and elsewhere. Tellingly in this connection, when asked by the British ambassador why he had not raised this issue with the Soviet Premier during his 1968 visit, the Shah responded that it would be no bad thing if the broadcasts continued since

144 *Maju 'eh-ye ta 'lifât, nutqhâ, payâmhâ, musâhâbehâ va bayânât-e A'lâhhazrat-e Humâyun-e Mohammad Rezâ Shâh Pahlavi*, Nashriyeh-ye Kitâbkhâneh-ye Pahlavi, 1347 / 1968, p5018.

145 See also in this respect the Shah's concerns about the extent of communist infiltration in neighbouring Afghanistan. FCO 17/184, Folio 7, *Afghanistan and the R.C.D.*, 25 February 1968, §3.

146 FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. 22: *Telegram to the Department of State*, 14 March 1968, §4. '[The Shah said] the Soviet system has failed in competition with West and world war is out of question for them, so they trying to dominate the Mid-east and its oil as a means for destroying Western industry.'

‘although they attacked him personally, they also disclosed the Communists' real intentions toward Iran.’¹⁴⁷ And as the American Embassy reported, ‘a number of dossiers concerning suspicious activities on the part of the Soviets are piled up on the desk of the Shah.’¹⁴⁸ With regard to Soviet leadership itself, the Shah's views were also sharply unflattering. In a remark that held important implications for the years ahead, at his first meeting with President Nixon's National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger, the Shah delivered his verdict on Soviet President Nikolai Podgorny, by ‘pointing to his head and shaking it, indicating that he wasn't very smart.’¹⁴⁹ And Western observers, for their own part, remained reasonably confident that the Iranian government would not ‘inject any particular warmth into the Irano-Soviet marriage of convenience.’¹⁵⁰

147 FCO 17/383: *Mr. Kosygin's Visit to Iran*, 2 May 1968, §11.

148 FRUS, 1964–1968, Vol. 22: *Ambassador in Iran to Secretary of State*, 22 October 1966, § 6.

149 FRUS, 1969–1976, Vol. E4: *Memorandum of Conversation*, 11 April 1969, p1.

150 FCO 17/1219: *Sir Denis Wright to Foreign Office*, 9 April 1970.

CHAPTER 4: SOVIET-IRANIAN RELATIONS FROM 1972 TO 1979

‘At the conclusion of the discussion, President Nixon agreed to furnish Iran with laser bombs, F-14s and F-15s. He asked the Shah to understand the purpose of American policy. “Protect me”, he said. “Don't look at détente as something that weakens you but as a way for the U.S. to gain influence.”’¹

- MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION, SA'DABAD PALACE, TEHRAN, 31 MAY 1972

‘Détente does not and cannot possibly mean the freezing of the objective process of historical development in the region. Détente does not represent an insurance policy for rotten régimes [...] nor does it obviate the necessity for social changes. This is a problem for the people themselves.’²

- RADIO PEACE AND PROGRESS (MOSCOW), 25 JUNE 1976

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

A NARRATIVE OF SOVIET ENCIRCLEMENT: THE SHAH'S REGIONAL OUTLOOK
IRAN, IRAQ AND THE KURDISH REBELLION ‘TRUMP CARD’

CONCERN AND CONCESSION: THE CURIOUS CASE OF LIEUTENANT ZOSIMOV

RETICENCE AND REALISATION: SOVIET POLICY TOWARDS IRAN IN 1978

CONCLUSION

Introduction

As the preceding chapter has sought to demonstrate, Soviet-Iranian relations emerged from the turbulent 1960s in a substantially less fraught position than they had entered them, albeit that relationship could not be characterised as particularly cordial. The conclusion of Khrushchev presidency and clarity on the subject of missile bases, combined with expanding Soviet economic engagement in Iran all combined to effect a degree of normalisation in relations. To deploy a Soviet diplomatic euphemism of the

1 Foreign Relations of the United States (hereafter ‘FRUS’), 1969-1976, Vol. E-4, *Memorandum of Conversation*, 31 May 1972.

2 Quoted in Shahram Chubin, *Soviet Policy Towards Iran and the Gulf*, Adelphi Papers No. 157, Spring 1980, p47 (note 32). As the station's editor himself confirmed, broadcasts broadly echoed the Kremlin's line. See discussion in Open Society Archive: *Radio Free Liberty Background Reports*, HU OSA 300-8-3, dated 8 July 1970.

time, there now existed an ‘atmosphere of sincerity and mutual understanding.’³ British cynicism regarding the Irano-Soviet ‘marriage of convenience’ notwithstanding, the evidence suggests that the Shah and his government, while suspicion of the U.S.S.R. and fear of Communist subversion remained deeply ingrained, were willing to pursue a more balanced relationship with Moscow on its own merits.⁴ Indeed, as the Shah had pointedly remarked to the American ambassador during the arms crisis of 1966, he hoped that negotiations with Washington on that subject would not undergo the same ‘agonising wranglings’ as in the case of what President Eisenhower had, he alleged, sneeringly dubbed Iran's insistence on having a ‘damn steel mill.’⁵ At the same time, the improvement in relations brought greater possibilities for applying pressure to Western allies in areas of perceived deficiency.

The favourable turn in relations was further cemented in October 1970 by the inauguration of the Iranian Gas Trunkline from Khuzestan in Iran to Hajikabul in Soviet Azerbaijan, boosting Iran’s natural gas exports by some 60% in its first year of operation.⁶ The barter trade credits accruing to Iran as a result, with the attendant increase in both Soviet bloc delegations visiting Iran and agreements signed, led the British ambassador in his annual report for the same year to speak of a ‘growing economic dependence’ between Iran and the USSR.⁷ Although the latter statement may appear somewhat incongruent in the context of the West's substantially increased presence in Iran during the mid-1970s, the extent of bilateral investment, both political and economic, was indeed significant. The Soviet commercial share of Iranian military purchases in the five years 1967 to 1971, for example, reached 26%; more than all

3 ‘Искренность и полное взаимопонимание.’ The phrase typically indicates that the two sides do not see entirely eye-to-eye but are willing to overlook differences in the cause of pragmatism. For a example see: *Foreign Relations of the Soviet Union in 1966, Soviet-Afghan Communiqué*, p48.

4 See e.g. the Shah's letter to President Johnson in FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. 22, *Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Iran*, 7 March 1966. The letter makes clear that the attractive interest rates offered by the Soviets was a significant factor in the Shah's decision to purchase ground forces equipment from the U.S.S.R.

5 FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. E-4, *Memorandum of Conversation*, 14 March 1966, §7. The Shah alleged that the Americans had attempted to ‘sabotage’ an earlier British bid (FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. 22, *Telegram from the Embassy in Iran*, 31 August 1965, §9c). The British record however, reveals that the bid was economically unattractive; Iran was requested to front two-thirds of the required capital. The National Archives (TNA): The Public Record Office (PRO), FO 371/180800, ‘*Soviet Aid to Iran*’ (draft submission, October 1965), §2 & 3.

6 FCO 17/1513: *Iran – Annual Review for 1970*, 5 January 1971, chronology on p7; Shahram Chubin, *The Foreign Relations of Iran: a developing state in a zone of great-power conflict*, p80.

7 FCO 17/1513: *Iran – Annual Review for 1970*, 5 January 1971, §13.

European countries combined, Britain included.⁸ Examination of published Soviet economic data suggests that, between 1965 and 1969, non-military trade between Iran and the U.S.S.R. expanded nearly sevenfold.⁹ The Shah himself, in a 1972 speech to Soviet leaders, enthusiastically acknowledged a further fivefold increase.¹⁰ Earlier in the same year, a detailed CIA report estimated Iran to be in receipt of Russian economic credits and grants totalling US\$521 million.¹¹ From a political perspective too, a willingness to reciprocate the Soviet policy of ‘good neighbourliness’ served not only as a counterweight to the ambitions of Moscow's Arab clients, who the Shah increasingly saw as a threat to his hegemonic aspirations in the Gulf, but also to undercut the domestic criticisms of the Left.¹²

In light of the positive state of affairs described above, it has not unreasonably been claimed that the momentous turning points for Iran of 1971 (the Tehran Oil Agreement¹³) and 1973 (the Yom Kippur War and the Oil Embargo) heralded, in their turn, significant changes in the dynamics of the Soviet-Iranian relationship.¹⁴ The effect of the former, arguably the more important of the two, was to establish the Shah in a position of ‘moral leadership’ in the region and allow for a 30% increase in Iran's military budget for the Iranian year 1350 (commencing March 1971.) Thus, Shahram Chubin, in his 1980 monograph on Soviet-Iranian relations, identifies the period from 1974 to 1979 as a ‘reversion’ to the hostile position seen in the early 1960s, arguing that ‘Iran's broadly activist [regional] policy [...] together with growing Soviet involvement in Asia, resulted in increased rivalry and disagreement on a widening number of

8 Britain's share during the same period was 8%. See *CIA: Recent Trends in Iranian Arms Procurement*, dated May 1972 (FRUS 1969-1976, Vol. E-4, Document 181). The analysis presents its figures in terms of total arms *deliveries* (Table 1, p3), however, by excluding from these calculations American weaponry and training provided *gratis* as part of the Military Assistance Programme (Table 2, p4), Moscow's *commercial* stake appears to be substantial.

9 Внешняя Торговля СССР, Статистический Обзор за 1966 год (Foreign Trade of the USSR, Statistical Review for 1966), p251-3, and *ibid.* series for 1969, p224-6. During 1965, the USSR exported 13.8 million roubles' worth of goods to Iran and imported 16.3 million; in 1969, exports were 145.4 million roubles and imports, 50.8 million.

10 *Maju'eh-ye ta'lifât, nuṭqâ, payâmhâ, musâhâbehâ va bayânât-e A'lâhhazrat-e Homâyun-e Mohammad Rezâ Shâh Pahlavi (The Collected Writings, Speeches, Letters, Interviews and Statements of His Royal Highness Mohammad Reza Pahlavi)*, p6060.

11 See Department of State: Intelligence and Research, *Communist States and Developing Countries: Aid and Trade in 1972* (Washington DC, August 1973.)

12 FRUS 1969-1976, Vol. E-4: *National Intelligence Estimate 34-69*, 10 January 1969, §23.

13 For an overview, see FCO 17/1716, *Iran in 1971*, 20 December 1971, §5.

14 ‘Price Quadruples for Iranian Crude Oil at Auction’, *New York Times*, 12 December 1973.

issues.’¹⁵ Foremost among those tensions was, unsurprisingly, Iran's extensive military purchases from the USA, viewed from Moscow as the centrepiece in an American neoimperialist strategy:

‘The question of America's 'modernisation' of Iran's armed forces cannot be viewed in isolation from the wider imperialist policy being pursued by Washington in the Persian gulf. At a press conference in Tehran, Henry Kissinger openly announced that Iran's military purchases “coincide with our aims.” He underlined the “stabilising role” played by Iran in America's Near and Middle East policy, thereby giving to understand that Washington has assigned Iran a special role as standard-bearer for American strategy in these regions.’¹⁶

The Soviet viewpoint was not without its justification. It is indisputably the case that, with British withdrawal from her Gulf protectorates, America under the Nixon Doctrine indeed looked to Iran as successor in the role of regional security guarantor; the Shah's eyes were, as a British report noted (perhaps somewhat piqued at their diminishing influence) ‘lifted to higher horizons.’¹⁷ Yet it would also be erroneous to paint Iran as the passive tool of America's regional interests. As argued in the introductory chapter to this thesis, fundamental to the Iranian *rayonnement*, and by extension its military pretensions, was a profound desire to restore Iran's past glories and dignity against a uncomfortably proximate history of humiliation at the hands of foreign powers, most prominently, by the Soviet Union during World War II and the former imperialist powers more broadly.¹⁸ Indeed, as the British Ambassador Peter Ramsbotham trenchantly observed in his celebrated 1971 dispatch on the 2,500th Anniversary Celebrations for the Iranian monarchy held at Persepolis that year, although the glories of ancient Iran were a central source of inspiration to Iranian nationalists of the time, ‘the events of the immediate past have greater psychological significance.’¹⁹ Building

15 Shahram Chubin, *Soviet Policy Towards Iran and the Gulf*, Adelphi Papers No. 157 (1980), p20.

16 *Izvestiya*, 26 August 1976: 'A Dangerous Course' (A. Leonidov)

17 FCO 17/1716, *Iran in 1971* (Annual Report) 20 December 1971, §3

18 The description (by British Ambassador Peter Ramsbotham, FCO 8/2261, dated 31 December 1973, §11) of the Shah's foreign policy as a '*rayonnement* on the Gaulist model' is apt given the Shah's deep personal admiration for de Gaulle. Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, *Réponse à l'Histoire*, Éditions Albin Michel (Paris, 1979), p180

19 FCO 17/1517, *The Dynasty Blessed by the Gods*, dated 11 October 1971, §2.

on this point, it will argued here that the foremost element in the Shah's strategic outlook during the period continued to be an overriding preoccupation with perceived Soviet ambitions in the Gulf, which, however tentative, chaotic, or unsuccessful they may have been in reality, were viewed as unambiguous evidence of a communist grand design. In the words of one Iranian Foreign Minister of the period, Abbas-Ali Khalatbari, the Shah viewed Soviet activity in the Middle East as 'an extended hand with fingers probing' Iran's immediate neighbours.²⁰

Notwithstanding the seemingly inflexible nature of such suspicions however, this chapter will contend, and in contrast to Chubin's own schema, that the turbulent events of the 1970s did not, despite often quite convincing appearances to the contrary, represent a marked deterioration in Soviet-Iranian relations. Rather, the relationship was paradoxically strengthened. The specific contention will be that, by drawing a clear and firm distinction between rhetorical and practical interaction (a methodological necessity noted at the outset of this thesis), a surprisingly pragmatic picture emerges, on both sides. In particular, it is suggested that the ostensible Soviet narrative of 'objective historical development', while undoubtedly genuinely held by some, belied and to some extent provided cover for a more sober assessment of the realities. Ideological differences aside, Iran remained a central player in the region, in whose economic and political stability the Soviet Union had an increasingly substantial stake.²¹

Three case studies are presented in support of the above claim. With respect to Iraq's Soviet-financed arms build-up and Iran's own American-financed support for the Kurdish rebellion, it is observed that this considerably more serious source of tension found an effective, if ruthless resolution in the Algiers Accord of March 1975; an agreement which Soviet officials insisted – to the singular disbelief of the Western officials at the time – that Moscow had in fact instigated.²² It will be argued that the importance attached by the Kremlin to maintaining relations with Iran produced a

20 FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. E-4: *Shah's deep concern re. increasing Soviet pressures*, 1 June 1970, §4.

21 By 1973, the Iranian Gas Trunkline (IGAT) was supplying 9 billion cubic metres of natural gas to the Soviet Union annually, supporting 50% of Soviet exports. See: *Asnâd-e Lâneh-ye Jâsusi*, Vol. 50: *CIA Report 'Outlook for Soviet Oil and Gas'*, p30; Marshall I. Goldman, *The Oil Crisis In Perspective*, Daedalus, Vol. 104, No.4 (Fall, 1975), p139.

22 FCO 8/2502, *Folio 7: Foreign Office to Embassy in Tehran*, 31 July 1975, §5.

cautious and flexible approach toward Iraq, in which commercial interests often took blunt precedence over political or strategic ones.²³ Mirroring this, the Shah's agreement with Saddam Hussein to 'sell out' the Kurdish insurgency evidenced a willingness to accommodate with Moscow, even, as this case demonstrated, to the major discomfiture of the United States.²⁴ The trend toward accommodation continued into 1976 and 1977, when the Shah's growing perception of Communist inspiration behind domestic opposition to his rule and discomfiture at a hardening in U.S. attitudes on the subject of oil pricing led to further concessions to and cooperation with Moscow. Finally, an analysis of Soviet actions both leading up to and during the Islamic Revolution of 1979 arrives at the conclusion that the upheavals of this period were not welcome to the Soviet leadership, who were both slow and ill-prepared to take advantage of events. Contrary to the Shah's subsequent rationalisation of the Iranian clergy as 'sorcerers' apprentices' – unwitting stooges of international communism supplied with agitators from 'outside' – it is suggested that the Moscow's vehicle of choice, the *Tudeh* party, was in no position to exercise influence over the revolutionary clerics.²⁵ The Soviet leadership itself, it is further argued, was primarily concerned with guarding against the possibility of American intervention and protecting its commercial interests inside Iran. There is substantial evidence that Moscow realised they had a great deal to lose as a result of the Shah's fall from power, a fact underlined by their strenuous – but ultimately fruitless – efforts to curry favour with the post-Revolutionary regime.²⁶

A Narrative of Soviet Encirclement: The Shah's Evolving Regional Outlook

'Mr. Goronwy Roberts, the Foreign Office envoy, assured us that Great Britain intended to remain in the Gulf "for as long as might be expected." Three months later, the English were packing their bags! The security of the Gulf had to be guaranteed, and who but Iran could fulfil this task?'²⁷

23 Oles M. Smolansky (1991), *The USSR and Iraq, The Soviet Quest for Influence*, p21.

24 The collapse of the Kurdish rebellion freed up Iraq's military to turn its attentions on Israel. See conversation between Kissinger and Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin, in Andrew Scott Cooper (2011), *Oil Kings*, p243-4.

25 M. R. Pahlavi, *op. cit.*, p218

26 See, for example, Moscow's refusal to condemn Iran's leadership during the hostage crisis. Alvin Z. Rubenstein, *The Soviet Union and Iran under Khomeini*, International Affairs, Vol. 57, No. 4 (Autumn 1981), p605.

27 M. R. Pahlavi, *op. cit.*, p174

The British decision to withdraw from the Persian Gulf – communicated by Goronwy-Roberts to the Shah on the 7th of January 1968 – was indeed, as Foreign Office records privately concede, ‘unpalatable and very different’ from assurances the Minister had given only two months previously.²⁸ The timeframe for the withdrawal itself however, was considerably less abrupt, with all British troops to have left the Gulf by the end of 1971 – within three years of the announcement.²⁹ As the Shah increasingly emphasised to American officials in the months and years that intervened, an opportunity had arisen for Iran to play ‘the dominant role’ for security in the Gulf as Britain’s ‘only logical successor.’³⁰ Iran, in the Shah’s view, was to be a bulwark against subversive regional forces and ‘aggressive designs’ in the Persian Gulf that other riparian states could not be expected to adequately counter.³¹ The expression of these convictions, it might be argued, can be best understood in the context of the imperial trips to Washington that they typically preceded and the inevitably central feature of those visits: vocal requests for American support in expediting Iran’s armed forces buildup.³² While there is ample evidence to support such a view, this section will rather focus on the increasingly entrenched narrative of Soviet encirclement in which the Shah’s drive towards military ‘credibility’ found its primary basis, and indeed the chief component of which was identified by the American Ambassador to Tehran as the Shah’s ‘absolute obsession’ that failure to strengthen Iran’s military posture would result in the loss of the Gulf to radical Arabism ‘encouraged by the Soviets’ following the British withdrawal.³³

Most obviously central to the conception of Soviet-supported radical Arabism were the rival hegemonic pretensions of neighbouring Iraq, underlined by its Ba’athist regime’s ongoing attempts to rally littoral states to the cause of ‘protecting the Gulf’s Arabism.’³⁴

28 FCO 18/849, *Iran: Annual Report for 1968*, dated 2 January 1969, §1; Jeffrey R. Macris, *The Politics and Security of the Gulf: Anglo American Hegemony and the Shaping of a Region*, p157,

29 See text of Wilson’s announcement in *The Annual Register: Record of World Events, 1968*, Vol. 210.

30 FRUS 1969-1976, E-4: *Intelligence Note 743*, 17 October 1969, p1-3.

31 See Shah’s statement at Persepolis press conference, quoted in FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. E-4: *State Department Research Study*, 28 January 1972; for Shah’s belief that other Gulf states could not ‘contribute significantly’ to regional security see in *ibid.*, *Intelligence Note 743*, 17 October 1969, p2.

32 An excellent illustration of the interplay between the Shah’s regional ambitions and defence needs is provided in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. E-4: *Memorandum of Conversation*, 1 April 1969, p3.

33 FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. E-4: *Telegram from the Ambassador in Iran*, 1 April 1970. For the Shah’s arguments in favour of a ‘credible’ Iranian position (as opposed to military supremacy), see *ibid.*, ‘*Iran’s Need for Adequate Military Establishment*’, October 13, 1969, §3.

34 Oles M. Smolansky with Bettie M. Smolansky, *The USSR and Iraq*, p150

Particularly unsettling implications were drawn from Iraq's 'reckless behaviour' in respect of the reignited Shatt al Arab waterway dispute, which was viewed as a direct product of the expanded Communist influence in Iraqi affairs and the apparently related influx of Soviet arms and military advisors.³⁵ The Shah's concerns over Iraq were heightened yet further in 1970 by the Iraqi government's accord (in effect a peace agreement) with the Kurdish rebels: the 'March Manifesto.'³⁶ Although mediated by the Soviets primarily out of interest in a promoting their ally's stability and development, the peace deal was viewed in Tehran as a capitulation by the Iraqi government to Kurdish demands for autonomy, resulting from Moscow's 'direct pressure'; the Shah noted with some disquiet that communist elements were present at both sides of the negotiating table.³⁷ This impression was further strengthened by the subsequent visit of leaders from the Democrat Party of Kurdistan to Moscow and by an exchange of notes, prominently reported in *Pravda*, in which the two sides underlined their 'favourable disposition toward each other.'³⁸ The effect of these two developments, as perceived by the Shah, was to advance the 'Soviet plan' both of increasing the Iraqi military's capacity for intrigue elsewhere (because resources would no longer required to fight the Kurds), and, as a long-range objective, establishing an autonomous, communist state of Kurdistan capable of 'overcoming' the geographical barrier of Turkey and Iran and providing the Soviet Union with its allegedly long-sought route to the Gulf.³⁹ It was thus in a broad conception of Soviet geopolitical strategy that Iran's support for the Kurdish rebellion during the early 1970s, explored later in this chapter, found its genesis. For the Shah, Iranian support for the Kurdish rebellion constituted an insurance policy against the possibility of a 'dangerous and more purposeful regime' assuming power in Baghdad.'⁴⁰

35 FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. E-4: *Memorandum of Conversation*, 1 April 1969, p4; for overview of the Shatt Al Arab dispute in 1969 see *ibid.*, *Intelligence Note 295*, 22 April 1969; for Shah's key concerns on Iraq's weaponisation see *ibid.*, *Memorandum of Conversation*, 22 October 1969, p2.

36 Oles M. Smolansky with Bettie M. Smolansky, *The USSR and Iraq*, p70

37 FRUS 1969-1976, E-4, *Telegram from the Embassy in Iran*, 19 March 1970; for the Russian viewpoint see Aleksei Vasil'yev in *Pravda*, 11 March 1971 quoted in Oles Smolansky, *op. cit.*, p74.

38 See *Pravda*, 28 April and 30 June 1970.

39 FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. E-4: *Soviet-Iraq Threat (Shah's Views)*, 12 March 1969.

40 FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. E-4: *National Intelligence Estimate*, 10 January 1969, §19. The specific danger envisaged by the Shah, elaborated in a later conversation with the U.S. ambassador, was that the Soviets would succeed in combined the Kurds, the Ba'athist and the Communists to form a national front government. See *ibid.*, *Telegram 2604 from Embassy in Tehran*, 4 May 1972, §10.

Within Iran itself, underlying sensitivities toward perceived continuity in Russia's 'historical objectives' were brought into stark relief by an apparently more mundane incident in June 1970.⁴¹ In conversation with Hushang Ansari, the Iranian economics minister, a high-ranking Soviet member of the recently-formed Joint Iran-USSR Economic Committee caused considerable strain by 'pointedly' invoking the 1921 Soviet-Iranian treaty in challenging the Iranian government's consideration of a joint venture (with an American company for exploitation of timber resources on the Caspian coast.) Although the unnamed delegate quickly dropped the subject – Ansari reportedly had reacted 'with some spirit' – this unfortunate and poorly-judged intervention was singled out by the Shah as further evidence of 'thinly-veiled' Soviet intimidation, and of Moscow's wider designs for becoming the 'arbiter' of the Middle East.⁴² The impression of concealed motives in Soviet policy received further apparent corroboration when, later in the same month, the death of Iran's leading Shi'ite cleric, Ayatollah Hakim, prompted sustained lobbying on behalf of the exiled Ayatollah Khomeini by clandestine Communist radio stations. *Seda-ye Melli-ye Iran* (The National Voice of Iran, broadcasting from Baku) inveighed against the 'coup d'etat regime's [...] dirty designs', specifically its attempts to appoint a 'stooge' (Shariat-Madari) as Hakim's successor, while Radio Iran Courier, now broadcasting from Bulgaria, approvingly noted Khomeini's 'struggle' in support of 'freedom, democracy and anti-imperialism.'⁴³

Thus, apprehension over regional Soviet ambitions, as in Iraq, combined with less obvious suspicions and irritations nurtured by heavy-handed local Soviet diplomacy and the excesses of Communist broadcast stations, distilled in the minds of the Shah and his close confidantes to form a broader perception of Soviet encroachment and expansionism. In such a context, allowing for the possibility that a Soviet official could commit an undirected *faux pas*, or that clandestine radios, located on the periphery of the USSR, might pursue a radical agenda independently of direct central supervision was irrelevant. What mattered was that such observations informed an overall picture and provided apparent corroboration of a wider thesis concerning Soviet activities and interests on Iran's immediate periphery – India, Baluchistan, Afghanistan – and

41 FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. E-4: *Telegram from Embassy in Tehran*, 4 May 1972, §10.

42 FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. E-4: *Tehran Telegram* 2333, 1 June 1970, §2 & §4.

43 FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. E-4: *Selecting a New Leader for Shi'ite Islam*, 7 July 1970, p3.

producing a regional outlook of which the USSR-Iraq Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, signed in April 1972, represented the nightmarish apotheosis.⁴⁴ Its Article 8, specifically, was viewed as ‘ambiguous’ and potentially hostile toward Iran:

‘The two high contracting parties will, in the event of a situation developing which endangers the peace of either of them or constitutes a threat to peace or a violation of peace, hold immediate contacts to coordinate their positions in the interest of eliminating the developing danger and re-establishing peace.’⁴⁵

It is revealing however, that U.S. officials (from whose memoranda of conversations with their Iranian counterparts the above survey is purposefully drawn) took a significantly more nuanced view of Soviet policy in the region. The State Department's stance, outlined clearly in a letter of June 1970 to the U.S. ambassador in Tehran, cautioned that Moscow's relations with Iraq had ‘not been uniformly harmonious’ and called for circumspection:

‘While we agree with Iran that there is no room for complacency, we nonetheless do not believe that Soviet power and influence in the Middle East or the Gulf should be overdrawn [...] we believe that Soviet efforts to become arbiter of Gulf and entire Middle East [as perceived by the Shah] face formidable obstacles.’⁴⁶

44 In conversation with Kermit (Kim) Roosevelt, chief CIA architect of *Operation Ajax* and a close personal friend, the Shah described the treaty as ‘most disturbing ... a fulfilment of [my] worst dreams.’ FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. E-4: *Mr. Kermit Roosevelt's Meeting with the Shah*, 8 May 1972, §2f. The Shah saw India as the aggressor in the Indo-Pakistan war of December 1971 (in the context of their then recently-concluded Friendship Treaty with the Soviet Union); with Nixon's support and knowledge, Iran re-directed American arms to Pakistan, fearing that its break-up would create opportunities for Soviet expansion, specifically, an independent Soviet-supported Baluchistan. See George Washington National Security Archive, *Electronic Briefing Book No. 79*, Document 28, 4 December 1971. With respect to Afghanistan, the Iranian government were ‘very concerned’ about the régime of Mohammed Daoud Khan, even suspecting the latter was a trained Soviet agent. FCO 8/2265, *Conversation with the Iranian Ambassador*, 23 January 1974, §2

45 Text of treaty as translated in Majid Khadduri, *Socialist Iraq* (Washington: Middle East Institute, 1978), p241. For the Iranian reaction to the treaty, see: FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. E-4: *Tehran Telegram 2604*, 4 May 1972, §10.

46 FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. E-4: *Telegram from the Department of State*, 6 June 1970, §4. For an elaboration of this viewpoint, see *ibid.*, *Special National Intelligence Estimate 34-70: 'Iran's International Position'*, 3 September 1970, §24, which identified extensive splits within the Ba'ath party and an unwillingness on the part of Arab states ‘to accept Soviet direction’ as factors limiting the development of Moscow-led Arab radicalism.

Going further, a report by National Security Council staff prepared for President Nixon and his chief adviser Henry Kissinger, in advance of their crucial May 1972 meeting with the Shah, identified the latter's 'overreaction' to the situation in Iraq as *itself* a contributory cause to regional instability. It concluded, significantly, that the Soviets had proceeded with caution in Gulf for fear of upsetting bilateral relations with Iran, on which 'they seem to place a fairly high value.'⁴⁷ In point of fact, the Soviets had been at great pains to stress that the 1972 Treaty was not directed against Iran.⁴⁸ There was cause to believe the Soviet side had in fact refused a request by Saddam Hussein (then the civilian Ba'ath Party leader) that the U.S.S.R. guarantee to intervene in the event that Iran attacked Iraq.⁴⁹ In the event however, and crucially, the Shah 'did not want to be told' that the Kremlin might have an interest in restraining its clients.⁵⁰ Nor, it may equally be noted, did Nixon insist on arguing the point. In the context of America's investment in Iran, and the invaluable facilities provided by Iran to the U.S., the President's formulation quoted at the head of this chapter, requesting that the Shah protect him, appeared carefully designed to reflect and encourage the Shah's aspiration for regional leadership, against a backdrop of détente in Europe which, as seen from the Sa'dabad palace, had 'freed up' the Soviets for increased activity elsewhere.⁵¹

Iran, Iraq and the Kurdish Rebellion 'Trump Card'

As suggested above, it was the Soviet-Iraqi Friendship Treaty of 1972, and specifically the commitment by Moscow to 'concrete measures' for strengthening Iraq's defence capabilities, that provided the immediate catalyst for Iran's expanded arms procurement programme.⁵² In a revealing interview of June 1972, the Shah left the chief of the

47 FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. E-4: *Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger*, 17 May 1972, p2.

48 *Asnad-e Laneh-ye Jasusi*, Vol. 47: *Discussion with Soviet 1st Secretary Vladimir Vlassov*, 20 April 1972, §2: Vlassov relates that the Soviet Ambassador personally called on Iranian Foreign Minister Khalatbari to offer his government's reassurances, which the latter received 'without enthusiasm.'

49 FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. E-4: *Briefing Paper – Iraqi Politics in Perspective*, 18 May 1972, p6.

50 FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. E-4: *Memorandum of Conversation*, 31 May 1972, p2. The overflying rights provided to the U.S. military by the Iranian air corridor to East Asia were 'irreplaceable.' (*Ibid.*, *Tehran Telegram 1665 Part 1*, 23 March 1972, §2.) Similarly, the CIA listening stations located in Iran, were seen as providing information of the 'most vital importance to [American] national security.' (*Ibid.*, *Memorandum for Henry Kissinger*, 16 April 1970.)

51 FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. E-4: *Tehran Telegram 2642*, 6 May 1972; for fuller elaboration of the Nixon doctrine as applied to Iran, see briefing paper by Kissinger in *ibid.*, 29 June 1972, §III, 1 (p7.)

52 See text of joint Soviet communiqué following Iraqi President Al-Bakr's trip to Moscow published in *Pravda*, 20 September 1972, quoted in R. Freedman (1982) *Soviet Policy Toward the Middle East Since 1970*, p99; for a detailed assessment of the balance of military power between Iran and Iraq at

American military mission in Tehran, Major General Elis Williamson, in little doubt as to his motivation in securing all advanced weaponry ‘short of the atomic bomb’:

‘His Imperial Majesty stated that the recent USSR / Iraqi agreement has forced him to change his views with respect to the Middle East Area. Since the signing of the USSR / Iraqi pact, the Shah says he is completely willing for the U.S. to come into this area if it will do so with quality [...] a few corvettes [small, lightly armed warships] are not appropriate.’⁵³

Precipitated by suspicion of Iraq, and buoyed by rising oil revenues, the extent of the quality the Shah had in mind became fully apparent in February 1973 with the announcement of what was, at the time, the largest military sales agreement ever concluded by the U.S. Defence Department.⁵⁴ It was a revelation that brought the delicacy of the Soviet position into sharp relief. The following month, in a visit to Iran to inaugurate the Soviet-built Esfahan steel mill, Soviet premier Aleksei Kosygin delivered a speech that was instructive both for the indirectness of its criticism of the Iranian arms programme as for its implicit defence of the Soviet military assistance to Iraq. Referring to ‘those states bordering Iran and the Soviet Union’, Kosygin noted:

‘If we want the security [of these states] to be based not on an arms race [...] but on the continued relaxation of tensions and the strengthening of mutual trust among countries, then the efforts of each party concerned are required. Conversely, the militant policy of one country will inevitably inflame the situation in an entire region [...] forcing its neighbours to take measures to defend their national interest.’⁵⁵

Mutual trust was, however, an element severely lacking in the increasingly tense triangle of Iraqi-Soviet-Iranian relations. ‘The Shah’, as Henry Kissinger tersely briefed

the time of Nixon visit to Tehran, see FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. E-4, *Recent Trends in Iranian Arms Procurement* (CIA, May 1972), §29-30 and Table 9

53 FRUS, 1969-76, *ibid.* Vol., *Memorandum [Tab A] attached to Memorandum from Harold Saunders (NSC) to Kissinger*, dated 12 June 1972, §9; see also: Andrew Scott-Cooper, *Oil Kings*, pp67-70

54 R. Freedman, *op. cit.*, p105. The Shah's particular insistence on expedited delivery of F-5E aircraft underlined the concern with Iraq (the F-5E having a superior dogfight capability than Iraq's MiG 21s.)

55 Text of speech in *Pravda*, 16th of March 1973

Nixon's confidante John Connally, dispatched to Tehran to follow up on the President Nixon's commitments of May 1972, 'is concerned that the USSR may find ways to facilitate the overflow into Iran' of instability that had developed in Iraq.⁵⁶ An agreement had in fact been concluded, as an additional but secret result of Nixon's and Kissinger visit, for the CIA to provide arms and funds (euphemistically termed a 'subvention') to Kurdish fighters in their struggle against the Iraqi central government in Baghdad; an undertaking viewed as so sensitive that the U.S. administration's panel of experts responsible for authorising it were provided with a single piece of paper, containing a three line outline of the operation drafted by Henry Kissinger and underneath which they were presented with two options: 'Authorise' or 'Other.'⁵⁷ The logic in supporting the Shah's request has been made explicit in recently-declassified record of conversation:

'Kissinger: What I want is for the Politburo in Moscow to be in a frame of mind not to get involved in further adventures in the Middle East. I want them to recall that [...] Iraq turned out to be a bottomless pit. I want them to tell anyone who comes with a recommendation for renewed activity in the Middle East to go away. I want the Shah to help in this strategy.'⁵⁸

The Shah's success in securing American support for the Kurdish insurgency thus reflected a coincidence of interests. In respect of U.S. regional commitments, as events during the Yom Kippur war of 1973 were to prove, the overextension of Iraqi forces by the Kurdish conflict substantially limited their ability to assist the Arab cause against Israel; a reality that the Ba'athist regime publicly lamented.⁵⁹ And indeed, at its height, the insurgency required the active deployment of no less than eighty percent of the Iraqi Army.⁶⁰ The Iranian government's quest for financial stability was a second factor. Two separate entries in Court Minister Asadollah Alam's diary strongly imply – although

56 FRUS, 1969-76, Vol. E-4, *Backchannel Message from Kissinger to Connally*, 29 June 1972, §I(a); Connally had recently left his post as Treasury Secretary and was Nixon's preferred successor in the White House. See: Andrew Scott-Cooper, *op. cit.*, p420, n67

57 CIA: *The Pike Report* (Nottingham: Spokesman, 1977), p196; for a further example of Kissinger's unique approach, see FRUS, Vol. E-4, *Memorandum for the Secretary of State*, 15 June 1972.

58 FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. 27: *Memorandum of Conversation*, 23 July 1973

59 See FCO 8/2094: *Al-Thamra*, 'How did Iraq Get Into the Battle?', 11/12 October 1973, §3a & d.

60 FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. 27: *Intelligence Note Prepared in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research: 'Iran's Intervention in Iraqi-Kurdish Struggle Growing'*, 18 November 1974

they do not explicitly state – that Kurdish fighters had previously been tasked by the Shah with sabotaging Iraqi pipelines in order to restrict Baghdad's revenue stream, thereby enhancing investment in Iran's own oil industry.⁶¹ It is nevertheless clear, in this instance as elsewhere, that the impact of history was a crucial governing influence. Mullah Mustafa Barzani, then leader of the Kurdish Democratic Party, had previously spearheaded Iraqi Kurdish elements in support of the Soviet-inspired Mahabad Republic, formed on Iranian territory during World War II and coterminous with the Pishvari regime in Tabriz. Following the short-lived Republic's collapse, Barzani fled to Soviet Azerbaijan.⁶² The Shah saw support for Barzani's Kurds in their conflict with Baghdad as a means to prevent the potential creation of an autonomous, Soviet-sponsored Kurdish homeland on Iran's borders.⁶³ More broadly, it was thought that the political stabilisation of Iraq – which maintenance of the Kurdish insurgency naturally precluded – would aid Communism's 'long-term' objectives by furnishing Baghdad greater latitude to create 'mischief.'⁶⁴ This concern was, it must be emphasised, not without merit and was a perception energetically reinforced by the Iraqi media, monitored closely in Iran, which frequently pronounced Baghdad's support for those engaged in anti-Iranian activities.⁶⁵

Iran's renewed attempts to weaken the Iraqi regime through subvention of the Kurdish insurgency, as a means of curtailing Soviet regional ambitions, also came against a wider background (1969-1972) of deteriorating Iran-Iraqi relations. The ongoing dispute regarding sovereignty of the Shatt Al Arab waterway, and Baghdad's territorial pretensions with respect to Iran's southern province of Khuzestan, which it saw as Arab territory, had at times threatened to escalate into open military conflict.⁶⁶ Conversely, Iran's decision to assert its claim to the disputed Gulf islands of Tunb and Abu Musa prior to the British withdrawal at the end of 1971 had proven an unwelcome challenge

61 Asadollah Alam (Trans. Alinaghi Alikhani and Nicholas Vicent, 1992), *The Shah and I*, pp38-42.

62 Shahram Chubin and Sepehr Zabih (1974), *The Foreign Relations of Iran*, p178

63 FRUS, 1968-1976, Vol. E-4: *Soviet-Iraq Threat (Shah's Views)*, 12 March 1970, §2(b).

64 FRUS, 1968-1976, Vol. E-4: *Shah's Views on Procurement*, 19 March 1970, §3.

65 For an example, see: FCO 17/1732: *Irano / Iraqi Relations and the Kurds*, 19 January 1972, §1

66 R. Ramazani (1975), *Iran's Foreign Policy 1941-1973: A Study of Foreign Policy in Modernizing Nations*, pp417-18. For evidence of the Iraqi government's policy regarding what it saw as its 'defensive' pronouncements on Khuzestan, FCO 8/2315: *'Iran / Iraq'*, 18 December 1974, §2.

to the Ba'ath party's efforts to promote pan-Arabic solidarity.⁶⁷ In response, the Iraqi government had broken off relations with Tehran and sought to apply pressure by deporting *en masse* to Iran some 40,000 Iraqi citizens 'of Iranian origin', predominantly Kurds, precipitating a major humanitarian crisis in Iran, representations to the U.N. on the part of the Iranian government, and a virulent press reaction inside Iran that served to underline the situation's volatility. 'For us to continue behaving towards the Baghdad junta', urged the semi-official newspaper Keyhan in article entitled *Time to Act*, 'as if it were a government in the accepted sense of the term, would be quite unwise.'⁶⁸ It was in the context of these pre-existing tensions, enhanced by and viewed against Iraq's alignment with the Soviet Union, that the Iranian government elected to re-launch the Kurdish insurgency in 1972; a decision in fact acted upon *before* U.S. financial support for the move was forthcoming.⁶⁹ In a subsequent conversation with the British Ambassador, Peter Ramsbotham, the Shah openly described Iran's support for Barzani as his regional 'trump card.'⁷⁰

Thus, the state of affairs reached by the point of Kosygin's visit to Iran in 1973 was far from serving Moscow's interests. As one scholar of the period has convincingly argued, the escalation of rivalry between the Iran and Iraq, in both of whose economic development and political stability the Soviets were actively invested, confronted the Soviet policy makers with an uncomfortable dilemma.⁷¹ On the one hand, wholehearted practical support for Iraq held out a significant risk of alienating Iran. On the other, the increasingly obvious reliance by the Kurdish fighters on Iranian support was unpalatable and undermined Moscow's ability to affect a resolution that would ensure its continued importance as an actor in Iraqi politics.⁷² In the immediate context therefore, as shown in Kosygin's speech above, Soviet leaders sought to deemphasise military assistance to Iraq (even offering privately to sell MiG fighter aircraft to Iran) while

67 FRUS, 1968-1976, Vol. E-4: *Shah's View on Tunbs and Abu Musa*, 10 December 1970, §1.

68 For Iranian representations to the U.N. on this issue, see FCO 17/1732: *Irano-Iraqi Relations*, 20 January 1972, directly echoing the Shah's own views evidenced in *ibid.*, *Extract from Shah's Press Conference*, 15 January 1972.

69 FCO 17/1732, Folios 2, 17 & 18: *Irano-Iraqi Relations and the Kurds*, 10–20 January 1972.

70 FCO 8/2094, Folio 20: *Iraq / Iran*, 19 April 1973.

71 Oles M. Smolansky, *The USSR & Iraq: The Soviet Quest for Influence*, p163.

72 *Ibid.*, p164; CIA: *The Pike Report*, p196.

applying pressure on both sides to pursue rapprochement.⁷³ Further evidence of Moscow's efforts in this direction was provided by Iraq's surprise public request of October 1973 to resume diplomatic ties with Tehran.⁷⁴ Made at the height of the Yom Kippur war, which provided a convenient smoke screen, the announcement's appeal to other 'friendly countries' to support the move strongly suggested the decision was intended to meet with Moscow's approbation.⁷⁵ The approach however, failed to produce an improvement. The Shah had 'every intention' of maintaining his Kurdish card. Iranian assistance to the Kurds expanded to include heavy artillery and British-supplied anti-aircraft weapons.⁷⁶ Border clashes continued to escalate.⁷⁷

Faced with this deterioration, the Soviet leadership at first continued to pursue a policy of mediation between Baghdad and the Kurds. Yevgeny Primakov, a prominent Arabist and personal confidante of Mustafa Barzani with close ties to the Kremlin, was secretly dispatched to Iraqi Kurdistan in an effort to coax K.D.P. officials round to Moscow's viewpoint.⁷⁸ When Primakov found himself unable to prevail upon Barzani however, the Soviet leadership evidently decided that a bolder intervention was required. In November 1974, during a 'friendly business visit' by the Shah to the U.S.S.R., at the latter's invitation, the Soviet president made his government's feelings plain.⁷⁹ Slamming his fist down on the table, a visibly agitated Brezhnev appraised the Iranian monarch 'most frankly [...] that the existing tensions between Iran and Iraq do not accord with the interests of peace.'⁸⁰ Taken aback, the Shah struck a conciliatory tone: 'I would only like to note that if in its relations with us Iraq would take the same position which you, our great neighbour, adhere to in your relations with us [...] there would be no problem with this question.'⁸¹

73 FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. 27: *Telegram from the Embassy in Iran*, 7 April 1973, n3.

74 See also Hoveyda's assessment in FCO 8/2094: *Iran/Iraq Relations*, 9 October 1975, §2.

75 FCO 8/2094: *Iran – Iraq Diplomatic Relations*, 8 October 1973, §3

76 FCO 8/2094: *Iran/Iraq Relations*, 11 October 1973, §2.

77 For details see Hussein Sirriyeh, *Development of the Iraqi-Iranian Dispute, 1847-1975 in Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (Jul., 1985), pp. 489; *Yearbook of the U.N.*, 1974, p252ff.

78 Leonid Mlechin (2007), *Evgeny Primakov* (biography in Russian), p50. See also: Рассекретить Примакова [Declassifying Primakov], Газета <<Аргументы и Факты>> [Arguments and Facts], 2001: No. 31 (1085), 8 August 2001.

79 'Shah Begins Moscow Talks', *The Financial Times*, 19 November 1974, quoting TASS news agency; see also FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. 27: *Memorandum from Walters to Kissinger*, 7 October 1974.

80 Asadollah Alam, *The Shah and I*, p398.

81 FCO 8/2265: *Visit of Shah [to USSR]*, 25 November 1974, §2.

The Shah's words came against an atmosphere of nervousness in Iranian government circles over rumours – curiously enough originating in Moscow – that the United States was plotting to lever the Shah from the throne for his role in raising oil prices.⁸² Indeed, the Moscow visit came against a significant background of official U.S. displeasure on this topic – including a ‘spirited’ exchange between Iran’s OPEC representative and a visiting State Department official – and the tension was subsequently reinforced by a damaging newspaper interview in which Kissinger refused to rule out the possibility of force in resolving the dispute.⁸³ Given such a context, the Shah evidently judged it imprudent to further antagonise his northern neighbour. Central to this decision were Barzani’s increasingly ambitious demands, which substantially outgrew what the Shah was willing to accept: not only did the increased Iranian military involvement required to sustain the resistance apparently entail acceptance of a separatist Kurdish-Arab government if successful, it also ran the considerable risk of open Soviet intervention on the Iraqi side.⁸⁴ In April 1975, Iraq and Iran agreed to resolve their differences. President Boumediène of Algeria, a statesman with close ties to the Kremlin, was conspicuously instrumental.⁸⁵ The agreement provided for a division of sovereignty over the Shatt Al Arab waterway along its median line, and called for both parties to ‘exercise strict control of their borders, with a view to a final cessation of all subversive infiltration, on both sides.’⁸⁶ In effect, the Shah had agreed to call off the insurgency. According to one U.S. intelligence report, the Iraqi government secretly undertook to pay Iran \$300 million dollars to assist in managing the Kurdish refugee flow onto Iranian territory.⁸⁷

The abrupt deescalation provided further evidence of Soviet efforts to proactively address, and where feasible to mitigate, areas of potential conflict with Iran. Although the Algiers Accord, in significantly strengthening Iraq’s Ba’athist regime, actually diminished Soviet leverage over Baghdad, Moscow had contrived to avoid a regional

82 ‘The Shah plays safe with visit to Moscow’, *Daily Express*, 19 November 1974, cutting in FCO 8/2265.

83 FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. 27: *Telegram from the Embassy in Iran*, 26 September 1974; the offending interview appeared as ‘Kissinger on Oil, Food and Trade’ in *Business Week*, 13 January 1974.

84 FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. 27: *Backchannel Message from Helms to Scowcroft*, 8 March 1975; see also Barzani’s earlier requests in *ibid.*, *Memorandum from Colby to Kissinger*, 21 March 1974.

85 *Asnad-e Laneh-ye Jasusi*, Volume 31, *Telegram 2750*, 25 March 1975, §5, p45.

86 See *U.N. Treaty Series*, Volume 1017, *Communiqué Commun Irano-Irakien*, 6 March 1975, p118-9.

87 *Asnad-e Laneh-ye Jasusi*, Volume 31, *Financial Payment by Iran to Iraq*, 26 April 1975, p54.

conflagration that risked the loss of influence in both Iraq and Iran; hence the adulation with which the Soviet media greeted the agreement.⁸⁸ The subsequent assertion by Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister, Mikhail Sytenko to his counterpart in London (which the latter described as ‘breathtaking’) that Moscow had actively supported the rapprochement was, the evidence suggests, true.⁸⁹ Indeed, the positive attitude shown by the Kremlin toward resolution of the Kurdish conflict, in favour of Baghdad, was entirely consistent with earlier Soviet reaction to the March Manifesto of 1970.⁹⁰ From the Iranian perspective, willingness to reach a compromise with Iraq undoubtedly reflected the fact that, as the Shah had himself privately conceded as early as 1973, the Kurds ‘would not last for ever’ under Iraqi and Russian pressures.⁹¹ The episode nevertheless presented a clear illustration of the Shah's readiness to accommodate with the U.S.S.R., where expedient to do so, even at the risk of severely embarrassing his Washington allies. Ambassador Ardeshir Zahedi, who was present at the meeting in Zurich – held on the 19th of February 1975 – where the Shah presented Kissinger with the possibility of dropping the Kurdish insurgency, recalls that the Secretary of State had nothing to say in response: “His face went completely white.”⁹²

Concern and Concession: The Curious Case of Lieutenant Zosimov

Taking the broader view of Soviet-Iranian ties in the post-1973 period, and notwithstanding the accommodation achieved with respect to Iraq, it is clear that wider potential for tensions existed in relations. Most visibly, Iran's estimated \$20 billion annual oil income had not only made the country a centre of attraction for the West, with whom the Shah ‘recycled’ much of Iran's increased revenue, but also came to

88 In the view of one Soviet commentator, the Accord had 'frustrated the plans of those who would like to see these two neighbouring countries pitted against each other in the role of regional gladiators.' V. Shamarov, *New Times*, No. 15 (April 1975), quoted in Smolansky, *op. cit.*, p169.

89 FCO 8/2547: *Anglo-Soviet Consultations – Middle East*, 25 January 1975, §5.

90 See n35 above; during an official visit to Iraq in June 1972, the Soviet Deputy Prime Minister, Vladimir Novikov, stated that the Manifesto had 'expanded the capabilities of [the Ba'ath] in its national struggle against colonialism.' A. L. Khudayda: *Soviet-Iraqi Relations and the USSR's Position on the Kurdish Question from 1958-1991* (Doctoral dissertation, 2010), p107-8.

91 FCO 8/2094: *Telno 334* of 19 April 1973. A month after the Algiers Agreement the Shah told a U.S. journalist that Iranian aid to the Kurdish movement had been cut off due its 'futile struggle', see: *Asnad-e Laneh-ye Jasusi*, Volume 31, *Tehran Telegram 3281*, 10 April 1975, §3, p47.

92 Interview with author, Montreux, 16 June 2012. Zahedi's recollection of Kissinger's panic is borne out by the documentary record, which reveals the Secretary of State's frantic attempts to limit the domestic political fallout from the Shah's decision. *Asnad-e Laneh-ye Jasusi*, Volume 31, *State Department Telegram*, 23 March 1975, p43.

dwarf Soviet economic aid, which had previously been of substantial benefit for internal development.⁹³ A salient illustration of the reversal in Iran's financial fortunes was provided by the Shah's decision to embark on a foreign investment programme of his own, including the conclusion of loans to Afghanistan, India, Egypt, Syria and Eastern Europe.⁹⁴ The choice of countries, furthermore, seemed purposefully calculated to balance or even counteract Soviet influence, albeit Iranian investment in Eastern Europe was not entirely unwelcome to Moscow.⁹⁵ A prominent source of friction remained, unsurprisingly, Iran's ongoing militarisation, fundamentally designed to check Russian scope for expanding influence in the Gulf and Indian Ocean. The Shah's apparently connected role as America's 'obedient gendarme' in the region drew sustained and pointed Soviet criticism, publicly and privately, with the regression towards overtly threatening language – in some cases – seeming to reflect a frustration on the part of the Kremlin at its diminishing influence.⁹⁶ In both the economic and military fields Iran had emerged as a middleweight power whose policies appeared, much to the satisfaction of Western governments, deeply inconvenient to the USSR.⁹⁷

Yet such an analysis fails to recognise that, and as evidenced in each of the case studies analysed above, frankness in relations between Iran and the Soviet Union by no means precluded concerted and qualitative efforts by both parties to consolidate economic ties and maintain a functional level of political exchange.⁹⁸ In fact, the Shah's 1974 trip to Moscow and the subsequent Algiers Agreement, in resolving a significant point of

93 FCO 8/2497, *Annual Review of Iran for 1974*, 9 January 1974, §2 & 3.

94 FCO 8/2265, Folio 11: 'Shah set for hard talks in Moscow', *Daily Telegraph*, 19 November 1974.

95 Shahram Chubin, *op. cit.*, p9.

96 For published Soviet criticism see A. Borisov, *Shadow over the Persian Gulf* in *Izvestiya*, 10 March 1975. A useful survey of *Radio Moscow* broadcasts on the subject is provided in *Tehran Echo No. 43* (Summer 1975) – *Political Survey: Current Iran-USSR Relations*, FCO 8/2504, *Enclosure (Final Paper)*, p4; for details of private Soviet representations to the Iranian government, see FCO 8/2265: *Iran / Soviet Relations*, 6 June 1974, §5.

97 See exchange of letters between Iain Sutherland (British Ambassador in Moscow) and Michael Weir (Head of Middle East Section at the Foreign Office), FCO 8/2504, Folios 2 (25 June 1975) and Folio 7 (31 July 1975.)

98 The three year period from the Soviet-Iraq Friendship Treaty to the signing of the Algiers Agreement saw visits to the USSR by the Shah (10-21 October 1972), Prime Minister Hoveyda (7-12 August 1973) and an Iranian Parliamentary Delegation (9-19 February 1974), and return trips by the Soviet Premier (14-16 March 1973), an economic delegation (October 1973) and the Deputy Minister of Foreign Trade (3 – 18 August 1974) see: FCO 8/2049, FCO 8/2261 and FCO 8/2497: *Annual Reviews for 1972, 1973 and 1974* respectively.

disagreement, had set the stage for renewed cooperation in a number of areas.⁹⁹ Two specific cases bear highlighting. First, on the 27th of March 1975, Iran signed what was billed by the Finance Minister as ‘the largest ever economic agreement’ concluded between the two countries. The provisions of the deal, valued at some \$2.5 billion dollars, included substantial expansion of the Isfahan steel mill. In a second significant reversal, Iran also undertook to finance a paper mill in the Russian SSR, with the latter to repay the loan retrospectively in products from the mill.¹⁰⁰ It was envisaged that trade between 1971 and 1975, estimated at \$1.2 billion, would double within the subsequent four year period; a projection borne out by the Soviet documentary record.¹⁰¹ Second, and of comparable importance, April 1975 saw the conclusion of a trilateral ‘gas swap’ partnership whereby Iran, through a new pipeline to be constructed parallel to existing infrastructure, was to double its supply to Soviet industrial centres in the Caucasus and Eastern Europe.¹⁰² In response, the Soviet side undertook to increase its exports to Federal Germany and Western Europe. Unlike the previous agreement financing the Esfahan steel mill however, Iran was to be paid hard currency.¹⁰³ Notably in this connection, even prior to the proposed pipeline expansion, Soviet trade figures reveal that by 1975 the pipeline out of Iran effectively underpinned a substantial fifty percent of Soviet gas exports to Eastern and Western Europe.¹⁰⁴ Politically and economically, therefore, the effect of the deal was to further strengthen the signatories’ investment in each other’s stability.¹⁰⁵

Yet in spite of such successes, one constant in relations remained. As internal and external dissidence to the Iranian political system expanded in terms of its scope and virulence, the Shah, encouraged by his security force SAVAK, sought out a familiar thesis within which to situate and rationalise the apparently cohesive nature of opposition to his rule. Thus, the previous sense of ‘claustrophobia’, derived from a

99 An undersecretary at the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed that ‘preliminary discussions’ had taken place during the Shah’s trip. FCO 8/2502: *Embassy in Tehran to London*, 20 March 1975.

100 FCO 8/2502, *ibid.*

101 The period saw an annual bilateral trade volume of 370 million roubles (262 USD). See: Foreign Trade of the Soviet Union, 1922-1988, Jubilee Statistical Compilation (in Russian), p17.

102 FCO 8/2502: *Soviet / Iranian Relations*, 28 June 1975, §2

103 Under the existing arrangement, initialled in October 1965, Iranian gas had retrospectively financed both the construction of the pipeline itself, and also the Esfahan steel mill. See Chapter Three.

104 Foreign Trade of the USSR for 1975, p122 and p238; see also Robert G. Jensen, Theodore Shabad & Arthur W. Wright (1983), *Soviet Natural Resources in the World Economy*, p373.

105 Shahram Chubin, *op. cit.*, p9.

perception of Soviet activities in countries surrounding Iran, became steadily transposed onto activities within Iran.¹⁰⁶ Evidence of this transition was provided in events surrounding the Rockwell murders of August 1976. Earlier that year, Rockwell International (a prominent American defence contractor) had been engaged by the Iranian government to spearhead the design of the Ibex project, a clandestine series of intelligence facilities intended to monitor communications in the Gulf region.¹⁰⁷ The project's subsequent disclosure by the *New York Times*, in June 1976, immediately soured relations with Moscow, underlined by a front page invective published in *Pravda*, a marked increase in hostility on the part of the clandestine radio stations and a 'difficult' audience undertaken by the Soviet ambassador with the Shah during which the former elected to tackle the subject of Iran's military build-up head on.¹⁰⁸ Most damagingly however, the exposé highlighted the presence of contracted Rockwell employees in Iran, three of whom were subsequently killed in a brutal armed attack on the 28th of August 1976.¹⁰⁹ Despite an apparent lack of evidence connecting Soviet displeasure with the attack the Shah left his Court Minister, Asadollah Alam, in no doubt as to where the blame should be apportioned:

'Above all, let the ambassador know that in our opinion the blame for this atrocity rests with the communists. They're taking advantage of the US Senate and the idiotic questions raised by its committees. Various senators have suggested that US advisers might one day be taken hostage. The terrorists are now trying to impress this fear on the minds of the American public. [...] I'm also convinced, tell him, that various US journalists and newspapers are controlled by communists.'¹¹⁰

Although such a view was undoubtedly aimed at currying sympathy with the West in light of events – as the first assassination of 'non-official' U.S. citizens in Iran, the incident had greatly shocked the expatriate community – suspicion of Russian involvement was supported, in the minds of Iranian officials, by 'hard proof' that the

106 FCO 8/2502: *Soviet / Iranian Relations*, 28 June 1975, §7.

107 This point is well made by Andrew Scott-Cooper, *op. cit.*, p214.

108 Radio Iran Courier: *Iran to Cooperate in Espionage*, FBIS-MEA-75-108, R1, 2 June 1975.

109 *Three Americans Killed By Terrorists in Teheran* [sic], FBIS-MEA-76-169, R1, 28 August 1976;

110 Asadollah Alam, *The Shah & I*, p503.

terrorist organisation allegedly responsible was supported by Libya.¹¹¹ By extension, it was concluded, such activities were tacitly encouraged by the Soviet Union from behind the scenes.¹¹² It was similarly clear that the official concerns ranged far more widely than the Rockwell murders *per se*. As the Shah explained, in a highly significant audience with the British Ambassador two weeks later, Soviet agitators had now elected to ‘concentrate on’ Iranian students abroad and terrorist organisations within Iran.¹¹³ Two months later, the Shah issued a further warning via the Foreign Ministry, appraising the British ambassador of contact between Iraj Eskandiari and Enrico Berlinguer, respectively leaders of the Iranian (Tudeh) and Italian Communist parties. The Shah was, as the ambassador commented, ‘clearly firmly convinced’ that the meeting could not have taken place without specific approval from Moscow.¹¹⁴

The above state of affairs provided the backdrop for a particularly noteworthy episode, illustrating both the impact of Iranian anxieties on practical policy, and the integral nature of US-Iranian ties within the overall equation. On the 26th of September 1976, a mid-ranking Soviet Air Force Lieutenant, Valentin Zosimov, defected from Soviet Azerbaijan to Iran in an Antanov-2 biplane and sought political asylum.¹¹⁵ One month later, in spite of significant international protest – including a direct, official protest from the UN’s High Commissioner for Human Rights – the Iranian government decided to turn Zosimov over to the Soviet authorities, under the highly questionable legal cover of a 1973 Bilateral Agreement to combat airborne piracy.¹¹⁶ By all accounts, substantial

111 See Hoveyda’s interview with *Le Monde*, FBIS-MEA-76-106, R6, 28 May 1976; two days after the Rockwell murders, *Radio Mihan Parastan* (Radio of the Patriots), broadcasting in Persian from Tripoli, praised the act as “revolutionary”, describing it as the “correct answer of our people to [...] the Shah, his corrupt establishment and [...] his American overlords.” *Clandestine Radio on Killing of American Advisers*, FBIS-MEA-76-170, R1, 30 August 1976. The station, previously situated in Iraq, was thought to have links with *Cherikha-ye Fedayi-ye Khalq* (The People’s Guerillas), of which the alleged ringleader of the attack on the Rockwell employees was a member. See FCO 8/2729: *Soviet Subversive Intentions Against Iran*, 30 September 1976, §3(c). For expatriate reaction to events see *Frightened Americans Seek to Improve Security in Iran* in *Washington Post*, 31 August 1976.

112 FCO 8/2984: *Iran / USSR Relations*, 19 January 1977, §4

113 FCO 8/2729: *Soviet Subversive Intentions Against Iran*, 15 September 1976, §4. For a similar argument, see: GWU, *National Security Archive*, Episode 18, Interview with Jimmy Carter, p3. (www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/coldwar/interviews/episode-18/carter3.html, accessed 21.03.13.)

114 FCO 8/2729: *Relations Between Iran and the Soviet Union*, 10 November 1976, §2; in actual fact, the initiative from the meeting had come from Eskandiari and Berlinguer had felt it would be imprudent to refuse, §3.

115 Chronicle of Human Rights Protection in the USSR (in Russian), Issue 23-24 (1976), p52.

116 Chronicle of Human Rights Protection in the USSR (in Russian), Issue 30 (April-June, 1978), p62. For the text of 1973 Agreement on Airborne Piracy see *Collection of Active Treaties, Agreements and*

pressure had been exerted by Moscow.¹¹⁷ The unfortunate Lieutenant was subsequently convicted of treason and sentenced to twelve years in a hard labour camp.¹¹⁸ This concession by Iran to the Soviet Union on a sensitive issue was reciprocated in the replacement of Ambassador Erofeev, who had been in post for nine years, in favour of a diplomat with more senior standing, Vladimir Vinogradov.¹¹⁹ Summoned to see the Foreign Minister, Vinogradov was informed that he ‘hardly needed to be told what great importance’ relations with Iran had for the USSR, however, Gromyko added, ‘something is rather amiss.’¹²⁰ It would in fact appear that Erofeev had become personally unacceptable to the Shah following their ‘famous’ exchange of views earlier in the year; “those of us who have necks sometimes get them cut off”, the outgoing ambassador was heard to remark.¹²¹ Instructively, the rapprochement also came at a time of heightened tension between Iran and the West. In a private letter to President Ford, dated the 1st of November – three days after Zosimov's return to the Soviet Union – but withheld by Iran's Ambassador in Washington, Ardeshir Zahedi, until after the presidential election on the 2nd of November, the Shah's tone expressed anger at stiffening Western attitudes toward Iran on the subject of oil prices and, in an unusually direct threat, betrayed a nervousness regarding the future direction of American policy:

‘You are no doubt aware of my deep concern for the need to maintain close cooperation between our countries. However, if there is any opposition in Congress or other circles to see Iran prosperous and militarily strong, there are other sources of supply to which we can turn: our life is not in their hands.’¹²²

To underline the point, at the end of November the Iranian government concluded a \$528 million arms deal with the USSR, by some considerable margin the largest

Conventions concluded between the USSR and Foreign States (Moscow 1976), pp293-295.

117 Chronicle of Human Rights Protection in the USSR (in Russian), *ibid.* Issue, p62. See also FCO 8/2984: *Iran / USSR Relations*, 19 January 1977, §5.

118 Chronicle of Human Rights Protection in the USSR (in Russian), *ibid.* Issue, p68.

119 *Asnad-e Laneh-ye Jasusi*, Vol. 47, p32: *Soviet Ambassador Vladimir Yakovlevich Yerofeyev*; p83, *Vladimir Mikhaylovich Vinogradov*. (Central Intelligence Agency profiles.) Following his posting to Iran, Vinogradov went on to become Foreign Minister of the Russian Federative Socialist Republic.

120 V. M. Vinogradov (1998): *Diplomacy: People and Events. An Ambassador's Notes*, p354.

121 FCO 8/2984, Folio 1: *Iran / USSR Relations*, 19 January 1977, §9; Radio Iran Courier (*Peyk-e Iran*), evidently in recognition of Iran's forthcoming approach with Zosimov, ceased broadcasting. *Ibid.*, §6

122 Andrew Scott Cooper, *op. cit.*, p341-2.

hitherto signed between the two countries.¹²³ In a significant reversal of Kosygin's rejected 1973 offer, it was now the Iranian side (by their own admission) that had approached the Soviets for advanced weaponry.¹²⁴ Thus, as relations cooled with the United States, Iranian leaders again looked to the USSR as a counterbalance; a function the latter was only too pleased to fulfil. Thus, by the start of 1978 two important trends can be discerned. First, for the reasons outlined above, a genuine and mutually-beneficial stability had been achieved in Soviet-Iranian relations; evidenced both by the enhanced level of economic exchange and a series of notable diplomatic concessions from both sides. Secondly, and notwithstanding the former point, the Shah's entrenched and intractable convictions regarding the external, communist-inspired nature of opposition to the regime demonstrably restricted his ability to recognise or engage with the true internal, societal determinants of Iran's incipient revolutionary storm.¹²⁵

Reticence and Realisation: Soviet Policy towards Iran in 1978

One of the first visits the new Soviet ambassador made following his appointment was to Amir Abbas Hoveyda, by then the Shah's longest-serving Prime Minister. The two had developed a friendly relationship dating back to 1967 when the Hoveyda had made an official visit to the Soviet Union.¹²⁶ They met, as Vinogradov recalled, 'as old friends' – a circumstance which 'naturally helped' his work in Tehran. In a lengthy *tour d'horizon*, Hoveyda dwelt at length on Iran's differences with West European countries and, in particular, with America:

'Relations with the USA are complex [...] one cannot rely on them. We do not know what Carter represents. His recent letter to the Shah [...] concluded with the impudent expression 'Write me' - the same way he ended his [February 1977] letter to [prominent Soviet dissident, Andrei] Sakharov. This absolutely infuriated the Shah.'¹²⁷

123 *Asnad-e Laneh-ye Jasusi*, Vol. 50: *Iran's Relations with Communist Countries*, 12 January 1977

124 FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. 27: *Memorandum from Oakley to Scowcroft*, 10 December 1976.

125 For a revealing counterbalance to the Shah's views on 'communist' agitation among students, for example, see in *ibid.*, *Telegram from the Embassy in Iran*, 19 March 1976, which argued that discontent over rising tuition fees was based on dissatisfaction with the country's military expenditure.

126 Vinogradov, *op. cit.*, p395; FCO 17/382, *Irano-Soviet Relations*, 25 July 1967.

127 Vinogradov, *op. cit.*, p396.

The Iranian government's distaste for the newly-elected Carter administration and its preoccupation with human rights was indeed shared by the Soviet leadership, which had naturally found itself a principal target.¹²⁸ Apparently seeking to build on this common ground, Hoveyda intimated:

“The Americans behave in an overly familiar way toward Iran; they try to interfere [...] As a consequence, we have more problems in our relations with America than we do with the Soviet Union. Although there are deep difference in ideology between our two countries, our respective governments nevertheless understand each others' interests.”¹²⁹

Vinogradov's account of Hoveyda's apparent willingness to pursue greater accommodation with the Soviet Union in light of the perceived unreliability of Iran's Western allies finds support in the memoirs of Amir Ashraf, an Iranian diplomat and close confidante of the Shah. Recalling the events of May 1978 in his role as then Chief of Protocol at the Imperial Court, Ashraf wrote:

‘I suggested to His Majesty that now that the Americans and the Europeans are agitating against Iran it would be better that we get closer to the Russians so they understood that Iran would review its foreign policy, or that [...] we invite Brezhnev to Iran. His Majesty accepted my proposal and summoned the Russian ambassador. The next day the Russian ambassador was given an audience during which His Majesty reminded him of the friendly relations between Iran and Russia and there was talk of inviting Brezhnev to Iran [...]; the ambassador happily agreed to inform Moscow of the royal decision.’¹³⁰

It is difficult to assess the extent to which such approaches, if accurately reported, were genuinely intended to enlist Russian support in the face of mounting protests, or in fact

128 See Brezhnev's letter to Carter in Zbigniew Brzezinski (1983), *Power and Principle*, p155; see also Sarah B. Snyder (2011), *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War*, pp87-88.

129 Vinogradov, *op. cit.*, p397.

130 Mostafa Alamouti (ed.), *Iran dar asr-e Pahlavi*, No. 15 (1994), (*Mosahebe*); Amir Aslan Ashraf (1999) *Sarvha dar bad: akharin ruzha-ye shah dar Tehran*, p143. Vinogradov himself, who describes several audiences with the Shah in his own memoirs, makes no mention of such a proposal; if made at all, it would appear to have been declined.

to dissuade the Soviets from encouraging the opposition while simultaneously leveraging any improvement in relations to pressurise the Americans. Vinogradov himself was inclined to be cynical.¹³¹ What remains beyond doubt however, is that the developing internal situation in Iran presented the Kremlin with some uncomfortable policy choices, underlined by the length of Vinogradov's summer 'break' in 1978, which by the ambassador's own account lasted from June to September.¹³² On the one hand, a long sought-after opportunity had arisen to enhance Soviet influence over an increasingly isolated Iranian regime, the reliability of whose staunchest ally was in doubt. On the other hand, that same regime stubbornly refused to loosen its ties with West – a key Soviet objective – and had become, in Vinogradov's assessment, 'clearly objectionable to its people.'¹³³ Official responses, reflecting this dilemma, were initially characterised by caution. Publicly, Soviet media, while implying sympathy for the political demands of the opposition, tended to focus on American activities in Iran and carried no direct criticism of the regime itself.¹³⁴ 'The Soviet calculation', a British assessment from late November 1978 was led to conclude, 'appears to be that the Shah may pull through.'¹³⁵ It was an impression that Soviet officials were themselves eager to cultivate, seeking to avoid charges of interference. Most remarkably, at an informal meeting in Tehran between the U.S. Embassy's Political Officer, John Stempel, and the Second Secretary at the Soviet Embassy, Guennady Kazankin, the latter volunteered his government's hope that conditions in Iran would 'settle down'; the U.S., he bluntly charged, was 'not doing enough to help the Shah.'¹³⁶

Moscow's apparent preference for maintaining the status quo notwithstanding, it became progressively clear that the mounting unrest posed significant risks for the Soviet Union's interests in Iran. By October 1978, strikes at the Esfahan steel mill came close to necessitating a full-scale shutdown, and a walk-out by workers on the IGAT pipeline had halted deliveries of natural gas to the Caucasian SSRs.¹³⁷ In a note to the Iranian Foreign Ministry on the 28th of October, the Soviet Embassy complained that a series of

131 Vinogradov, *op. cit.*, p395.

132 Vinogradov, *op. cit.*, p401-2.

133 Vinogradov, *op. cit.*, p390.

134 FCO 8/3196: *British Embassy in Moscow to Middle East Department*, 29 November 1978.

135 FCO 8/3196: *Iran: Soviet Comment*, 18 November 1978, §1.

136 *Asnad-e Laneh-ye Jasusi*, Vol. 48, *Memorandum of Conversation*, 13 November 1978, p80.

137 Vinogradov, *op. cit.*, p382; *Asnad-e Laneh-ye Jasusi*, Vol. 48: *Memorandum of Conversation*, p80

fires had been deliberately started at the Soviet-built Ramin power station in Khuzestan and, in a separate incident, the homes of Russian specialists in Boroujerdi attacked and vandalised.¹³⁸ The gravity of the situation was soon mirrored in Tehran itself by widespread protests on the 5th of November, notable both for the lack of security provided to the Soviet Embassy, and, as Vinogradov himself recalled, the shouts of the crowd outside: *marg bar shuravi* ('Death to the USSR.')¹³⁹ In response to these developments, the embattled Soviet ambassador took the unprecedented decision to request permission from the Iranian authorities to issue a plea on national television and radio.¹⁴⁰ Underlining the Soviet Union's 'principle of non-interference' in Iranian affairs, Vinogradov took the opportunity to forcefully (albeit implicitly) differentiate between Soviet and Western economic assistance:

'The industrial enterprises and various other economic projects [...] being built in Iran with the assistance of the Soviet Union belong entirely to Iran. The Soviet Union is not motivated by the goal of extracting profits. Soviet specialists, working side by side with Iranian employees at the Esfahan Steel Mill, at construction plants, on fishing vessels and in powerplants [...] they are fellow workers, comrades. Indeed, they have not come to Iran for higher pay but rather to fulfil the mandate given them by the Soviet nation; to provide friendly help to our neighbour Iran in attaining economic independence.'¹⁴¹

The intervention did not have the desired effect; the Ramin power station continued to be targeted by arsonists, despite being guarded by the Armed Forces.¹⁴² As dependants of the Soviet Embassy staff and other non-essential personnel began to be evacuated, Moscow became increasingly concerned by the insistence of the Shah's regime, as of local and Western media, on identifying 'communist intrigue' as the primary source of

138 АБПРФ, ф.94, оп.62, п.260, д. № 013, т.3, л.91-2, *Urgent Note* dated 28 October 1978.

139 Vinogradov, *op. cit.*, p388. For the evacuation of Soviet personnel see: FCO 8/3196, Folio 1, *Iran: Soviet Comment*, 18 November 1978, §2. An American survey estimated the number of Soviet personnel and dependants in Iran at the time as 8,000: *Asnad-e Laneh-ye Jasusi*, Vol. 48: *Soviet Presence in Iran*, 14 November 1978, pp82-85.

140 The Soviet documentary record indicates that the initial approach to the Foreign Ministry (by the embassy's Press Attaché) was made on the 29th of October 1978, the day after the attack on the Ramin powerplant. АБПРФ, ф.094, оп.62, п.260, д. № 013, т.3, л.95: Telegram dated 29 October 1978.

141 АБПРФ, ф.094, оп.62, п.260, д. № 013, т.3, л.99: *Ambassador's Address*, 7 November 1978.

142 АБПРФ, ф.094, оп.62, п.260, д. № 013, т.3, л.125: *Protest to Iranian Foreign Ministry*, 28 November 1978.

‘incitement’ behind the street protests. It was thought this campaign might be a deliberate strategy designed to provide a platform for American intervention, as had been the case with the Mosaddeq regime in 1953.¹⁴³ In an effort to counter this impression, President Carter, in a statement on the 13th of November affirmed that his government had ‘no evidence that the Soviets [...] are trying to disrupt the existing government structure in Iran.’ Drawing on lessons learnt ‘the hard way in Vietnam’, Carter insisted the U.S had no wish to get involved ‘unless our own security should be threatened.’¹⁴⁴ For the Soviet leadership, however, the latter reservation only served to heighten their concern. Brezhnev, in a direct riposte issued six days later, decisively advertised his own rejection of outside interference in Iran, warning that the Soviet Union ‘could not watch indifferently’ in the event of foreign ‘and especially military’ intervention in Iran.¹⁴⁵ In Tehran, Vinogradov made hurried preparations to ensure Brezhnev's statement was given as wide a distribution as possible. His endeavours, however, met with little success.

‘It slowly became clear that the Shah [...] after reflecting for a while, had decided not to publicise Brezhnev's statement. His reasoning, it transpired, was as follows: if the text were published without critical comment, it would be interpreted as an attack on the USA. And yet it was not possible to criticise the statement; indeed, the Soviet Union had underlined in it the necessary of guaranteeing Iran's independence.’¹⁴⁶

Vinogradov's account conveys the sense of frustration his superiors felt about the difficulty in making the USSR's views known. In point of fact, the Soviet leader's unusual public intervention did little to deter the Carter regime from exploring military options, even if major divisions did exist within U.S. administration; two articles in the *New York Times* at the end of December 1978, which appeared to report authoritatively

143 Vinogradov, *op. cit.*, p373, p380 & p390.

144 FCO 8/3196: *British Embassy in Washington to Middle East Department*, 20 November 1978

145 *Pravda*, 19 November 1978: Ответ Л. И. Брежнева на вопросы корреспондента <<Правда>>; all texts of presidential 'answers' in the *Pravda* newspaper received prior approval from the Central Committee, preserved in Архив Президента Российской Федерации, Фонд Л. И. Врежнева.

146 Vinogradov, *op. cit.*, p389

on the options being considered, caused the Kremlin particular alarm.¹⁴⁷ For Moscow, the revelation that ‘Pentagon analysts [had] advocated a larger military role for American armed forces in the region’ was a step too far, as was the suggestion that some quarters in the U.S. were ‘prepared, if necessary, to go up in flames with the Shah.’¹⁴⁸ In a robust and important counter-offensive, *Pravda*'s leading article on the 11th of January 1979 evidenced a significant hardening in attitudes:

‘To the extent that American attempts to direct events along their desired course have been unsuccessful, an old acquaintance has begun to loom on the horizon: the spectre of ‘the Soviet threat.’ [...] A pretext must be found [...] And thus they are now speaking of expedited measures for a ‘last resort’ coup and institution of military dictatorship in Iran if the Bakhtiar government is unable to maintain ‘order’ or if it seeks normalisation of the situation at the price of too many major concessions to the opposition democratic forces.’¹⁴⁹

In explicitly contrasting Soviet non-interference with the alleged imperialist machinations of the West, ‘who Lord it over Iran like it is their personal fiefdom’, the piece signalled an abrupt departure from the hitherto restrained Soviet press coverage of the uprisings.¹⁵⁰ More notably, given both the article's timing and its explicit attempt to undermine the credibility of the Bakhtiar government, its message appeared tailor-made to strengthen the Soviet Union's credibility with a post-revolutionary regime and, in particular, to appeal to the clergy.

Soviet strategy thus began to shift, albeit belatedly, from one of containment to one of actively preparing for transition in Iran. Such an analysis is supported, in practical policy terms, by a remarkable collection of evidence from the KGB archives in Baku obtained by Azerbaijani scholar, Jamil Hasanli.¹⁵¹ The documents reveal that, one week prior to the *Pravda* article's publication, a decision was taken at the highest level to

147 *Asnad-e Laneh-ye Jasusi*, Vol. 48: *Embassy in Moscow to Secretary of State*, 13 January 1979, §3

148 See articles by Richard Burt in the *New York Times*, 28 and 31 December 1978.

149 A. Petrov: *The Spectre of the Soviet Threat* in *Pravda*, 11 January 1979.

150 The Americans were clearly taken aback by the change in tack, describing the article as ‘hysterical.’
Asnad-e Laneh-ye Jasusi, Vol. 48: *Embassy in Moscow to Secretary of State*, 13 January 1979, §2.

151 Jamil Hasanli (2006): *The USSR and Iran: The Azerbaijan Crisis and the Start of the Cold War*, p14.

encourage the Iranian People's Party (*Tudeh*) – whose Central Committee was based in Leipzig – to unite the Iranian left with Khomeini against the Shah in what was styled the ‘first stage’ of Iran's revolution.¹⁵² Nouredin Kianouri (see Chapter One, attempted assassination of the Shah in 1949) was ordered to Baku in an effort to secure the support of the Azerbaijan Democratic Party in his mission to assume control of *Tudeh* and to impress the Kremlin's refreshed strategy upon his Azeri comrades. It had become clear that the position taken by *Tudeh*'s incumbent first secretary, Iraj Eskandari (namely that the Iranian opposition movement's religious colouring should ‘not be exaggerated’) was wildly at odds with reality.¹⁵³ Eskandari had not sought cooperation with the clergy, believing that they and *Tudeh* were ‘simply participating in one and the same movement.’¹⁵⁴ In conversation with the leader of ADP on the 3rd of January, Geydar Aliev - then First Secretary of the Azerbaijan SSR emphasised the new official line:

‘At the present time in Iran there is no more popular person than Khomeini. They believe in him. People go to their deaths with portraits of him. It is necessary to understand that he is engaged in struggle not only against the throne, but also the American presence in Iran.’¹⁵⁵

The shift in Soviet strategy was further evidenced by an ‘exchange of views’ on the post-revolutionary environment between the Soviet Third Secretary in Tehran, Mohamed Osmanov, and an American counterpart: one of several such meetings that took place prior to the U.S. Embassy siege. Osmanov openly confirmed Moscow's assessment, namely, that Khomeini's broad popular support was indicative of his ‘progressive’ tendencies; and that, while the Soviet side still had doubts and reservations, they were ‘hopeful’ that once the Ayatollah was exposed to the broader thinking of his fellow revolutionaries, ‘he would moderate some of his views.’¹⁵⁶ Accordingly, at the *Tudeh* Party's 16th Plenum – held in Leipzig in February 1979 ‘with

152 *Ibid.*, p488

153 See Eskandari's interview with Prague-based journal *Problems of Peace and Socialism* in FCO 8/3196, Folio 8, *Interview with Iraj Eskandari*, 24 November 1978, §1(A). Notably the journal carried no editorial comment on the interview, nor were Eskandari's views discussed in the Soviet press, underlining the Soviet leadership's ambivalence toward the *Tudeh* leader. FCO 8/3196, Folio 6: *Interview with Iraj Eskandari*, 23 November 1978, §2.

154 FCO 8/3196, Folio 8, *Interview with Iraj Eskandari*, 24 November 1978, §1(E).

155 Jamil Hasanli, *op. cit.*, p488.

156 *Asnad-e Laneh-ye Jasusi*, Vol. 49: *Exchange of Views with Soviets on Iran*, p5, §2.

the active participation' of the Soviet Ambassador to the German Democratic Republic – the decision was taken to formally approach Khomeini and Bazargan with a request to broaden the participation of the Tudeh within post-revolutionary politics. Kianouri, in line with Moscow's wishes, was confirmed as leader.¹⁵⁷ Eskandiari was demoted.¹⁵⁸

The foregoing account supports an argument that the Soviet position, one of both public and private restraint prior to and indeed during the 'first stage' of the revolution itself, was one of active – if somewhat belated – preparation in the background to take advantage of its aftermath; a conclusion further evidenced by the fact that the Soviet Union became the first country to offer the new regime economic aid.¹⁵⁹ It was however, seen in retrospect, a policy of considerable naivety. If Soviet leaders hoped that by ingratiating itself with the incoming regime it might strengthen the hand of leftist forces, as early as July it was forced to admit that Tudeh's optimistic predictions had been woefully misplaced. A postmortem in Moscow conducted jointly between the head of the Politburo's international department with delegates from the Iranian People's Party and the Azerbaijan Democrat Party concluded as follows:

'The Peoples' Party of Iran (Tudeh), as a result of its policy of unconditional support for Khomeini, has isolated itself. Practically all leftist and democratic organisations have turned away from it, and are now subjecting Tudeh to sharp criticism. Religious leaders, for their part, totally ignore Tudeh and, notwithstanding Kianouri's repeated attempts to reach out to them, refuse all contact with him.'¹⁶⁰

As a consequence, and even as the ruling clergy's subsequent determination to eliminate leftist opposition became clear, and Soviet involvement in Afghanistan deepened, Kianouri's urgent request to Moscow for armed reinforcements met with an ambivalent response.¹⁶¹ The affiliations of the senior Tudeh leadership, allegedly exposed to British

157 Jamil Hasanli, *op. cit.*, p488-499.

158 Mahziar Behrooz (2000), *Rebels Without a Cause: The Failure of the Left in Iran*, p124.

159 James A. Phillips (Heritage Foundation, 1979): *The Iranian Revolution, Long Term Implications*, p9.

160 Jamil Hasanli, *op. cit.*, p489.

161 The head of the KGB ultimately recommended that 'considering [...] the position of the Tudeh itself and indeed of leftist forces as a whole, we suggest it may be prudent to return to Kianouri's request at

Intelligence by KGB defector Vladimir Kuzichkin in 1982, and subsequently shared with Iran's revolutionary authorities by the CIA as part of the Iran-Contra affair, subsequently sealed the tragic fate of the Iranian left.¹⁶²

Conclusion

The momentous consequences of the Shah's determination to pursue military 'credibility' at the expense of closer attention to domestic policy features prominently in the literature on Pahlavi foreign relations.¹⁶³ A related tendency, both among scholars of the period and indeed those themselves involved in its events, is to focus on the effects of Western policy in Iran. The assessment offered by Sir Eldon Griffiths – a member of the UK House of Commons foreign policy both before and during the Revolution – provides a typical example of such an approach. 'It was our pressure', he wrote, 'that led the Shah to overestimate the Soviet threat and spend far too large a share of Iran's income on the sophisticated weaponry of which we were the principal suppliers.'¹⁶⁴ By contrast this chapter has sought to argue that the chief underlying determinant of Iranian foreign policy during the 1970s remained, as previously, an instinctive suspicion and distrust of the Soviet Union nurtured by the Shah quite independently. It is undeniably the case that Western officials encouraged that suspicion to varying degrees, much to the chagrin of their Russian counterparts.¹⁶⁵ Yet they were not its source. Principally, it was the impact of an historical experience, a consistent theme in the preceding chapters of this thesis, that had predisposed Iranian leaders to perceptions of 'the socialist tide'; a trend discerned as far afield as Italy and New Zealand.¹⁶⁶ Such sensitivities were, again as previously, reinforced by the excesses of clandestine Communist radio stations, the tenor of whose programming – as one U.S. analysis conceded – the Iranian government

a later date.' *Ibid.*, p.490

162 Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin (2005): *The Sword and the Shield: the Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB*, p640; Jonathan Marshall, Peter Dale Scott and Jane Hunter (1987), *The Iran Contra Connection: Secret Teams and Covert Operations in the Reagan Era*, p160

163 For a detailed assessment see Robert E. Looney: *The Role of Military Expenditures in Pre-Evolutionary Iran's Economic Decline* in *Iranian Studies*, Volume XXI, Number 3-4, 1988, pp53.

164 Sir Eldon Griffiths (2006), *Turbulent Iran: Recollections and Revelations*, p33.

165 Vinogradov, for example, refers plaintively to the effect of American advisers in 'changing' the Shah's initially 'calm' assessment of the Afghan Revolution in April 1978. Vinogradov, *op. cit.*, p363. The documentary evidence suggests, in fact, that the Shah chiefly persuaded himself: 'Even if it was not a Russian coup, they must have known about it.' FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. 27: *Meeting between President Nixon, the Shah and Kissinger*, 24 July 1973.

166 FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. 27: *Memorandum from Nixon to Kissinger*, 19 January 1973.

could be 'forgiven for assuming' was aimed at its violent overthrow.¹⁶⁷ Soviet regional activities came to acquire a central significance in directing the course of Iran's foreign policy, irrespective of however limited, cautious, or unsuccessful Moscow's various activities or Middle Eastern forays may have been in reality.

Analogously, a clear motivational factor in Soviet regional diplomacy remained its concern with resisting, or at least containing, any American military presence in the Persian Gulf. Consistent with events of the 1950s and 1960s, this sensitivity was clearly evidenced in the Soviet response to Iran's military build-up, and in particular, to projects such as that appeared to provide America with a physical foothold in Iran or entail the long-term presence of U.S. personnel or threaten the security of Soviet borders. The Irbis radar installations and, latterly, the proposed sale of AWACS aircraft were a particular source of tension. The memoirs of Vladimir Vinogradov, the Soviet Union's last ambassador to pre-revolutionary Iran, provide a fascinating insight:

'The Shah and, under his direction, Prime Minister Hoveyda constantly tried to inspire us with the notion that Iran's warm relations with the USA were a, quote, "temporary matter" – until Iran could stand on her own two feet. When for instance I raised the question of Iran's possible purchase of AWACS jets from the USA, the Shah tried to convince me that these planes were necessary because of Iran's 'challenging mountainous terrain.' I was obliged to direct his Majesty's attention to the operational surveillance radius of these aircraft; they could cover a substantial part of Soviet territory. Moreover it was known that American personnel would maintain them. Did this not contradict repeated assurances that Iran's territory would not be used to the detriment of her northern neighbour's security? The Shah tried to manoeuvre around the issue, stating that he would not allow American pilots to serve on the jets. This was of course utter nonsense. And what if such aircraft should 'accidentally' overfly Soviet territory? "Then shoot them down", suggested the Shah coolly.'¹⁶⁸

From such exchanges it emerges strongly that Tehran and Moscow's respective

167 FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. 27: *Telegram from the Embassy in Iran*, 18 August 1976, §15.

168 Vinogradov, *op. cit.*, p363-4.

suspicious, and by extension the effects of that mistrust on practical policy, were of a mutually reinforcing character. From the Soviet perspective, they enhanced and supported a wider narrative of struggle against colonialist revanchement, identified in the alleged desire by the West to control Middle Eastern oil and singling out Iran as a tool of American neoimperialism. From the Iranian side, the suspicions both produced and perpetuated the perception of Communist grand design: a thesis expressed in terms of strategic ‘triangles’ and ‘blocs’; of Soviet attempts to ‘encircle’ the Near and Middle East through its activities in Iraq, India, South Yemen and Ethiopia; and above all, of Russia's unwavering ‘historical’ objectives.¹⁶⁹ Emotive rhetoric aside however, a sober analysis of Soviet foreign policy during the period, as the evidence presented in this chapter illustrates, was primarily defensive in instinct and cautious in execution. To the extent that an overtly aggressive impression was undoubtedly at times created, particularly through the strident pronouncements of Soviet radio stations, this appeared to reflect not so much a desire to spread communism as to match or mitigate the extension of U.S. influence in the Middle East. For Moscow, the key objective was to protect the USSR's southern borders; a consistent feature of Soviet policy from early Tsarist times. Thus, the Soviet treaties with India, Afghanistan and Iraq in the 1970s, far from being primarily directed against Iran, rather reflected a long-established Soviet priority of cultivating friendly, economically engaged neighbours on the Soviet periphery; a priority demonstrated, on closer inspection, by Soviet diplomacy toward Iran. Contrary to the Shah's vision of Russian ‘axes’ cutting across the region, Soviet policy was in fact one, as a major U.S. government study commissioned by Henry Kissinger in 1970 explicitly concluded, of ‘opportunism rather than grand design.’¹⁷⁰

It was however, precisely the opportunistic nature of Soviet policy that perpetuated and reinforced the Iranian leadership's impression of a wider strategy. Its response to this perceived threat was two-fold. The first element might be characterised as active containment. By taking the fight, as it were, to the Soviets in Iraq (and to similar extent Oman), Tehran aimed to frustrate the Kremlin's perceived attempts to infiltrate the region. The second element was economic, underlined by the healthy balance of trade maintained throughout the period, and in particular, by the agreements concluded

169 See discussion in the introduction to this thesis.

170 FRUS, 1969 – 1976, Vol. 24, *Middle East Region and Arabian Peninsula*, Documents 42 and 47.

following the resolution of the Iraq conflict in 1975. Ardeshir Zahedi, Iran's foreign minister from 1968 to 1972, was a firm proponent of this approach. Describing his government's efforts to strengthen the Soviet Union's stake in Iran's stability, he summarised the policy as one of "You can't eat the cake alone."¹⁷¹ In this manner, through limited but substantive economic engagement, the Shah's government aimed to reduce the Kremlin's appetite for coercive diplomacy.¹⁷² The policy was, in this respect, a successful one. An analysis by the Foreign Office from October 1976, prepared in response to the Shah's request for a British assessment of the Soviet threat to Iran, contains a hand-written note in the margin by one of its contributors: 'cf. dependence on Iranian gas.'¹⁷³ Indeed, the unprecedented augmentation of Iran's revenues during the period – ironically a result of the very battle against Western 'oil cartels' that the Soviet press had so fulsomely encouraged – had in its own right significantly reduced the range of methods available to Moscow for exerting pressure on its southern neighbour.¹⁷⁴

Yet the balance thus achieved was clearly an uneasy one. From the Soviet side, on the one hand, official attitudes remained consistent with long-standing attempts to foster stability in relations with Tehran, deploying a 'carrot and stick'-style approach designed to maintain influence and secure essential interests. From the Iranian side, on the other, conciliatory appearances continued to mask a deepening conviction, at times verging on paranoia, that the Soviet Union was secretly pursuing a long-range objective of undermining the régime. Indeed, following the Rockwell murders, the British Ambassador Anthony Parsons confessed himself 'a bit shocked' by the apparent hardening of Iranian attitudes, asserting that the Shah's view, in his identification of a more immediate, domestic Soviet threat, had 'changed completely.'¹⁷⁵ This assessment was surprising. Rather, the development represented a natural and, arguably, inevitable broadening of a concept that had been steadily gestating since World War II and the Shah's fateful meeting with Khrushchev in 1956; that of the 'real' Soviet face concealed

171 Interview with author, Montreux, 16 June 2012

172 For Soviet diplomacy as a balance between coercion and cooperation, see Walter K. Anderson: *Soviets in the Indian Ocean: Much Ado about Something--But What?* in *Asian Survey*, Vol. 24, No. 9 (September 1984), p914

173 FCO 8/2729, Folio 13: *Soviet Subversive Intentions Against Iran*, 15 October 1976, §2

174 FCO 8/2265, Folio 5: *Iran / Soviet Relations*, 6 June 1974, §4. This was also true of Moscow's relations with Baghdad. Khudeyda (2010), *op. cit.*, p115

175 FCO 8/2729, Folio 5: *Soviet Subversive Intentions Against Iran*, 15 September 1976, §3 & §6

beneath 'good-neighbourly' veneer. Indeed, the Shah's conception of a *maudite alliance* between the radical clergy and the Iranian left had been in development for some time.¹⁷⁶ And critically, this chapter has argued, it was this precise conception that both underlay and exacerbated the fateful combination of paralysis and overreaction with which Iran's government met the increased internal dissidence of 1978. Such an analysis is supported by the both Soviet and Western diplomatic sources, which unanimously report that in their final audiences with the Shah, the latter blamed 'the incitement of foreign agents' for the unrest.¹⁷⁷

In examining the Soviet response to events of 1978, a striking factor was the initial incomprehension regarding the revolution's genesis; a deficiency, as also seen, that arose in respect of Mosaddeq's rise to power in 1951. In a conversation with his U.S. counterpart, Guennady Kazankin of the Soviet embassy was eager to learn 'what sort of people' the U.S. Embassy thought might be involved in the 'Qom situation.'¹⁷⁸ This apparent lack of information was no doubt partly caused by the severe restrictions placed on Soviet personnel in Iran, a fact regarding which officials regularly complained. For example, Soviet diplomats were required to obtain the written permission of the Iranian Foreign Ministry for any travel within Iran. Phone lines were tapped by SAVAK and most of the time failed to work at all.¹⁷⁹ In light of such challenges, the evidence suggests that the Soviet response to events was initially to steer a strictly neutral course. At the same time, this chapter has argued that Iran's developing unrest was far from welcome to Moscow. In particular, the cessation of gas supplies in November 1978 caused, by Soviet officials' own admission, significant supply problems in southern Soviet republics during winter months.¹⁸⁰ As such difficulties compounded however, the Soviet leadership finally, in the words of one British report, 'came down off the fence.'¹⁸¹ They did so relatively late: close analysis suggests the Soviet position only began to shift appreciably in early December 1978. Attitudes finally hardened

176 See for instance Shah's speech on the 7th of June 1975 warning of 'red black reaction', noted in chronology of FCO 8/2728, *Iran: Annual Review for 1975*, 15 December 1975, p7.

177 Vinogradov, *op. cit.*, p385.

178 *Asnad-e Laneh-ye Jasusi*, Vol. 48: *Memorandum of Conversation*, 5 February 1978, p68.

179 *Asnad-e Laneh-ye Jasusi*, Vol. 48: *Memorandum of Conversation*, 3 April 1978, p73.

180 *Asnad-e Laneh-ye Jasusi*, Vol. 48: *Soviet MFA Iranian Desk Officer Discusses Iran*, 13 January 1979, §9. Even after the revolution, supplies reached only 35% of previous levels. *Ibid.*, Vol. 50: *Gas and Oil Developments in Azerbaijan [sic]*, 4 June 1979, §1, p30.

181 FCO 8/3196, Folio 13: *Telegram No. 1279 from British Embassy in Moscow*, 7 December 1978, §4.

against the Shah in January 1979 when it became clear both, that the crisis might precipitate U.S. intervention, and internally, that the Bakhtiar government was attempting to rally the 'national bourgeoisie' to his cause at the expense of the left.¹⁸²

With respect to the revolution's aftermath, the source materials presently available suggest that the Soviet leadership, both in its concern with potential U.S. intrigues, and in focussing too narrowly on a Tudeh and ADP leadership, whose isolation from events severely limited their ability to influence them, was ultimately too late in formulating, still less implementing a policy that might have furthered its ends.¹⁸³ In particular, it was slow to fully appreciate the religious nature of opposition; a fact that sat uncomfortably with the standard class analysis and objective rules of societal development to which officials and press commentators were accustomed.¹⁸⁴ The direct consequence was a failure to anticipate either the extent to which the Iranian clergy would itself appropriate the levers of power, or the implications of their ascendancy for the Soviet Union's position in Iran. Kianouri and his followers, for example, were evidently convinced that Ayatollah Khomeini would 'not place the USSR on a par with the USA.'¹⁸⁵ That they should have believed so was, in a sense, understandable; several prominent mullahs, such as Ayatollah Taleghani (who Kianouri names specifically) were known to be of a left-leaning persuasion. Yet the exiled Tudeh leadership, as events were to prove, lacked the ability to correctly predict and react to the events, still less to effectively exercise control over its adherents inside the country. Kianouri's naivety in this respect had been shared by his predecessor, Iraj Eskandiari, whose astonishing assessment, as late as November 1978, was that 'as far as we know, Iranian religious leaders have never called for the establishment of a theocratic state.'¹⁸⁶ Thus, in the final account, the Soviet Union's belated endeavours to turn Iran's revolution to its advantage were severely hampered by two factors. First, the inadequacy of the vehicle chosen. And second, the rapid progression of events to a point where the impracticality and risks of Soviet interference came to outweigh potential dividends.

182 *Asnad-e Laneh-ye Jasusi*, Vol. 48: *Soviet MFA Iranian Desk Officer Discusses Iran*, §8.

183 As the British observed: 'The Russian policy machine is notorious for taking some time to crank itself from one groove into another.' FCO 8/3196, *Soviet-Iran Relations*, 18 December 1979, §3.

184 A *Pravda* newspaper editorial on the 24th of December 1978 also exhibited a poor understanding of events by stating that religious leaders in Iran 'enjoy a certain popularity.'

185 Jamil Hasanli, *op. cit.*, c. 488

186 FCO 8/3196, Folio 8: *Interview with Iraj Eskandiari*, 24 November 1978, §1(D).

CONCLUSION

‘The departing West did not leave behind a socialist East. We never even entertained the thought that other nations might have their own values and ideals beyond the elusive Marxist doctrine proclaimed by Soviet leaders. We liked Khomeini for his firm rejection of U.S. dictates – economic, political, cultural. Here, it seemed, was an Iranian leader who ought to turn his gaze northward, to his great neighbour; to lean on her military and political might. Alas! With his characteristic dry wit the Imam once remarked: “America is worse than Britain, Britain is worse than America, but Russia is worse than them both.”’¹

- LEONID SHEBARSHIN, KGB STATION CHIEF IN TEHRAN (1979-1983)

This thesis has sought to offer an in-depth analysis of Soviet-Iranian relations in their historical context. Its stated objectives were present a chronologically-organised analysis of that relationship, in its own right, based on a detailed examination of the documentary record; to describe that relationship's impact on the broader conduct and trajectory of Iranian foreign policy under Mohammad Reza Pahlavi; to assess the consequences of Iran's Cold War alignment with the West on ties with Moscow and the extent to which Western priorities affected them; and finally, to establish to what degree the Iranian regime's perceptions of the Soviet Union, and the policy choices that resulted from those perceptions, may have contributed to its ultimate downfall. The relevancy of these issues, and their contribution to the conclusions outlined below, are central not only to the period under review in this dissertation, but also to subsequent Iranian history. In the U.S. Embassy hostage crisis that followed the revolution, for example, when a large quantity of State Department documents were confiscated and thematically published in line with the views of their hard line editors, volumes pertaining to the Soviet Union were entitled ‘The Aggressive East’ (*sharq-e tajavozgar*).² The introduction to the first volume in the series, asserting that ‘imperialism and communism are actually two manifestations of one motive [...] to deprive mankind of humanity’, provides an assessment of Soviet intentions that bears striking similarities to that expressed privately by the Shah throughout this thesis:

1 L. V. Shebarshin (2000): *The Humdrum Dreams of Life* (Russian source, memoir), p305.

2 The choice of 'East' to refer to the Soviet Union reflected Ayatollah's Khomeini's stated foreign policy of 'neither East nor West.' Nikki R. Keddie; Mark J. Gasiorowski (eds.), *Neither East nor West: Iran, the USSR, and the USA*.

‘Following the precious opportunity presented [by the Islamic Revolution] the Russians exploited their hypocritical policies and under the guise of supporting the Islamic Republic began to foster groups that were dependent on Moscow in order to achieve two goals; first to bring them to power in Iran through the special Soviet tactics [*sic*], and second to materialize [their] centuries old dream of gaining access to the rich resources of Iran and finally to the Persian Gulf.’³

And as recently as 2009, in a scene that would have been familiar to the Soviet Union's last ambassador to Pahlavi-era Iran, crowds protesting the outcome of the rigged presidential vote converged on the Russian Embassy in Tehran with cries of *marg bar russiyeh* (“Death to Russia”) reflecting public anger at the Russian government’s support of that election’s outcome.⁴

In seeking to offer a framework for understanding these themes in the Soviet-Iranian relationship, this dissertation began with a survey of prevailing theories in the international relations field and existing literature on relations between the two countries. Partially concurring with Dostoevsky, it concluded that individual theories may be insufficient, taken in isolation, to describe the complex motivations and psychological determinants that underlay and produced Iranian and Soviet foreign policy during the period. The explanatory potential of theory is further undermined with respect to Soviet-Iranian relations by the observation that, for both regimes, the exercise of policy by a single individual – or a restricted elite – introduces a further set of mental vicissitudes that frustrate any reliable analysis. As Shahram Chubin and Sepehr Zabih have diplomatically noted, ‘When controlled by one person, foreign policy will tend to project that person's temperament. It will tend to view other systems of government as personal, and to equate personal slights with insults to the state and personal antipathy to national rivalry.’⁵

There can be no doubt that Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, and particularly toward the latter end of his reign saw the world in anarchic terms; Iran had no choice but to augment its

3 *Asnad-e Laneh-ye Jasusi*, Vol. 47, p1-3.

4 ‘Why Opposition’s ‘Death to Russia’ is the new ‘Death to America’’, *New York Times*, 20 July 2009

5 Shahram Chubin and Sepehr Zabih (1974), *The Foreign Relations of Iran*, p20.

military strength in order hold its own in an increasingly uncertain world. To this extent, he might be said to have been a realist. Yet, as the evidence presented in this thesis has also highlighted, the actions and policies of the Shah and his government were also in significant degree both historically and socially contingent. Collective memory of perceived or actual injustice at the hands of Russia was both historically rooted and a key article of faith among the elite. Prime Minister Hoveyda, for example, debriefing the British Ambassador on his return from Moscow in 1975, emphasised that, notwithstanding the relative success of the trip, ‘his generation could never forget the Soviet occupation of Azerbaijan’ and that Russia's action had ‘left an indelible mark on him.’⁶ Thus, to the extent that the relationship was significantly determined, in the words of Alexander Wendt ‘by shared ideas rather than material forces’, it may also be explained in constructivist terms. Both of the above elements may be discerned in a remarkable interview given by the Shah in 1976:

‘[Interviewer] What are your Majesty's worries about the future? [Shah] As far as the domestic situation is concerned, fortunately I have nothing to worry about. However, when it comes to the world situation, I have a great deal to worry about. It seems that within the next 7 or 8 years, the fate of today's world be settled. Will civilisation as we know it [...] survive? However, those planning to put an end to the present civilisation should not have the misconception that, once it is changed, the world will become Marxist. On the contrary, Marxism, too, will perish. [Interviewer] Do you share the general pessimism concerning the forces of what is known as the totalitarian bloc? [Shah] Yes. And our pessimism stems from the complacency and carelessness of the other party [i.e. the West] I see nothing to make me optimistic. Our only alternative is to become and remain more powerful.’⁷

The exchange provides an further illustration, as has been witnessed throughout this thesis, of the direct connection between the Shah's ‘realist’ apprehensions vis-à-vis the Soviet Union and Iran’s pursuit of military supremacy to the subordination and ultimately detriment of economic and societal considerations. Within the same interview

6 FCO 17/382: *Visit of Iranian Prime Minister to Moscow*, 10 August 1967, §10(c).

7 FBIS-MEA-76-209, *Shah Interviewed on Domestic and World Situation*, 28 October 1976, R8.

however, the connection between those ambitions and the impact of constructed ‘ideas’ also finds clear expression, in this case the devoutly held and urgently perceived need, as argued in Chapter Four, to counter the weight of past humiliation:

‘[Interviewer] It is fifty years since the establishment of the Pahlavi dynasty. When your majesty views the past half century, what do you see? [Shah] Above all, I think about the previous condition of the country. How did this country, divided between Russia and Britain, remain a *de facto* state? This is really amazing. During the entire course of Iranian history, our country's decline coincided with an upsurge of European civilisation. At precisely that point, they lured our people to sleep. We were being ridiculed by everyone. It should suffice to recall a simple incident. During the period of decline, they [the Iranian government] had issued orders for a road to be built between *Pol-e Rumi* and *Tajrish* [two adjacent areas of northern Tehran] in order to establish a route between Tehran and Gilan. Now pay attention: they [the Russian authorities] reported to the then-governor that this was not possible. This is a fact.’⁸

Observing therefore the difficulty of applying any discrete theory of international relations to the Soviet-Iranian relationship, the introductory chapter proposed the need for a more nuanced view of Pahlavi foreign relations, attaching particular importance to the process of historical myth-making in underpinning and informing policy. To deploy the term ‘myth’ does not, it bears reemphasising, seek to deny the immediacy and relevancy of Soviet interference for Iranian politicians, which was both real and legitimate, nor to ignore Moscow’s analogous concern at American involvement in Iran. Rather, its aim has been to highlight the centrality of political narratives, and to evidence their power as a justificatory framework in the conduct of relations. Accordingly this dissertation, in contrast to the approach adopted by Chubin and Zabih, has focussed primarily on the perceptions, motivations and decision-making processes giving rise to the conduct of specific episodes in Soviet-Iranian relations, as opposed to a narrower concern with the physical content and outcome of foreign policy; and argued that Iranian elite conviction in the Soviet government's ‘historical’ objectives – and by

8 FBIS-MEA-76-209, *Shah Interviewed on Domestic and World Situation*, 28 October 1976, R14-15. The implication was that the Russians kept Iran divided by denying the authorities access to the north.

turn, Soviet preoccupation with perceived Western imperialism – were both profound and wide-ranging in impact. From the perspective of Iranian history, while such an analytic framework cannot in itself provide the full picture (indeed, as seen, the Shah's broadly pro-Western inclinations were not entirely unwavering and his personal admiration for the USSR's agricultural, technical and scientific advancements appear to have been genuine), the basic underlying conception of communist grand design – physically demonstrated by Stalin's territorial adventurism and psychologically reinforced by Khrushchevian bombast – ultimately frustrated any attempt by the two sides to reach a lasting accommodation and precluded the neutral foreign policy position that Dr. Mohammad Mosaddeq had coveted.

As Chapter One endeavoured to show, Iran's 'bitter experiences' of World War II, most prominently the Soviet Union's demand for an oil concession and concurrent activities in Iranian Azerbaijan, were a significant factor in prompting Mosaddeq's call for 'negative equilibrium.' Yet as the Prime Minister was to subsequently discover, practical enactment of this ostensibly simple principle – that no one country should be in a position to dictate Iranian interests – succeeded only in attracting the incremental suspicion of Washington and a lack of sympathy from Moscow. In particular, the documentary evidence presented from the Soviet archives has shown that Mosaddeq's explicit wish to utilise Soviet aid in order to extract concessions from the West was as unrealistic as it was unappetising to the Soviet negotiators. This was, after all, an era of bullish competition between the Cold War opponents: each outside party desired and indeed expected that a gain for their own political position in Iran should come at the other side's expense. This explains Soviet leaders' reluctance to support an otherwise textbook 'national liberation movement', since to have done so would have met neither of their primary objectives: reducing Western influence in Iran and, connectedly, ensuring the security of the USSR's southern flank. Mosaddeq's asking price however (namely, the tabling of 'other' issues in Soviet-Iranian relations, and more specifically, the USSR's right of armed entry to Iran on the basis of the 1921 Treaty) was unacceptable to Moscow insofar as such a move would risk reducing their leverage over Iran with little tangible gain in return for its support. The Soviet leadership's resolute refusal to accept such an exchange, as the fascinating negotiation minutes between the

Soviet ambassador and Hossein Fatemi bear witness, effectively led (and not for the last time) to an insuperable impasse.⁹ To a significant degree, both sides overplayed their hand and neither won.

Meanwhile, for the Shah himself, the events of 1946, 1949 and 1953 had shown that a febrile political environment and an uncontrolled opposition appeared to be an open invitation to Soviet-sponsored subversion. It is important to recognise that this (ultimately dominant) narrative was not without its justification. Soviet sponsorship of the Pishevari regime in Azerbaijan is an historical fact; KGB support for certain elements within the Tudeh party cannot reasonably be doubted although the commitment certainly varied in line with wider political goals; and the potential willingness to support the Mosaddeq regime in order to loosen Iran's relations with the West is a matter of archival record. As Chapter One has suggested however, such a reading requires some significant qualifications. First, Moscow's adventurism in Azerbaijan (in common with its precursor in Tsarist times) can be substantially explained by a desire to secure a greater political and economic stake in Iran, rather than subversion or territorial expansion for its own sake. Second, available evidence suggests that the assassination attempt on the Shah of 1949 proceeded from factionalism within the Tudeh party and from a radicalism which the KGB probably supported to some degree but did not explicitly direct. Third, Soviet interaction with Mosaddeq's government, although giving the external impression of a coincidence of interests between the two sides, the reality was considerably cooler. Such nuances notwithstanding, the critical impression made on the Shah and other senior figures by these undoubted failures of Soviet policy, caused at heart by the blunt and binary approach to international affairs of which Stalin and Molotov were chief architects, (and which Khrushchev gave the impression of continuing), first precipitated – and subsequently appeared to justify – the Shah's decision to adhere to the Baghdad Pact.

Yet the Shah's rationale for siding with the West also gave rise to an fundamental tension, alluded to above, resulting from the conviction that Iran could and should

9 ABПРФ, ф.094, о.65, п.403, д. № 033, л. 178: *Record of Negotiations between Ambassador of the USSR to Iran, Comrade Anatoly I. Lavrent'yev, and Iran's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hossein Fatemi, 15th of August 1953.*

thereby achieve a credible capability to counter Soviet aggression. The Eisenhower Doctrine, predicated on the observation that – in the words of John Foster Dulles – the so-called Northern Tier of nations were ‘feeling the hot breath of communism on their necks’, had enabled the provision of military assistance to countries seen as under threat and positioned the independence and geopolitical integrity of the Middle East as central to U.S. national security interests.¹⁰ In this respect, the Doctrine may reasonably be said to have created an expectation; an expectation that its physical incarnation – the Baghdad Pact – was singularly slow to fulfil. Indeed, as the incoming British ambassador in 1958, Sir Geoffrey Harrison, almost immediately conceded, the Iranian government felt ‘sharply the very exposed nature of their position [...] their main goal is likely to be the securing of some more concrete, formal and explicit guarantee from their allies than is at present offered them by the very non-committal wording of the Baghdad Pact.’¹¹ Nevertheless, there is evidence that the Shah's military ambitions met with a marked degree of cynicism on the part of Iran's American sponsors. Indeed, as Dulles reported to Eisenhower following a trip to Tehran in 1958: ‘The Shah, who considers himself a military genius, is determined to build up the military forces in Iran and perhaps in this way to gain a dominant position in the Baghdad Pact.’¹²

Further undermining the Shah's confidence in the West was a mounting perception that he was personally expendable. Already unnerved by the brutal demise of the monarchy in neighbouring Iraq, the Shah's suspicions were buttressed by his principal ally's insouciant reaction to (and apparent implication in) the Qarani plot. Commenting on the Shah's reaction to the episode, the British Ambassador substantially missed the point when he noted, with a startling air of condescension that ‘if the action taken as a result of the plot had the effect firstly of discouraging Iranians from coming to foreign embassies with cock-eyed and half-baked ideas about reform and change and secondly of making them generally more self-reliant and less prone to turn to foreigners for “support”, we should certainly be delighted.’¹³ By contrast, the Shah's Soviet

10 FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. IX: *Memorandum of Discussion at the 153rd Meeting of the NSC*, 9 July 1953. Text of the Eisenhower Doctrine in *American Foreign Policy, 1957 – The Near and Middle East and Africa*, pp829-830.

11 Iran Political Diaries, 1954-1965, *Annual Review for 1958*, 21 January 1959.

12 FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol. 12, *Telegram from Secretary of State Dulles*, 25 January 1958.

13 FO 371/133009: *Secret Minute*, 3 March 1958.

counterparts were energetically engaged in what the British portrayed, with equal cynicism, as a ‘sweetness and light campaign.’¹⁴ And demonstrably, in spite of Khrushchev's ill-disguised hostility towards the Baghdad Pact, the direction and style of the Kremlin's foreign policy toward the Middle East had changed substantially following Stalin's death.¹⁵ Given this background, Chapter Two of this thesis has argued against the prevailing Western opinion at the time; that the Shah was ‘bluffing’ in his decision to engage in negotiations for a Non-Aggression Treaty with Moscow.¹⁶ It is further suggested that the negotiations' abrupt breakdown was due less to western governments' panicked reassurances and more to the stubborn insistence of Soviet negotiators on retaining their treaty rights in respect of Iran (the same 1921 Treaty that Mosaddeq had sought unsuccessfully to tackle), in turn caused by the Iranian side's own emphasis on the Treaty's inoperability; a suggestion which served only to sharpen Soviet suspicions. Indeed the subsequent attempt by Iranian politicians to denounce the articles in question was firmly rejected by Moscow, who continued to invoke the Treaty in protesting against U.S. military activities in Iran.¹⁷

The acrimonious denouement of the 1959 negotiations precipitated a serious political crisis in relations and led to the highly unusual step of a Soviet newspaper printing the full text of a diplomatic note.¹⁸ Soviet leaders, it emerged clearly, were genuinely surprised and irritated at what they saw as an ‘ill-intentioned game’ by the Iranian side. A KGB defector and former operative in Iran, Vladimir Kuzichkin has alleged that the Kremlin was so enraged by Iran's subsequent consolidation of ties with the US that an assassination attempt was ordered on the Shah (a move whose apparent failure owed only to incompetency of the agent who attempted to carry it out.)¹⁹ While the truth of this allegation cannot be independently substantiated, the Soviet diplomatic record does show unequivocally that diplomatic relations were profoundly strained. At one stage, Abolhassan Masoud-Ansari, the Iranian Ambassador in Moscow, appears to have

14 FO 10116/58: *Tehran Embassy Report for 2nd Quarter of 1958*, 30 July 1958.

15 The significance of the post-Stalinist foreign policy shift has been outlined by Geoffrey Wheeler (British press councillor in Tehran from 1946 to 1951), *Russia and the Middle East* in *Political Quarterly*, Issue 28, No. 2, p134-5.

16 See Chapter Two, notes 147-149.

17 FO 371/164190: *Aspects of Soviet / Iranian Relations*, 5 December 1961; *Pravda*, 15 March 1959, p5.

18 See *Pravda* on 13 February 1959. Full translation in appendix.

19 Vladimir Kuzichkin (1992): *Inside the KGB – My Life in Soviet Espionage*, p211.

narrowly averted a full-scale break in diplomatic relations and a subsequent exchange of letters between Khrushchev and the Shah did little to ameliorate the deep distrust that had developed between the two sides.²⁰ In one letter in particular, delivered personally by the Iranian Chargé D'Affairs in Moscow to Khrushchev himself at the latter's dacha in Yalta, the Shah gave full reign to his latent grievances against the Soviet Union with respect to the Azerbaijan crisis. Khrushchev predictably robust and unrepentant response, in turn, lambasted the Shah for 'insulting' the Soviet Union and put forward his view, hitherto withheld by the Soviet Foreign Ministry as unduly inflammatory, that the Soviet invasion of Iran during World War II had saved the country from fascism.²¹ Yet behind the recriminations, Khrushchev's chief objective, in common with Russian leaders both previous and subsequent, was straightforward: to prevent the use of Iranian territory for the purposes of threatening the USSR.

‘It was no use categorising military bases as good or bad. The danger was the existence of any such bases, which might be used for foreign aircraft or foreign nuclear weapons. When a country permitted a third power to use its territory, there might be sinister and irreparable consequences.’²²

Khrushchev was not writing in the abstract. Less than two years later, the reality of U.S. IRBM deployments in Turkey was to become, by President Kennedy's own tacit admission, a central precipitating factor in the Cuban missile crisis.²³ Although, as one scholar has pointed out, by 1962 advances in US missile technology had effectively rendered such 'intermediate range weapons stationed in the Middle East obsolete, this was decidedly not how the Soviet government saw matters.²⁴ Ultimately, in the face of the Soviet Union's relentless hostility to the 'anti-popular' Amini administration, and

20 АБПРФ, ф.94, оп.48, п.136, д.011 л.17-18: *Verbal Note* of 28 May 1959, and л.53: *Ansari to Pegov*.

21 FO 371/149768: *British Embassy in Moscow to Foreign Office*, 29 August 1960.

22 FO 371/149769: *Tehran to Foreign Office*, 27 September 1960, §8.

23 See Ernest R. May and Philip D. Zelikow (Eds., 1997), *The Kennedy Tapes: Inside the White House During the Cuban Missile Crisis*, p100. Kennedy remarked to one of his advisers that, were America to deploy nuclear warheads in Turkey, this would be 'goddamn dangerous.' A National Security assistant, to his embarrassment, had to inform the president that this was in fact precisely the case!

24 Nur Bilge Criss (1997): *Strategic nuclear missiles in Turkey: The Jupiter affair, 1959–1963* in *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 20:3, p112. In his memoirs, then Soviet Foreign Minister, Andrei Gromyko, explicitly justified the USSR's 'right to help Cuba [to] strengthen its defensive capability' on the basis of US commitments in Turkey and elsewhere on the Soviet periphery. See: Andrei Gromyko, *Memories*, (trans. Harold Shukman, 1989), p230.

indeed the US administration's increasingly evident disillusionment with their 'abortive experiment' in Iranian reform, the Shah was persuaded, through Amini's replacement with Asadollah Alam, to normalise relations with Moscow by providing the commitment Khrushchev sought.²⁵ With the Shah's subsequent 1965 trip to Moscow, made possible by a sharp reduction in media propaganda and the political groundwork laid by Brezhnev personally in his 1963 visit to Tehran, a series of important bilateral deals – most notably regarding the Esfahan steel mill – led to a marked improvement in ties.²⁶ In a remarkable reversal, on returning from Moscow, the Shah not only announced his willingness to reconsider non-aggression pact with the USSR, but 'uncorked' a swathe of grievances regarding Allied conduct in World War II, denouncing Bevan, Byrnes and Molotov (Foreign Ministers respectively of the UK, the US and the Soviet Union) for having conspired together in 1945 to 'agree autonomy' for Iran's Kurdish, Azeri and Arab populations.²⁷ It was indeed clear that the Shah, as one U.S. politician lamented at the time, saw 'rust on his westward anchor.'²⁸ Meanwhile, a visiting Soviet economic delegation let it be known that the Kremlin wished Iran to 'supersede Afghanistan' as an exemplar of economic cooperation with Moscow.²⁹

Notwithstanding the favourable climate described at the close of Chapter 3, the British departure from the Middle East from the late-1960s, and the opportunities this appeared to present for the Soviet Union and its regional satellites – the PDRY, Iraq and Egypt – reignited latent antipathies. For the Shah, the root of the problem lay not in the British withdrawal *per se*, but Iran's potential 'encirclement' and a connected desire to avoid the humiliations of 1941 on which Mohammad Reza, even here at the height of his power, continued to dwell at length.³⁰ It is important to recognise that successive US

25 FRUS, 1961-1963, Vol. 18: *Paper by Robert Komer*, 20 October 1962.

26 FCO 371/175718: *Irano-Soviet Relations: 1962-1964*, 2 September 1964, §5.

27 FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. 22: *Embassy in Iran to the Department of State*, 31 August 1965, §7 & 9a.

The allegation appears to have its origin in Bevin's draft terms for a tripartite commission on Iran, put forward at the Moscow Council of Ministers in December 1945. Faced with the 'unyielding attitude' of Stalin and Molotov, Bevin and Byrnes made significant concessions on regional autonomy in the draft, including provincial council elections and the recognition of Arabic, Turkish and Kurdish as minority languages. Molotov rejected the draft. See FRUS, *Diplomatic Papers, 1945*, Vol. 8: *Ambassador to the Soviet Union to the Secretary of State*, 28 December 1945 and text in *ibid.*, Vol. 2: *Memorandum by the United Kingdom Delegation*, 24 December 1945, §6 & 7.

28 FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. 22: *Memorandum for President Johnson*, 16 September 1965.

29 FCO 17/382: *Irano/Soviet Union Economic Agreement*, 16 April 1967, §3(i).

30 FCO 17/1517: *The Dynasty Blessed by the Gods*, 11 October 1971, §3.

administrations had hitherto been unwilling to provide Iran with any significant defensive capability. To do so, it had been argued, was not only likely to enhance Iranian pressure for military aid, but also to trigger similar demands from other Baghdad Pact members. The underlying vision for the Iranian military was thus, at root, one of ‘instilling doubt’ in the Soviet military authorities as to their ability to invade Iran.³¹ Under the Nixon doctrine, by contrast, significant arms sales to Iran were designed both to assuage and encourage the Shah's desire for regional leadership; a role entailing precisely the capability that previous policy had precluded.³² Building on these observations, Chapter Four has implied as a whole that the Shah's personal preoccupation with countering a perceived Soviet rayonnement in the Middle East demonstrably diverted attention from domestic matters; and shown more specifically that, as protest to his rule mounted, the Shah's instinctive reaction was to identify the primary causes of the dissent in Soviet-sponsored agitation. In point of fact, as the last Soviet ambassador to Pahlavi Iran has alleged in his memoirs, the regime's lack of insight into the tempest brewing in the sprawling southern slums of Tehran was reflected in the Shah's answer to the question of whether he had visited them. ““Yes”, he said somewhat uncertainly, but then added, “true it was a while ago.””³³

It has been tempting for some scholars, as Abbas Milani has done in his recent biography of the Shah, to suggest that the monarch's asseverations in respect of the communist-clericy collusion were ‘at best inaccurate’; that like the fallen ancien régime of the French revolution he had ‘learned nothing.’³⁴ Such an analysis fails to capture the full significance of Soviet-Iranian tensions. As the documentary record clearly shows, the Shah was convinced – through good times and bad – that his opponents were the ‘willing dupes’ of Communism, all ‘inspired and controlled from outside.’³⁵ The objective ‘laws’ of societal development, as seen from Moscow, including the suggestion that the Shah's own reforms may have borne the seed of his demise, were anathema in the context of ‘enemy intrigues, including the clergy, who wish to return

31 FRUS, 1961-1963, Vol. 17: *Embassy in Iran to the Department of State*, 10 May 1961, §8 & §9.

32 FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. 24: *Minutes of a Senior Review Group Meeting*, 9 December 1970.

33 V. Vinogradov, *Diplomacy: People and Events*, p377.

34 A. Milani (2011), *The Shah*, p294-5.

35 FRUS, 1961-1964, Vol. 17: *Embassy in Iran to the Department of State*, 6 June 1961, (A).

the country to the Middle Ages with the support of foreign agents.’³⁶ Published SAVAK documents, and indeed the title given by the post-revolutionary regime to the relevant volumes (‘The Red Spider’), bear witness to an enduring wariness of Russia; sensitivities that the activities of clandestine radio stations and Russian personnel on the ground did little to alleviate during the period discussed.³⁷ Nor was the Shah’s conceptualisation of ‘red-black reaction’ necessarily baseless.³⁸ The results of these historically-rooted convictions, however, irrespective of their relation to fact (which this thesis has suggested was more banal or benign than appearances may at times have suggested), and regardless of their roots in alleged ‘Pahlavi paranoia’ identified by the Shah’s opponents, were profound and far-reaching.³⁹ Thus, as this dissertation has at core argued, neither Pahlavi foreign relations in particular, nor the trajectory of events from 1941-1979 more generally, can be viewed in isolation from the thesis of communist infiltration of which the Shah was an unyielding and singularly effective proponent. As to the reality of Soviet interference in Iran, there can be no more fitting or illuminating vignette than the following account from highest level of the Soviet government provided by Leonid Shebarshin, the KGB Tehran chief quoted above:

‘Before I flew out to Tehran [in February 1979], Yuri Andropov summoned me to see him. I was surprised by this, since the head of the KGB almost never personally briefed residency chiefs. He invited me to sit and asked: “What do you see as our next steps in Iran?” As a Soviet man and specialist in the region, I replied: “Yuri Vladimirovich! I consider Iran’s Islamic Revolution to be an intermediary event. It will inevitably evolve into a communist revolution, and we will therefore actively support our friends in Iran’s communist party. Yuri Vladimirovich looked at me carefully and said, “Maybe you are right, but I think otherwise. To be exact, I am convinced that things will be otherwise. I am certain that the mullahs are here to stay, and to stay for a very long time. This is not bad for us [...] but your task must be to work in the knowledge that there

36 V. Vinogradov, *op. cit.*, p377.

37 For a representative illustration, see the dubious activities of Sergei Krakhmalov, described in his *Notes of a Military Attaché. Iran – Egypt – Iran –Afghanistan (Passim)*

38 The Shah’s claim in his *Answer to History* (p104), for instance, that communist radio stations accorded Khomeini the title of Ayatollah (and spoke approvingly of his anti-imperialism) is supported by evidence. See Chapter Four, n43.

39 FRUS, 1968-1976, Vol. E-4: *Letter from Nasser Afshar to President Nixon*, 1 September 1972, p2.

will be no communist revolution. This should also govern our relations with Tudeh.” I was amazed by what Andropov said, contradicting what even our own specialists thought about the region. We were convinced of Tudeh's strength; we knew Iran well. It appears that Andropov however, in contrast to ourselves, grasped the situation. Yuri Vladimirovich understood that the main thing for Russia was not to gain a friend in Iran, but rather to ensure Iran did not become our enemy.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Public lecture at Moscow State University (MGY, March 2005.) Lenta (Russian source, newspaper), *On the Death of a Resident*. <http://pda.lenta.ru/articles/2012/04/02/shebarshin/> (accessed 10.03.13.)

RUSSIAN FEDERATION ARCHIVE OF FOREIGN RELATIONS

PUBLISHED LITERATURE

Справочник по фондам Архив Внешней Политики Российской Федерации, 1917-1962
(Министерство Иностранных Дел РФ, 2004) // Guide to the Holdings of the Russian Federation
Archive of Foreign Relations (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2004)

ARCHIVAL RESEARCH

ф.06: Секретариат В.М. Молотова, 1946, 1953-1956
(Fund 06: Secretariat of Vyacheslav Molotov, 1946; 1953-1956)

оп.15, п.012, д.011: *Correspondence with the Iranian Government, 1956*
оп.45, п.139, д.142, 143, 144: *Shah's State Visit to the Soviet Union, 1956*

ф.056б: Отдел печата / обзоры прессы / досье ТАСС / вырезки из иногазет
(Fund 056b: Soviet Foreign Ministry Press Department / Press surveys / TASS dossiers)

оп.10, п.230, д.267: *Reports on Iranian media coverage of the Soviet Union, 1947*
оп.14, п.311, д.201: *Reports on Iranian media coverage of the Soviet Union, 1948*

ф.595б: Комитет информации / подборка ТАСС по международным проблемам, 1951-1958
(Fund 595b: Information Commission / TASS collections on international problems, 1951-1958)

оп.3а, п.157, д.261: *Iranian media coverage of Iran's adherence to the Baghdad Pact, 1956*
оп.3а, п.512, д.1000: *Translations of Iranian newspaper articles, September to December 1955*

ф.94: Референтуры по Ирану, 1909 –
(Fund 94: Records of the Soviet Foreign Ministry Iran Desk, 1909 –)

оп.37, п.362, д.001: *Record of conversation between Molotov and Qavam, February 1946*
оп.38, п.103, д.013: *Embassy correspondence concerning attempted assassination of Shah, 1949*
оп.48, п.375, д.171: *Report on Iranian media coverage of the USSR, 1949*
оп.65, п.403, д.033: *Diary of Ivan Sadchikov / Anatoly Lavrent'yev, January-August 1953*
оп.65, п.403, д.031: *Conversations between Foreign Minister and Iranian Ambassador, 1953*
оп.45, п.132, д.201: *Exchange of views within Soviet Foreign Ministry regarding Iran, 1956*
оп.46, п.131, д.006: *The Shah's state visit to the Soviet Union, June 1956*
оп.45, п.131, д.006: *Wedding gifts for Ardeshir Zahedi and Shahnaz Pahlavi, 1956*
оп.48, п.136, д.011: *Correspondence: Iranian Embassy in Moscow and Foreign Ministry, 1959*
оп.04, п.136, д.001: *Correspondence: Soviet Embassy in Tehran and Foreign Ministry, 1959*
оп.62, п.260, д.013: *Soviet Embassy reports for September-December 1978*

Ф. = фонд (Fund No.); оп. = опись (Inventory No.), п. = папка (Folder No.); д. = дело (Case No.)

UNITED KINGDOM PUBLIC RECORDS OFFICE ARCHIVAL MATERIALS

PUBLISHED COLLECTIONS

Iran Political Diaries (Archive Editions, 1997)
Volumes XI (1939-1942), XII (1943-1945), XIII (1946-1951), XIV (1952-1965)

ARCHIVAL RESEARCH

FO 248/1439	<i>Iran: Soviet penetration in</i>	1944
FO 248/1442	<i>Persian government and internal situation</i>	1944
FO 371/120752	<i>Visit to Soviet Union by Shah of Iran</i>	1956
FO 371/126842	<i>Comments in press of Iran on policy of Soviet Union in the Middle East [regarding] adoption by Iran of Eisenhower doctrine</i>	1957
FO 371/133009	<i>Plot against Shah instigated by officers of armed forces of Iran</i>	1958
FO 371/133010	<i>Foreign Policy of Iran</i>	1958
FO 371/133019	<i>Records of conversations between HM Ambassador and Shah of Iran</i>	1959
FO 371/140797	<i>Political Relations between Iran and Soviet Union</i>	1959
FO 371/140798	<i>Political Relations between Iran and Soviet Union</i>	1959
FO 371/140799	<i>Political Relations between Iran and Soviet Union</i>	1959
FO 371/149768	<i>Political Relations: Soviet Union</i>	1960
FO 371/149769	<i>Political Relations: Soviet Union</i>	1960
FO 371/149770	<i>Political Relations: Soviet Union</i>	1960
FO 371/157618	<i>Political Relations: Soviet Union</i>	1961
FO 371/164190	<i>Political Relations: Soviet Union</i>	1962
FO 371/170382	<i>Political Relations: Soviet Union: State visit of President Brezhnev</i>	1963
FO 371/175718	<i>Political Relations: Soviet Union</i>	1964
FO 371/180792	<i>Commercial Relations: Soviet Union</i>	1965
FO 248/1609	<i>Attempted assassination of The Shah at Marble Palace, 10th April</i>	1965
FO 371/180800	<i>Soviet aid to Iran: steel mill/gas pipeline</i>	1965
FO 371/186675	<i>Political Relations: Soviet Union</i>	1966
FO 248/1620	<i>Iran-Soviet Relations</i>	1966
FO 248/1632	<i>Arms for Iran from the USSR</i>	1966
FCO 17/382	<i>Political Relations: Soviet Union</i>	1967
FCO 17/184	<i>Regional Co-operation for Development: Comments by Shah of Iran on Afghan attitude and Communist penetration into Afghanistan</i>	1967
FCO 17/383	<i>Political Relations: Soviet Union</i>	1968
FCO 28/639	<i>[Soviet Union's] Relations with Iran</i>	1969
FCO 17/862	<i>Oil pipeline from the Persian Gulf to the Soviet Union</i>	1969
FCO 17/1219	<i>Visit by President of Soviet Union to Iran</i>	1970
FCO 28/1094	<i>[Soviet] Government's Foreign Policy</i>	1970
FCO 17/1517	<i>Review of political situation in Iran</i>	1971
FCO 8/2054	<i>Political relations between Iran and Soviet Union</i>	1973
FCO 8/2265	<i>Political relations between Iran and Soviet Union</i>	1974
FCO 8/2502	<i>Political relations between Iran and Soviet Union</i>	1975
FCO 8/2729	<i>Political relations between Iran and Soviet Union</i>	1976
FCO 8/2984	<i>Political relations between Iran and Soviet Union</i>	1977
FCO 8/3196	<i>Political relations between Iran and Soviet Union</i>	1978
FCO 28/3479	<i>Political relations between the Soviet Union and the Middle East</i>	1978
FCO 8/3371	<i>Political relations between Iran and Soviet Union</i>	1979
FCO 8/3372	<i>Political relations between Iran and Soviet Union</i>	1979
FCO 28/3872	<i>Relations between the Soviet Union and the Middle East</i>	1979
FCO 8/3578	<i>Valedictory reports from British Naval Attaché</i>	1980

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTARY MATERIALS

Published by the United States Government Printing Office, Washington D.C.

SERIES, TITLE AND DATES COVERING	VOLUME	RELEASED
<i>Foreign relations of the United States, 1941. The Near East and Africa.</i>	III	1959
<i>Foreign relations of the United States, 1942. The Near East and Africa.</i>	IV	1963
<i>Foreign relations of the United States, 1943. The Near East and Africa.</i>	IV	1964
<i>Foreign relations of the United States, 1944. The Near East and Africa.</i>	V	1965
<i>Foreign relations of the United States, 1945. The Near East and Africa.</i>	VIII	1969
<i>Foreign relations of the United States, 1946. The Near East and Africa.</i>	VII	1969
<i>Foreign relations of the United States, 1947. The Near East and Africa.</i>	V	1971
<i>Foreign relations of the United States, 1948. The Near East and Africa.</i>	V	1975
<i>Foreign relations of the United States, 1949. The Near East and Africa.</i>	VI	1977
<i>Foreign relations of the United States, 1950. The Near East and Africa.</i>	V	1978
<i>Foreign relations of the United States, 1951. The Near East and Africa.</i>	V	1982
<i>Foreign relations of the United States, 1952-1954. Iran.</i>	X	1989
<i>Foreign relations of the United States, 1955-1957. Near East; Iran; Iraq.</i>	XII	1991
<i>Foreign relations of the United States, 1958-1960. Near East; Iran; Iraq; Arabian Peninsula.</i>	XII	1993
<i>Foreign relations of the United States, 1961-1963. Near East, 1961-1962.</i>	XXVII	1994
<i>Foreign relations of the United States, 1961-1963. Near East, 1962-1963.</i>	XVIII	1995
<i>Foreign relations of the United States, 1964-1968. Iran.</i>	XXII	1999
<i>Foreign relations of the United States, 1969-1976. Documents on Iran and Iraq, 1969-1972.</i>	E-4	2006
<i>Foreign relations of the United States, 1969-1976. Middle East and Arabian Peninsula.</i>	XXIV	2008
<i>Foreign relations of the United States, 1969-1976. Iran; Iraq, 1973-1976.</i>	XXVII	2012

PERSIAN LANGUAGE BIBLIOGRAPHY

DOCUMENTARY SOURCES

Asnâd-e Lâneh-ye Jâsusi (Documents from the Nest of Spies), Vols. 48-54, Dâneshjuyân-e Musalmân Payrou-ye Khat-e Emâm, 1358 / 1980

Chap dar Irân beh Revâyat-e Asnâd-e SÂVÂK, Ketab-e Sevom: Ankabut-e Sorkh (The Left in Iran according to SAVAK Documents, Vol. 3: The Red Spider), Markaz-e Barresi-ye Asnâd-e Târikhi-ye Vazârat-e Etelâ'ât, 1378 / 1999

Chap dar Irân beh Revâyat-e Asnâd-e SÂVÂK, Ketab-e Panjom: Ravâbet-e Irân va Shuravi (The Left in Iran according to SAVAK Documents, Vol. 5: Relations between Iran and Russia), Markaz-e Barresi-ye Asnâd-e Târikhi-ye Vazârat-e Etelâ'ât, 1381 / 2002

Maju'eh-ye ta'lifât, nutqhâ, payâmhâ, musâhâbehâ va bayânât-e A'lâhazrat-e Homâyun-e Mohammad Rezâ Shâh Pahlavi (The Collected Writings, Speeches, Letters, Interviews and Statements of His Royal Highness Mohammad Reza Pahlavi), Nashriyeh-ye Kitâbkhâneh-ye Pahlavi, 1347 / 1968

SECONDARY LITERATURE

Adamiyat, T.: *Gashti bar gozashte: Khâterât-e Safirkabir-e Irân dar Shuravi (A Journey Through the Past: Memoirs of an Iranian Ambassador in the USSR)*, Chachkhaneh-ye Seke, 1368 / 1990

Alamouti, M. (ed.): *Irân dar asr-e Pahlavi (Iran during the Pahlavi Era)*, No. 15, 1994

Ashraf, A.: *Sarvhâ dar bâd: âkharin ruzhâ-ye Shâh dar Tehrân*, Alborz Publishers, 1999

Baqir, A.: *Mirzâ Ahmad Khân es-Saltaneh dar Durân-e Qâjârihâ va Pahlavi, bâ tahqiq va negâresh-e Bâqir Aqili*, Javidan Publishers, 1376 / 1999

Kianouri, N.: *Khârerât-e Nouredin Kiânouri (Memoirs of Nouredin Kianouri)*, Enteshârât-e Ettela'ât, 1370 / 1992

Kirmani, H.: *Az Shahrivar 1320 ta Fajâ'ih-ye Âzerbayjân va Zanjân (From Shahrivar 1320 to the Disaster of Azerbaijan and Zanjan)* Vol. 2. Tehran: Mazahiri, 1329 / 1950

Masoud Ansari, A.: *Maruri dar Panjâh Sâl-e Târikh: Khâterât-e Siâsi va Ejtemâl'i (Retrospective on Fifty Years of History: Political and Social Memoirs)*, Tehran: Olmi, 1374 / 1994

Sanjabi, T.: *Panj golouleh baraye Shah (Five Bullets for the Shah)*, Khojasteh Publishers, 1371 / 2002

Zahedi, A.: *Khâterât-e Ardeshir Zâhedî (Memoirs of Ardeshir Zahedi)*, Vol. 1, Ibex Publishers, 2006

Zahedi, A.: *Khâterât-e Ardeshir Zâhedî (Memoirs of Ardeshir Zahedi)*, Vol. 2, Ibex Publishers, 2009

RUSSIAN LANGUAGE BIBLIOGRAPHY

DOCUMENTARY SOURCES

Внешняя Политика Советского Союза (разные), М. Издательство «Международные отношения» // Foreign Policy of the Soviet Union (various issues), International Relations Press, Moscow

Внешняя Торговля СССР, 1922-1981: Юбилейный Статистический Сборник (М. Финансы и Статистика, 1982) // Foreign Trade of the USSR: Jubilee Statistical Compilation (Moscow, International Relations Press, 1982)

Сборник действующих договоров, соглашений и конвенции, заключенных СССР с иностранными государствами (Москва, 1976 г.) // Collection of Operative Treaties, Agreements and Conventions concluded between the USSR and Foreign Governments (Moscow, 1976)

Советско-Иранские Отношения в договорах, конвенциях и соглашениях, Министерство Иностранных Дел СССР, М. 1946г. // Soviet-Iranian Relations in Treaties, Agreements and Conventions (Moscow, USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1946)

Хроника Защиты Прав в СССР, Выпуск 23-24 (Октябрь-Декабрь, 1976; Выпуск 30 (Апрель-Июня, 1978), Издательство Хроника // Chronicle of Human Rights in the USSR, Issues 23-24 (October-December, 1976) and 30 (April-June, 1978)

SECONDARY LITERATURE

Алиев С.М.: Иран 60-70-х годов: социальные и Политические сдвиги. М.: 1980 // Aliyev, S.M.: *Iran in the 1960s and 70s: Social and Political Developments* (Moscow, 1980)

Алиев С.М.: История Ирана: XX век. – М.: ИВ РАН, 2004 // Aliyev, S.M.: *History of Iran in the 20th Century* (Moscow, 2004)

Бади Ш. М.: Городские средние слои Ирана. – М.: Наука, 1977 // Badi, S. M.: *The Urban Middle Classes of Iran* (Moscow, 1977)

Башкиров А.В.: Экспансия английских и американских империалистов в Иране. – М: Госполитиздат, 1954. // Bashkirov, A.V.: *The Expansion of American and British Imperialism in Iran*, (Moscow, Government Political Press, 1954)

Белов, И.: Преследование демократических организации в Иране. Новое время. – 1949. - № 11. Belov, I.: *The Harrassment of Democratic Organisations in Iran New Times* (Moscow, 1949), No. 11

Большая советская энциклопедия. Изд. 2. – М., 1953. – Т.18. // *Great Soviet Encyclopaedia*, 2nd Edition, (Moscow, 1953), Vol. 18

Васильев А.: Россия на Ближнем и Среднем Востоке: От мессианства к прагматизму. – М.: Наука, 1993 // Vasil'yev, A.: *Russia in the Near and Middle East: From Messianism to Pragmatism*. (Moscow, Nauka Press, 1993)

Васильев И.Л.: Пути советского империализма Нью Йорк: Изд-во им. Чехова, 1954 // Vasilev, I. L.: *The Development of Soviet Imperialism* (New York: Chekhov Publishing House, 1954)

Великов, Д.М.: Азербайджанская ССР в развитии советско-иранских культурных связей (1941-

1946 годы), Институт востоковедения Академии наук Азербайджанский ССР // Velikov, D.M.: *The Azerbaijan SSR and its Role in Soviet-Iranian Cultural Ties, 1941-1946* (Doctoral Dissertation, Azerbaijan SSR Academy of Sciences, Institute of Orientalism, 1988)

Годс. М. Р.: Иран в XX веке: политическая история. – М.: Наука, 1994 // Ghods, M. R.: *Iran in the 20th Century: A Political History* (Moscow, Nauka Press, 1990)

Всемирная история. – М., 1977 // *International History* (Moscow, 1977)

Виноградов, В.М.: Дипломатия: люди и события (из записок посла), М. Росспэн, 1998 // Vinogradov, V.M.: *Diplomacy: People and Events (A Diplomat's Papers)*, Moscow, «Rosspen» Publishers, 1998.

Гасанов, Дж.: СССР-Иран: Азербайджанский Кризис и Начало Холодной Войны (1941-1946гг.) – М: «Герой Отечества», 2006 // Hasanli, J.: *The USSR and Iran: The Azerbaijan Crisis and the Beginning of the Cold War.* (Geroi Otechestva Press, 2006)

Гасратян М. А. (отв. ред.): Курдское движение в новое и новейшее время – М. Наука, 1987 // Gasratyan, M.A. (ed.): *The Kurdish Movement in Recent Times* (Moscow, Nauka Press, 1987)

Дорошенко Е.А.: Шиитская традиция и революция 1978-1979 гг. В Иране. Политические отношения на Востоке: Общее и особенное. – М.: Наука, 1990 // Doroshenko, E.A.: *Shi'ite Tradition and Revolution in Iran 1978-79 in Eastern Political Relations: General and Specific.* (Moscow, Nauka Press, 1990)

Егорова Н.И.: Иранский кризис 1945-1946 гг. По рассекреченным архивным материалам. «Новая и новейшая история», 1994, № 3 // Yegorova, N. I.: *The Iranian Crisis of 1945-1946: Declassified Archival Materials in New and Recent History*, 1994, No. 3.

Иванов М.С.: Очерк истории Ирана. - М: Госполитиздат, 1952. // Ivanov, M. S.: *Study on Iranian History* (Moscow, Government Political Press, 1952)

Иванов М.С.: Новейшая История Ирана (М. 1965) // Ivanov, M. S.: *A New History of Iran* (Moscow, 1965)

Ислам: Словарь атеиста. – М., 1988 // *Islam: An Atheist's Primer* – Moscow, 1988

История Ирана. – М.: Изд-во МГУ, 1977 // *A History of Iran*, (Moscow State University Press, 1977)

Караосманоглу Я. К.: Дипломат поневоле. М.: Международное Отношения, 1978 // Karaosmanoglu, Y. K.: *An Unwilling Diplomat* (Moscow, International Relations Press, 1978)

Кива А.В. (отв. ред.): Проблемы развития коммунистического Движения в освободившихся странах Азии и Северной Африки. М.: Наука, 1987 // A. V. Kiva (ed.): *Developmental Issues for the Communist Movement in Liberated Countries of Asia and North Africa* (Moscow, Nauka Press, 1987)

Комаров В. В.: На переднем крае борьбы в защиту интересов Иранских трудящихся. Вопросы истории КПСС. – 1981. – № 10. // Komarov V. V.: *At the Forefront of the Battle to Defend the Interests of Iranian Workers*, CPSU Historical Questions, No. 10 (1981)

Комиссаров Д. С.: Иран: взгляд в тревожное прошлое // Статьи и воспоминания советских востоковедов 1941-1945. М., 1985 // Komissarov D. S.: *Iran: A View on a Troubled Past in Articles and Memoirs by Soviet Orientalists, 1941-1945.* (Moscow, 1985)

Крахмалов, С: Записки военного атташе. Иран – Египет – Иран – Афганистан. М.: Издательский Дом «Русская Разведка», 2000 // *Krakhmalov, S.: Notes of a Military Attaché. Iran – Egypt – Iran – Afghanistan.* Moscow, («Russian Intelligence» Publishers, 2000)

Лемин И.М.: Обострение кризиса британское империи после второй мировой войны. – М: Изд-во АН СССР, 1951. // *Lemin I. M.: The Escalation of the British Imperial Crisis After World War II,* Moscow, USSR Academy of Sciences, 1951

Любин, Д.М.: Ввод красной армий в иран летом-осенью 1941 года: причины, осуществление и последствия. Диссертация, Саратовский Государственный Университет, 2002 // *Lyubin, D.M.: The Entry of the Red Army into Iran in the Summer-Autumn of 1941: Reasons, Implementation, Consequences.* (Doctoral dissertation, Saratov State University, 2002)

Млечин, Л.: Евгений Примаков. Молодая Гвардия, 2007 // *Mlechin, L.: Evgeny Primakov* (Young Guard Publishers, 2007)

Новейшая история стран Азии и Африки, М.: Изд-во МГУ, 1965 // *A New History of Asian and African Countries* (Moscow State University Press, 1965)

Очерки истории российской внешней разведки. – М.: Международные отношения, 2003 // *Essays in the History of Soviet Foreign Intelligence* (Moscow, International Relations Press, 2003)

Пикулин М.Г.: На посту редактора газеты // Статьи и воспоминания советских востоковедов 1941-1945. М., 1985 // *Pikulin, M. G.: At the Post of a Newspaper Editor in Articles and Memoirs by Soviet Orientalists, 1941-1945.* (Moscow, 1985)

Политические партии зарубежных стран: Справочник. М.: Изд-во политической литературы, 1967 // *Political Parties of Foreign Countries: A Guide* (Moscow, Political Literature Publishers, 1967)

Советское Востоковедение, 1956г., № 5 (Изд-во Академии наук СССР) // *Soviet Orientalism* (Periodical), 1956, No. 5 (USSR Academy of Sciences Press)

Современный Иран (Справочник), Академия Наук СССР институт востоковедения (1957г.) // *Modern Iran* (A Guide), USSR Academy of Sciences (Institute of Orientalism, 1957)

Ша'бани, Р.: Кратая история Ирана. – СПб., Петербургское Востоковедение, 2008 // *Sha'bani, R.: Short History of Iran* (St Petersburg, Petersburg Oriental Studies Press, 2008)

Шебаршин, Л.В.: «...И жизнь мелочные сны», М., Международные отношения, 2000 // *Shebarshin, L.V.: "...And the Petty Dreams of Life"*, (Moscow, International Relations Press, 2006)

Хажякан, Г.Д.: Соприкосновение с легендой: разведчики-нелигалы Геворк и Гоар Вартапяны, ООО «Апавен», 2010 // *Khazhyakan, G. D.: Breaking Cover: Undercover Agents Gevork and Gohar Vartanyan,* «Arapen» Ltd., 2010 (Private Publication.)

Худайда, А.Л.: Советско-иракские отношения и позиции СССР по курдской проблеме в 1958-1991 г.г., Диссертация на соискание ученой степени кандидата исторических наук (Ростов-на-Дону, 2010) // *Khudayda, A.L.: Soviet-Iraqi Relations and the USSR's Position on the Kurdish Question from 1958-1991* (Doctoral dissertation, Rostov-on-Don, 2010)

Яковлев, А.Н.: Молотов, Маленков, Каганович 1957. Стенограмма июньского пленума ЦК КПСС. М.: 1998 // *Yakovlev, A. N.: Molotov, Malenkov, Kaganovich in 1957: Minutes of the June Plenum of the Communist Party Central Committee* (Moscow, 1998)

ENGLISH LANGUAGE BIBLIOGRAPHY

NON-ARCHIVAL PRIMARY SOURCES

Washington Post, New York Times, Open Society Archive, Center for the Study of Intelligence, Truman Library Public Papers, Yale University Avelon Project, Treaties and Other International Acts Series (Department of State), League of Nations Treaty Series, Nato Treaty Series, The Department of State Bulletin, National Security Archive (George Washington University), Time Magazine, The Times, International Legal Materials (American Society of International Law), Yearbook of the United Nations, Foreign Broadcast Information Service, American Foreign Policy Current Documents.

SECONDARY LITERATURE

Abrahamian, E.: *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton University Press, 1982)

Allison, G.: *The Essence of Decision* (Longman Press, 1999)

Alam, A.: *The Shah and I* (trans. Alinaghi Alikhani and Nicholas Vicent, New York: St Martin's, 1992)

Andrew, C. and Metrokhin, V.: *The World Was Going Our Way: The KGB and the Battle for the Third World* (Basic Books, 2005)

Andrew, C. and Metrokhin, V.: *The sword and the shield: the Mitrokhin archive and the secret history of the KGB* (Basic Books, 2000)

Ansari, A.: *The Politics of Nationalism in Modern Iran* (Cambridge Middle East Studies, 2012)

Atkin, M.: *Myths of Soviet-Iranian Relations* in N. Keddie and M. Gasiorowski (eds.), *Neither East nor West: Iran, the Soviet Union and the United States* (Yale University Press, 1990)

Atkinson, J. and Sices, D. (eds.): *Machiavelli and his friends: Their Personal Correspondence* (Northern Illinois University Press, 2004)

Augelli, E. and Murphy, C.: *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations* (Cambridge University Press, 1993)

Behrooz, M.: *Rebels With A Cause: The Failure of the Left in Iran* (I.B.Tauris, 2000)

Brzezinski, Z.: *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981* (Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1983)

Callinicos, A.: *Making History – Agency, Structure and Change in Social Theory* (Polity Press, 1987)

Chubin, S. and Zabih, S.: *The Foreign Relations of Iran: A Developing State in a Zone of Great-Power Conflict* (University of California Press, 1974)

Chubin, S.: *Soviet Policy Towards Iran and the Gulf*, Adelphi Papers, No. 157, Spring 1980

Cooper, D.: *World Philosophies: An Historical Introduction* (Blackwell Publishers, 1996)

- Dessler, D.: *What's At Stake in the Agent-Structure Debate?* in F. Kratochwil and E. Mansfield (eds.) *International Organization and Global Governance* (Pearson Education, 1994)
- Diba, F.: *Mohammad Mosaddeq, A Political Biography* (Routledge Keagan & Paul, 1986)
- Etzold, T. and Gaddis, J. (eds.): *Containment: Documents on American Policy and Strategy 1945-1950* (Columbia University Press, 1978)
- Ford, A.: *The Anglo-Iranian Oil Dispute of 1951-1952: A Study of the Role of Law in the Relations of States* (University of California Press, 1954)
- Freedman, R.: *Soviet Policy Toward the Middle East Since 1970* (Praeger 1982)
- Gasiorowski, M. and Byrne, M.: *Mohammad Mosaddeq and the 1953 Coup in Iran* (Syracuse University Press, 2004)
- Gasiorowski, M.: *U.S. Foreign Policy and the Shah, Building a Client State in Iran* (Cornell University Press, 1991)
- Gellner, E.: *Nations and Nationalism* (Blackwell Publishers, 1983)
- Gilpin, R.: *The Richness of the Tradition of Political Realism* in R. Keohane (ed.) *Neorealism and Its Critics* (Columbia University Press, 1986)
- Gramsci, A.: *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (Lawrence and Wishart, 1971)
- Gromyko, A.: *Memories* (Hutchinson Press, 1989)
- Griffiths, Sir E.: *Turbulent Iran: Recollections and Revelations* (Seven Locks Press, 2006)
- Heiss, M.: *Empire and Nationhood: The United States, Great Britain, and Iranian Oil: 1950-1954* (Columbia University Press, 1997)
- Hume, D: *Treatise of Human Nature*, (Oxford University Press, 1978)
- Jarvis, R.: *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton University Press, 1976)
- Jensen, R., Shabad, T. and Wright, A.: *Soviet Natural Resources in the World Economy* (University of Chicago Press, 1993)
- Keddie, N.: *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution* (Yale University Press, 2006)
- Keddie, N. & Gasiorowski, M.: *Neither East nor West: Iran, the USSR, and the USA* (New Haven, 1990)
- Khadduri, M.: *Socialist Iraq* (Washington: Middle East Institute, 1978)
- Khrushchev, N.: *Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev*, Vol. 2 (Pennsylvania University Press, 2006)
- Kuzichkin, V.: *Inside the KGB – My Life in Soviet Espionage* (Ballantine Books, 2002)
- Macris, J.: *The Politics and Security of the Gulf: Anglo American Hegemony and the Shaping of a Region* (Routledge, 2009)

- Magnus, R. (ed.), *Documents on the Middle East* (Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1969)
- Marshall, J., Dale Scott, P. and Hunter, J.: *The Iran Contra Connection: Secret Teams and Covert Operations in the Reagan Era* (South End Press, 1987)
- Marx, K.: *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (Allen & Unwin, 1926)
- Marx, K.: *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Vol. 1 (New Left Review, 1976)
- May, E. and Zelikow, P. (eds): *The Kennedy Tapes: Inside the White House During the Cuban Missile Crisis* (W. W. Norton & Company, 2002)
- Mikdash, Z.: *A Financial Analysis of Middle Eastern Oil Concessions, 1901-1965* (Praeger, 1966)
- Milani, A.: *The Shah* (Macmillan Publishers, 2011)
- Morgenthau, H.: *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York, Knopf, 1978)
- Nyman, J.: *The Psychology of Nuclear Proliferation: Identity, Emotions and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge University Press, 2006)
- Pahlavi, M. R.: *The Shah's Story* (trans. Teresa Waugh), Michel Joseph, 1980
- Phillips, J.: *The Iranian Revolution, Long Term Implications* (Heritage Foundation, 1979)
- Plato: *Protagoras* in *Plato in Twelve Volumes* (trans. W. R. M. Lamb, Harvard University Press, 1975)
- Plato: *The Republic* (Penguin Classics, 1955)
- Ramazani, R.: *Iran's Foreign Policy 1941-1973* (University Press of Virginia, 1975)
- Reisman, W.: *Termination of the USSR's Treaty Right of Intervention in Iran* in *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 74, No. 1 (January, 1980)
- Rengger, N.: *International Relations, Political Theory and the Problem of Order: Beyond International Relations Theory* (Routledge, 2000)
- Rubenstein, A.: *The Soviet Union and Iran under Khomeini*, *International Affairs*, Vol. 57, No. 4 (Autumn 1981)
- Said, E.: *Orientalism* (Penguin, 1995)
- Scott Cooper, A.: (2011), *Oil Kings: How the US, Iran and Saudi Arabia Changed the Balance of Power in the Middle East* (One World Publications, 2011)
- Smolanski, O., *The USSR and Iraq: The Soviet Quest for Influence* (Duke University Press, 1991)
- Snyder, S.: *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War: A Transnational History of the Helsinki Network* (Cambridge University Press, 2011)
- Taubman, W.: *Khrushchev: The Man and his Era* (W. W. Norton, 2004)
- Thucydides: *History of the Peloponnesian War* (trans. Rex Warner, Penguin Classics, 1954)

- Tomson, W.: *Khrushchev: A Political Life* (Palgrave Macmillan, 1997)
- Waltz, K.: *Man, The State and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (Columbia University Press, 2001)
- Waltz, K.: *Theory of International Politics* (McGraw Hill Publishers, 1979)
- Wendt, A.: *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 1999)
- Westad, O.: *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge University Press, 2005)
- Whitney, T.: *Khrushchev Speaks: Selected Speeches, Articles and Press Conferences* (University of Michigan Press, 1993)
- Wittgenstein, L.: *Philosophical Investigations* (4th Edition, Wiley Publishers, 2010)

ARTICLES

- Anderson, W.: *Soviets in the Indian Ocean: Much Ado about Something - But What?* in *Asian Survey*, Vol. 24, No. 9 (September 1984)
- Ansari, M. (2001) *The Myth of the White Revolution: Mohammad Reza Shah, 'Modernization' and the Consolidation of Power* in *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (Jul., 2001)
- Behrooz, M.: *Tudeh Factionalism and the 1953 Coup in Iran* in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 33, No. 3 (August 2001)
- Bleiker, R. and Hutchison, E.: *Fear no more: emotions and world politics* in *Review of International Studies*, 34 (January, 2008)
- Byman, D. and Pollack, K.: *Let Us Now Praise Great Men: Bringing the Statesman Back In* in *International Security*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (Spring, 2001)
- Campbell, J.: *The Soviet Union and the Middle East: 'In the General Direction of the Persian Gulf'* in *Russian Review*, Vol. 29/2 (April, 1970)
- Chaqueri, C.: *Did the Soviets play a role in founding the Tudeh party in Iran?* in *Cahiers du Monde Russe*, 40/3 (1999)
- Crawford, N.: *The Passion of World Politics: Propositions on Emotion and Emotional Relationships* in *International Security*, Volume 24, No. 4 (Spring 2000)
- Criss, N.: *Strategic nuclear missiles in Turkey: The Jupiter affair, 1959–1963* in *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 20:3 (1997)
- Garst, D.: *Thucydides and Neorealism* in *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (March, 1989)
- Gasiorowski, M.: *The Qarani Affair* in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (1993: 25)
- Gavin, F.: *Politics, Power, and U.S. Policy in Iran, 1950-1953* in *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 1999, Volume 1, Issue 1

- Goldman, M.: *The Oil Crisis In Perspective*, Daedalus, Vol. 104, No.4 (Fall, 1975)
- Hutchinson, E. and Bleiker, R.: *Fear No More: Emotions and World Politics*, Review of International Studies (2008), 34
- Looney, R.: *The Role of Military Expenditures in Pre-Evolutionary Iran's Economic Decline* in Iranian Studies, Volume XXI, Number 3-4, 1988
- McGlinchey, L.: *Building a Client State American Arms Policies Towards Iran, 1950-1963* in *Central European Journal of International and Security Studies*, Vol 6, Issue 2
- Orlov, A.: *A "Hot" Front in a Cold War* in *Studies in Intelligence*, Winter 1998 – 1999
- Philipp Rosenberg, J.: *The Cheshire Ultimatum: Truman's Message to Stalin in the 1946 Azerbaijan Crisis*, The Journal of Politics, Vol. 41 (1979)
- Reid, D.: *Political Assassination in Egypt, 1910-1954* in *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (1982)
- Ricks, M.: *U.S. Military Missions to Iran, 1943-1978: The Political Economy of Military Assistance in Iranian Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 3/4 (Summer - Autumn, 1979), p173
- Scullion, R.: *Michel Foucault the Orientalist: On Revolutionary Iran and the "Spirit of Islam"* in *South Central Review*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Summer, 1995)
- Sirriyeh, H.: *Development of the Iraqi-Iranian Dispute, 1847-1975*, Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 20, No. 3 (July, 1985)
- Stanley Jr., K.: *Rational Choice Theory and Politics*, Critical Review, Vol. 9, Nos. 1-2 (Winter-Spring 1995)
- Walt, S.: *Rigor or Rigor Mortis? Rational Choice in Security Studies*, International Security, Vol 23, No. 4 (1999)
- Wendt, A.: *The State as a Person in International Theory*, Review of International Studies, 30 (2004)
- Wendt, A.: *The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations Theory*, in *International Organization*, Vol. 41, No. 3, 1987
- Wheeler, G.: *Russia and the Middle East* in *Political Quarterly*, 1957, Issue 28, No. 2
- Wiebes, C. and Zeeman, B.: *The Pentagon Negotiations March 1948: The Launching of the North Atlantic Treaty International Affairs*, Vol. 59, No. 3 (Summer, 1983),
- Wight, C.: *State Agency and Human Activity* in *Review of International Studies*, 30 (2004)
- Wright, D.: *Defence and the Baghdad Pact* in *Political Quarterly*, No. 28 (Issue 2), 1957
- Yeşilbursa, B.: *The American Concept of the 'Northern Tier' Defence Project and the Signing of the Turco-Pakistani Agreement, 1953-54* in *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (July, 2001)

APPENDIX | TRASLATION OF PRAVDA ARTICLE

Thesis reference: p187, n18

Written: 11th of February 1959

Content: Text of note delivered by Soviet government delegation to the Iranian Foreign Minister following the breakdown of negotiations for a treaty of non-aggression and friendship.

Since January the 29th of this year, a Soviet government delegation has been present in Tehran at the invitation of the Iranian government. The delegation consisted of the Deputy Foreign Minister of the USSR, V. S. Semenov, the Soviet Ambassador to Iran, N. M. Pegov, and the Director of the Middle East Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador A. P. Pavlov.

The delegation conducted negotiations with the Shah of Iran and his government regarding the conclusion of a Friendship and Non-Aggression Treaty, a draft of which was proposed by the Iranian government. In the course of negotiations, however, when the Soviet delegation announced that their government accepted the Iranian government's proposed draft in its entirety, the Iranian government disavowed the original draft, putting new conditions on its signature, and attempting in every way to draw out the talks.

On the 10th of February the Soviet delegation held a meeting with Iran's minister of Foreign Affairs, Hekmat, during which it became clear that the Iranian government had opted for the breakdown of talks and were refusing to conclude the text of the Treaty, as proposed by the Iranian government, with the Soviet Union. Wherefore, by order of the Soviet government, the head of the Soviet delegation, V. S. Semenov, made the following statement to the government of Iran:

'Your Excellency, we have listened to your statement, containing the reply of the Iranian government to the Soviet proposals submitted by us to his Majesty the Shah-in-Shah on the 6th of February. Its substance may be reduced to the fact that the Iranian side no longer agrees with the aforementioned proposals. The Iranian government does not at the present time wish to proceed with signing a Treaty for Friendship and Non-Aggression, the draft of which they themselves proposed. They insist a clause is included to the effect that the Soviet government approves, along with activities already undertaken, future activities that may be undertaken in connection with Iran's participation in the Baghdad Pact, which it considers, contrary to fact, to be defensive in nature. The Iranian side does not agree to take upon itself a commitment against signing bilateral agreements, directed against the Soviet Union, with third parties. Moreover, the Shah-in-Shah's government has today directly announced, via yourself, that it will conclude a bilateral military agreement with the USA. The Soviet government's position with regard to this is well known to you.

You consider it essential that the question of foreign military bases in Iran be submitted to specialists for further study; this position concerning the entry of foreign forces into Iranian territory cannot but be considered evasive and ill-defined. The motives you cite for such a response are completely unconvincing, and bear no relation to the content of

the negotiations held here between the two sides. The refusal of the Shah-in-Shah's government to accept the Soviet government's proposals of February 6th, or to sign a Treaty of Friendship, Non-Aggression and Cooperation can only arouse regret in those who sincerely strive for good-neighbourliness between Iran and the Soviet Union, and for the strengthening of peace in the Middle and Near East.

Your Excellency, it should be recalled that the negotiations we conducted in Tehran regarding the conclusion of a Treaty for Non-Aggression and Feiendship were initiated at the request of the Iranian side. The subject first arose during the exchange of views which took place in December 1958 between our respective governments concerning Soviet-Iranian relations, which had been especially aggravated in connection with preparations for the conclusion of a military agreement between Iran and the USA, directed against the USSR and against other peace-loving countries of the region. A noteworthy message, transmitted by the USSR's ambassador in Iran, N. M. Pegov, to the Iranian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Hekmat, on the 28th of December, underlined that the intended Irano-American military agreement is incompatible with the promotion of peace in the Near and Middle East and would inflict irreparable damage on Soviet-Iranian relations. At the same time, the Soviet government expressed its aspiration that the Near and Middle East become a zone of peace; a zone of good-neighbourliness and friendly cooperation between governments. Wherefore the government of the USSR, taking into account the Iranian government's assurances of its wish to maintain friendly relations with the Soviet Union, expressed its willingness to make efforts, together with the Iranian government, to find a way to improve Soviet-Iranian relations and promote the normalisation of the present situation in the region.

Following an exchange of views regarding the shared issues of Soviet-Iranian relations on the 19th of January, a proposal for the conclusion of a Treaty of Friendship and Non-aggression was submitted to the Shah-in-Shah's government through the Soviet ambassador, and likewise the Iranian draft of the treaty. The Soviet government regarded the idea of a such a treaty with approval and expressed itself in favour of conducting negotiations on the subject, also making known its readiness either to welcome an Iranian delegation to Moscow for the purpose, or, should the Iranian government find it more appropriate, send a Soviet government delegation to Tehran. In response to this, on the 27th of January, the government of Iran expressed its wish that the Soviet government urgently send a delegation to Tehran, and that the negotiations be held in the strictest confidentiality. This was accepted by the Soviet side.

Accordingly, the Soviet delegation arrived in Tehran on the 29th of January at the urgent invitation of the Iranian government. The delegation proceeded on the basis that the Iranian government was genuinely interested in the conclusion of a treaty between Iran and the Soviet Union, and had full powers to conduct negotiations and to sign an appropriate treaty. The delegation met on several occasions with the head of the Iranian government, his majesty the Shah-in-Shah of Iran, and also with the Prime Minister, Mr. Manouchehr Eqbal; with yourself and responsible officials from the Iranian Foreign Ministry; and again with the Iran's appointed ambassador to the USSR, Mr. Aligholi [sic] Masoud-Ansari.

Acting on behalf of the Soviet government and on the personal orders of the Chairman

of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, N. S. Khrushchev, the delegation informed the Shah that the Soviet government was in favour of signing a new Soviet-Iranian Treaty, which would strengthen friendship and cooperation between our neighbouring governments and facilitate the removal of distrust and misunderstanding from Soviet-Iranian relations. The Soviet delegation handed the Shah the Soviet draft of the Treaty, in which many of the clauses from Iran's draft were taken into account. At the same time, included in the Soviet draft were a series of clauses directed toward the wider development of friendly cooperation between our two countries. In the Soviet draft, *inter alia*, it was stated that Russia and Iran would build their relations on the basis of mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty; of non-aggression and non-interference in each other's internal affairs; and on the basis of equality and mutual benefit. These clauses are in accordance with the decisions taken at the Bandung Conference, to which Iran was party, and also with the principles and goals of the United Nations.

The draft also included an obligation for both sides not to afford third parties the right to construct, or make use of existing, military bases and aerodromes within their territory nor permit the presence therein of any third party's armed forces. The Soviet draft of the treaty envisaged further expansion of economic, trade and cultural ties between the two sides. In this connection, the Soviet government expressed its willingness to extend assistance to Iran, in a spirit of friendly cooperation, for the development of its economy, particularly in development of industry and agriculture, as well as hydroelectric and transport facilities. Additionally, measures were envisaged for the widening of cooperation in the fields of culture, healthcare, and the fight against animal diseases and agricultural pests.

They may ask, why is the Soviet Union displaying such interest in the development of friendly relations with its Iranian neighbour? Is there not some concealed agenda here? As has already been stated on more than one occasion, this interest proceeds before all else from the Soviet government's aspiration for the strengthening of peace on Soviet borders and similarly from an ambition to promote the independent development of the sovereign nations of the East as they struggle to dispose of the heavy legacy of colonialism. The Soviet people consider it far better to labour and invest in the peaceful development of nations on a mutually beneficial basis rather than expending energy and material resources on arms races and the maintenance of inflated armies. It appears to us, of course, that Iran is no less interested in this than the Soviet Union. Regrettably, the Soviet delegation is forced to admit that the Shah-in-Shah's government passed over the above-mentioned Soviet proposals in complete silence and did not accept the hand of friendship, which the Soviet Union sincerely extended to Iran.

During the course of negotiations, the Iranian side attached particular significance to the cancellation of the 5th and 6th articles of the Soviet-Iranian treaty of 1921. These articles, as is known, encompass an obligation on the part of both sides not to permit the presence in their respective territories of any foreign state's armed forces that may constitute a threat to the borders, interests or security of the other contracting party; and additionally, an obligation on the part on the part of Iran not to allow the conversion of its territory into a base for military action against the Soviet Union.

The suggestion of revoking these articles of the Soviet-Iranian Treaty, which remain in force, was not entirely comprehensible to the Soviet side in as much as, according to available information, the conclusion of a military agreement between Iran and the USA envisages the potential stationing of U.S. troops on Iranian territory, and also the further widening of military cooperation between Iran and the USA within the framework of the Baghdad bloc. Nevertheless, taking into consideration the Shah's clarification, the Soviet government consented to discussions with the Iranian side on the issue of cancelling the 5th and 6th articles of the 1921 Treaty.

In taking this major step, the government of the USSR had hoped to clear all obstacles from the road, and remove any doubts, that might complicate Soviet-Iranian relations or lead to a recurrence of dissatisfaction either now or in the future. It also took into account the statement from the Iranian side to the effect that, in case of a treaty of friendship being concluded between the USSR and Iran, the Iranian government would not in future conclude military agreements directed against the Soviet Union, either with the USA or other with third parties; it also considered the Shah-in-Shah of Iran's statement that, in respect of the aforementioned articles, which were included in the Treaty of 1921 under particular historical conditions, and especially the provisions of Article 6, which envisages the possibility of Soviet forces entering Iranian territory in a specific context, their cancellation would facilitate the creation of a strong basis for mutual trust and development of friendly relations between Iran and the USSR, for which the Soviet government has continually striven.

Needless to say, the Soviet side could not but consider the fact that aggressive imperialist forces continue with their plans to utilise Iranian territory for the preparation of military escapades directed against the Soviet Union and other peace-loving nations. Wherefore, in the course of the negotiations, the Soviet government expressed its concern that Iran's participation in the Baghdad military pact will be used against the Soviet Union. The Soviet side expressed its opinion, that it would be beneficial if both sides – both the USSR and Iran – could conclude a treaty of friendship, non-aggression and mutual cooperation with the goal of formulating some essential security guarantees for both sides, in which connection Iran would secure its withdrawal from the Baghdad Pact.

The Soviet side stated with complete openness that the Baghdad Pact, as experience has demonstrated, has not brought, and cannot bring, security to Iran. Placing, as it does, on the shoulders of Muslim nations – its participants – the burden of heavy military expenditure, pushing them toward the exhaustion of their economic resources, the Baghdad Pact leads in reality to the transformation of their territories into a theatre of military activities in case of the emergence of armed conflict; something in which only foreign imperialist powers are interested – the long-standing oppressors of the Near and Middle East. Being a tool in the hands of aggressive powers, the Baghdad Pact has caused hostile and strained relations between the USSR and Iran, and also between Iran and her other peace-loving neighbours. Thus, the result of Iran's presence in the Pact is only a negative one.

Taking into account, however, the statements made by the Shah-in-Shah that Iran's participation in the Baghdad Pact will not be used against the interests of the security of

the Soviet Union, the Soviet government did not insist on Iran's withdrawal from the Baghdad Pact. That the Soviet government arrived at this stage followed from its sincere desire to underline its trust in what the Shah said, albeit the Soviet Union knows only too well that the initiators of the Pact see it as an aggressive military organisation, directed first and foremost against the Soviet Union and other peace-loving countries. A view was taken that, as peace is strengthened and tension reduced in the Near and Middle East, the Baghdad Pact will wither, like a tree with rotten roots withers; a tree from which Iran has neither received nor will receive any fruit.

That the Soviet government regards the aggressive Baghdad Pact in a strongly negative manner has been known to the Shah-in-Shah's government from the very day of the Pact's emergence. It nevertheless proposes that we now abandon our convictions on the subject, which have been confirmed by experience; it further proposes that we sign a treaty, in which we undertake to legitimise, in the eyes of the nations of the Near and Middle East, the aggressive Baghdad Pact and Iran's participation in it. Does this really speak of an intention on the part of the Shah-in-Shah's government to reach an agreement with the Soviet Union?

Having considered the report on the Soviet delegation's recent meeting with the Shah of Iran, held on the 3rd of February, the Soviet government instructed the delegation to inform the Shah that, in view of its aspiration to do everything possible for establishing genuinely friendly and good-neighbourly relations between the USSR and Iran, it had decided to make another step to meet the wishes of the Iranian government. The Soviet government announced that it accepted, in its entirety, the text of the draft Treaty on Friendship and Non-Aggression, which was proposed by the Iranian side on the 19th of January, and which, in terms of its content, was beneficial primarily to Iran. On the 6th of February, the Soviet delegation underlined that it had authority to sign this treaty without delay. In taking such a step, it goes without saying that the Soviet government counted on the Iranian government, and the Shah personally, to take corresponding measures that might furnish evidence of the Iranian side's desire to strengthen trust between our countries and likewise provide security, in equal measure, for Iran and the Soviet Union.

The government of the USSR proceeded on the basis that, with the signing of a treaty of friendship and non-aggression as set out by the Iranian side, the Iranian government would, as had been stated by the responsible government officials in the course of the negotiations, take upon itself the obligation not to conclude bilateral treaties directed against the Soviet Union with any third government. The Soviet government likewise had in mind that, in accordance with assurances given by the Shah, the government of Iran would undertake not to make its territory available for the establishment of foreign military bases and the placement therein, under some pretext or other, of foreign forces. It is obvious that such a statement on the part of the Iranian government would not only bring no harm to Iranian's independence, but also promote the strengthening of its sovereignty.

The reply of the Shah-in-Shah's government, transmitted today by you, can only be understood as a refusal to conclude such a treaty with the Soviet Union and to affirm those commitments, given on more than one occasion by the Iranian side both leading

up to and during the negotiations. They now wish to bury the whole affair, and even to drown the clear question regarding foreign military bases and the exclusion of foreign forces from Iranian territory in the murky water of 'studies' and the logomachy of specialist commissions.

The refusal of the Iranian government to adopt its own proposal for the conclusion of a treaty of friendship and non-aggression, which was made only a couple of weeks ago, and its abandonment of the treaty's draft, which was put forward by its own side, cannot but cause astonishment. Did not the Shah of Iran state, in his very first meeting with the Soviet delegation on the 30th of January, that the signing of such a treaty would be a substantive turning point in the betterment of relations between Iran and the USSR, and lead to a reduction of tensions in the Near and Middle East region? Indeed, there can be little doubt that conclusion of a suitable treaty and the establishment of friendship and mutual trust between our countries would serve the interests of both the Iranian and Soviet nations, and all those who are interested in the consolidation of peace.

The Soviet government, as you can see, placed its confidence in the Shah's aforementioned statement, and in the steps taken by the government of Iran. It did everything possible to meet the wishes of the Iranian side. And then now, it would seem, when there are no obstacles to the conclusion of the treaty proposed by the government of Iran, the Shah-in-Shah's government retreats from its own proposals. We now see that, on the part of the Shah-in-Shah's government, all this was nothing more than an ill-intended game calculated, above all, to mislead public opinion in Iran. It is now clear why the Iranian side drew out the negotiations in Tehran and retreated both from their position on the proposals made by the Soviet side and from their own draft of the treaty. True, in the course of official and unofficial meetings, and even today, we listened to no few verbal assurances of friendship and good intentions fed to us by individuals responsible for Iran's foreign policy in relation to the Soviet Union. As a wise Persian adage says, however, conversations about halva don't make the halva sweeter. [*Ba halva halva goftan, dahân shirin nemishavad.*]

The motivation behind Iran's behaviour is simple. The Soviet government is in possession of information, confirmed by the facts, that from the very first day of the Soviet delegations's arrival in Tehran, the Shah committed himself to a foreign government with an undertaking not to conclude an agreement with the Soviet Union and stated instead that he intended to sign an agreement with the United States of America. Furthermore, during the course of negotiations, the foreign press, for example, in Pakistan, published reports on a public statement by prime minister Eqbal to the same effect. Today you yourself confirmed this in your statement, made in the name of the Shah-in-Shah's government. Thus, on the one hand, you made statements to the Soviet government regarding your desire to improve Soviet-Iranian relations by the conclusion of an agreement with us, and on the other hand, the Iranian government both prepared to and pre-determined that it would sign a military agreement directed against the Soviet Union with the United States of America.

A similar hostility toward the USSR follows from the intention of the Iranian government to boost its role within the aggressive Baghdad pact. The hostile orientation of the Baghdad Pact, not only in relation to the Soviet Union but even in relation to the

peoples of those countries participating in the Pact, has been demonstrated, and in particular more recently, by events in certain member countries. Its role in increasing region tensions has been proven. Nations have taken a more decisive stand against the aggressive plans of Western colonialist powers of the Baghdad Pact and against the burdens which membership of this pact has placed on them. The forces of peace have found means to curb the aggressive and feeble machinations⁴¹ of the Baghdad Pact's sponsors. What we have said here suggests that the Iranian government and the Shah have pursued a two-faced policy in respect of the Soviet Union, which cannot but lead to grave consequences, above all for Iran. The Iranian government and the Shah of Iran clearly do not value friendly relations with the Soviet Union and do not appreciate the sincere steps taken by the Soviet Government toward settlement of unresolved issues with Iran.

As is well known, in recent years, and through the initiative the Soviet government, concrete and positive results have been attained in improving Soviet-Iranian relations: an agreement was inked on the resolution of border issues, providing for both demarcation and re-demarcation of the whole Iranian-Soviet border, putting an end to border disputes that have lasted more than a century; mutual financial claims were definitively settled to Iran's advantage and a significant increase in trade achieved between the two countries; the Soviet Union freely renounced, for Iran's benefit, its rights to and holdings in the joint Soviet-Iranian oil cooperative 'Kevir – Hurian', wishing to enable the Iranian people themselves to make use of their countries natural resources as they see fit; agreements were signed regarding the joint and equal-rights usage of the Arak and Hari-Rud (Tedzhen) river's water and energy resources; in line with the Iranian government's wishes, the question of transit fees was resolved, with preferential rates for Iranian goods passing through USSR territory; finally, a notable widening of both business contacts and cultural ties was achieved on both sides.

Through their activities in preparing to conclude a military agreement with the USA, and also in breaking of the negotiations regarding a treaty of non-aggression and friendship with the Soviet Union under American pressure, the Iranian government is cancelling out the recent trend toward the development of neighbourly relations between Iran and the Soviet Union. It has clearly demonstrated that it does not desire the betterment of relations, renouncing such an improvement. The unfriendly conduct of the Shah-in-Shah's government bears an indisputable relation to their collusion with those circles among certain foreign powers, who envisage making use of Iranian territory as a springboard for aggression against the Soviet Union and other peace-loving countries of the Near and Middle East. Such a conspiracy however, indicates nothing other than an about-face in the Iranian government's policy, which is leading Iran into the ranks of those who oppose the Soviet Union and opening up the possibility of Iran being utilised by aggressive foreign forces.

It goes without saying, all of this means that the activities being undertaken by the Shah-in-Shah's government will constitute a turning point both for mutual relations with

41 It is difficult to convey the full meaning of the admirable Russian noun 'поползновение' in English. The term derives from the verb 'to crawl' (поползти), and gives a sense of an action that is underhand, clandestine and deliberate in nature, but at the same time feeble, somewhat directionless and ultimately doomed to failure.

the USSR and for Iran, since, as everyone knows, the Soviet Union cannot overlook such activities on the part of the Iranian government, which have been dictated neither by the interests of improving our relations nor those of the maintenance of peace. We do not doubt that the hostile course recently adopted by the Shah's government in respect of the Soviet Union accords neither with national interests of the Iranian government nor with the aspirations and sentiments of the peace-loving Iranian people, who harbour deep sympathies for the peoples of the Soviet Union. Of course, the Iranian nation, just as other nations of the world are interested neither in increasing the burden of military expenditures, nor in cooperation with the aggressive powers of colonialism and imperialism that strive to push them into the abyss of war, nor in the deterioration of Iran's relations with her neighbours. On the contrary, the Iranian nation is interested in economic development and improving its quality of life; in strengthening Iran's independence; in sincere, neighbourly and amicable relations with certain freedom-loving states.

Insofar as the Shah's government has refused to conclude the treaty they themselves proposed regarding friendship and non-aggression with the Soviet Union, and insofar as it has already decided to sign a military agreement with the USA, continuing the present negotiations is meaningless. It is known to us that the Iranian government's decision was prompted by the Americans, who have endeavoured to break off the signing of the treaty with the USSR and ensure the signing of the bilateral agreement with the USA. It is also known to us that the Shah-in-Shah's government is in a great predicament, since it is unable to explain to its people the reasons for its two-faced policy toward the Soviet Union. The Soviet government will be obliged to make plain the true state of affairs with the negotiations.

Of course, the hostile steps taken by the Iranian government in respect of the Soviet Union cannot be regarded as anything other than evidence that the Shah's government is now openly siding with the aggressive American policies being enacted in the Near and Middle East; openly treading the path of cooperation with aggressive foreign powers, who are interested only in exacerbating the situation between our own two countries, and indeed in the whole Near and Middle East. It is natural that, in connection with the aforementioned unfriendly steps taken by the Shah-in-Shah's government in relation to the Soviet government, which is interested in ensuring the security of its borders and peace in the Near and Middle East, no agreeable conclusion can follow from this.'

On the 11th of February [1959] the Soviet delegation departed from Tehran.