



Written by [James Perloff](#) on May 12, 2009

Iran and the Shah: What Really Happened

In September 2007, *US News & World Report* stated: "Amid deepening frustration with Iran, calls for shifting Bush administration policy toward military strikes or other stronger actions are intensifying." And in June 2008, President-to-be Barack Obama declared: "The danger from Iran is grave, it is real, and my goal will be to eliminate this threat."

However, suppose a progressive, pro-Western regime ruled Iran, representing no threat? War discussions would be unnecessary. Yet many forget that, until 30 years ago, exactly such a regime led Iran, until it was toppled with the help of the same U.S. foreign policy establishment recently beating war drums.



Meet the Shah

From 1941 until 1979, Iran was ruled by a constitutional monarchy under Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, Iran's Shah (king).

Although Iran, also called Persia, was the world's oldest empire, dating back 2,500 years, by 1900 it was floundering. Bandits dominated the land; literacy was one percent; and women, under archaic Islamic dictates, had no rights.

The Shah changed all this. Primarily by using oil-generated wealth, he modernized the nation. He built rural roads, postal services, libraries, and electrical installations. He constructed dams to irrigate Iran's arid land, making the country 90-percent self-sufficient in food production. He established colleges and universities, and at his own expense, set up an educational foundation to train students for Iran's future.

To encourage independent cultivation, the Shah donated 500,000 Crown acres to 25,000 farmers. In 1978, his last full year in power, the average Iranian earned \$2,540, compared to \$160 25 years earlier. Iran had full employment, requiring foreign workers. The national currency was stable for 15 years, inspiring French economist André Piettre to call Iran a country of "growth without inflation." Although Iran was the world's second largest oil exporter, the Shah planned construction of 18 nuclear power plants. He built an Olympic sports complex and applied to host the 1988 Olympics (an honor eventually assigned Seoul), an achievement unthinkable for other Middle East nations.

Long regarded as a U.S. ally, the Shah was pro-Western and anti-communist, and he was aware that he posed the main barrier to Soviet ambitions in the Middle East. As distinguished foreign-affairs analyst Hilaire du Berrier noted: "He determined to make Iran ... capable of blocking a Russian advance until the West should realize to what extent her own interests were threatened and come to his aid.... It necessitated an army of 250,000 men." The Shah's air force ranked among the world's five best. A voice



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for stability within the Middle East itself, he favored peace with Israel and supplied the beleaguered state with oil.

On the home front, the Shah protected minorities and permitted non-Muslims to practice their faiths. "All faith," he wrote, "imposes respect upon the beholder." The Shah also brought Iran into the 20th century by granting women equal rights. This was not to accommodate feminism, but to end archaic brutalization.

Yet, at the height of Iran's prosperity, the Shah suddenly became the target of an ignoble campaign led by U.S. and British foreign policy makers. Bolstered by slander in the Western press, these forces, along with Soviet-inspired communist insurgents, and mullahs opposing the Shah's progressiveness, combined to face him with overwhelming opposition. In three years he went from vibrant monarch to exile (on January 16, 1979), and ultimately death, while Iran fell to Ayatollah Khomeini's terror.

Houchang Nahavandi, one of the Shah's ministers and closest advisers, reveals in his book [The Last Shah of Iran](#): "We now know that the idea of deposing the Shah was broached continually, from the mid-seventies on, in the National Security Council in Washington, by Henry Kissinger, whom the Shah thought of as a firm friend."

Kissinger virtually epitomized the American establishment: before acting as Secretary of State under Republicans Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford, he had been chief foreign-affairs adviser to Nelson Rockefeller, whom he called "the single most influential person in my life." Jimmy Carter defeated Ford in the 1976 presidential election, but the switch to a Democratic administration did not change the new foreign policy tilt against the Shah. Every presidential administration since Franklin D. Roosevelt's has been dominated by members of the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), the most visible manifestation of the establishment that dictates U.S. foreign policy along internationalist lines. The Carter administration was no exception.

Nahavandi writes:

The alternation of parties does not change the diplomatic orientation of the United States that much. The process of toppling the Shah had been envisaged and initiated in 1974, under a certain Republican administration.... Numerous, published documents and studies bear witness to the fact, even if it was not until the beginning of the Carter administration that the decision was made to take concerted action by evoking problems related to human rights.

The Shah's destruction required assembling a team of diplomatic "hit men." Du Berrier commented:

When the situation was deemed ripe, U.S. Ambassador William Sullivan — the man reputed to have toppled the pro-American government of General Phoumi Nosavan in Laos — was sent to urge the Shah to get out. In December Mr. George Ball, an instant "authority on Iran," was sent as a follow-up with the same message.

Sullivan (CFR), a career diplomat with no Middle East experience, became our ambassador to Iran in 1977. The Shah recalled:

Whenever I met Sullivan and asked him to confirm these official statements [of American support], he promised he would. But a day or two later he would return, gravely shake his head, and say that he had received "no instructions" and therefore could not comment.... His answer was always the same: I have received no instructions.... This rote answer had been given me since early September [1978] and I would continue to hear it until the day I left the country.



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The other key player du Berrier named, George Ball, was a quintessential establishment man: CFR member, Bilderberger, and banker with Lehman Brothers Kuhn Loeb. The Shah commented: "What was I to make, for example, of the Administration's sudden decision to call former Under Secretary of State George Ball to the White House as an advisor on Iran? I knew that Ball was no friend."

Writes Nahavandi:

George Ball — that guru of American diplomacy and prominent of certain think-tanks and pressure groups — once paid a long visit to Teheran, where, interestingly, the National Broadcasting Authority placed an office at his disposal. Once installed there, he played host to all the best-known dissidents and gave them encouragement. After he returned to Washington, he made public statements, hostile and insulting to the Sovereign.

Joining the smear was U.S. Senator Ted Kennedy, whose role Nahavandi recalled in a 1981 interview:

But we must not forget the venom with which Teddy Kennedy ranted against the Shah, nor that on December 7, 1977, the Kennedy family financed a so-called committee for the defense of liberties and rights of man in Teheran, which was nothing but a headquarters for revolution.

Suddenly, the Shah noted, the U.S. media found him "a despot, an oppressor, a tyrant." Kennedy denounced him for running "one of the most violent regimes in the history of mankind."

At the center of the "human rights" complaints was the Shah's security force, SAVAK. Comparable in its mission to America's FBI, SAVAK was engaged in a deadly struggle against terrorism, most of which was fueled by the bordering USSR, which linked to Iran's internal communist party, the Tudeh. SAVAK, which had only 4,000 employees in 1978, saved many lives by averting several bombing attempts. Its prisons were open for Red Cross inspections, and though unsuccessful attempts were made on the Shah's life, he always pardoned the would-be assassins. Nevertheless, a massive campaign was deployed against him. Within Iran, Islamic fundamentalists, who resented the Shah's progressive pro-Western views, combined with Soviet-sponsored communists to overthrow the Shah. This tandem was "odd" because communism is committed to destroying *all* religion, which Marx called "the opiate of the masses." The Shah understood that "Islamic Marxism" was an oxymoron, commenting: "Of course the two concepts are irreconcilable — unless those who profess Islam do not understand their own religion or pervert it for their own political ends."

For Western TV cameras, protestors in Teheran carried empty coffins, or coffins seized from genuine funerals, proclaiming these were "victims of SAVAK." This deception — later admitted by the revolutionaries — was necessary because they had no actual martyrs to parade. Another tactic: demonstrators splashed themselves with mercurochrome, claiming SAVAK had bloodied them.

The Western media cooperated. When Carter visited Iran at the end of 1977, the press reported that his departure to Teheran International Airport had been through empty streets, because the city was "all locked up and emptied of people, by order of the SAVAK." What the media didn't mention: Carter chose to depart at 6 a.m., when the streets were naturally empty.

An equally vicious campaign occurred when the Shah and his wife, Empress Farah, came for a state visit to America in November 1977. While touring Williamsburg, Virginia, about 500 Iranian students showed up, enthusiastically applauding. However, about 50 protestors waved hammer-and-sickle red flags. These unlikely Iranians were masked, unable to speak Persian, and some were blonde. The U.S. media focused exclusively on the protestors. Wrote the Shah: "Imagine my amazement the next day when I saw the press had reversed the numbers and wrote that the fifty Shah supporters were lost in a



hostile crowd.”

On November 16, the Shah and Empress were due to visit Carter. Several thousand Iranian patriots surrounded the White House bearing a huge banner saying “Welcome Shah.” However, as Nahavandi reports:

The police kept them as far away as possible, but allowed a small number of opponents [again, masked] to approach the railings ... close to where the Sovereign’s helicopter was going to land for the official welcome. At the exact moment, when courtesies were being exchanged on the White House lawn, these people produced sticks and bicycle chains and set upon the others.... Thus, the whole world was allowed to see riotous scenes, on television, as an accompaniment to the arrival of the Imperial Couple.

Terror at Home

Two major events propelled the revolution in Iran. On the afternoon of August 19, 1978, a deliberate fire gutted the Rex Cinema in Abadan, killing 477 people, including many children with their mothers. Blocked exits prevented escape. The police learned that the fire was caused by Ruhollah Khomeini supporters, who fled to Iraq, where the ayatollah was in exile. But the international press blamed the fire on the Shah and his “dreaded SAVAK.” Furthermore, the mass murder had been timed to coincide with the Shah’s planned celebration of his mother’s birthday; it could thus be reported that the royal family danced while Iran wept. Communist-inspired rioting swept Iran.

Foreigners, including Palestinians, appeared in the crowds. Although the media depicted demonstrations as “spontaneous uprisings,” professional revolutionaries organized them. Some Iranian students were caught up in it. Here the Shah’s generosity backfired. As du Berrier pointed out:

In his desperate need of men capable of handling the sophisticated equipment he was bringing in, the Shah had sent over a hundred thousand students abroad.... Those educated in France and America return indoctrinated by leftist professors and eager to serve as links between comrades abroad and the Communist Party at home.

When the demonstrations turned violent, the government reluctantly invoked martial law. The second dark day was September 8. Thousands of demonstrators gathered in Teheran were ordered to disperse by an army unit. Gunmen — many on rooftops — fired on the soldiers. The Shah’s army fired back. The rooftop snipers then sprayed the crowd. When the tragedy was over, 121 demonstrators and 70 soldiers and police lay dead. Autopsies revealed that most in the crowd had been killed by ammo non-regulation for the army. Nevertheless, the Western press claimed the Shah had massacred his own people.

The Shah, extremely grieved by this incident, and wanting no further bloodshed, gave orders tightly restricting the military. This proved a mistake. Until now, the sight of his elite troops had quieted mobs. The new restraints emboldened revolutionaries, who brazenly insulted soldiers, knowing they could fire only as a last resort.

Khomeini and the Media Cabal

Meanwhile, internationalist forces rallied around a new figure they had chosen to lead Iran: Ruhollah Khomeini. A minor cleric of Indian extraction, Khomeini had denounced the Shah’s reforms during the 1960s — especially women’s rights and land reform for Muslim clerics, many of whom were large landholders. Because his incendiary remarks had contributed to violence and rioting then, he was exiled, living mostly in Iraq, where Iranians largely forgot him until 1978.



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A shadowy past followed Khomeini. The 1960s rioting linked to him was financed, in part, by Eastern Bloc intelligence services. He was in the circle of the cleric Kachani Sayed Abolghassem, who had ties to East German intelligence. Furthermore, in 1960, Colonel Michael Goliniewski, second-in-command of Soviet counter-intelligence in Poland, defected to the West. His debriefings exposed so many communist agents that he was honored by a resolution of the U.S. House of Representatives. One report, declassified in 2000, revealed, "Ayatollah Khomeini was one of Moscow's five sources of intelligence at the heart of the Shiite hierarchy."

Nevertheless, as French journalist Dominique Lorenz reported, the Americans, "having picked Khomeini to overthrow the Shah, had to get him out of Iraq, clothe him with respectability and set him up in Paris, a succession of events, which could not have occurred, if the leadership in France had been against it."

In 1978, Khomeini, in Iraq since 1965, was permitted to reside at Neauphle-le-Château in France. Two French police squads, along with Algerians and Palestinians, protected him. Nahavandi notes:

Around the small villa occupied by Khomeini, the agents of many of the world's secret services were gathered as thickly as the autumn leaves. The CIA, the MI6, the KGB and the SDECE were all there. The CIA had even rented the house next door. According to most of the published witness-statements, the East Germans were in charge of most of the radio-transmissions; and, on at least one occasion, eight thousand cassettes of the Ayatollah's speeches were sent, directly to Teheran, by diplomatic bag.

Foreign-affairs analyst du Berrier reported:

French services quickly verified that Libya, Iraq and Russia were providing money. Young Iranians, members of the Tudeh (communist) Party, made up Khomeini's secretariat in France. Working in cooperation with the French Communist Party they provided couriers to pass his orders and tapes into Iran. Their sympathizers in Britain turned the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) into a propaganda organ.

Journalists descended in droves on Neauphle-le-Château; Khomeini gave 132 interviews in 112 days, receiving easy questions as their media organs became his sounding board. Nahavandi affirms that, within Iran "the Voice of America, the Voice of Israel and, especially, the BBC virtually became the voice of the revolution, moving from criticism, to overt incitement of revolt, and from biased reporting, to outright disinformation."

Khomeini's inflammatory speeches were broadcast; revolutionary songs aired on Iranian radio. One journalist, however, stunned Khomeini by bucking the trend: intelligence expert Pierre de Villemarest, hero of the French Resistance in World War II, anti-communist, and critic of the CFR. Interviewing Khomeini, de Villemarest asked:

How are you going to solve the economic crisis into which you have plunged the country through your agitation of these past few weeks?... And aren't you afraid that when the present regime is destroyed you will be outpaced by a party as tightly-knit and well organized as the [communist] Tudeh?

Khomeini didn't reply. The interpreter stood, saying, "The Ayatollah is tired." De Villemarest registered his concern with the French Ministry of the Interior, but reported, "They told me to occupy myself with something else."



Ending the Shah's Rule

Iran's situation deteriorated. As Western media spurred revolutionaries, riots and strikes paralyzed Iran. The Shah wrote:

At about this time, a new CIA chief was stationed in Teheran. He had been transferred to Iran from a post in Tokyo with no previous experience in Iranian affairs. Why did the U.S. install a man totally ignorant of my country in the midst of such a crisis? I was astonished by the insignificance of the reports he gave me. At one point we spoke of liberalization and I saw a smile spread across his face.

The Carter administration's continuous demand upon the Shah: liberalize. On October 26, 1978, he freed 1,500 prisoners, but increased rioting followed. The Shah commented that "the more I liberalized, the worse the situation in Iran became. Every initiative I took was seen as proof of my own weakness and that of my government." Revolutionaries equated liberalization with appeasement. "My greatest mistake," the Shah recalled, "was in listening to the Americans on matters concerning the internal affairs of my kingdom."

Iran's last hope: its well-trained military could still restore order. The Carter administration realized this. Du Berrier noted: "Air Force General Robert Huyser, deputy commander of U.S. forces in Europe, was sent to pressure Iran's generals into giving in without a fight." "Huyser directly threatened the military with a break in diplomatic relations and a cutoff of arms if they moved to support their monarch."

"It was therefore necessary," the Shah wrote, "to neutralize the Iranian army. It was clearly for this reason that General Huyser had come to Teheran."

Huyser only paid the Shah a cursory visit, but had three meetings with Iran's revolutionary leaders — one lasting 10 hours. Huyser, of course, had no authority to interfere with a foreign nation's sovereign affairs.

Prior to execution later by Khomeini, General Amir Hossein Rabbi, commander-in-chief of the Iranian Air Force, stated: "General Huyser threw the Shah out of the country like a dead mouse."

U.S. officials pressed the Shah to leave Iran. He reflected:

You cannot imagine the pressure the Americans were putting on me, and in the end it became an order.... How could I stay when the Americans had sent a general, Huyser, to force me out? How could I stand alone against Henry Precht [the State Department Director for Iran] and the entire State Department?

He finally accepted exile, clinging to the belief that America was still Iran's ally, and that leaving would avert greater bloodshed. These hopes proved illusions.

A factor in the Shah's decision to depart was that — unknown to most people — he had cancer. U.S. Ambassador William Sullivan (CFR) assured the Shah that, if he exited Iran, America would welcome him. Despite the pleadings of myriad Iranians to stay, he reluctantly left. However, shortly after reaching Cairo, the U.S. ambassador to Egypt effectively informed him that "the government of the United States regrets that it cannot welcome the Shah to American territory."

The betrayed ruler now became "a man without a country."

Iran's Chaotic Descent



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On February 1, 1979, with U.S. officials joining the welcoming committee, Ayatollah Khomeini arrived in Iran amid media fanfare. Although counter-demonstrations, some numbering up to 300,000 people, erupted in Iran, the Western press barely mentioned them.

Khomeini had taken power, not by a constitutional process, but violent revolution that ultimately claimed hundreds of thousands of lives. Numerous of his opponents were executed, usually without due process, and often after brutal torture. Teheran's police officers — loyal to the Shah — were slaughtered. At least 1,200 Imperial Army officers, who had been instructed by General Huyser not to resist the revolution, were put to death. Before dying, many exclaimed, "God save the King!" "On February 17," reported du Berrier, "General Huyser faced the first photos of the murdered leaders whose hands he had tied and read the descriptions of their mutilations." At the year's end, the military emasculated and no longer a threat, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. More Iranians were killed during Khomeini's first month in power than in the Shah's 37-year reign. Yet Carter, Ted Kennedy, and the Western media, who had brayed so long about the Shah's alleged "human rights" violations, said nothing. Mass executions and torture elicited no protests. Seeing his country thus destroyed, the exiled Shah raged to an adviser: "Where are the defenders of human rights and democracy now?" Later, the Shah wrote that there was

not a word of protest from American human rights advocates who had been so vocal in denouncing my "tyrannical" regime! It was a sad commentary, I reflected, that the United States, and indeed most Western countries, had adopted a double standard for international morality: anything Marxist, no matter how bloody and base, is acceptable.

Exile

The Shah's personal tragedy wasn't over. He stayed briefly in Egypt and Morocco, but did not wish to impose risks on his hosts from Muslim extremists. Eventually he welcomed Mexican President Lopes Portillo's hospitality.

However, in Mexico the Shah received an invitation from CFR Chairman David Rockefeller, who used influence to secure permission for the Shah to come to America for medical treatment. Rockefeller sent a trendy Park Avenue MD to examine the Shah, who agreed — against his better judgment — to abandon his personal physicians and fly to New York for treatment. In October 1979, he was received at the Rockefeller-founded Sloan-Kettering Memorial Hospital for cancer treatment. Here the Shah experienced a fateful delay in spleen surgery that some believe accelerated his death.

The Shah's admission to the United States had another outcome. Partly in retribution, on November 4, 1979, Iranians took 52 hostages from the U.S. embassy in Teheran. (According to Nahavandi, Soviet special services assisted them.) This embarrassed Jimmy Carter, who had done so much to destroy the Shah and support Khomeini. The seizure made the Shah a pawn.

While in New York, Mexico inexplicably reversed its welcome, informing the Shah that his return would contravene Mexico's "vital interests." One can only guess at the hidden hands possibly influencing this decision.

Carter faced a dilemma. Iran wanted the Shah's return — for a degrading execution — in exchange for the American hostages. However, a direct trade might humiliate the United States.

Therefore, Panama was selected as intermediary. Following treatment in New York, the Shah was informed he could no longer remain in America, but Panama would welcome him. In Panama, however, the Shah and Empress were under virtual house arrest; it was apparent that it would only be a matter



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of time before the Shah would be sent to Iran in exchange for the hostages. A special cage was erected in Teheran. Khomeini's followers envisioned parading him in the streets before final torture and bloody execution.

However, Anwar Sadat, the Egyptian president and the Shah's friend, discerned the scheme, and sent a jet to Panama, which escorted the Shah and Empress safely to Egypt.

Mohammad Reza Pahlavi died on July 27, 1980. His last words: "I wait upon Fate, never ceasing to pray for Iran, and for my people. I think only of their suffering." In Cairo, a grand funeral honored him. Three million Egyptians followed the procession.

Anwar Sadat who, like the Shah, advocated a peaceful Middle East, and defied the American establishment by saving the Shah from infamous death, did not survive much longer himself. The following year, Muslim extremists assassinated him under circumstances remaining controversial.

The Issues

Why did the American establishment, defying logic and morality, betray our ally the Shah? Only the perpetrators can answer the question, but a few possibilities should be considered.

Iran ranks second in the world in oil and natural-gas reserves. Energy is critical to world domination, and major oil companies, such as Exxon and British Petroleum, have long exerted behind-the-scenes influence on national policies.

The major oil companies had for years dictated Iranian oil commerce, but the Shah explained:

In 1973 we succeeded in putting a stop, irrevocably, to sixty years of foreign exploitation of Iranian oil-resources.... In 1974, Iran at last took over the management of the entire oil-industry, including the refineries at Abadan and so on.... I am quite convinced that it was from this moment that some very powerful, international interests identified, within Iran, the collusive elements, which they could use to encompass my downfall.

Does this explain the sudden attitude change toward Iran expressed by Henry Kissinger, beginning in the mid-seventies? Kissinger's links to the Rockefellers, whose fortune derived primarily from oil, bolsters the Shah's view on the situation. However, other factors should be considered.

Although the Shah maintained a neutral stance toward Israel, during the 1973 Yom Kippur War, he allowed critical supplies to reach Egypt, enabling it to achieve a balance of success, and earning Sadat's undying gratitude, but wrath from influential Zionists. Did this impact the West's attitude change in the mid-seventies?

We should not overlook that the Shah opposed the powerful opium trade, now flourishing in the Middle East.

Finally, the Shah was a nationalist who brought his country to the brink of greatness and encouraged Middle East peace. These qualities are anathema to those seeking global governance, for strong nations resist membership in world bodies, and war has long been a destabilizing catalyst essential to what globalists call "the new world order."

What is the solution to modern Iran? Before listening to war drums, let us remember:

It was the CFR clique — the same establishment entrenched in the Bush and Obama administrations — that ousted the Shah, resulting in today's Iran. That establishment also chanted for the six-year-old Iraq War over alleged weapons of mass destruction never found. Therefore, instead of contemplating war



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with Iran, a nation four times Iraq's size, let us demand that America shed its CFR hierarchy and their interventionist policy that has wrought decades of misery, and adopt a policy of avoiding foreign entanglements, and of minding our own business in international affairs.



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