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8 April 1966

IRAN - WHAT STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE TO THE FREE WORLD

By

JESSE B. HOLLIS, JR.

Colonel, Artillery

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USAWC RESEARCH ELEMENT
(Research Paper)

Iran - What Strategic Importance to The Free World?

by

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Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania
8 April 1966

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SUMMARY

Iran occupies an important position in the area commonly referred to as the Middle East. It forms a bridgehead on the way to Central Asia, bars the way to India and points the way to Africa and Europe. It was the world's first great empire and, throughout its two thousand five hundred year history, has kept its cultural identity intact in spite of numerous invasions. Iran has eluded foreign domination notwithstanding its strategic location, which has made it an aspiration of all would-be world conquerors.

Today, a coveted neighbor of the Soviet Union and one of the richest oil producing countries in the world, Iran occupies a position of great strategic importance to both the Free and the Communist Worlds. It provides direct and relatively easy access to or egress from the southern plain of the Soviet Union thus providing an important element in the forward defense concept of the Free World. Iran blocks the way to warm water ports on the Persian Gulf and offers a buffer shielding the essential and the vast oil deposits of the Persian Gulf area from the Soviet Union. Iran's location as well as her oil marks her as an important element in the strategic and commercial considerations of the western world.

Threatened internally by the lack of a developed economy and the great gap between the rich and poor, Iran is in the throes of a social and economic revolution, which is being fostered by its Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlevi. Progress is being achieved in social, administrative, and economic reform. Education, health and modernization programs are being aggressively pursued. Given time, Iran should prove to be a stable and extremely important ally of the Free World.

To insure the continuance of the valuable friendship of this strategic ally, United States policies should support Iran in: its search for economic and social reform; its need for internal and external security; and its courageous stand in cooperating with the Western World in the use of its petroleum resources, transit rights, and strategic position in a common defense against communism and Russian imperialism.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

History as well as the world environment of today marks Iran as a focal point of international politics and military strategy. A study of the factors which cause world interest to center in Iran, is important in the determination of the strategic value of this ancient country to the United States and the Free World.

In the past, the unique geographical situation of Iran has conferred upon this region an historical importance unequalled by many other parts of the world. This protruding offshoot of the Asiatic Continent is a great land bridge between far eastern Asia and the lands of the Mediterranean and Europe.

Before the dawn of recorded history, the caves of the Zagros Mountains of western Iran sheltered the hunters who were among the earliest people of the world to move down into the valleys and lower plains to cultivate crops, raise domesticated animals and finally to settle in villages.¹ Iran lies along the routes of the prehistoric migrant tribes of central Asia. These people poured down from the cold of the north and many settled in Iran. Since the beginning of recorded history, Iran's rulers have

¹Donald N. Wilber, Iran Past and Present, p. 15.

spread their control afar and established the first great world power, the Persian Empire.

Conflict in Iran, Persia as it was formerly called, has paralleled the history of mankind.² No area on the earth's surface has been so continually the scene or source of conflict among men and nations. Every major empire in the history of the old world has either included this area, in whole or in part, or has aspired to include it.³ Among the great captains of history, who have cast covetous eyes, if not their power, into Iran, are: Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan, Tamberlane, Peter the Great, Napoleon, and in more recent times: Hitler, Stalin and Khrushchev. The historical feats of the youthful genius, Alexander, and his thin legions in their inspiring defeat of the massive army of Darius, in Alexander's conquest of the area has fired the imagination of the western world for generations.

It is obvious from the history of this ancient country that men have sensed its strategic importance and have considered it imperative to control the land mass of this veritable crossroads of three continents if one dreamed of world domination. In this era of air power, modern communications, missiles, and nuclear weapons, the strategic importance of Iran may have diminished or

²Although the present Shah has authorized both Persia and Iran as names of the country, it was known only as Persia until 1935 when Reza Shah decreed that Iran only was to be used. This study will use both names interchangeably.

³Philip K. Hitti, The Near East in History, pp. 4-8.

changed in form as modern civilization has swept by her. This study will attempt to research her modern day strategic importance.

Essentially, although the strategic impact of Iran may have changed in intensity over the period of time, its present strategic value to the Free World is still derived from three fundamental factors: geographic position, strategic resources, and the political stability. It is within these areas, that we shall endeavor to research and analyze in order to seek the answer sought by this study and thus suggest broad United States policies toward Iran.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF IRAN

The past in Iran is ever present in the people and the problems facing them and in the land itself ever waiting to be uncovered. Mounds covering many layers of dead villages silently testify to the antiquity of life in Iran and ancient ruins are reminders of a great world empire.

Any attempt to study Iran or its people should be prefaced by a look at its background into the deep reaches of history. The Iranian knows his land was once the center of civilization, the birthplace of a great religion, and the developer of a great world empire. He is sensitive to this heritage, and his leaders of today look to the past as inspiration and guidance for present actions.

There are countries such as Egypt whose recorded history dates farther back than that of Iran. Yet few, if any nations, have been so deeply related to the fate of civilization and humanity.

Man's knowledge of the earliest inhabitants of Iran is very fragmentary. Excavations in a cave at Behistun, located in western Iran, disclosed flints of the middle Paleolithic period as well as skeletons of the Mesolithic period.¹ There is a growing amount of evidence that civilization, as measured by the beginning of agriculture, emerged in the valleys of the Zagros Mountains of western

¹Donald N. Wilber, Iran Past and Present, p. 15.

Iran.² Grains, such as wild emmer the ancestor of wheat, still grow there and are native to those mountain slopes, not to the great river basins of the Tigris and Euphrates.³

THE ARYANS

Around 2000 B.C., a new people, the Aryans, appeared on this landscape of an already ancient type of civilization. These Indo-European people swept in from the plains of south central Russia and established the first documented intrusion into Iran from the north. Upon reaching Iran, the migration split, half going on to India and the other settling in Iran giving the country its present name, Iran, land of the Aryans.⁴

THE PERSIAN EMPIRE

The two main groups to settle in Iran were those identified as the Medes and the Persians. The Medes settled in northwestern Iran. By 600 B.C. they had established a nation consisting of a confederation of tribes, which included the Persians. In 550 B.C. Cyrus, leader of the Persians, revolted and overthrew the Media ruler.

Cyrus was soon engaged in a series of successful campaigns that resulted in the establishment of the great Archaemedian Empire of

²Conversation between Danish archaeological team and author in Shahabad, Iran, 1963.

³Wilber, op. cit., p. 15.

⁴Elgin G. Groseclose, Introduction to Iran, pp. 10-15.

the Persians, extending from the Indus Valley in the east to the far reaches of Asia Minor in the west. This first vast world empire, which burgeoned so rapidly, brought forth new problems of control and administration never before experienced by man. To meet these new problems, the Persian flair for organization emerged.⁵

The improved life that the Persians introduced made them quite acceptable as conquerors. Roads were built to the far reaches of the empire. With these roads, knowledge was spread and trade was promoted. A canal linking the Nile and Suez was completed allowing waterborne traffic between Egypt and Persia. Money was coined to meet the expanding commercial needs. Political and military control was centralized. Civilization flourished as never before.⁶ These attributes of the Persian may be explained not only by the genius of such leaders as Cyrus and Darius, but also by the great religion of Zoroastrianism, which evolved in Iran at approximately the same time as the Persian Empire.

Zoroaster, thought to have been born in northwestern Iran around 660 B.C. like Isaiah, believed that the great problem of the world was sin. He taught that man was a creature of dignity and that his mission was to wage war upon all the forces of evil, until eternal goodness would triumph and peace would reign over heaven and earth.⁷ Thus, the spirit of tolerance, manifested by the Persian Kings, was

⁵A. T. Olmstead, History of the Persian Empire, pp. 35-58.

⁶Philip K. Hitti, The Near East in History, pp. 51-54.

⁷Olmstead, op. cit., pp. 94-106.

derived from this religion. As an example Cyrus liberated the Jews, who were held captive in Babylon, and aided in the rebuilding of their temples.

The Persians had a civilizing mission in all the lands they conquered and were gifted administrators as well as able military men. The governmental system for the administration and control of the empire was a work of genius. The organizing and administrative abilities of the Persians were often utilized by other conquerors in seamier days of Iran.

KINGS AND CONQUERORS

As time passed, the leadership and organization eroded. The stage was set for the entrance of Alexander and the Greek phalanx in 330 B.C. As a conqueror, Alexander admired the Persians and adopted their customs and dress. He took a Persian wife and promoted mass marriages between his men and Persian women.⁸ Thus, the children were reared in the customs of their mothers, preserving the Persian culture. But, the first great empire was no more. The star of Iran slowly descended through the age of the Sassanian Persians (224-641 A.D.) and the Arab occupation, which lasted through the tenth century and produced a Muslim but not Arabic Iran.

The next onslaughts to be survived were the invasions of the Turks and Mongols (1050-1500 A.D.). The Turks borrowed much from

⁸Wilber, op. cit., p. 27.

Persia, even recruiting Persians as top administrators, and again Persia retained its identity. The Mongols (1112-1227 A.D.), led by Genghis Khan, followed the Turks and swept down the ancient invasion routes from the north. Iranians feel their country has never recovered from the ruthless slaughter and wanton destruction of the hordes of Genghis Khan.

Tamberlane, a central Asian Turk, appeared next on the scene. The land was devastated; cities were destroyed; and towers were built of human skulls. Even this did not completely bury the main stream of Persian culture and tradition, which struggled to the surface again in the Safavid Persian dynasty (1499-1736 A.D.).⁹ This era saw the Persians sweeping into India to capture Delhi and vast treasures including the bejeweled peacock throne and the Koh-i-noor diamond.

A series of inept rulers ended this last surge of Persian empire builders. They brought to a close that period of history, wherein the Persians were players in the master games of world power as they swirled in and through the land of the Aryans.

MODERN FOREIGN IMPERIALISM

Peter the Great of Russia ushered in the modern era of world power politics in the Middle East, and Iran became a pawn in the game rather than a powerful participant. In 1722, Peter captured the key

⁹Human Relations Area Files, Iran, Country Survey Series, p. 21.

fortresses of Derbend and Baku and entered into an agreement with Turkey for the dismemberment of Iran.¹⁰ This would have achieved the Russian ambition for a warm water port on the Persian Gulf and an open gateway to India; however, his death prevented the consummation of the agreement. Nevertheless, for over two centuries Russia eroded the Northern boundaries of Iran.

During this era, Napoleon negotiated for a passage through Iran to India; Germany infiltrated; and England maneuvered diplomatically and economically for a position of power.

The overriding reason that the Iranian has been able to preserve the identity and autonomy of his country is the checks and balances provided by so many eager and powerful antagonists. The Persian has become extremely adept at delay and the art of playing one opponent off against the other. This is a concept to be considered in any current appraisal of Iranian foreign policies.

During World War I, Iran, in its strategic position between the continents, was engulfed again in the struggle for world power and occupied by Turkey, Russia, and Great Britain. However, events came to the rescue of Iran; she was freed by the Bolshevik Revolution and British post war preoccupation in other areas.

¹⁰Hitti, op. cit., p. 382.

REZA SHAH

Corruption, incompetence, and internal strife following World War I created pressures that dictated a government change. Reza Khan, the commander of the Persian Cossack Brigade, swept into power and proclaimed himself Shah in Shah (King of Kings) in December 1925 creating the Pahlevi Dynasty. Establishing a dictatorial monarchy, Reza Shah crushed Soviet-agitated opposition in the northwest, disarmed the semi-independent tribes, and restored governmental control in the south, where it had been undermined by the British. Reza then launched upon a vast program to modernize Iran along western lines; he built railroads and roads, erected factories, established schools, brought in foreign advisors, and instituted countless economic and social reforms. While the magnitude of these programs were modest in scope and in terms of results, Iran began her emergence from conditions that were likened to those of the early middle ages.¹¹

Again, because of her "most favored position" on the earth's surface, Iran was forced to submit to foreign military occupation during World War II. Reza Shah was required to abdicate because of his strong German sympathies and in order to preserve the throne for his twenty-two year old son.¹² Iran was again occupied by the Russians and Great Britain, but this time a new force appeared in this amphitheater so long associated with world power--the United States of America.

¹¹William S. Haas, Iran, pp. 135-167.

¹²Hitti, op. cit., p. 419.

MOHAMMED REZA SHAH

With the termination of hostilities Great Britain and the United States withdrew their forces from Iran. However, the Soviets did not agree immediately, instead they created the autonomous states of Azerbaijan and Kurdistan under the tutelage of the Red Army occupation forces. Under pressures created through the United Nations, by the United States, Great Britain, and Iran, Russia finally withdrew her forces in May 1946.¹³ The new states quickly collapsed, and youthful Mohammed Reza Shah was again in nominal control of his country playing the role of a constitutional monarch.

The Shah began to press for social and economic reforms and demanded that corruption be eradicated from public life. Frightened by the Shah's progressive and liberal views, traditional forces began to reassert their power in the person of Dr. Mohammed Mossadegh.¹⁴

Dr. Mossadegh, long an advocate of nationalization of the gigantic oil industry of Iran, seized upon the impatience of the country for enforcement of the oil nationalization law to force his appointment as Prime Minister. He immediately set out to establish himself as the leader of all segments of the nation. A master at swaying public opinion, Mossadegh used emotionalism and dreams of a resurgent Persian.

¹³E. Day Carman, Soviet Imperialism, p. 129.

¹⁴John Marlowe, Iran, pp. 87-100.

empire in his attempt to gain autocratic control of the government. He was successful to the extent that on 16 August 1953, the Shah fled the country.

On 19 August the army supported by popular demonstrations, took a hand and toppled Mossadegh. Upon his triumphant return, the Shah immediately began to consolidate his regained power. He astutely played strong opposing forces against each other and gained a firm control over all segments of the government. His reigning role as a constitutional monarch was cast aside and he assumed the more traditional ruling role of the Shah as established by his father.¹⁵

Mohammed Reza Shah was maturing, and what was more important this maturity was oriented toward the West. Iran firmly linked itself with the Free World in the power struggle between East and West by joining the Baghdad Pact and negotiating relatively large amounts of military and economic assistance from the United States.¹⁶ Again the Persian had staved off his powerful and avaricious adversary of the North by adroitly playing the game of world power politics that he learned so well during the milleniums.

¹⁵George Lenczowski, The Middle East in World Affairs, pp. 214-218.

¹⁶Hitti, op. cit., p. 422.

CHAPTER 3

GEOGRAPHICAL STRATEGIC ASPECTS

STRATEGIC POSITION

The strategic geographical position occupied by the Middle East and the economic importance of the area in the contemporary struggle between the two great world powers have brought the states of this region into the international power arena. The geography of the Middle East, both its global location and physical characteristics, points out the strategic value of the area in the modern world as it has in the historical past.¹ It requires little imagination, in looking at a world globe, to see that this area constitutes a vast land bridge joining Europe, Asia and Africa. It also presents a barrier across the major water route linking the countries bordering the Atlantic Ocean and its Mediterranean extension with those along the Indian Ocean. Thus, it might be said to divide the East from the West in both geographic and economic terms. Specifically, this vast area controls, to a considerable extent, movements of men and cargoes of trade in peace or in war, even in an age of air transport.

Iran, the second largest country of the Middle East, occupies an extremely important position in the area. It consists principally

¹Institute of Ethnic Studies, Soviet Policy in the Middle East, p. 1.

of a vast, triangular plateau, the north side of which is bounded for 1250 miles by the Soviet Union and the Caspian Sea. On the east, Iran borders Afghanistan and Pakistan, while the western side of its triangle is formed by the border with Turkey and Iraq and the eastern shore of the Persian Gulf. Thus, Iran separates the Soviet Union from the warm water ports of the Persian Gulf, and thence from a water passage to those parts of the East and Middle East, which could be approached from that body of water. In reverse, Iran provides one of the few approaches, available to the western world, that gives direct access to the Soviet Union itself. Iran, likewise, commands the western land approach to the subcontinent of India, and in the same manner controls the eastern approaches to Iraq and the fertile crescent of the Middle East. This latter route would provide an envelopment of Turkey, breaching the Central Treaty Organization and flanking the eastern anchor of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

A discussion of the strategic position of Iran would be incomplete without an analysis of its impact on Middle East oil. A strong power, entrenched in Iran, would be able to dominate not only Iranian oil but the principal producing areas of the Persian Gulf containing approximately sixty two percent of the world's known oil reserves.² Should Iran come wholly under Soviet control, the strategic map of the world would be altered or as a minimum create an adjustment in the world balance of power.

²Charles R. Wallis and Robert L. Hunt, ed., Readings in Middle Eastern Studies, Vol. II, p. 163.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Modern Iran is a vast region of over 628,000 square miles, an area equal to that of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California combined.³ In general, the landscape resembles the American Southwest, but has less vegetation and a wider variety of climates. There are great elevated plateaus, vast stretches of colorless, empty land, ringed by awe-inspiring ranges devoid of most vegetation; there are the salt deserts sparsely dotted with bright oases, rich with produce, dates, and nuts; there are the rich mountain valleys, green from the carefully controlled waters of the melted snows; and finally the extremes of the lush tropical, rain jungle of the Caspian littoral to the harsh, dust laden, furnace heated winds on the Persian Gulf.⁴ Topographically, Iran can be compared to a vast natural fortress, protected by mountain ranges on all sides. These ranges are massive and lofty on the north, west, and southwest; rising to over 18,600 feet above Teheran, in the center north; 16,900 feet (Mount Ararat) at the junction of the Iranian, Turkish, and Russian borders; and then gradually diminishing in the west and southwest, but containing numerous peaks in the 11,000 to 12,000 foot range.

The Elburz Mountains in the north descend abruptly to the fertile Caspian shores; the Zagros in the west descend more

³"Persia," Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. 17, p. 543.

gradually to a desolate plain along the coast of the Persian Gulf. The Iranian plateau is split up in the west into a number of basins by secondary offshoots of the Zagros Mountains and in the east consists mainly of two great, forbidding, and practically impassable salt deserts.

Iran is an arid country except in the northern Elburz, the Caspian coast, and some mountain basins in the Zagros. Most of the inhabited areas are confined to the peripheral zones and the northwestern and western basins. The remainder is uninhabited except for the seasonal intrusions by the various nomadic tribes.

STRATEGIC LAND DEFENSES

Classical invasion routes into the country from the north funnel west of the Caspian through the defendable narrow passes of the Elburz mountains then to split off to the east towards Teheran or to follow the valleys and cross compartments through the Zagros Mountains to Kermanshah, thence on to the Persian Gulf. At Kermanshah, a natural break in the Zagros occurs called "The Gate of Asia". This is the ancient, golden, caravan route to Baghdad.

Routes east of the Caspian through the northern Elburz swing southwest toward Teheran, thence either continue to the southwest to the Persian Gulf via Isfahan, avoiding the inhospitable eastern salt deserts, or westerly along the historic cavern route to Hamadan and Kermanshah. Either of these routes must penetrate the Zagros to reach the Gulf or to continue west to Baghdad.

Thus, the northern land defenses of Iran and the entire Middle East are predicated upon successive defenses of the two major and formidable terrain features: first the line of the Elburz Mountains, and second the Zagros Massif extending from the northwest corner of Iran to the Persian Gulf. This latter position is stronger and greater in depth; if it were breached, the route to the Persian Gulf or the Mediterranean would be greatly simplified.

ANALYSIS OF GEOGRAPHICAL ASPECTS

An analysis of Iran's physical location reveals it as an important link, if not a keystone, in the arc of the Northern Tier that bulwarks the defense of the Middle East. In spite of difficulties of terrain, it provides direct and relatively easy access to or egress from the southern plain of the Soviet Union. As the meeting place of three continents, as a vital link in air communications, and as a repository for major oil deposits of the world, Iran must be considered an important element in the strategic and commercial considerations of the western world.

CHAPTER 4

STRATEGIC RESOURCES OF IRAN

PETROLEUM

In any master plan for the security and defense of the Free World, access to adequate supplies of petroleum is of paramount importance. In addition to the critical need of oil for energy, the petro-chemical industry has made such progress in refining petroleum that an enormous number of essential substances and products are derived from it. Some industries depend entirely upon petroleum for their raw materials; this is in addition to the much broader industrial demands upon oil as a source of power. The highly industrialized western world can truly be said to constitute an "oil culture."¹

In the future, oil may be replaced as the dominant energy source of the world, particularly as a source of stationary energy. However, as a source of mobile energy and raw chemical material, there is certainly nothing on the present horizon that would replace it. In the contemporary world, oil is power to be used by those that control its production and distribution.

The Suez crisis of 1956 brought about a dramatic realization of Europe's almost complete dependence on Middle Eastern oil.

¹University of Minnesota Center for International Relations and Area Studies, U.S. Policy in the Middle East, p. 42.

In that year, European consumption of petroleum products was 115 million tons. The best estimates indicate this figure will rise to 340 million tons by 1975.² As important as the total rise in consumption, is the fact that the figures indicate a growing conversion to oil from other energy sources. Thus, greater reliance than ever is being placed on the Middle East, which supplies approximately 80 percent of European oil imports.³ Even though the percentage of the total received from the Middle East may decline as North African fields enter the picture, it is probable that the total amounts supplied will have to be increased in the future in order to supply oil hungry Europe.

This essential and strategic product again brings Iran to the forefront of world focus and, as most things Iranian, reaches back into the pages of history. Seeping oil or gas on the Iranian plateau, probably ignited by lightning, so impressed the ancient man that it became an object of worship. A gas and oil seepage at Baba Gurgur is traditionally associated with the fiery furnace of Nebuchadnezzar.⁴ Later Zoroastrianism, the official religion of the Persian Empire, built temples housing eternal flames fed by seeping oil or gas. It was at the site of such a temple that oil was discovered in commercial quantities in 1908. This discovery occurred after seven years of exploration and at a time when the

²George Lenczowski, Oil and State in the Middle East, pp. 11-12.

³Rear Admiral E. M. Eller, "The Strategic Importance of the Middle East," Now Hear This, Apr. 1957, pp. 11-12.

⁴W. B. Fisher, The Middle East, p. 237.

board of governors of D'arcy's English Company were considering abandoning the search.⁵

In 1909, the Anglo-Persian Oil Company was formed and proceeded to develop the oil production of the area. Thus, Iran became the first oil producing country of the Middle East and presently ranks among the leading petroleum producing countries of the world.

Today, oil is produced at over 100 different fields in the foothills of the Zagros Mountains. These fields form an arc of about 180 miles radius around Abadan at the head of the Persian Gulf.⁶ The world's largest refinery is also located at Abadan.

In 1956, under operations carried out by the National Iranian Oil Company in central Iran, a dramatic new oil discovery was made at Qum. This discovery was entirely separated from the Persian Gulf formations. A 120 foot gusher was brought in that flowed unchecked for eighty two days and covered the surrounding desert with an estimated 5 million barrels of oil.⁷

New and successful exploration is continuing in the off-shore fields of the Persian Gulf and in central Iran. These explorations are being conducted under the auspices of the National Iranian Oil Company and a world consortium of oil companies.

⁵Elgin G. Groseclose, Introduction to Iran, p. 89.

⁶Great Britain Central Office of Information, Reference Division, Iran, p. 26.

⁷Lenczowski, op. cit., pp. 11-12.

Iranian oil certainly plays an extremely important part in the economy of Western Europe and a far more important part in that of Iran. It is making a vital contribution to the welfare and economic progress of the country. Oil, by financing the development plans of the country, is bringing social vitality and economic growth to Iran.⁸

OTHER MINERALS

Iran has the potential of developing other extensive and widely varied mineral resources. While she has sources of most minerals, some in rich quantities, her mining industry suffers from the inaccessibility of the deposits and primarily from the lack of markets for the ores both domestically and internationally.⁹ These minerals, while not currently of great importance to Iran, are certainly adequate for any foreseeable economic and industrial growth of the country.

In recent years additional reserves of good quality coal and iron ore have been discovered. An estimated 180 million tons is reportedly located near Kerman, and some 20 million tons of iron ore has been found near Arak. In spite of these discoveries Iran continues to import all of its finished iron and steel.

⁸Ibid., p. 53.

⁹Donald N. Wilber, Iran Past and Present, p. 219.

AGRICULTURE

While petroleum has produced the strength for the economic development of Iran in this century, agriculture is still the principal economic activity of the country. It affords a living for 75 percent of the people. Some 10 to 15 percent of the land is under cultivation, although approximately half lies fallow each year due to lack of water; an additional 15 percent is grazing land, the majority of which is submarginal due to over grazing; and 10 percent is in forest predominantly not of commercial quality.¹⁰ The soil is generally of poor quality and subject to erosion due to poor agricultural methods. Output of the chief agricultural products has risen since World War II, but has not kept pace with the increase in population. As a result, some imports of foodstuffs have been necessary, especially in years of extreme drought.¹¹

Over most of Iran, the farming of the land is done, as in other countries of the Middle East, by methods in use for thousands of years. It is estimated that, with the current increase in the use of fertilizers, pesticides and modern agriculture methods, Iran can maintain her population growth and manage to feed herself.

¹⁰Great Britain Central Office of Information, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

¹¹In the spring and summer of 1963, the author arranged for Iranian Army transportation to distribute PL 480 grain from the U.S. to livestock starving from a prolonged three year drought in the Khuzistan area.

With the present emphasis on agricultural development and particularly the development of water resources for irrigation, great strides in food production should be made. Western Iran was the bread basket of the world in ancient times and has the capability to vastly increase her current production. Of interest is the fact that in the age of the Persian Empire, conservation methods in agriculture were the law of the land.¹² The Iranian must again look to the past for his guidance of the future.

ANALYSIS OF STRATEGIC RESOURCES

The natural resources of Iran, though primarily undeveloped, are adequate for her present needs and can sustain her future growth. Other than petroleum, no essential or critical raw material has been found in commercially significant quantity to attract world markets. The importance of Iranian oil to the Western World cannot be over-emphasized. It has come to play a vital role in the peacetime economies and military requirements of Western Europe. The strategic importance of this vital product is becoming progressively more essential to the destiny of Europe.

¹²Conversation with the Director of the Iranian Experimental Agricultural Station in Kermanshah, Iran, disclosed that Royal decrees of the Archaemedian Empire had been found which indicated that a field could not be replanted until it had been fertilized.

CHAPTER 5

POLITICAL, SOCIAL, AND ECONOMICAL STABILITY OF IRAN

THE GOVERNMENT

Iran is one of the most ancient countries in the world with a continuous history as a political entity extending over some 2,500 years.¹ What is more important in an analysis of its political system is the fact that it has had a continuous governmental system of a monarchy for the 25 centuries of its existence.

It would seem difficult to find a link between the political environment of the Persia of 2,500 years ago and modern 20th century Iran. Yet such a link does exist and is meaningful in our examination into the political stability of present day Iran. There has never been a well defined aristocracy in Iran, such as has played an important role in all of the western countries. In Iran, no such distinct nobility ever developed and Persian Shahs never found it necessary to rely on a privileged class.² Whereas in the west, the king is the apex of a social pyramid; the Shah in Shah of Iran always faces a mass of people who are all equally subject to his will. Nothing stands between the Shah and his people to weaken his power. Such unlimited power, as the Iranian rulers have exercised through the centuries, is almost unknown in the west except in a

¹Great Britain Central Office of Information Reference Div., Iran, p. 2.

²Elgin G. Groseclose, Introduction to Iran, p. 60.

rare occasion of an extraordinary personality or situation. However, with a few exceptions, the rulers of Iran cannot be accused of having been sinister tyrants, indifferent to and remote from their subjects. The kings of Iran have traditionally administered justice in public and received complaints and petitions in person. This environment continues to exist and exerts a tremendous influence on present day actions in Iran. For example, it has been traditional for the high officials and great landowners to tolerate the Shah's practice of confiscating a subject's fortune, when it became large enough to tempt him. The present land reform movement could be said to have its roots in such a tradition.

Prior to 1906, the Shah in Shah was an absolute monarch. The word of the Shah was the supreme law of the land in so far as it did not conflict with the basic principles of the Shiite sect of Islam. The land and all its subjects were the property of the Shah; the national treasury and his pocket book were one. In times of stress rights were sought by petition, demonstrations, riots, and assassination. While the Iranian people have a tremendous tradition of loyalty, respect, and devotion to their Shah as an institution, the person of the Shah is not inviolable.³

In 1906, Iran became a constitutional monarchy, but the Shah remained the most powerful element in the entire structure of the government. Under the constitution, the Shah is empowered to name

³Human Relations Area Files, Iran, Country Survey Series, p. 56.

and dismiss cabinet ministers, command the armed forces, declare war, conclude peace and appoint persons to military rank. He may also call special sessions of the parliament, dissolve either or both chambers of it, and act independently in appointing a Prime Minister. While the total powers of the Shah are not spelled out in the constitution, the powers listed above and the considerable influence he can exert on ministers, officials, and parliament make the Shah one of the most powerful heads of state in modern times.

The legislative branch is composed of a bicameral parliament consisting of a lower house, the Majlis, and an upper chamber, the Senate. The Majlis includes 200 deputies elected for four years. The members are elected on a regional basis in proportion to population. The Senate is composed of 60 members, 30 of whom are appointed by the Shah and 30 are elected. Their term is for six years. Half of each category of membership must come from Teheran, the other half is drawn from the provinces.

The judicial system is modeled on the French system. The lowest court is the justice of the peace in the villages with jurisdiction over petty cases and misdemeanors. The district court in larger towns is the court of first instance in all except petty cases. Next is the court of appeals in the province capitols and finally the Supreme Court in Teheran. The progress in the field of law since 1925 is one of Iran's major achievements in her move towards Westernization. The fundamental change from orthodox Islamic law to a

modern judicial system with codified statutes and laws constitutes a great step forward.⁴

NATIONAL LEADERSHIP

The present head of state, Mohammed Reza Shah, assumed the throne in 1941 after the abdication of his father and under circumstances that rendered his position very weak. The country was occupied by the British and Russian forces. The Iranian Army, which had been the force behind the old Shah, had practically disintegrated and ceased to wield effective force in the country.⁵ At the close of World War II, the Shah strove to reestablish the foundation of royal authority and to pursue the modernization of Iran. Stepping into the competitive political arena the Shah pushed measures of social, administrative, and economic reform.

Traditional forces, alarmed at some of the Shah's reforms (particularly land redistribution), used the popular nationalization of oil crisis to force the appointment of Dr. Mohammed Mossadegh as Prime Minister in July 1952. His downfall occurred when he sought autocratic powers, superior to those of the Shah, so as to gain control of the army and thus, negate the Shah's order for his dismissal. This awakened another deep seated Iranian tradition, that no temporal power under

⁴Ibid., pp. 76-77.

⁵Foreign Area Studies Division, Special Operations Research Office, Area Handbook for Iran, p. 308.

Allah can be higher than the Shah.⁶ The army and the masses turned upon Mossadegh and Reza Shah returned to power in August 1953.

With the removal of Mossadegh, the Shah began immediately to overhaul Iran's political system with the objectives of strengthening royal authority and assuring a more orderly and responsible parliamentary process. Thus, a new era of a weak and pliable parliament and a strong royal power was inaugurated.

With encouragement of the Shah in 1957, Asadollah Alam, a lifelong friend, founded the People's Party (Mardom). A few months later, again on the Shah's encouragement, Premier Eghbal founded the National Party (Mellioum).⁷ The programs of the parties do not reveal any major differences, although the Mardom seems to place greater emphasis on land reform. Both parties, acting in the Majlis, more aptly play the part of the loyal opposition in as much as the cabinet incumbents are not members of parliament. It might be added that, since the Mossadegh crisis, the Shah has appointed to the premiership only men who can be trusted to remain docile and under his control.

In addition to strengthening his position politically after removing Dr. Mossadegh as Prime Minister, the Shah continued the rebuilding and favored treatment of his primary benefactor, the army. He controls the Minister of War by appointing a trusted army officer as minister. The latter then staffs the ministry with military officers. The Shah maintains close personal contact with the armed

⁶Human Relations Area Files, op. cit., p. 88.

⁷George Lenczowski, The Middle East in World Affairs, p. 229.

services, keeping abreast of the state of affairs within them. He actively works towards increasing their morale and public prestige. He closely controls promotions and personally appoints and assigns all general officers. At the same time, he closely controls the movements and activities of these general officers and their units.⁸ The armed forces are considered loyal to the Shah and can be depended on in any internal crisis that might develop.

The question of leadership succession in Iran is an open one. Mohammed Reza Shah reached political maturity with the removal of Mossadegh. Since that time he has astutely prevented the emergence of any powerful government figure. The constitution provides that the Majlis will appoint a single regent, if the throne becomes vacant and the Crown Prince has not reached his 20th birthday. As Crown Prince Reza has only reached his 5th birthday, the question could be kept open for some period of time. One thing is certain, the successor of Mohammed Reza Shah will be a strong man. The Iranian will demand that.

SOCIAL ASPECTS

Iran is a complex country weighed down by centuries of magnificent glory and followed by centuries of destitution. Some 75 to 80 percent of the people are still illiterate. Iran does not have a single homogeneous society, but is an admixture of different kinds

⁸Personal observation of author, 1963-1964.

of sub-societies strongly linked around a central Persian core. However, there are some non-Iranian ethnic groups with different languages and traditions. Of the 22 million population, 64 percent are ethnic Persians, 24 percent are Azerbaijan in northwest Iran, and 12 percent are non-Persian tribes.⁹ Many of the tribes are relatively autonomous and integrated with the central government through their leaders. All tribes, though, are in varying stages of absorption in the Persian core. The disarming and integrating of the tribes has been a primary internal objective of the Iranian government under the present Shah and his father. Success is being achieved slowly.

Land reform and the Literacy Corps are two powerful weapons presently being employed that tribal custom and tradition will find difficult to blunt. The pride of ownership of land and the thirst for education are conflicting with the migratory customs of individual families. Tribal autonomy is gradually breaking down and the political functions are being assumed by the national government.

The Iranian has a deep and fierce pride in his country, its history, and its traditions. The other ethnic groups, although not sharing this reverence to the same degree, nevertheless, do share the pride of being a part of the Persian tradition. Having fought, worked, and lived with the Iranians for centuries, they have achieved a cultural and social conglomerate that is distinctly Persian.

⁹Headquarters Dept of the Army, Middle East: Tri Continental Hub a Strategic Survey, p. 78.

Besides ethnic and tribal differences there are many regional differences. Some differences are based on climatical and geographical factors. Others are based on the extreme differences between the rural villages, some of which date back to Mohammed; the old bazaar town, from the middle ages with a few modern innovations; and the sleek cosmopolitan metropolis.

The symbol of unity for these diverse social, ethnic, and cultural groupings is the "ShanAnShah" as the Iranian proudly and fiercely refers to his king. The throne represents Persia, its history, its culture, and its traditions; the Shah, occupying the throne, represents the state and derives his strength and power from Allah and from his people. He is the leader, the father of the nation. The Iranian's fervor for his country--especially its past and the Shah--is hard for the western observer to understand. Particularly if one recognizes that the Iranian is inward looking and closely allied with his family, practically to the exclusion of all else. Perhaps it is two things--the strongman father image of the Shah and the dreams of glories of the past take the Persian away from the harsh realities of the present.

During all of its centuries, Iran has been a nation composed of the very rich and the very poor. Today, this culture is in a slow and painful transition towards modern social, economic, and political ideas. There is a paradox in this transition. Despite the Iranian's apparent devotion to things modern and their eagerness to catch up with the Western World, there is an innate reluctance

to give up his Persian ways. This has discouraged and exasperated many foreign advisors.

Mohammed Reza Shah has realized that the aspirations for modernization in Iran will not of itself overcome this reluctance to change nor carry on the fight against the vested interests of the wealthy elite.¹⁰ The Shah has tried to establish the pattern by distributing his own crown lands to the peasants, but he was not followed in this move. Deciding to take matters into his own hands, he proclaimed the Iranian people's "White Revolution."¹¹ This dramatic action called for a six point program to completely overhaul the entire economic and social structure of this ancient land. The six points briefly are as follows:

1. Redistribution of the land from the wealthy landowners to the peasants and the abolition of serfdom.
2. Nationalization of all forests in order to preserve this scarce and important resource.
3. Public sale of stock of government owned industries.
4. Provision for profit sharing for workers in industry.
5. Complete revision of election laws and practices.
6. Creation of a Literacy Corps.

¹⁰"New Democracy in an Ancient Land," Iran Today, No. 15, Vol. II, 1964, pp. 5-7.

¹¹"Mission for His Country," Iran Review, Vol. IV, No. 3, Sep. 1965, p. 2.

The Shah put the reforms to a public vote on 26 January 1963 and received overwhelming support. He has since, by decree, extended the right to vote to women, established the Health Corps, and the Development and Extension Corps. These latter two agencies supplement the Literacy Corps and consist of young medical and engineering graduates who, instead of doing compulsory military duties, will be sent to villages and rural areas of the country. If the enthusiastic reception of the Literacy Corps in rural areas is any indication, there is no doubt that their impact will be considerable.

In addition to the "revolution from the top," there has been another hopeful change in Iran. Like all genuine social changes, it has progressed slowly and spontaneously; it has not been planned; this is the emergence of a middle class in Iran.¹² The process for this social change began when rich landlords moved to Teheran during World War II to engage in war time speculation. They were followed by many young peasants, who, through contact with occupation forces, found money and skills had meaning, which was unknown in a feudal society. Knowledge and education were also found to be of value. All of these ideas struck fertile ground and established roots. The Shah's reform program has accelerated this process of development.

There is, of course, still a tremendous gap between the aspirations of many of the new projects or reforms and their fruition. The difference between the theoretical concept and the implementation

¹²Anne Sinclair Mehdevi, "Iran Celebrates a 2,500th Birthday," New York Times Magazine, 31 Oct. 1965, p. 51.

of it in Iran is frequently an abyss. Social progress is being made in spite of the Persian obstinacy to turn loose of the past.

The stable class of Iran through the centuries has been the land owning elite. They have backed the monarchy and controlled the serfs. But, now things have changed; the political and social impact is not clear at this time. All Iranians are not presently gripped in the paralysis between the glorious past and a future that will automatically bring justice without effort. However, these new social movements have given rise to tensions and conflicts that the Persian has not hitherto encountered. The Shah is apparently aware of many of these problems and is striving for education, industrialization, and modernization as a solution to the tensions prior to their reaching a snapping point. These strains, if not removed, will certainly jeopardize the country's chances for orderly development.

Traditionally in Iran, the rising tide of reform has met a wall of vested interests. These vested interests are powerful and, in the past, have been the political strength of the monarchy. Their modern political replacements, the peasants, constituting 75 percent of the population, and the middle class, newly emerging, have not yet become significantly articulate.

The Shah is adroitly and skillfully playing a tense social, as well as, political game. It is too early to determine with any degree of certainty whether the Shah will be successful in his "revolution." It is predicted that he will be. The delicate

balance of power, which he has attained by reducing the power of the elite and guiding the voices of the lower classes, would appear to be sufficient to provide the time that is necessary for the developing program and for its growing social structure to mature.

THE ECONOMY

Today, as in the past, the principal economic activity in Iran is agriculture, which provides a living to 75 percent of the population and produces 40 to 45 percent of the gross national product.¹³ Petroleum, however, has provided the strength for Iran's present economical progress and provides for the majority of her exports.

Manufacturing industries, apart from traditional crafts, are of recent growth. One of the country's great needs is for trained personnel, particularly those who are technically trained. The Shah has described education and training as the key to Iran's economic and social development.

Perhaps nowhere in the developing nations have such broad, basic steps been taken in search of economic progress as in Iran. The changes are designed to elevate the economic level to western standards and raise the standard of living of all the people of Iran.

The government has successfully instituted land reforms in which the large feudal estates have been broken up and the land

¹³Foreign Area Studies Div., op. cit., p. 427.

redistributed to the peasants who work them.¹⁴ The problems are still enormous. Educating the peasant to manage his land, providing capital, working out precise boundaries, and organizing cooperatives to provide marketing facilities and irrigation facilities all remain to be successfully accomplished. Meanwhile much can be said for the accomplishment of reforms that removed the centuries old feudal system of landlord and serf. The peasant in Iran now has some sort of political if not economic freedom.

The Shah has launched upon a 30 year program to reverse the present 75 to 25 percent ratio of agriculture to industry.¹⁵ Capital invested in industrial productive and developmental fields is to be tax free. This is certainly a bid for the capital that was made available from the sale of land by the large landlords. In addition, government owned factories are being handed over to the dispossessed land owners as payment for their estates. Traditionally, Iranian capital goes abroad for investment unless quick exorbitant returns can be obtained in Iran. The above steps were taken to reverse the outflow of capital and to give the dispossessed landowner a vested interest in the economy and stability of the country.

Another boost to Iran's economy is expected from the opening of new oil fields. The terms of the present contracts negotiated with the international oil companies are much more favorable to Iran than

¹⁴Jay Wale, "Land Reform Slows as Iran Turns to Second Stage," New York Times, 16 Apr. 1964, p. 15.

¹⁵Ali Mehravari, "Major Economic Reforms are Transforming Iran," New York Times, 15 Jan. 1965, p. 68.

those of the past. The new petroleum agreements will give Iran 75 percent of the proceeds in contrast to the former 50-50 split in revenues. In addition, increased production and more advantageous contracts increased oil payments to Iran from 90 million dollars in 1955 to a figure which is expected to exceed 525 million dollars in 1965.¹⁶

The petrochemical industry has the potential of becoming as important to Iran as the oil industry.¹⁷ It can be a pivot around which other huge industries may develop. The basic raw material for the industry, gas, is abundant. For years this product has been burned for safety and merely to dispose of it. Realizing the importance of such an industry, Iran has allocated substantial funds for its development. Particular attention is being devoted to the fertilizer portion of the industry. Thus, two fold results will be achieved, industrial development and agricultural progress.

There are other signs of what appears to be a reactivation of the national economy. Bank rates have been cut to encourage private investment, export bonuses are granted to encourage exports, and standardization and quality control for exports are being stressed. Another boost for the economy is the reorientation of government economic planning in the current development plan. For the first

¹⁶Thomas F. Brady, "International Oil Group in Iran Lifts Output Fivefold in Decade," New York Times, 20 Dec. 1965, p. 59.

¹⁷Ali Mehravari, op. cit.

time, consideration has been given to the private sector of the economy in contrast to the past when total reliance was placed upon improving the long range and slower reacting factors of the public sector.¹⁸

Undoubtedly, some of the results of the past economic plans are now being felt. One of Iran's major weaknesses, the lack of communications is being gradually overcome with the slow completion of modern highways linking the major cities and the extension of secondary roads into other sectors of the country. The railroad from Tabriz to Turkey is in the final stages of completion.¹⁹ This will link Iran to Europe by rail and should provide an additional impulse to international trade. The Dez River dam, the highest in the Middle East, has been dedicated and is producing water for irrigation and hydro-electric power to revitalize the Khuzestan region of southwest Iran.²⁰ Within the last three years, adequate water and natural gas have been piped into the capital city of Teheran to sustain its phenomenal growth from a prewar city of 600,000 to a metropolis of over 2,000,000 persons.

Iran announced recently that one of her long time economic dreams, the possession of a steel industry, was about to be fulfilled. She has recently completed negotiations with Soviet Russia to build

¹⁸US Dept of State, Background Notes: Iran, Oct. 1964, p. 3.

¹⁹Personal interview with Col George L. Eckert, Chief of Field Advisory Team #1 ARMISH/MAAG Iran, 1964-1965.

²⁰Kathleen McLaughlin, "Farming in Iran Reaping Gains," New York Times, 2 Nov. 1964, p. 63.

a big industrial complex, including a steel mill, a machine tools plant, and other satellite units.²¹ Cost of the complex is to be paid with natural gas and other products from Iran. The Russians will also build a natural gas pipeline from the southern oil fields near the Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea. After supplying the needs of Iran along the route, the surplus gas will be exported to the Soviet Union. Many development experts question Iran's need for a steel industry at this time in view of her lack of transportation facilities, but such an industrial complex, achieved at the cost of a surplus product, should help to stimulate Iran's economy.²² The future will determine how lasting the effect may be. One thing is certain, Russian aspirations in Iran have not been stilled.

ANALYSIS OF THE STABILITY OF IRAN

At the pinnacle of the power structure on which the political, social, and economic stability of Iran depends, stands Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlevi. By forcing through far-reaching reforms, the Shah has alienated the traditional support of the monarchy, the landowners, who for generations have dominated the economy of the country.

The fast growing middle class, articulate but not matured as a political force, is dependent on an economy not yet fully integrated into the capabilities of the country. The root of this problem

²¹"Iran's Dreams of Steel Industry May Soon Come True," Washington Post, 10 Dec. 1965, p. A4.

²²Stanley Karnow, "Iran Takes Russia as Friend," Washington Post, 21, Nov. 1965, p. 5.

seems to lie, on the one hand, in the lag between the expectations of this vibrant class and, on the other, in the state's capacity to meet these expectations in an orderly and timely manner.

Economically, Iran is one of the few developing countries, which has the resources to develop a stable economy. It has sufficient people, adequate natural resources, and a dependable source of capital. If the level of skills and education can be raised, its resources wisely developed, and its stable and forward looking leadership maintained, Iran can emerge into the modern world with a minimum of disruption. It must not be overlooked, however, that life and environmental conditions in Iran are harsh and often insecure. Thus, the attainment of economical stability will not be easy or certain. The economic future, however, looks bright, thanks to nature's splendid endowment of great supplies of petroleum.

The Shah's big and long term gamble is to build a solid political base with the support of the peasants who are benefiting from the land and social reforms. His problems are that the peasants are politically inarticulate and they will require several years to develop coordinated political leadership. There is also the possibility of the failure of the land reform movement due to the lack of the peasant's ability to manage adequately his land or market his produce.

Meanwhile, the Shah depends on the army and secret police to keep him in power. Both are adequate to perform this mission, except for assassination, which is always a possibility.

As far as a violent upheaval of the monarchy is concerned, Iran has certain built-in safeguards. First, there is the continuous threat of Soviet imperialism, which tends to unify the national ranks when the pressure is great; and secondly, the historical continuity of the monarchical institution that Iran has enjoyed for centuries.

It appears that at present Iran is relatively stable and oriented towards the west. The Shah seems to have a tight enough hold on the country to permit continuation of his reforms. However, the complete success of his programs cannot be predicted at this time.

In the event of the death of Mohammed Reza Shah, it seems quite improbable that any Iranian regime, which might succeed him, would ignore the past and fail to assess correctly the purposes implicit in Soviet Russia's imperialism.

CHAPTER 6

SOVIET ASPIRATIONS IN IRAN

TSARIST RUSSIA

In an attempt to review and examine Soviet Russia's aspirations in Iran, it is impossible to deal entirely in the present or with Iran in isolation. A look at the past and some reference to Iran's neighbors is necessary.

As has been mentioned earlier in this study, the modern history of Iran has been largely an account of big power rivalry. The one country, which has been aggressively on the scene in the power struggle since the eighteenth century, is Iran's northern neighbor, Russia. Aspiring to reach warm water ports, and jealous of the British hold in India, Russia has displayed unabated economic and territorial ambitions to the south.¹ Her relationship to Iran has been one of steady pressure and territorial advancement. Beginning as far back as 1722, Peter the Great temporarily occupied Iran's northern Caspian province of Gilan. With the reign of Catherine the Great, Russian pressure increased. Wars were fought in 1796, 1800-1813, and 1826-1828. These wars resulted in the loss, by Iran, of her rich Caucasian provinces and advanced the Russian border to the present frontier, west of the Caspian, on the Aras

¹International Studies Group of the Brookings Institution, Brookings Institution, The Security of the Middle East, pp. 6-7.

River.² These wars closed one chapter of Russian expansion, but did not halt it. In 1869, a Russian expedition occupied Krasnovodsk on the eastern shore of the Caspian. In 1873, another Russian expedition surrounded the Turkoman steppe on the northeastern frontier, and in 1881, the Turkoman tribes were subdued.³ The same year a Russo-Iranian agreement fixed the Atrek River as a boundary between the two countries. Russia now stood poised both east and west of the Caspian Sea, at the mountain passes leading to the ethnic territory of Iran.

Oil appeared on the scene and Great Britain had a "raison d'etre" in Iran. The entrance of another great power into the area served to provide Iran an instrument to check and balance the power of her powerful northern neighbor. In 1907, the Anglo-Russian agreement divided the country into two spheres of interest--Russia in the north--British in the south. This placed Russia in control of a large area of Iran including the capitol and brought her closer to India and the Persian Gulf. The Russians strove for political and economic control of Iran with the ultimate aim to absorb it as a Russian province.⁴

The last and most successful foreign policy maneuver by Tsarist Russia was the agreement concluded with the allied powers in March 1915 and May 1916 in which Russia was to receive:⁵

²George Lenczowski, Russia and the West in Iran 1918-1948, p. 2.

³Ibid., p. 2.

⁴Halford L. Hoskins, The Middle East, pp. 167-172.

⁵Institute of Ethnic Studies, Soviet Policy in the Middle East, pp. 5-6.

1. The city of Constantinople.
 2. The areas bordering on the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus.
 3. Large areas of Turkish Armenia and Northern Kurdistan.
- A separate agreement with England enlarged Russia's sphere of influence in Iran and obtained tacit agreement to incorporate later that area into Russia. The real plans of Russia apparently went further to include the extension of her frontier to the Persian Gulf.⁶

The defeat of Russia in World War I and the Bolshevik revolution in 1917, terminated all of these agreements.

SOVIET RUSSIA

Economically weak and strenuously occupied in the consolidation of its own position, the new Communist government found it impossible to continue the drive in the traditional maneuver toward the Middle East. Russian aspirations in Iran were not stilled, however. In the fall of 1920, the city of Baku in Soviet Azerbaijan was host to the First Congress of the Peoples of the East, an instrument newly created by the Communist International. At the Congress, Carl Radek, a protege of Lenin, outlined the oriental revolution and the role Russia was to play in it. He first attacked the colonial exploiters and their lackeys the Shahs, Emirs, and Khans. He defined Russia as the nerve center and arsenal of revolution and said:

⁶Ibid., p. 6.

No enemy will be dreadful to you, nobody will stop the stream of workers and peasants of Persia, Turkey, and India, if they unite with Soviet Russia. Soviet Russia was encircled by enemies, but now she can produce weapons with which she will arm the Indians, the Persian and Anatolian peasants, all oppressed, and will lead them to common victory.⁷

Thus, the projection of Russian Imperialism into Iran appeared in a new and virulent dimension.

The reference to Iran in the speeches of the Congress indicated that Iran had an important place in the revolutionary strategy being developed in Moscow. In 1918, the bolshevik, K. Troyanovsky, had spelled out Iran's role, in his Vostok in Revolutsia, as follows:⁸

1. Persia is the route for the movement of political emancipation of Central Asia.
2. The best friend of the Persian people is Soviet Russia.
3. India is the principal objective. Persia is the only open path to India.
4. Persia is the Suez Canal of revolution, just as the Suez Canal is the key to British domination of the orient.
5. As the center of gravity of revolutionary moves to Persia, the Suez Canal loses its strategic value and importance.
6. In order for the oriental revolution to succeed, Persia is the first nation that must be conquered by the Soviets.

In spite of this insight provided by the Congress, of continued Soviet interest in Iran, Russia was too busy with her

⁷Lenczowski, op. cit., p. 7.

⁸Ibid., pp. 9-10.

internal affairs during the 1920's and 30's to continue an aggressive expansionist policy to the south. She contented herself with strong economic penetration of northern Iran.

World War II brought to light documents that completely unmasked Soviet aspirations in Iran and Turkey. Soviet-German negotiations in Berlin and Moscow in November 1940 produced a paper that included the statement: "The area south of Batum and Baku in the general direction of the Persian Gulf is recognized as the center of the aspirations of the Soviet Union."⁹ Other secret papers of the time concluded that "The Soviet Union declares that its territorial aspirations center south of the national territory of the Soviet Union in the direction of the Indian Ocean."¹⁰ Hitler's attack upon the Soviet Union pushed these aims in the background, but it did not erase them.

At the close of World War II, Soviet actions in creating the autonomous states of Azerbaijan and Kurdistan in Iran and her demands for revision of the status of the Turkish straits offered dramatic proof of the validity of the continued Russian ambitions in the area.

It has been stated that the "cold war" had its inception on 4 March 1946; the day that 15 Soviet armored brigades began to pour into the Iranian province of Azerbaijan, to deploy along the Turkish border, and toward central Iran. At the same time, another Soviet Force of comparable size deployed along Turkey's European border.

⁹Ibid., p. 193.

¹⁰Hoskins, op. cit., p. 13.

Robert Rossow, Jr., who was in charge of the United States Consulate in Tabriz during the period, states:¹¹

The Soviet offensive fell into distinct phases. It seems clear that the primary objective during the first phase was the reduction of Turkey, after which the eastern Mediterranean, Suez, the oil fields of the Persian Gulf, and the western approaches to India would have been within easy reach. When this line of attack failed, the Soviet strategy shifted sharply in late spring, when a new assault was launched with Iran itself the primary target.

That the Soviet imperialist moves were not successful was due to strong action by the United States and her possession of the atomic bomb at the time. United States foreign policy made the first move in the direction that was later to become the "Truman Doctrine" and the policy of collective defense against Communist aggression and expansion.¹²

Iran's joining of the Baghdad Pact in 1955 did not provoke any overt retaliation by the Soviet Union. In general, her outward relations with Iran have been diplomatic correct and attempts to penetrate by persuasion, economic trade, and aid. Soviet Russia's actions toward Iran during the past decade have been less virulent because of the balance of power in the Middle East rather than any abatement in her imperialistic interest in the area.

¹¹Robert Rossow, Jr., "The Battle of Azerbaijan, 1946," The Middle East Journal, Vol. X, 1956, p. 17.

¹²Ibid., p. 22.

ANALYSIS OF SOVIET ASPIRATIONS

An analysis of Russia's past and present policies and actions toward Iran tend to highlight the following principal Russian aspirations:

1. Warm water ports on the Persian Gulf.
2. Control of oil in Iran and the Persian Gulf area.
3. Secure land approach to India.
4. Provide relatively easy land approach to the Mediterranean.
5. Extension of Soviet communism into the Middle East.

Thus, the Communist stakes for the control of Iran are high but the cost of buying into the game at present would be extremely expensive. The Russian bear still bides its time.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS

Iran - What Strategic Importance to the Free World? In the introduction to this study it was announced the question would be examined and analyzed in light of Iran's geographic location, its possession of strategic resources, and the stability of the country. It was further stated that as a result of these analyses, an attempt would be made to determine broad United States policy toward Iran. In seeking an objective answer to our problem, we must now look at the results of the analyses of the three areas we examined.

The science of geopolitics finds a viable laboratory for the study of international relations in Iran. The power of the Free World led by its champion, the United States, and the power of the communistic world, headed by the Soviet Union, have come face to face in Iran. Here the fate of nations repeatedly has been determined in times past and may be determined again in times to come. Located as a stepping stone to three continents, Iran provides an essential link to Free World communications. It provides a keystone in the forward defense concept of the Free World. Iran's alignment with the Western World prevents Soviet power from being entrenched along the Persian Gulf oil fields and from having access routes to the Indian subcontinent and the Mediterranean.

History is said to be geography in motion. This statement seems quite appropriate in the answer to Iran's strategic location. True, the advances in communications, the surge in the technology

of war, and the spread of ideologies have brought many changes from the past, but none of these factors have altered the strategic equation that represents the importance of the geographical location of Iran to the Free World.

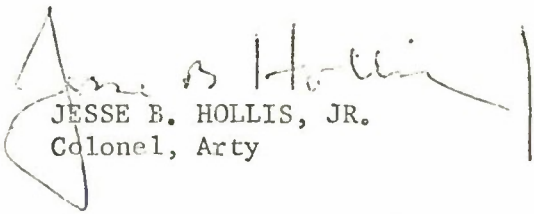
Russian designs on Iran originated in a sound understanding of geopolitical values long before petroleum became such an important factor in international power. There is ample reason to believe that the original interest has not diminished as a result of the presence of oil in great quantities. In the contemporary world oil is power. Iran has oil in abundance, oil that is essential to the economy of Europe. Any optimistic outlook for the Free World rests on the availability to the nations of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization of adequate supplies of petroleum. The almost complete dependence of Western Europe on Middle Eastern oil, of which Iran is a primary source, brings to the foreground a fundamental conclusion that the petroleum reserves of Iran are the second factor in the over-all strategic importance of the country. Thus, the geostrategic importance of Iran is based on twin pillars: one represents a historical center of world communications; the other--the newly emerged natural power--the control of oil, vital to the Free World in peace or war.

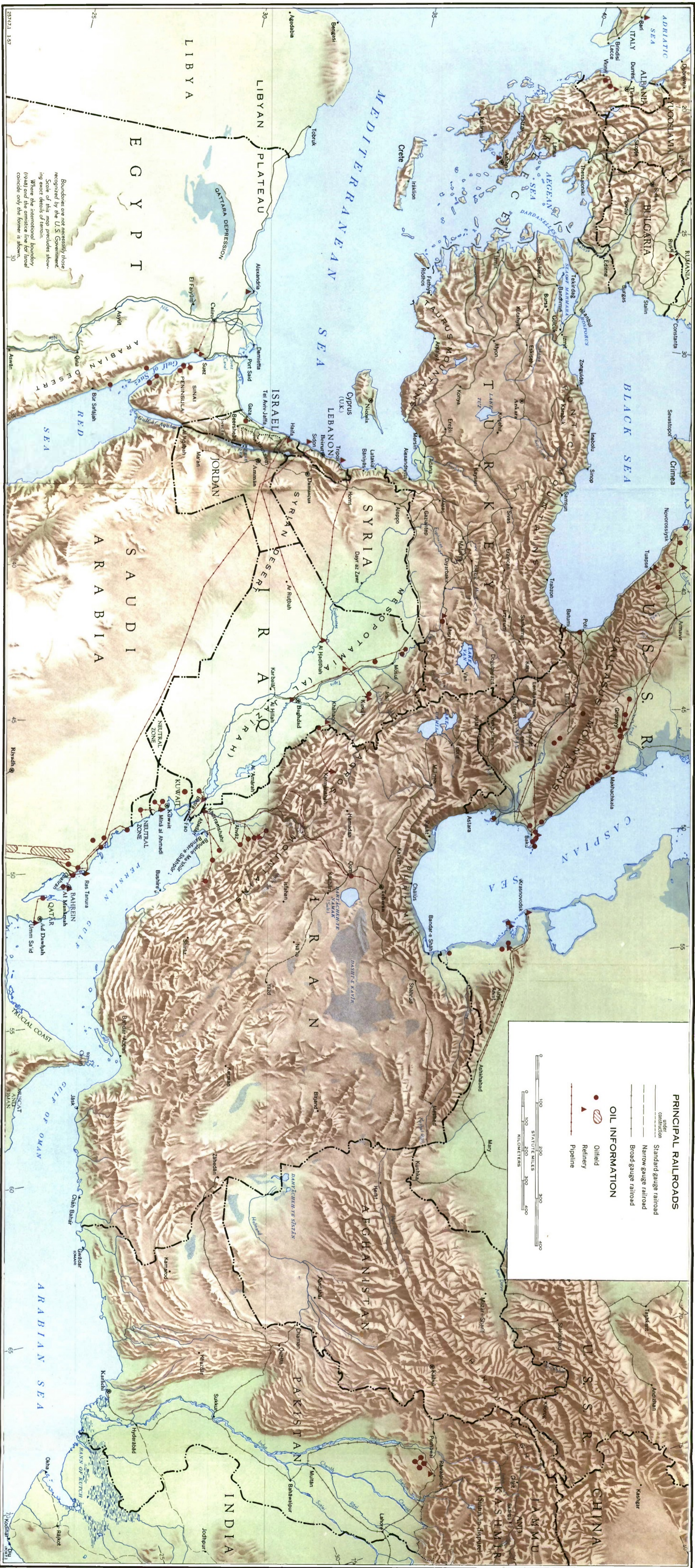
The third element of our question concerns the internal stability of the country. Iran with her present government is firmly in the camp of the Western World, a member of the Central Treaty Organization, and a keystone in the forward defense concept of the Free World. Her historic experiences with her powerful

northern neighbor permit her no other recourse. Iran's internal stability is more of an open question. An historical constitutional monarchy, Iran is in the throes of an economic and social revolution implemented from the top. The Shah seems to have a firm enough grip on the country to provide for a peaceful change and an orderly development. The historical threat of Soviet Russia and the centuries old continuity of the monarchial institution would both seem to insure the stability of Iran and its orientation toward the Free World.

Policies are indicative of national interests. Thus, in conclusion, it appears that, in view of the strategic importance of Iran, the broad policies of the United States should support the government of Iran in:

1. Its quest for economic and social reform and both internal and external security.
2. Its policies of cooperating with the Free World in the use of petroleum resources, strategic positions, and transit rights in a common defense against communism.
3. Denying to the Soviet Union the strategic resources and strategic positions vital to the defenses of Iran and the Free World.


JESSE B. HOLLIS, JR.
Colonel, Arty



PRINCIPAL RAILROADS

- Standard gauge railroad
- Narrow gauge railroad
- Broad-gauge railroad

OIL INFORMATION

- Oilfield
- Refinery
- Pipeline

0 100 200 300 400
STATUTE MILES

0 100 200 300 400
KILOMETERS

Boundaries are not necessarily those recognized by the U.S. Government. Scale of this map precludes showing exact details of terrain. Where the international boundary (1948) and the armistice line for Israel coincide only the former is shown.

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