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Oil and the Eastern Front: US Foreign and Military Policy in Iran, 1941-1945

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Abstract
Naomi R. Rosenblatt, College '09, History

Oil and the Eastern Front: US Foreign and Military Policy in Iran, 1941-1945

During World War II, the United States established a military presence in Iran that marked a dramatic change in U.S. involvement in the Middle East. Unlike earlier centuries when Americans traveled to the Middle East primarily as missionaries, merchants, and pilgrims, during WWII, the U.S. government began to establish deep political and economic ties to the region. How did U.S. foreign policy towards Iran develop within the context of a global war? What sort of tensions developed between the State Department's long-term diplomatic goals and the War Department's urgent short-term military aims? Through my research, I hope to illuminate how the United States balanced its own competing interests in Iran: that of ensuring a speedy victory at minimal human and financial cost, while all the while keeping in mind that its military efforts could very well disrupt its long-term diplomatic interests.

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Oil and the Eastern Front:
U.S. Foreign and Military Policy in Iran, 1941-1945

Naomi R. Rosenblatt

The University of Pennsylvania
Department of History*
and
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*Advisors: Professor Bruce Kuklick and Professor Kristen Stromberg Childers

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Introduction

While American-Iranian relations today are rocky at best, in the first half of the twentieth century, those relations were cordial – even friendly. It was not until the 1950s, when the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency supported the *coup d'état* that toppled Iranian politician Mohammed Mosaddeq from power, that American-Iranian relations truly turned sour. In order to understand the origins of American-Iranian relations, we must look back to World War II – a period of time when the United States was just beginning to form a serious, forward-looking, long-term policy towards Iran. Prior to the war, the United States maintained a minor diplomatic presence in Iran in order to support Americans traveling there, but it did not otherwise have a particularly strong interest in the region. This changed, however, at the outbreak of the Second World War, when the United States' growing interest in the region's oil resources coalesced with a realization about the regions' geostrategic importance.

The years 1941 to 1945, then, became a crucial formative period in the United States' foreign policy towards Iran. The United States was just beginning to emerge from a period of isolationism, and was beginning to explore the possibilities of developing its economic interests abroad. Its oil companies were especially focused on Iran and the Middle East as a new source of income. At the same time, in order to meet the taxing demands of the war effort, the United States began steadily to take over Great Britain's military functions in Iran. Because of its seaports and its proximity to the Soviet Union's southern border, Iran took on significant military

importance during the war. After it joined the war on the side of the Allies in December 1941, the United States established a military mission in Iran in order to ensure the successful shipment of war materiel and supplies into the Soviet Union. These few short years became a crucial turning point in the history of the United States' presence in the Middle East. With the exception of a handful of American missionaries, American military and diplomatic efforts in Iran during World War II proved to be the "first large-scale contact between Americans and Iranians."[1] However, the American mission in Iran was neither straightforward nor simple: Iran was, in many ways, the victim of the competing interests of various American institutions. As will later be elaborated, the particular military-strategic considerations of the war often stood in the way of long-term diplomatic advancements in Iran.

I. Historical Context

By the outbreak of the Second World War, Iranian ruler Reza Shah Pahlavi had developed close ties with Nazi Germany. Despite the fact that Iran had officially declared neutrality, it maintained its strong economic contact with Germany, and even attempted to negotiate the opening of an overland transit route through Soviet territory in order to maintain trade relations.[2] Germany saw the Near East as a "natural economic basin of German activity," an idea expressed in its 1939 agreement with Italy to "divide the Near East into spheres

[1] Kenneth M. Pollack. *The Persian Puzzle: The Conflict Between Iran and America.* (New York: Random House, 2004), 40.
[2] Miron Rezun. *The Iranian Crisis of 1941; The Actors: Britain, Germany, and The Soviet Union.* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 1982), 36.

of influence, according to which… Irak [sic] and Iran were to be conceded to the German sphere."[3] And the relationship was not merely one of trade: Reza Shah, on many occasions, expressed sympathy with the Nazi cause, and "there are stories told that it was the Iranian Embassy in Berlin that first suggested to Reza Shah in 1935 that he change the name of the country from 'Persia'… to 'Iran (land of the Aryans).'"[4] The American Minister in Iran, Louis Dreyfus, expressed concern in March 1941 that "Iran's foreign policy [is] opportunistic, extremely cautious as well as neutral, a policy which leaves the door open to cooperation and friendship with whichever belligerent is victorious."[5] Additionally, there was a physical German presence within Iranian borders: by 1941, Tehran had become home to over one thousand German officials and advisors.[6] This presence intensified Soviet and British unease about the reliability of Iran and the threat posed to crucial oil refineries in the region.

Iran's role in the war drastically changed during the summer of 1941. In June, Germany launched an invasion deep into the Soviet Union, with one of its army groups, Army Group South, making a beeline towards the Baku oil fields in the Caucasus. At this point in the war, the Soviet Union was in desperate need of supplies. For the other Allies, keeping the Soviet Union involved in the war against Germany was crucial to the success of the entire war effort. As long as the Soviets were keeping Adolf Hitler's forces engaged in battle on the Eastern

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[3] Rezun, 33.
[4] Pollack, 37-38.
[5] National Archives at College Park (hereinafter NARA). American Embassy, Tehran, Iran 1941. Record Group 84, MLR UD Entry 2737, Box 44. Telegram sent by Dreyfus dated March 14, 1941.
[6] James A. Bill. *The Eagle and the Lion: The Tragedy of American-Iranian Relations*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 18.

Front, the pressure faced by Great Britain in the west was lessened. However, with the *Wehrmacht* advancing through Soviet territory at an incredible pace, the Soviets could not indefinitely maintain a defense alone and without aid. Therefore, in October 1941, President Roosevelt signed his approval on a Lend-Lease commitment to the Soviet Union, which became the first in a series of so-called "protocols" specifying quantities and types of supplies that the United States would provide the Soviet Union over an agreed-upon period of time. According to military historian Robert W. Coakley,

> furnishing the supplies and the shipping in the end proved to be the less difficult part of the task of supplying the Russians; by mid-1942 the central problem had become that of opening or keeping open routes of delivery over which these ships and supplies, made available at such sacrifice, could move to the U.S.S.R.[7]

Three routes were identified for shipping supplies to the Soviet Union: the first across the Pacific to the Soviet port at Vladivostok and across the Trans-Siberian Railroad to the Eastern Front, the second north through the Soviet Arctic and into the ports at Murmansk and Archangel, and the third through Iran. On this final route, American Lend-Lease supplies could be shipped into Iranian ports and transported north by train or truck through the Caucasus Mountains and into the Soviet Union. However, in order to utilize Iran as a shipping route, the Allies would require the cooperation of local government. After unsuccessful attempts to pressure the Shah into distancing himself from his German allies, the Soviet Union and Great Britain launched a joint invasion in August 1941,

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[7] Robert W. Coakley. "The Persian Corridor as a Route for Aid to the USSR," in *Command Decisions*, ed. Kent Roberts Greenfield. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1959, pp. 154-181), 157.

occupied Iran, and deposed the Reza Shah in favor of his son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, and after it became clear that both Great Britain and the Soviet Union did not have the resources to maintain a presence in Iran while at the same time carry on other military campaigns, the United States joined its allies in occupying the country. It eventually established a military mission of 30,000 noncombatant troops[8] – the Persian Gulf Service Command, or the PGSC – under the direction of Major General Donald Connolly to oversee the transportation of nearly $18 billion in goods to the Soviet Union.[9]

However useful its transportation program was, the United States did not intend to remain in occupation of Iran indefinitely. Patrick J. Hurley, President Roosevelt's personal emissary to the Middle East and the head of a mission to make a "low-profile survey of nationalist movements" throughout the region in late 1943, championed the cause of Iranian independence after the war, as outlined in the Atlantic Charter.[10] To do this, Hurley "proposed investing massively in industrial and transportation systems in Iran and sending American experts to help it erect democratic institutions."[11] While Roosevelt was eager to adopt this foreign policy, he was checked by the concerns of the British and the Soviets. The United States was still in need of its military allies, and so the policy of development and investment was set aside. Instead, the United States attempted, according to policy analyst Kenneth Pollack, to

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[8] Noncombatant soldiers were given only minimal combat training. Their primary purpose was to run the shipping operations, rather than to fight battles.
[9] Pollack, 40.
[10] Michael B. Oren. *Power, Faith, and Fantasy: America in the Middle East, 1776 to the Present.* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007), 434.
[11] Oren, 456.

> reassure the Iranians by seeking a joint declaration from all three Allied powers affirming that the takeover of Iran was temporary… this led to the January 1942 Tripartite Pact, in which the three allies guaranteed Iran's territorial sovereignty and independence. In addition, to try and attach meaning to these guarantees, all three agreed to withdraw their troops from Iran no later than six months after the end of the war.[12]

In the end, U.S. troops finally pulled out of Iran by January 1946.

II. Developing a Cohesive Foreign Policy

It is clear that the United States' concerns in occupying Iran during World War II were not simply limited to the shipment of supplies north into the Soviet Union. The United States was, during the war, beginning to shape a cohesive, long-term foreign policy towards Iran, and towards the Middle East as a whole. At the outset of the war, the United States had no clear, comprehensive policy towards the Middle East and Iran, and instead, according to Middle East historian Thomas Bryson, "the American State Department concentrated on implementing those policies supportive of the war effort."[13] However, the State Department gradually developed a distinct foreign policy – particularly potent with regards to Iran – over the course of the war, primarily due to the additional presence of both Great Britain and the Soviet Union, turning that country into a "veritable political cockpit."[14] Beyond the immediate priority given to the war effort, the United States increasingly sought to hinder British imperialist ambitions (as a part of a larger trend of US ascendancy over British influence in the Middle East

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[12] Pollack, 41.
[13] Thomas A. Bryson. *Seeds of Mideast Crisis: The United States Diplomatic Role in the Middle East During World War II.* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1981), 49.
[14] Bryson, 48.

as a whole), to support American oil companies in their quest for regional oil concessions, and to impede Soviet aspirations in Iran. Historian Mansour Bonakdarian claims that this policy was unified and influenced by the economic and material damage suffered by Great Britain during the war: "[in] light of Britain's depleted economic and military resources and the strengthened Soviet position in Iran during the war, the American State Department would actively explore possible means of containing Soviet influence in Iran even before the war came to a close."[15] All of these foreign policy goals involved bolstering Iranian sovereignty, and supporting an Iranian government friendly to the United States.

U.S. military efforts, however, proved in many ways to be a major impediment to the United States' long-term diplomatic goals in the region. For example, while throughout the war, Iranian officials tried to keep the United States militarily and politically involved in their country as an impediment to British and Soviet ambitions, "the evidence suggests that many average Iranians would have preferred that the Americans get out. U.S. military personnel showed little cultural sensitivity and often treated the Iranians as impediments to their mission."[16] PGSC transport monopolized the roads and railroads of Iran, which created a great impediment to domestic trade, and especially to the movement of food. In 1942, Iran suffered from a bad harvest, and the widespread famine, paired with the influx of 30,000 American troops, led to violent bread riots and widespread discontent. While the United States attempted to address the

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[15] Bonakdarian, Mansour. "Great Expectations: U.S.-Iranian Relations, 1911-1951," in *U.S.-Middle East Historical Encounters*, ed. Abbas Amanat and Magnus T. Bernhardsson. (Tallahassee: University Press of Florida, 2007, pp. 121-141), 129.

[16] Pollack, 41.

problem using Allied supplies in the country, they met with "considerable resistance from the Russians and the British, who cared little about the welfare of the Iranians," which was perhaps because they lacked the long-term ambitions in the region that the United States was developing. As the war progressed, the American Office of Strategic Services station in Tehran "constantly reported that the Iranian people were… increasingly pro-Nazi, with crowds cheering Hitler's appearance in newsreels."[17] These reports eventually began to alarm the State Department, which began to express concern that perhaps the War Department should not be conducting its transportation efforts without thought given to the long-term repercussions of the *way* in which it was conducting those efforts. If the PGSC, for example, were to not entirely monopolize Iranian roads and railways, perhaps popular opinion of the United States would not be so greatly damaged, and U.S. long-term interests would be more effectively protected.

III. Argument

This thesis will examine the interaction of the United States' military policy – and military considerations involving supporting the Eastern Front – with US foreign policy and foreign policy considerations in Iran during the Second World War. During the period from 1941-1945, the War and State departments each had its own agenda in Iran. More often than not, as these agendas were implemented, they came into conflict with one another. Would Iran become a partner in America's quest to develop the economic potential of the region, or would America risk those friendly relations with Iran in order to achieve its more immediate military aims?

[17] Pollack, 43.

The struggle that played out between these policies over the course of the war eventually decided the nature of the United States' ultimate relationship with Iran during that period. The conflicting demands of the war effort and long-term political considerations often caused a great deal of friction both among policymakers in Washington and in the Middle East and Europe, as well as a great deal of contradiction and discord among the policies themselves. This thesis will engage in an in-depth study of those frictions that developed among the policies of the War and State Departments, as a result of the conflicting demands of the war effort and long-term political considerations.

Because of the nature of this in-depth study, my argument will be organized thematically, rather than chronologically. This is a complicated topic – there were many factors that played a role not only in the development of the United States' foreign policy towards Iran, but that also played a role in complicating the relationship between the United States' foreign and military policies regarding Iran during the war. I will therefore structure my discussion using three main organizing ideas: First, I will discuss the rise of US foreign policy interests and influence in Iran against the backdrop of British decline. This initial chapter will demonstrate how the war demands brought the United States into greater involvement with Iran both militarily and diplomatically, and how the United States' military involvement eventually embittered American-Iranian relations. The next chapter will then elaborate upon the military issues that brought the United States into closer contact with Iran – including the use of Iran and the Persian Corridor as a route for military aid to Soviet Russia – and the anxieties that arose from aiding a potential future

enemy. The reason that the United States established a military presence in the region had more to do with supporting the Soviet Union than with Iran itself, which accounts for the disconnect between American foreign and military policies regarding Iran. It is therefore important, in a study of American policies towards Iran during this period, to understand the issues and policy conflicts surrounding the United States' support of the Soviet Union. Finally, the third chapter will draw upon the previous two chapters to illustrate how those tensions within the United States government, as related to Iran, promoted conflict among U.S. military and diplomatic institutions, officers, and personnel on the ground.

It is clear that the United States' concerns in occupying Iran during World War II were not simply limited to the shipment of supplies north into the Soviet Union. The United States was, during the war, just beginning to shape a cohesive, long-term foreign policy towards Iran, and towards the Middle East as a whole. During this period, then, the United States needed to do what almost all nations must do during a time of war: it needed to balance its own competing interests in Iran by working to ensure a speedy victory at minimal human and financial cost, while all the while keeping in mind that its military efforts could very well disrupt its long-term diplomatic interests in the region.

Because this period marked the first time that the United States showed a prolonged, deep-seated, comprehensive interest in the Middle East, it is important to understand what factors most influenced its early relations with the countries of that region. The United States' relationship with Iran in the twentieth century has historically been a rocky one, with roots that lie in this period from 1942-1945. The

policies that the United States developed towards Iran during this early period and the influences of World War II on the formation of those policies can help shed light on the general history of American-Iranian relations. The implications of this first prolonged engagement in Iran and the Middle East are far-reaching, as we are all too aware of today.

I. The Setting Sun of the British Empire: Rising US Interests in Iran

In this chapter, I will discuss the factors in the development of the United States' foreign policy towards Iran during World War II. I will illustrate how the demands of the war effort brought the United States into greater involvement with Iran, and facilitated the shift from a disinterested foreign policy to an active, forward-thinking policy. At the same time, however, the war effort presented many complications and difficulties to the successful realization of U.S. foreign policy goals in Iran. By the end of the war, the increased influence of the United States in Iran and Iranian affairs somewhat embittered American-Iranian relations. This encroachment upon Iranian sovereignty eventually compelled Iran to pull back from its original reliance on American assistance, and take its foreign affairs into its own hands.

The United States was, during the war, just beginning to shape a cohesive, long-term foreign policy towards Iran, and towards the Middle East as a whole. At the outset of the war, the United States had no clear, comprehensive policy towards the Middle East and Iran, and instead, according to Middle East historian Thomas Bryson, "the American State Department concentrated on implementing those policies supportive of the war effort."[1] However, the State Department gradually developed a distinct foreign policy – particularly potent with regards to Iran – over the course of the war. This was primarily due to the additional

[1] Bryson, 49.

presence in Iran of both Great Britain and the Soviet Union, turning that country into a "veritable political cockpit."[2] Beyond the immediate priority given to the war effort, the United States increasingly sought to hinder British imperialist ambitions[3], to support American oil companies in their quest for regional oil concessions, and to bolster Iranian sovereignty.

I. The Rising Primacy of the United States in Iran

According to historian Mansour Bonakdarian, until the early 1940s, the United States' main concern with Iran was "with the well-being of American Presbyterian missionaries who had been arriving [there] since the 1830s."[4] Though it maintained a diplomatic presence to support the American missionaries, pilgrims, and merchants who traveled there, the United States did not have particularly strong economic interests or imperialist ambitions in the region. Instead, the United States simply conformed to the policies of Great Britain, especially after World War I. For Britain, the Middle East was a key strategic location from which to protect its interests in India. Therefore, if Britain did not consider Iran to be of particular importance in and of itself, it was still seen as a crucial strategic stronghold from a geomilitary perspective. The United States, on the other hand, gave "tempered and tacit recognition of Iran as a sphere of British ascendancy" after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, believing that it could rely on the strength of Great Britain to

[2] Bryson, 48.
[3] As a part of a larger trend of US ascendancy over British influence in the Middle East as a whole.
[4] Bonakdarian, 15.

protect Iran from the influence of Communism.[5] This policy of conformity to the status-quo of British policy in the region continued through the interwar period and into the early 1940s, despite the fact of growing American economic interests in Iranian oil fields. American oil companies had begun to explore the possibility of oil concessions during the interwar period, yet "few in the United States expressed any desire to see their country either replace or support Great Britain [militarily or politically]. Americans still believed that they could undermine Britain's economic position without having to accept any political or military responsibilities."[6] As a nation which still retained many of its isolationist and non-interventionist tendencies, inter-war America shied away from competing with Britain's diplomatic and military clout in the region. Even when the United States became embroiled in World War II and joined its British allies in supporting shipping efforts through Iran, Great Britain initially held the upper hand and dictated policy. Harry L. Hopkins, a diplomatic advisor to President Roosevelt, wrote in a memorandum regarding the Middle East:

> British officials never fail to emphasize by word and deed Empire interests in the Middle East. The Middle Eastern Theater of operations is referred to and treated by them as an exclusive British theater. American activity is almost resented…. Unfortunately American Policy in the Middle East has not retained a separate identity.[7]

The United States' neutrality policy, which had theretofore encouraged its abstention from actively developing a foreign policy towards the Middle East, came

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[5] Bonakdarian, 18.

[6] Michael A. Palmer. *Guardians of the Gulf: A History of America's Expanding Role in the Persian Gulf, 1833-1992*. (New York: Free Press, 1992). 20.

[7] Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library (hereinafter FDR). Hopkins, Harry L. Box 332, Book 8 - Interest in Middle East.

to an abrupt end with the onset of World War II and the beginning of US material support of the Allies through the Lend-Lease program. After Britain and the Soviet Union occupied Iran and opened the Persian Corridor, a transportation system was set into place, allowing Great Britain to move Lend-Lease supplies through Iran and into Soviet hands. While the United States would not formally enter the war for another few months, it still maintained a vested interest in the success of the Allied nations, and consequently in the success and efficiency of the war efforts in the Middle East. In September 1941, the U.S. Military Iranian Mission, led by Colonol Raymond A. Wheeler, was established to facilitate transportation efforts through the Persian Corridor (this military mission would later become the Persian Gulf Service Command). Yet, even with its own established troops in the region, the United States could not easily dictate policy or control transportation efforts. In a confidential telegram from Cairo, Admiral Alan Kirk wrote to the United States Secretary and Under-Secretary of State complaining about the "absence of unified command and the lack of coordination among the various services [that] have resulted in a restriction of the Middle Eastern achievements of the British armed forces and of the efficacy of the war effort."[8] Knowing that it was ultimately Great Britain that held sway over the politics and logistics of transportation through Iran, the most that Kirk could recommend that the United States do was encourage reforms in the British war machine.

In 1942, the American role in Iran and the Middle East began to undergo a drastic change. Until July of that year, American supplies had primarily been

[8] FDR. Hopkins, Harry L. Box 326, Book 7 - Middle East Politics and Requirements.

shipped to the Soviet Union over two main convoy routes: one through Iran and the Persian Corridor, and the other through the Soviet Arctic and into Soviet ports at Murmansk and Archangel. However, when the northern convoys came under serious strain due to unfavorable weather conditions and German interference, the Allies turned to the Persian Gulf "as the only important alternative for forwarding war supplies to the U.S.S.R. The Russians… asked that not only planes and trucks but all sorts of military equipment in the largest quantities possible come via the southern route."[9] Traffic through the Persian Corridor would have to be increased drastically. However, with its resources stretched after three years of war, its troops fighting the German forces in North Africa, and the demanding preparations for the cross-channel invasion then proposed for 1943, Britain was beginning to feel the strain of maintaining its military presence in Iran.

Both British and American resources were "under heavy strain to meet even the minimum requirements of their own forces,"[10] and yet the United States emerged as the nation best equipped to deal with the additional burden placed onto the southern route. On July 13, 1942, Franklin Roosevelt forwarded to Winston Churchill a recommendation that in order to expand transit facilities in Iran, the U.S. Army should take over operation and control of the Trans-Iranian Railway in southern Iran, and "Churchill accepted the proposal immediately with some enthusiasm."[11] One month later, after receiving recommendations for precisely

[9] Coakley, 162.
[10] Coakley, 155.
[11] Coakley, 170.

how the United States would take over shipping efforts, Churchill wrote to Roosevelt:

> I therefore welcome and accept your most helpful proposal contained in your telegram, that the railway be taken over, developed and operated by the United States Army; with the railroad should be included the ports of Khorramshahr and Bandar Shapur… The railway and ports would be managed entirely by your people, though the allocation of traffic would have to be retained in the hands of the British military authorities for whom the railway is an essential channel of communication for operational purposes.[12]

At this point, the United States Army immediately began to expand its presence and efficacy in Iran. In a booklet issued on September 3, 1942 entitled, *Plan for Operation of Certain Iranian Communication Facilities between Persian Gulf Ports and Tehran by US Army Forces*, a request by the commanding officer of the USAFIME (the United States Forces in the Middle East) for further resources is detailed: "He requests certain troops to operate the railroads and the ports. He also requests a large amount of railroad equipment in addition to that set up for the railroad under Lend-Lease. In addition, he desires to establish truck supply routes for which he requires troops and a large number of trucks."[13] Over the next year, the United States' military involvement in Iran would expand to such an extent, that it would end up maintaining a total presence of 30,000 noncombatant troops in the region.

Now that Great Britain and the United States were cooperating on shipping efforts in southern Iran, problems and difficulties associated with the division of military responsibility and combined strategy began to present themselves, mainly

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[12] Quoted in: Motter, T.H. Vail. *The Persian Corridor and Aid to Russia*. (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1952.) 190.

[13] FDR. President's Soviet Protocol Committee. Box 25, Plan for Operation of Certain Iranian Communication Facilities between Persian Gulf Ports and Tehran by US Army Forces. 3 Sept. 1942.

associated with the increasingly differing objectives of the two countries. Due to its imperialist interests in the region, Britain was primarily interested in bolstering the security of Iran against enemy attack and internal unrest, while the United States remained focused on the objective of "increasing and insuring the uninterrupted flow of supplies to Russia." [14] With this in mind, the Anglo-American Combined Chiefs of Staff issued the following statement: "It is definitely understood that the British control of priorities and allocations must not be permitted to militate against attainment of such objective [i.e. the objective of shipping supplies to Russia], subject always to the military requirements for preparing to meet a threat to the vital Persian Gulf oil areas."[15] This recognition of the difference in objectives thereby allowed the United States even greater control over the allocation of goods within Iran, and further freed it from the dictates of British policy. The war demands were simply more pressing, and therefore, unless an imminent security threat to the region presented itself, the United States' objectives would maintain primacy, and the U.S. military could focus its energies entirely on the goal of shipping aid to the Soviet Union.

The proposal of the Combined Chiefs of Staff marked an important change for the United States. At this point, U.S. military policy towards the region began to diverge from that of Great Britain's. U.S. policymakers began to become concerned about developing the United States' own reputation in the Middle East, separate from Britain's, and about what the U.S. considered to be Britain's misappropriate allocations of Lend-Lease materials. The State Department in particular was

[14] Coakley, 178.
[15] Coakley, 178.

concerned that Great Britain had been abusing Lend-Lease privileges: In a December 1943 report to President Roosevelt, Brigadier General Patrick Hurley complained that "Britain has been giving and now Russia is about to give [to Iran] our lend lease supplies or supplies that have been replaced or released by our lend lease supplies, to other nations in return for concessions or to strengthen their own ideologies in the countries to which supplies are given."[16] One of the reasons that the State Department was so concerned with this issue was because it believed that Lend-Lease could be "a potent instrument in international relations."[17] If nations receiving Lend-Lease aid knew that they were receiving it directly from the United States, then there would be a much greater positive impact on American prestige worldwide than if Great Britain were distributing that same aid. Additionally, if U.S. aid were not being distributed by Great Britain, then the United States' reputation would not suffer damage by being associated with any unpopular British policies. In the meantime, however, "the administration of Lend-Lease in the Middle East [had] been characterized as inefficient and injurious to American prestige," because "the British [were] using American lend lease and American troops not for the purpose of creating a brave new world based on the Atlantic Charter… but for British conquest, British imperialist rule, and British trade monopoly."[18] Therefore, Harry Hopkins, Roosevelt's personal advisor, believed that the resources could be more efficiently used if "the policy making and direction of lend lease be placed

[16] FDR. Roosevelt, Franklin D. Papers as President, President's Secretary's File. Box 40, Iran Diplomatic Correspondence.
[17] FDR. Hopkins, Harry L. Box 332, Book 8 - Interest in Middle East.
[18] FDR. Roosevelt, Franklin D. Papers as President, President's Secretary's File. Box 40, Iran Diplomatic Correspondence.

exclusively and in actuality under proper civilian authority in the State Department," and if "all operations pertaining to distribution of lend lease goods in foreign territory be transferred to the United States Army."[19]

II. Positive Equilibrium and Iranian Sovereignty

Historian Michael Palmer writes that during the transitional period in 1942, "as Americans became increasingly aware of Great Britain's incapacity, the strategic significance of the Middle East, and the importance of access to the oil in the Persian Gulf during the war, and perhaps after as well, they began reassessing longstanding United States policies toward the region."[20] It was during this period that the United States began to increasingly obstruct both British and Soviet imperialist objectives in the region, and to support Iranian aspirations for national sovereignty.

An important theme during the war was Iran's insistence on maintaining the integrity of its national sovereignty. Even before the outbreak of hostilities, Iran had long suffered from the pressure of both Soviet and British influence, breeding an intense domestic hostility against those nations. As an outlet to the Persian Gulf, Iran had been a point of contention between the Soviet Union and Great Britain for more than a hundred years. For Britain, controlling the Persian Gulf meant protecting the waterways to India, the crown jewel of the Empire. From the point of view of the Iranian government, its country was the victim of constant attack: During an interview with American diplomat Wendell Willkie, the Prime Minister of Iran stressed that "for years Great Britain had tried to colonize Iran and Russia to

[19] FDR. Hopkins, Harry L. Box 332, Book 8 - Interest in Middle East.
[20] Palmer, 25.

gobble up Iran."[21] A British memo issued by the Coordinator of Information office in December 1941 describes some of the origins of Iranian hostility to the British and the Soviets:

> In 1907 the first partition of Iran into 'spheres of influence' between Great Britain and Russia reduced Iran to the equivalent of three vassal states. As a result, Iranians neglected internal reform and concentrated their attention on an intense hatred of Russia and Britain. Further experience with major powers came to Iran during the war of 1914-18. Iranian neutrality was repeatedly violated, and Iran suffered all the horrors of war with none of the compensations allowed the victors. After the war, Lord Curzon drew up an Anglo-Iranian treaty so one-sided in favor England that riots took place in Iran and their Assembly failed to pass the bill.[22]

Britain was well aware that its own imperialistic and poorly implemented policies had much to do with the bitterness and hostility they were experiencing as they attempted to coordinate shipping through the Persian Corridor. The joint invasion by the Soviet Union and Great Britain in August 1941 and the subsequent abdication of Reza Shah Pahlavi not only served to exacerbate those hostilities, but also encouraged the determination of the Iranian Government to seek assurances from the Allied nations that after the war, Iranian territorial sovereignty would be respected.

Even before the United States' official entry into the war, Iran turned to the U.S. immediately upon its invasion by the Soviet Union and Great Britain. As the invasion progressed, Reza Shah Pahlavi telegraphed President Roosevelt, pleading for assistance. While Roosevelt's response expressed sympathy for Pahlavi's plight and support for Pahlavi's determination to protect his nation's sovereignty, it also

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[21] NARA. American Embassy, Tehran, Iran 1942. Record Group 84, MLR UD Entry 2737, Box 45. Overview of Willkie's audience with the Prime Minister, September 16, 1942.
[22] FDR. Hopkins, Harry L. Box 326, Book 7 - Middle East Politics and Requirements.

remained carefully neutral, indicating implicit support for the Soviet Union and Britain's actions: "I hope your Majesty will concur with me in believing that we must view the situation in its full perspective of present world events and developments."[23] This lackluster support, however, did not deter later attempts by Reza Shah's son, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, to solicit American support for Iranian sovereignty. In a 1944 memorandum on American foreign policy in Iran, Persian Gulf Command Major General Donald Connolly wrote that Iran "would welcome the intervention of American forces to defend her sovereignty against the encroachments of Russia and England."[24]

Two primary reasons can be attributed to this support for American intervention in Iran. The first was a genuine belief that while the United States had long-term economic and trade interests in Iran, it did not have any territorial ambitions in the region. Particularly towards the beginning of the war, United States had gained a reputation – both within Iran and world-wide – as a champion of freedom and national self-determination. American policymakers were aware that this trusting opinion of the United States was beneficial to the war effort. They recognized that the United States could use its own positive image – as a nation without territorial ambitions in Iran, and which touted the values of national self-determination – as leverage to ease any Iranian insecurities about allowing Americans to control their ports, roads, and railways. As Louis Dreyfus noted early in 1941, immediately after the U.S. government approved a bill that would provide

[23] FDR. Papers as President, Official File (OF). Box 0/134. Iran (Persia), Government of - Endorsements for Ambassador. OF 134: Iran.
[24] FDR. Hopkins, Harry L. Box 332, Book 8 - Interest in Middle East.

Lend-Lease aid to Iran, "[the] Iranian people has sympathy for the American policy of assisting nations which are fighting for their existence… Officials of Government feel that the legislation may be used as a lever to get approval for the exportation from the United States of war materials which are much needed, since aggression threatens Iran."[25]

As it turns out, Dreyfus was only somewhat correct in his assertions. It took the invasion of Iran a few months later for American material to begin flowing to the Soviet Union through the Persian Corridor. However, American generosity towards Iran did not go unnoticed, and in fact improved American prestige in Iran over that of the Soviet Union and Britain. As policy analyst Kenneth Pollack writes: "A variety of Iranian officials, believing the United States to be benign and uninterested in Iranian affairs, pleaded with American administrators and diplomats to evict the Soviets and British from Iran and simply run the Lend-Lease operations themselves."[26] While it was clear to Iran that Great Britain and the Soviet Union had much to gain by maintaining control over the Persian Corridor and Persian Gulf, it was much easier to swallow the idea that the United States' only interests in Iran were based on the achievement of its war aims and the eventual development of trade relations in the area. If America were to entirely take over the shipping operations, it would be much less likely to prolong its military presence in the country after the cessation of hostilities. The United States, in turn, was concerned with maintaining this positive reputation. As the close of the war drew near,

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[25] NARA. American Embassy, Tehran, Iran 1941. Record Group 84, MLR UD Entry 2737, Box 44. Telegram sent by Dreyfus dated March 14, 1941.
[26] Pollack, 41.

discussion began amongst the Allies about an international trusteeship over Iranian Railways and the establishment of a free port on the Persian Gulf. American policymakers knew, however, that an attempt by the United States to extend its power in Iran beyond anything concerned strictly with the war effort could potentially backfire. In a January 1945 memorandum, Acting Secretary of State Joseph Grew explained to President Roosevelt that "no matter how drawn up or proposed, the plan would appear to Iran, and doubtless to the world, as a thinly disguised cover for power politics and old-world imperialism."[27] Because the United States *did* in fact entertain foreign policy interests in Iran aside from its war aims, it was important that (in an ironic twist of logic) it maintain the appearance of altruistic intervention.

The second reason behind Iranian support for American intervention had much more to do with realpolitik considerations. In an article discussing the history of American-Iranian diplomatic relations, Mansour Bonakdarian postulates that Iranian nationalist aspirations facilitated extensive U.S. intervention in the region because the Iranian government pursued a policy of "'positive equilibrium' or the 'third power strategy,' which consisted of playing the great powers against one another for preserving Iran's independence."[28] Iran was not itself a strong enough power to hold much clout against invaders with imperialist intentions; however, it could take advantage of strategic alliances for its own benefit. Iran therefore exerted significant effort during the war to develop and strengthen its relations with

[27] United States. Department of State. *Foreign Relations of the United States* (hereinafter FRUS), 1945. *The Near East and Africa:* Volume VIII, 524.
[28] Bonakdarian, 15.

the United States – often by invoking American commitment to self-determination of nations – in order to undermine British and Soviet influence, both during and immediately after the war. In a description of the September 1942 meeting between Wendell Willkie and Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, Ambassador Louis Dreyfus wrote that, in a show of defiance and independence, the Shah stated that he wanted "to build up his army so that it would be able to defend Iran against the Axis if they reached its frontiers. He thought there would be time for such preparations and that he would in the meantime endeavor to bring about an alliance with the Turks for a mutual defense pact. He said he had already broached the subject to the Turkish Ambassador."[29] Iran was clearly willing to play the power politics game in order to manipulate the great powers into respecting Iranian sovereignty, and would make outside bilateral alliances if need be.

Iran also managed to secure commitments from the Soviet Union and Great Britain that they would, to an extent, respect Iranian sovereignty – and often relied upon the United States to encourage that those promises be met. In January 1942, after the Soviet Union and Great Britain had occupied Iran, the three nations signed a Treaty of Alliance, which committed Iran not only to consent to Allied military presence within its borders, but also to provide nonmilitary assistance to the war effort. Yet the treaty also committed the Allies to pull its troops out of Iran by, at the latest, six months after the conclusion of the war. Additionally, at the Tehran Conference in December 1943, Churchill, Stalin, and Roosevelt signed the Declaration of the Three Powers Regarding Iran. In this document, the Allies not

[29] NARA. American Embassy, Tehran, Iran 1942. Record Group 84, MLR UD Entry 2737, Box 45. Overview of Willkie's audience with the Shah on September 16, 1942.

only recognized the sacrifices that Iran had been making on behalf of the war effort, but also pledged post-war economic assistance to Iran, and declared their desire to help Iran maintain its "independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity."[30] Through the rest of World War II, the Iranian government never ceased to remind the United States of the Allies' commitment to supporting Iranian territorial sovereignty at the conclusion of the war. A letter from the Iranian Ambassador to President Truman, written six months after the conclusion of the war in Europe, illustrated this sentiment: "I earnestly beg you, Mr. President, to continue to stand up for the rights of Iran[…] Your country alone can save us, for you have always defended moral ideas and principles and your hands are clean[…] The only solution [is…] immediate and simultaneous withdrawal of Soviet and British forces from Iran and insistence on allowing Iran to have a free hand in her own territory."[31] That same month, upon presenting his letters of credence as the newly appointed Iranian Ambassador to the United States, Hussein Ala remarked that

> Iran has been the Bridge of Victory over which enormous quantities of American and British war material and supplies reached the U.S.S.R. with clockwork precision, hastening the defeat of our common foe. The valuable help furnished by my country in the prosecution of the war was duly recognized in the Declaration of Teheran… That important document also provides for economic assistance to Iran in the postwar period and, above all, affirms that the three allied powers 'are at one with the Government of Iran in their desire for the maintenance of the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iran'… It is the confident expectation of Iran that the Declaration of Tehran will be implemented and her territory completely evacuated by the occupying foreign forces whose

[30] Declaration of the Three Powers Regarding Iran, December 1, 1943.
[31] NARA. Record Group 59, Central Decimal Files; 1945-1949, File #701.9111; Iranian Diplomatic Representation in the United States. Letter from the Iranian Ambassador to President Truman, dated November 29, 1945.

> continued presence within the borders of an allied country has no justification.[32]

Iran's staunch and persistent reminders of the Allies' promise to leave Iran after the war points to a certain degree of cynicism that those nations would keep to their promise.

The United States, however, proved to be responsive to Iran's demand for support of its right to territorial sovereignty. The United States did not have any post-war territorial ambitions in Iran, but nevertheless was beginning to develop ambitions with regard to oil concessions and the development of trade relations. These ambitions could only be realized, however, so long as the United States remained in good standing with the Iranian government – and that involved developing a reputation as a selfless champion of Iranian rights. In a letter to the Secretary of State, Roosevelt expressed his sentiments of being "rather thrilled with the idea of using Iran as an example of what we could do by an unselfish American policy. We could not take on a more difficult nation than Iran."[33] Again, it is clear here that the maintenance of American prestige was both a concern and a motivator of foreign policy. The United States could hold more clout abroad if the international community perceived its intentions as selfless and noble, and would therefore be able to more easily negotiate treaties and trade arrangements. However, simply providing aid would not be enough to maintain American prestige. Harry Hopkins, one of President Roosevelt's closest advisors, recognized the

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[32] NARA. Record Group 59, Central Decimal Files; 1945-1949, File #701.9111; Iranian Diplomatic Representation in the United States.
[33] FDR. Roosevelt, Franklin D. Papers as President, President's Secretary's File. Box 40, Iran Diplomatic Correspondence.

importance of stepping lightly even in the giving of "unselfish" aid, lest Iran perceive the United States as meddlesome: "In our participation in the government of other nations, except as a military necessity, our operations must be limited by the fact that we are committed to the principle that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the government."[34] Thus, it was important that even the giving of military and economic aid be done in such a way as to uphold the principle of the Atlantic Charter, and to ensure that the control of Iran's development was ultimately held in the hands of the Iranian government.

American officials perceived U.S. policy in direct juxtaposition with British foreign policy, especially in light of the decline of British influence in the Middle East and rising U.S. primacy in the region. It is clear in the documents coming out of the U.S. State Department that American officials believed that British interests in Iran had been imperialistic and selfish. In contrast, those same officials claim that the United States' policy towards Iran would follow the magnanimous rubric of the Atlantic Charter. Members of the State Department were often apt to criticize the history of British influence in the region as both selfish and repressive: "Britain has supported whatever ruling class could achieve law and order… it has either maintained its own officials in power or frequently other corrupt and conservative regimes... [there has been] total neglect by Britain in the Middle East of such things as the promotion of education and public health." The poverty and backward development in Iran were blamed on the fact that Britain's only interest in the region was in "maintaining its strategic dominance in the area… [and] keeping the

[34] FDR. Hopkins, Harry L. Box 332, Book 8 - Interest in Middle East.

Russians away from the Persian Gulf."[35] American policymakers recognized that this sort of approach would only damage American prestige in Iran and hinder the United States' ability to pursue its longterm diplomatic and economic goals in the region. Therefore, American policymakers not only wanted to encourage Iranian perceptions of the United States as an altruistic nation, but also sought to actively develop a policy based on nation building. In a 1944 memorandum on American Policy in the Middle East, it was reported to Roosevelt's personal advisor, Harry Hopkins, that "a general objective of American policy should be to *encourage* the political *independence* of the Middle Eastern Governments," which would be achieved through "lifting [the] level of the peoples of the Middle Eastern Countries. This is of importance, because it will help to counteract the political disturbances that arise from poverty and disease." [36] By providing Lend-Lease aid and economic advisors to Iran during the war, and by promising economic aid for after the war, the United States would not only be improving the livelihood of average Iranian citizens, but would also be ensuring the internal strength of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi's regime. American policy even took into account the importance of developing Iran's military strength – this was a policy that both the War Department and the State Department agreed upon. The 1944 memorandum stated that "an objective of United States Policy must relate to the promotion of law and order… the responsibility for internal security must be made to rest with the governments themselves. We are beginning to pursue a policy along this line by furnishing

[35] FDR. Hopkins, Harry L. Box 332, Book 8 - Interest in Middle East.
[36] FDR. Hopkins, Harry L. Box 332, Book 8 - Interest in Middle East. Italics in this quote have been added for emphasis.

certain arms and equipment to these governments and by the military missions we have sent to Persia."[37] Among these missions were that of General Clarence Ridley, who consulted with the Iranian Army on organizational problems, and that of Colonel H. Norman Schwarzkopf, who advised the Iranian Gendarmerie (the military police force).[38] The appearance of an "unselfish" foreign policy rubric would ensure the maintenance of positive American prestige both globally and within Iran, and thereby provide room for the United States to expand its influence abroad.

American policymakers recognized that the United States would derive benefit from the development of a stronger Iranian regime. By freeing Iran from Soviet and British influences and encouraging internal security and economic development, the United States could promote trade relations with Iran. In the words of one American policymaker: "Another objective of American policy should be promoting the development of Middle East trade. A certain desirability attaches to making the Middle East more self-sufficient."[39] Motivated by the spirit of an open-door policy, the United States could promote its own trade interests by checking Soviet and British imperialist ambitions in the region. As historian Thomas Bryson writes,

> A long-range American policy toward Iran developed gradually during the war years. As early as 1943, a position paper prepared by John D. Jernegan of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs suggested that the United States needed to take cognizance of the presence of Russia and Britain in Iran… Jernegan argued that the United States ' alone, is in a position to build up Iran to the point at which it will stand in need of neither British nor Russian assistance… we can hope to remove any excuse for a post-war occupation, partition, or tutelage of Iran… We

[37] Ibid.
[38] These missions will be discussed further later on in the chapter.
[39] FDR. Hopkins, Harry L. Box 332, Book 8 - Interest in Middle East.

> can work to make Iran self-reliant and prosporous, *open to the trade of all nations* and a threat to none.' Jernegan's proposals became the basis of Department policy in Iran.[40]

Some policymakers even suggested that development of U.S.-Iranian relations be taken a step further – not only should the United States encourage Iran to open its borders to American trade, but the United States should also seek to direct the development and strengthening of the Iranian government "so that the basis of government will be broadened." The United States would benefit by encouraging a strong and self-sufficient government in "a part of the world which lies on one of the most important trade crossroads."[41] If the Middle East could be made into a stable region, then the United States would be able to encourage the development of trade relations with Iran and its neighbors.

At the same time, however, the United States recognized the need to temper its enthusiasm for the development of Iranian independence. Until the cessation of hostilities, it was crucial for the sake of the Allied war effort that the Soviet Union and Great Britain remain involved with shipping efforts through Iran and with the maintenance of internal Iranian security (in order to protect those shipping efforts). It therefore did not seek to immediately expel or discourage the Soviet Union and Great Britain from remaining involved in the development of the Persian Corridor. Instead, the United States agreed to dispatch political, financial, and military missions to the Iranian government and military institutions. In 1942, the Iranian government had submitted a formal request to the United States for the assignment

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[40] Bryson, 59. Jernegan's position paper can be found in FRUS 1943, *The Near East and Africa*: Volume IV, 334-335. Italics in this quote have been added for emphasis.
[41] FDR. Hopkins, Harry L. Box 332, Book 8 - Interest in Middle East.

of a mission to improve the Iranian military in order to "insure the security of the country so that the troops of the Allied Nations could be returned for use elsewhere and secondly, for the defense of the country against the Axis powers if such defense is needed."[42] The American government consented: "the United States will furnish, upon invitation of the Iranian Government, expert advisors in any or all of the fields of government."[43] It was recognized that the goals of these missions would not be fully realized for a few years, so that while they would eventually equip Iran to assert its full sovereignty, it would not be entirely able to do so until after the conclusion of the war.

III. Oil Concessions in U.S. Foreign Policy

One of the United States' major foreign policy concerns in Iran during the war was the development of its international oil industry. Not only was domestic demand for oil in the United States rapidly expanding during the war, but it was becoming abundantly clear that oil would play an increasingly important role in the development of the American economy. During the war, oil was becoming an increasingly important factor in the shaping of post-war policy, and played a significant role in expanding U.S. interest in the Persian Gulf. This newly increased interest in the Gulf was "based on a newly developed national petroleum policy for the postwar world formulated by the State Department in late 1943 and early

[42] NARA. American Embassy, Tehran, Iran 1942. Record Group 84, MLR UD Entry 2737, Box 45. Overview of Willkie's audience with the Prime Minister on September 16, 1942.
[43] FDR. Roosevelt, Franklin D. Papers as President, President's Secretary's File. Box 40, Iran Diplomatic Correspondence.

1944."[44] Through the national petroleum policy, American domestic petroleum reserves were to be conserved, while the American government and American oil companies facilitated the "substantial and orderly expansion of production in the Eastern Hemisphere sources of supply, principally in the Middle East."[45] This policy arose out of a growing concern over the threatened depletion of the Western Hemisphere's oil reserves, and therefore of the increased need to find substantial oil reserves abroad, in places like Iran and Saudi Arabia. As a result of this increasingly important economic focus on Iran, "a February 1944 PAW [Petroleum Administration for War] technical report labeled the Persian Gulf 'the center of gravity' for future oil development."[46] As the development of American petroleum interests in later decades showed, the PAW's statement could not have been more prophetic.

In addition to these long-term economic and trade concerns, the war effort had put an increasing strain on American oil supplies, necessitating the immediate development of new oil concessions abroad. By exploiting new foreign sources of petroleum, the United States could both "increase production and refinery capacity during wartime, and… insure American participation in postwar overseas oil development."[47] Mid-war, in 1943, American oil companies Standard-Vaccum, Standard Oil of New Jersey, and Sinclair communicated with the State Department their intentions to negotiate oil concessions with the Iranian government. They were supported in their efforts by the State Department. As Cordell Hull told the

[44] Palmer, 25-26.
[45] FRUS, 1944. *The Near East and Africa*: Volume V, 27-33.
[46] Palmer, 23.
[47] Palmer, 22-23

Standard-Vaccum company in November 1943, the State Department looked "with favor upon the development of all possible sources of petroleum."[48] Therefore, the American government took an active role in assisting with the negotiations by advocating for the oil concessions. Because this "coincided with renewed attempts by Tehran to use oil as a bait for encouraging greater US involvement in Iran," American oil companies were able to successfully negotiate short-term oil concessions.[49]

However, American-Iranian oil trade relations became increasingly complicated as the war wore on. Throughout 1944, the Soviet government had been attempting unsuccessfully to negotiate oil concessions with Iran. While Iran had the year before demonstrated its willingness to allow oil concessions to the United States, it was far less inclined to grant those rights to the Soviet Union, whose intentions were, as has been illustrated, suspect. Soviet officials were, of course, exceedingly upset about the imbalance in oil concessions. In October 1944, Soviet diplomat Sergei Kavtaradze complained that "if the Persian Government chose to grant a concession to the Americans in south-east Persia, they should give the Soviets a concession in the north"[50] These sorts of compensations would regulate the balance of power in the region. Iran, however, was intent on preventing the Soviet Union from gaining any sort of control over Iranian resources. Therefore,

> on December 2, 1944, [Mohammad] Musaddiq suddenly proposed an oil bill in the Majlis [the Iranian Parliament] that forbid the government from granting any oil concessions without legislative approval… In effect, it guaranteed that no further oil concessions

[48] FRUS, 1943. *The Near East and Africa*: Volume IV, 625-626.
[49] Bonakdarian, 27.
[50] George Kirk. *Middle East in the War.* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), 476.

> would be granted while Iran was an occupied country; when the occupation ended, the Majlis would determine the issue of concessions.[51]

Through this legislation, not only was the Majlis flexing its muscle in the face of its Soviet occupier, but it was also asserting its ability to play the power politics game independently of the United States. Suddenly, U.S. officials were faced with a situation in which Iran no longer relied upon its influence and generosity in order to hinder Soviet and British territorial ambitions. Because it made use of its oil fields as negotiating tool, the legislation temporarily damaged American influence in Iran. In denying concessions to the Soviet Union, the Majlis proved that it was not entirely reliant upon outside support to fend off occupying forces and defend its right to territorial sovereignty. For the past three years, the Iranian perception of the United States as a selfless power put the U.S. in a position to influence Iran's economy and government. The two countries had been using each other: Iran had used the United States to thwart British and Soviet ambitions, which had given the U.S. power to advance its own intentions in the region.

Now, at the end of 1944, American oil companies were also barred from negotiating further oil concessions from Iran because of this legislation. This was not simply in order to maintain a balance of power between the great powers, nor as a symbolic demonstration of fairness. While, as has been discussed, the Iranian government believed to a certain extent that the United States could be trusted in its foreign policy intentions, it did not wholeheartedly trust that the United States would keep to its word and pull its own troops out of Iran by the deadline of six

[51] Bill, 29.

months after the end of the war. During the last few months of the war, nearly all Iranian diplomatic communications with the United States expressed the sentiment that Iran wished to be granted its territorial sovereignty. In October 1945, after hostilities worldwide had ceased and American, British, and Soviet troops were in the process of withdrawing from Iran, a discussion was sparked among American policymakers over whether Seaboard Oil Company should be allowed to send a representative to Tehran to keep in touch with developments as the Majlis discussed reopening concession negotiations. Among the many pros and cons that were discussed, American Ambassador to Iran, Wallace Murray, claimed that there was "considerable risk that premature discussions would prejudice the American position for negotiations later on…this is not an appropriate time to discuss the development of Iranian petroleum resources by an American company."[52] The Majlis eventually reopened negotiations for oil concessions in 1946. In the meantime, however, there was a genuine concern in the American State Department that a wrong move on its part could damage future opportunities for oil concessions – a sentiment that not only reflected a degree of distrust of the United States by Iran, but also reflected how important Persian oil had become in the eyes of American policymakers.

Much had changed, then, since the beginning of the war. Within the span of four years, American foreign policy towards Iran had shifted from an almost disinterested passivity to an intense, forward-thinking policy. Much of this change was facilitated by the demands of the war effort – for example, by the necessity for

[52] FRUS, 1945. *The Near East and Africa*: Volume VIII, 582-583.

the United States to take over much of Great Britain's role in the shipment of aid through the Persian Corridor. At the same time, however, war demands complicated the United States' ability to build its relationship with the Iranian government. So long as hostilities continued, the United States was obligated to assist the Soviet Union, which meant it must encroach upon Iranian sovereignty – a policy which served to embitter American-Iranian relations, and which eventually drove Iran to pull back from its reliance upon American assistance in defending Iran from the Soviet Union and Great Britain's imperialist ambitions.

II. Aiding the Enemy: The Russian Bear at the Northern Border

In this chapter, I will discuss in further detail the use of Iran and the Persian Corridor as a route for military aid to the Soviet Union, and the resulting tensions among the War and State Departments regarding aid to a potential future enemy. While on the one hand, the war effort demanded that the United States provide enough aid to the Soviet Union to stave off the German advance, on the other hand, the United States was just beginning to look ahead towards supporting a containment policy in what was predicted to become a bipolar postwar world.

The initial reason that the United States established a military presence in Iran had more to do with militarily supporting the Soviet Union than with Iran itself, which largely accounts for the disconnect between American foreign and military policies regarding Iran. Not only was the State Department concerned with maintaining friendly relations with Iran, but it also had a somewhat more forward-looking approach towards the United States' dealings with the Soviet Union. The State Department recognized that in order to impede Soviet aspirations of territorial expansion in Iran, the United States needed to be protective of Iranian territorial sovereignty. The common sentiment in the State Department, therefore, was that Iran should not be used as a land bridge for the transportation of goods to a nation which might later threaten Iran. The War Department, on the other hand, was motivated primarily by its immediate policies of supporting the Soviet Union's military efforts against Germany, and consequently thought it absolutely necessary

to maintain a military presence in Iran. It is therefore important, in a study of American policies towards Iran during the war, to understand the issues and policy conflicts surrounding the United States' support of the Soviet Union.

I. The Military Necessity of Aiding the Soviet Union

In June 1941, Nazi Germany launched an attack, code-named Operation Barbarossa, deep into Soviet Russia. Ill-prepared for the sudden invasion, Soviet troops suffered defeat after staggering defeat. While the Nazi advance began to slow down in September, the situation in the Soviet Union was still critical. The Allies recognized that the collapse of the Soviet Union would have a devastating effect on the Allied war effort, and therefore immediately began to seek out ways to buttress the Soviet army, and keep it fighting. When the Soviet Union refused to allow its Allies to send troops to assist with the fighting, the Allies eventually agreed that they would support the USSR by providing it with war material. As Henry Stimson, the United States' Secretary of War, wrote to President Roosevelt in February 1944: "Russia continues to be a major factor in achieving the defeat of Germany. We must therefore continue to support the USSR by providing the maximum amount of supplies which can be delivered to her ports."[1]

One major threat that Operation Barbarossa posed to the Allied war effort was the steady advance of German Army Group South towards the Baku oil fields in the Caucasus. As the German army advanced further east, its supply lines were stretched almost to the breaking point – all that would change, however, if

[1] FDR. President's Soviet Protocol Committee. Box 20, Future Status Persian Gulf Command (Scott).

the Germans controlled these valuable natural resources further afield. The loss of access to these oil fields would at once be devastating for the Red Army, and would provide the German *Wehrmacht* with renewed strength with which to continue its attack further east into the Soviet Union, or south into the Middle East. The security of the Soviet Union, then, was not the only concern created by the German advance: as British Brigadier J.M. Whiteley pointed out in a 1941 memorandum: "The oil bearing areas in Roumania, the Caucasus, Iraq and Iran are within, or within striking distance of, the Middle East."[2] Great Britain was concerned with the security of the Middle East not only out of its own imperialist interests, but also out of a geo-military concern shared with the rest of its allies. A letter by Brig. Gen. Russell L. Maxwell, who supervised American military activities in Cairo, pointed to the Allies' anxieties about a potential Nazi incursion into the Middle East and about the potential fall of the Soviet Union:

> Were Germany to take the Middle East, interrupt the Basra-Caspian Sea supply line, so great would be the victory that she would be justified in spending another winter in Russia. The effect of another winter of war on Russia is likely to be tragic… If in 1943 the Red Army quits, a clean cut Allied victory would take years and is next to impossible. The fate of the Middle East marks the turning point of the war. Once lost, the Middle East can scarcely be regained.[3]

While the last comment, that the fall of the Middle East would doom the entire war effort, is Maxwell's personal opinion, there were others. The War Department Chief of Staff, for example, believed that the Allies could continue fighting even if the Middle East and North Africa fell to the Germans.

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[2] FDR. Hopkins, Harry L. Box 326, Book 7 - Middle East Politics and Requirements.
[3] FDR. Roosevelt, Franklin D. Papers as President, Map Room File. Box 167, Naval Aide's Files, A/16-3 – Warfare - Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean. 12 June 1942 - 03 Feb. 1943.

Nevertheless, it was clear that if the *Wehrmacht* were to take control over the Caucasus and Middle East oil fields, the Allies would suffer a tremendous blow.

It was with these worries in mind – both regarding the need to ship supplies to the Soviet Union, and regarding the security of the Middle East itself – that Great Britain and the Soviet Union launched this joint invasion of Iran in late August 1941. Now, the Allies could depend upon their own military forces to protect the Middle East and its oil fields, and could develop a viable route through which to ship weapons, ammunitions, food, clothing, and building supplies to the Red Army. In October 1941, Roosevelt signed his approval on a Lend-Lease commitment to the USSR, which became the first in a series of so-called "Soviet Protocols" specifying exact quantities and types of supplies that the United States would provide the Soviet Union over an agreed-upon period of time. These goods were transferred to Great Britain, which initially took primary responsibility for transporting them to the Soviet Union. However, the British development of the supply route through Iran was crude at best, and was plagued with management and coordination problems. When the United States officially joined the Allies in December 1941 Henry Stimson wrote a letter to President Roosevelt, calling for the establishment of a military presence in Iran to assist with shipping efforts. In the letter, Stimson stressed that the "prompt development of the supply route through the Persian corridor is a matter of great urgency due to (a) the critical need of the USSR for large quantities of material

which can only be shipped over this route, and (b) the necessity for establishing and supplying united military forces in this area."[4]

It soon became clear, however, that simply providing the supplies was not enough. Because Great Britain could not handle the transportation efforts through Iran, by mid-1942, the United States replaced Great Britain as the primary transporter of goods to the Soviet Union through Iran. In April 1942, what had previously been an advisory mission to shipment efforts – the U.S. Military Iranian Mission – was renamed the Iran-Iraq Service Command, and began to report to the Cairo headquarters of the U.S. Army Forces in the Middle East. The mission was given its final name, the Persian Gulf Service Command, in August 1941, and began to report directly to the War Department in Washington, DC, in December 1943.

It was not clear at the outset of the war, however, that the Persian Corridor would be the primary route through which the Allies would ship supplies to the Soviet Union. For quite some time, there had been debates about the relative merits and pitfalls of the so-called northern and southern routes. The northern route involved the transportation of supplies by ship north through the Soviet Arctic and into the ports at Murmansk and Archangel. This route, however, faced quite a number of perils. First, during the winter months, Allied ships had to navigate the treacherous ice floes that littered the Norwegian and Barents seas. Then, during the spring and summer months, Allied ships were vulnerable to naval attacks by German U-Boats. Nevertheless, in 1941, "the major

[4] FDR. President's Soviet Protocol Committee. Box 19, Persian Gulf. March 1942-Aug 1942. Folder 1.

effort was devoted to forwarding supplies to the Russians over the more venerable northern Atlantic route." This was perhaps due to the fact that Great Britain did not have enough resources to support fully the significantly longer supply route through Iran, and because "the Russians insisted on the use of the northern route, evidently both because it promised quicker delivery of supplies closer to their fighting fronts and because they feared the establishment, in Iran, of a strong British or American position so close to the Soviet border."[5] However, it eventually became clear that the northern route was simply too perilous to be a viable shipping option. As a 1943 article in the Chicago Sun, discussing the potential final abandonment of the northern route, described:

> A total absence of darkness throughout the 24 hours is making seagoing traffic to Murmansk and Archangel extremely vulnerable to German naval and air attack… Moreover, reports from Stockholm believed trustworthy state that the Germans have recently concentrated a strong naval force at Narvik… Stoppage of supplies to the Soviet Union via the northern route would be a serious disadvantage to Russia at this moment.[6]

The failure of the northern route naturally threw the spotlight on the Persian corridor as the only other key alternative for transporting goods to the Soviet Union. By September 1942, the War Department was advocating the improvement of the Persian Corridor shipping operations in order to increase its capacity. In a booklet published that month, entitled *Plan for Operation of Certain Iranian Communication Facilities between Persian Gulf Ports and Tehran by US Army Forces*, the War Department recommended that,

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[5] Coakley, 158. I will return to this final point, regarding the establishment of a British or American position in Iran, later on in the chapter.
[6] FDR. President's Soviet Protocol Committee. Box 25, Newspaper Clippings and Other Data File. The Chicago Sun and Field Publications, 7 April 1943.

> if the volume of shipments to Russia via the Persian Gulf is to be increased in time to be of material aid, immediate action will be necessary. The possibility of using successfully the northern sea route to Russia seems remote. The desirability of increasing the capacity of this route, if not the absolute necessity for doing so, seems of the first order of importance.[7]

In order to further develop the southern route, the British and American militaries formed the Combined Military Transportation Committee (CTMC). The CMTC sought to increase the capacity of the Persian Corridor by ensuring that it was "economically operated, and in particular that: (a) Ships are not unduly delayed; (b) Port and internal clearance agencies are kept working to full capacity but are not overloaded."[8]

While they were still concerned with the problem an American or British stronghold in Iran, the Soviets realized that the immediate needs to insure its military survival were much more critical, and therefore "reversed their previous position and asked that not only places and trucks but all sorts of military equipment in the largest quantities possible come via the southern route."[9] Once this material reached Iran's northern border with the Soviet Union, however, instead of continuing to expedite the shipping process by allowing the United States to transport the material all the way to the front lines (or even, at least, partway into the Soviet Union), Soviet officials insisted that the material be transferred directly to the Red Army at the border, a policy which served to slow the shipping process (but

[7] FDR. President's Soviet Protocol Committee. Box 25, Plan for Operation of Certain Iranian Communication Facilities between Persian Gulf Ports and Tehran by US Army Forces. 3 Sept. 1942.
[8] FDR. President's Soviet Protocol Committee. Box 20, Persian Gulf: CMTC Papers. 1943.
[9] Coakley., 162.

which also gave the Soviet Union far more consolidated control over the Caucasus region).

However, the use of Iran as a route through which to ship material to the Soviet Union was still an issue fraught with politics. Some in the War Department believed that it was not in the United States' best interests to put large groups of American ground forces in the Middle East. In June 1942, the War Department's Chief of Staff, George Marshall, wrote a letter to President Roosevelt expressing his opposition to the transition of power over the Persian Corridor from Great Britain to the United States:

> The leakage or wastage of strength logistically in operating in such distant theaters is tremendous… if we undertake to support large forces in the Middle East, it is our opinion that we have denied the probability of assembling American forces of decisive power in an theater in this war… You are familiar with my view that the decisive theater is Western Europe…. A large venture in the Middle East would make a decisive American contribution to the campaign in Western Europe out of the question. Therefore, I am opposed to such a project.[10]

Marshall believed that by focusing too much on shipment efforts in Iran (and, consequently, by focusing too much on directly supporting the USSR), the United States was losing its focus on what he saw as the primary target: Western Europe.

While most others in the War Department recognized, and advocated the benefits of a significant American military presence in Iran, many in the State Department shared Marshall's broad sentiments. The State Department did not argue about the importance of one theater of war over another – rather, it saw the United States' military efforts in Iran on behalf of the Soviet Union as damaging to

[10] FDR. Roosevelt, Franklin D. Papers as President, Map Room File. Box 167, Naval Aide's Files, A/16-3 – Warfare - Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean. 12 June 1942 - 03 Feb. 1943.

American long-term interests. Especially in the later years of the war, the State Department became increasingly concerned about the Soviet Union's global postwar ambitions. It eventually became clear that both the United States and the Soviet Union would emerge from the war as the two primary global powers, and that the Soviet Union could pose a grave threat to the United States. Among its many concerns regarding the potential postwar bipolar world, the State Department was concerned that the Soviet Union would attempt to spread its influence into Iran and the Middle East. While an actual containment policy doctrine would not become prevalent in the United States until after the war, many in the State Department had already been concerned about the spread of Communism for many years. The fact that the American military was shipping billions of dollars of weapons, ammunitions, and other supplies to this potential future enemy, then, was quite troubling. And while the United States and the Soviet Union were largely cooperative during the war, the State Department was aware that the Soviet Union harbored territorial ambitions in Iran.[11]

II. Border Politics

The Soviet Union's primary interests in Iran were twofold: First, much like the United States, it desired access to Iran's rich oil reserves. Second, it desired either free access to, or control over, Iran's warm water ports on the Persian Gulf. In a policy essay written shortly after the war, John

[11] The State Department's additional concern over the necessity of maintaining friendly relations with Iran in order to support its long-term political and economic goals in the region, and the damage that transportation efforts were creating to those relations, is discussed in other chapters of this thesis.

Cooper Wiley, an American foreign service officer who served as Ambassador to Iran from 1947-1948, discussed the Soviet Union's interest in Iranian petroleum:

> Iran, a country that almost floats on oil, had long been a prime objective of Russian ambitions. On November 25, 1940, when the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany were virtually allies, the Soviet government demanded of Hitler that 'the area South of Batum and Baku in the general direction of the Persian Gulf should be recognized as the center of the aspirations of the Soviet Union.' This area was certainly intended to include, in addition to Iran, the petroleum of the Persian Gulf.[12]

During the war period, the Soviet Union had access to very few warm water ports, and even those were on mostly landlocked bodies of water such as the Black Sea. With access to Iranian ports at Khorramshahr, Bandar Abbas, and Bandar Shahpur, the Soviet Union would be able to increase its trade capacity tremendously. As Major General Donald Connolly wrote to Harry Hopkins in February 1944, access to the Persian Gulf would provide the Soviet Union with perhaps one of its only opportunities to partake in global trade in any significant way:

> Russia is seeking a warm-water port. The Baltic is closed to the outside world at Skagerrak. Even if Russia controlled the Dardanelles, the Mediterranean is closed at Gibraltar and the Suez Canal. The eastern port of Vladivostok is closed by the Japanese Islands, so that is the only possible place where Russia can find free access to the world's oceans and trade is through the Persian Corridor and the Gulf Ports.[13]

Especially after the Soviet Union joined the side of the Allies, it found its access to the world's oceans not only limited by geographical constraints, but also severely

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[12] FDR. Wiley, John Cooper. Box 12, Petroleum, Focal Point of Policy.
[13] FDR. Hopkins, Harry L. Box 332, Book 8 - Interest in Middle East.

limited by hostile Japanese and Nazi ships. After the joint Anglo-Soviet invasion of Iran in August 1941, the ability to have either access to, or control over, the warm water ports on the Persian Gulf became a feasible reality: "This access to the sea that hitherto had only been a dream now has been made a reality as a consequence of General Connolly and the Persian Gulf Command…"[14] The wartime transportation efforts of the Persian Gulf Command succeeded in building and improving Iranian infrastructure, which would smooth the path for the Soviet Union to potentially develop its own, postwar, transportation efforts *south* through Iran to the Persian Gulf.

The United States, however, was clearly wary about the idea of a Communist Russia with free access to the Persian Gulf. While the importance of the Soviet Union's military victory over Nazi Germany was appreciated by nearly everyone in the United States government, it was important to American policymakers that the power of the postwar Soviet Union be checked. Administrators in the State Department were well aware that after the war, the United States and the Soviet Union would be competing for the same resources and the same economic benefits in Iran.

As the war drew to a close, fears of increasing Soviet interference in Iran began to rise. In a January 1945 memorandum to the president, Acting Secretary of State Joseph Grew wrote that "Many Soviet officials undoubtedly believe that Russia must have an assured outlet to the Persian Gulf, to be obtained by forceful means if

[14] FDR. Hopkins, Harry L. Box 332, Book 8 - Interest in Middle East.

necessary."[15] For a short while, a number of ideas where developed to preclude such an action on the part of the Soviet Union. One such idea was to allow the Soviet Union access to the Persian Gulf ports, so long as this access would be shared by the international community. Joseph Grew suggested to Roosevelt that the United States work to develop an international trusteeship over the Trans-Iranian Railway, along with a free port on the Persian Gulf. This action

> might render less likely a more exigent demand by Russia. The trusteeship would assure to Russia an uhampered trade outlet to the Persian Gulf and would at the same time assist Iran economically by developing an important transit trade through the country and by improving Iranian transport facilities for its internal trade… the trusteeship proposal would be in the direction of British-Soviet-American cooperation rather than rivalry in Iran.[16]

While Grew argued that the international trusteeship would support Iran's domestic economy, the idea was nevertheless ill-received by Iranian officials. The trusteeship was seen as an infringement upon Iranian sovereignty, and American officials discovered that "no matter how drawn up or proposed, the plan would appear to Iran… as a thinly disguised cover for power politics and old-world imperialism."[17] In the end, the idea was not implemented, and the United States had to content itself with simply keeping a close watch on the Soviet Union and Iran.

While the Soviet Union did not end up launching a full-scale invasion of Iran in order to claim its ports, there were many moments of friction at the Soviet-Iranian border. As was mentioned earlier, the Soviet Union espoused

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[15] FDR. Roosevelt, Franklin D. Papers as President, President's Secretary's File. Box 40, Iran Diplomatic Correspondence.
[16] Ibid.
[17] FRUS, 1945. *The Near East and Africa:* Volume VIII, 524.

highly territorial policies, and did not allow American troops to cross the border into the Soviet Union. Although its military was suffering tremendously from the German onslaught, Joseph Stalin nevertheless did not fully trust the United States or Great Britain. The Soviet Union's desire to maintain control over its borders in many ways remained paramount, even though it was already under attack in the west. This territoriality was perhaps due to the fact that the Soviet Union wished to keep strict control over its southernmost territory, in order to leave it in a position to exercise greater control over Iran after the end of the war. This idea is supported in an August 1944 memorandum sent to Harry Hopkins on American Policy in the Middle East: "Russia's eyes in Persia are definitely on the Persian Gulf… Russian policy presently deems it best to keep the Persian Government weak. Russian occupation in the North is complete and exclusive."[18]

Concerns over Soviet intentions in Iran were later heightened when, towards the very end of the war, "Soviet-sponsored separatists in Azerbaijan and Kurdistan, under the political mantel of the Democratic Part of Azerbaijan, began seizing control... it was clear that the Soviets had both exacerbated and manipulated these tensions to create a puppet regime in the area under their control."[19] This Azerbaijan, a separate entity from the Republic of Azerbaijan, was a region in northern Iran, and Kurdistan was a province in northwest Iran. When the Iranian government tried to send its military forces and government officials to the region to investigate, the Red Army barred those officials from entering into the region:

[18] FDR. Hopkins, Harry L. Box 332, Book 8 - Interest in Middle East.
[19] Palmer, 30.

> My Government's efforts to send reinforcements to the local garrisons[…] were, and are still, frustrated by the refusal of the Red Army at Kazvin to allow a detachment of Persian troops to advance north into the affected areas… the Soviet Government does not approve of our troops entering the affected zone because this might lead to clashes and bloodshed, and in that case, the Soviets will be obliged to bring more troops into Iran.[20]

It is important to note that the Soviet Union was threatening to send even more troops into Iran, should the Iranian military enter its own territory in Azerbaijan. By issuing this warning, the Soviet government was, in effect, consolidating its power and control over that region. Because it was not fully checked, the Soviet Union continued to interfere with the local operations of Iranian forces through the end of the war. In a letter to the Secretary of State at the very end of the war, in May 1945, Leland Morris, the new American Ambassador in Iran, expressed frustration over the Soviet obstructions to the operations of the Iranian *Gendarmerie*: "Russian interference with the activities of Iranian security forces is, in effect, a negation of Iranian sovereignty over a substantial part of the country and violates the spirit, at least, of the Anglo-Soviet-Iranian treaty of 1942."[21] The Anglo-Soviet-Iranian treaty, among other things, committed Iran to supplying nonmilitary aid to the Allied war effort, and committed the Allies to removing their troops from Iran no later than six months after the end of the war. In effect, the treaty, while demanding that Iran play its role in furthering the Allied war effort, also recognized the autonomy of the Iranian government. The fact that the Soviet Union was overstepping its bounds –

[20] NARA. Record Group 59, Central Decimal Files; 1945-1949, File #701.9111; Iranian Diplomatic Representation in the United States. Letter from the Iranian Ambassador to President Truman.
[21] FRUS, 1945. *The Near East and Africa*, Volume III: 528-529.

as outlined in the treaty – was worrisome to many policymakers in the United States.

In an article from the New York Times, journalist W.H. Lawrence reported that American officials "had long feared trouble in that part of Iran because of the Soviet Union's desire for important oil concessions and the Iranian Government's persistent refusal to grant them."[22] This blatant disregard for Iranian autonomy further fueled American fears that the Soviet Union might soon forcefully pursue further territorial objectives in Iran. This would, of course, endanger American foreign policy objectives in Iran. These specific concerns, paired with growing general sentiment within the United States that Communism was an expansive, global threat that needed to be constrained, helped to create American foreign policies towards Iran that were couched in the concerns and language of what would become the containment policy.

III. Looking Forward Towards a Containment Policy

While the Cold War and the containment policy are usually associated with postwar politics, the United States was in fact actively concerned with checking Soviet power as early as 1944. Anti-Communist sentiment, however, was even prevalent among American policymakers from a much earlier date. When the United States first began to supply aid to the Soviet Union, it recognized that it was providing aid to a past – and potentially future – enemy. However, quelling the Nazi threat was a far more pressing need. A November

[22] NARA. Record Group 59, Central Decimal Files; 1945-1949, File #701.9111; Iranian Diplomatic Representation in the United States. Letter from the Iranian Ambassador to President Truman.

1941 article from the Associate Press describes how W. Averell Harriman, the chairman of Roosevelt's mission to Soviet Russia, assured the American Legion that American aid to Russia "in no way compromises our opposition to Communism. Our aid… is being given to the Russian solider, to the Russian people, because they are fighting Hitler's war machine in the defense of their homes and their land."[23]

As the war began to reach its end, however, American policymakers began to look ahead to the postwar world. It was clear that both the United States and the Soviet Union would emerge from the war as global powers, and that they might come to blows in a number of key regions around the world. Because of the growing importance of its petroleum resources, Iran was one such region of concern. In a November 1944 article in the Washington News, William Philip Simms discussed the concern in Iran about Soviet postwar intentions, and about the fear that the Soviet Union would not adhere to the Atlantic Charter: "The 27th anniversary of the Bolshevist revolution find officials here torn between unstinted admiration for the Red army and growing concern over Russia's future, but still far from clear, intentions… What is not clear today, however, is whether Iran is to become another Poland."[24] The comparison to Poland is quite potent – the fear was not simply that the Soviet Union would exercise its influence over Iran to achieve oil concessions, but that it would initiate a physical hostile takeover of Iran.

[23] FDR. President's Soviet Protocol Committee. Box 25, Newspaper Clippings and Other Data File.
[24] FDR. Republican National Committee Papers. Box 46, Teheran; Cairo; Iran – Newspaper clippings (Folder 11-12).

Therefore, "in light of Britain's depleted economic and military resources and the strengthened Soviet position in Iran during the war, the American State Department would actively explore possible means of containing Soviet influence in Iran even before the war came to a close."[25] As the Cold War temperament began to gain ascendancy in the State Department, it began to compete with the War Department's policy of continuing to bolster the Easter Front and of completing its Soviet Protocol obligations. The United States' military presence in Iran was dictated primarily by the need to provide the Soviet Union with military aid; at the same time, many of the State Department's concerns over Iran were shaped by the threat posed by the Soviet Union to Iran. If the USSR were to exert successfully its influence in the region, then the United States' own foreign policy ambitions in Iran – as discussed in the previous chapter – would be threatened. The conflict created by these two policies within the United States government did not ultimately halt U.S. aid to the Soviet Union. It did, however, cultivate an environment of veiled hostility and mistrust towards Soviet Russia, as well as a sort of cognitive dissonance in policymaking – at the same time as the United States continued to provide aid to the USSR through the Persian Corridor, it would look ahead and create plans to obstruct the Soviet Union's own territorial ambitions in Iran.

[25] Bonakdarian, 23.

III. Tensions on the Ground: Military and Diplomatic Institutions in Iran

In the previous two chapters, I discussed U.S. policy towards Iran on a grand scale – its development and implementation, the tensions between diplomatic and military policy, and the geopolitical foundations, causes, and consequences of those policies. These tensions cut to the heart of the United States' relationship – and projected relationship – with Iran. Would the United States pursue policies that encouraged friendly relations with Iran, thereby creating the possibility to develop its postwar trade relations with the country, and strengthen its foothold in the region? Or would the United States give priority to the all-important war effort, which would require encroaching upon Iranian sovereignty, angering the Iranian government, and potentially threaten the future of American-Iranian relations? As we have seen, there was no single answer to these questions. Both the State and War departments pursued their agendas simultaneously, which led to the implementation of policies that conflicted with one another, and that would sometimes damage the effectiveness of the department's objectives. In this chapter, I will look at how those greater policy tensions within the United States government promoted conflict among U.S. military and diplomatic institutions, officers, and personnel on the ground in Iran.

I. The Persian Gulf Service Command

The Persian Gulf Service Command began in 1941 as a small military mission (called the U.S. Military Iranian Mission) led by Colonel Raymond Wheeler, which assisted British troops in facilitating the shipment of Lend-Lease supplies to the Soviet Union. In April 1942, after being renamed the Iran-Iraq Service Command, the mission began to report to the Cairo headquarters of the US Army Forces in the Middle East, and Colonel Don G. Shingler replaced Wheeler as its commander. In August 1942, the mission was placed under the direction of Major General Donald Connolly and renamed once again, becoming known as the Persian Gulf Service Command. In a booklet entitled *Plan for Operation of Certain Iranian Communication Facilities between Persian Gulf Ports and Tehran by US Army Forces*, published in September of 1942, the mission's responsibilities and goals are outlined: "You will be permitted wide latitude, subject to the supervision of the Commanding General, United States Army Forces in the Middle East. It is to be borne in mind that your mission is to insure the uninterrupted flow of an expanding volume of supplies to Russia."[1] Finally, in December 1943, the PGSC's efforts in the Persian Corridor had become significant enough that the mission began to report directly to the War Department in Washington. By the war's end, the PGSC would consist of nearly 30,000 noncombatant troops, and had overseen the transportation of nearly $18 billion in goods to the Soviet Union.[2]

Even at the time, it was debatable whether or not the presence of American troops in Iran was helpful or detrimental to American prestige (and

[1] FDR. President's Soviet Protocol Committee. Box 25, Plan for Operation of Certain Iranian Communication Facilities between Persian Gulf Ports and Tehran by US Army Forces. 3 Sept. 1942.
[2] Pollack, 40.

therefore to the mission of the United States' diplomatic presence in Iran). In a memorandum sent to Harry Hopkins on February 26th, 1944, Connolly shared his personal opinion that

> It is recognized that the technical training obtained by Iranians working with and for American troops has been one of the greatest opportunities yet offered to Iranians. This is particularly true in the railroad setup, where the employees of the railroad, under the direction of American troops, are acquiring technical knowledge which they could otherwise not acquire in Iran. Moreover, the American Army in all its relationships with Iranians has showed the American spirit of fair play. The pay of Iranian personnel has been made regularly and has been granted on the basis of service rendered. This spirit of fair play in the ordinary business relationships is much appreciated by the Iranians.[3]

Connolly claimed that the United States' military presence was having a beneficial impact on grassroots American-Iranian relations, mostly because the American military was a good employer. In a country that had many economic difficulties even before the outbreak of hostilities, steady and well-paid work would have been welcome by its citizens. In this sense, according to Connolly, the United States was engaging in a sort of "citizen" diplomacy in Iran through its military.

At the same time, however, many argue the opposite. While the PGSC did hire a great number of Iranians to support the Persian Corridor supply routes, it was at the same time monopolizing Iran's roads and railroads, creating an impediment to domestic trade and the transportation of food and supplies. An editorial in Iranian newspaper *The Iran* complained that the war "has closed all the roads to Iran and Iran is by no means responsible for it. This has created

[3] FDR. Hopkins, Harry L. Box 332, Book 8 - Interest in Middle East.

difficulties of all kind for us especially in the matter of food supply. Iran needs wheat. Iran needs means of transport. Iran needs sugar. Iran needs articles which she was previously importing from abroad."[4] This problem became particularly onerous during the 1942 famine. During that year, the shortage of food became so grave that many Iranians began to incite bread riots: "By the end of [1942], the US embassy in Tehran was reporting that the government could only keep two days' worth of wheat… on hand… This state of affairs led to violent bread riots in 1942."[5] Even worse, many Iranians were resentful that the monopolization of domestic transportation was being used to support the Soviets. Relations between Iran and the Soviet Union were bitter, and it was therefore frustrating for Iranians to know that they were suffering shortages so that the Soviets could continue to be well-supplied. An August 1942 informal aide memoire from Allah Yar Saleh, Chief of the Iranian Trade and Economic Mission to the US, to Sumner Welles communication the frustration of the Iranian people: "It is impossible to explain to Iranians how no shipping can be provided for some of the immediate needs of Iran while the people of Iran constantly observe that American material is being unloaded in the Persian Gulf and carried through Iran to Russia."[6]

This bitterness continued well after the bread riots subsided. Iranians were well aware that to the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union, their country was militarily nothing more than a byway. While the United States did have diplomatic interests in Iran, its military was, for the most part, unconcerned with the well-being

[4] NARA. American Embassy, Tehran, Iran 1942. Record Group 84, MLR UD Entry 2737, Box 45. Excerpt from editorial in newspaper "The Iran", dated September 15, 1942, on Willkie's visit to Iran.
[5] Pollack, 43.
[6] FDR. Welles, Sumner. Box 165, Iran. 1938 – 1942.

of Iranian citizens. Mohammad Shayesteh, the Iranian Minister to the United States, further illustrated Iranian's frustrations in a speech at the Annual Dinner of the Iranian Institute on December 16, 1943:

> How often have we not read about the so-called 'Lifeline to Russia' described in such a manner as to give the reader the impression that our railroads, our highways, and even our ports did not exist before the war and had all been built during the past two years… Iran is in most serious economic difficulties right now and… these difficulties are entirely caused by the war… Our contribution [to the war effort] has not been without hardship and sacrifices. The scarcity of food reaching famine proportions, the epidemics of typhus and other diseases… will cause 1942 and 1943 to be remembered for many long years with grief and sorrow.[7]

This frustration and bitterness, while mostly inconsequential to the War Department, often created havoc for the American diplomatic mission in Iran. If Iranians were upset about the American military presence in their country, their feelings would certainly not stop the flow of supplies from the Gulf ports to the northern border with the Soviet Union. Iranian feelings, however, could have dire consequences on the United States' ability to improve its diplomatic standing with that country after the war, and could seriously impede efforts to improve trade relations and obtain oil concessions. Luckily, for most of the war, the State Department had installed a very talented diplomat at its legation in Tehran.

II. The American Legation in Iran and the Preservation of Prestige

[7] NARA. RG 59, File #701.9111, 1940-1945. Text of speech by Mr. Mohammad Shayesteh at the Annual Dinner of the Iranian Institute, December 16, 1943. Entitled "Iran in the International Scene".

Well before the United States became embroiled in the war, it maintained a small legation in Tehran.[8] The legation's role there was primarily to maintain cordial relations with Iran in order to look after the interests of American merchants, missionaries, and pilgrims who traveled there. Historian James Bill describes the chief diplomatic officer of the legation, Minister Louis Dreyfus, Jr., as a "shy, sensitive individual and perhaps one of the best minister/ambassadors that the United States ever sent to Iran. He was extremely popular among Iranians of all classes, who respected his sincere commitment to understanding and communicating their concerns to his government in Washington."[9] Even before Dreyfus was assigned to the legation, it was recognized that he was a talented diplomat and would be well-suited to serve in Iran. In a memo dated June 23, 1939, Brigadier General E.M. Watson wrote to Roosevelt that had "talked personally with Mr. [Cordell] Hull and he said that Iran was a very delicate place and they had just established satisfactory, cordial relations there, and he thought this man Dreyfus was particularly qualified to carry that on."[10] The fact that Hull was highly confident in Dreyfus' ability to succeed in a country with whom the United States did not yet have robust, solid relations was a strong indicator of his talents as a diplomat and of his ability to continue to strengthen American relations with Iran. To that extent, the legation was quite successful – Dreyfus had a long history of good rapport with the Iranian government, and was popular with the Iranian public at large (a September 1942 article from Persian newspaper *The Iran* even described Dreyfus as

[8] A legation was a diplomatic representative office, ranking below an embassy. The office was upgraded to an embassy in August 1944.
[9] Bill, 21.
[10] FDR. Papers as President, Official File. Dreyfus, Louis G., Jr. 1933-1945. File 3697.

"loveable").[11] This assertion about Dreyfus' popularity is substantiated by a number of sources from the Iranian side, including a request by Iranian officials in March 1944 that the State Department not remove Dreyfus from his post. At the time, the State Department was planning to relocate Dreyfus to Iceland and replace him with a diplomat named Leland Morris, primarily because of internal politics. When the Iranian government learned of the planned move, however, it protested. A memorandum from the Secretary of State, dated March 14, 1944, described the situation:

> the minister of Iran transmits a request from the Iranian Government for reconsideration of the recall of Dreyfus. The Iran Government expressed hope that Mr. Dreyfus will be appointed Ambassador to Iran. The Iran Government has nothing against Leland Morris and will be glad to agree to Mr. Morris' appointment but feel that Mr. Dreyfus would be better as he knows and understands them.[12]

Further information about Iran's attachment to Dreyfus can be found in a memorandum dated a few days earlier, on March 9th, by diplomat Adolf Berle, Jr. Recounting a conversation with Iran's minister in Washington, Mohammad Shayesteh, Berle writes that while Shayesteh did not have any complaints against Leland Morris, he claimed that Dreyfus "had upheld the interests of Iran and of the United States at a time when the Middle East supply center was falling down badly on supplies, and so forth."[13] As will be illustrated later in the chapter, Dreyfus was aware – especially during the war – that it was in the United States' best interests to support positive relations with Iran, and that enhancing American prestige in Iran

[11] NARA. American Embassy, Tehran, Iran 1942. Record Group 84, MLR UD Entry 2737, Box 45. Excerpt from editorial in newspaper "The Iran", dated September 15, 1942, on Willkie's visit to Iran.
[12] FDR. Roosevelt, Franklin D. Papers as President, Official File (OF). Box 0/134. Iran (Persia), Government of - Endorsements for Ambassador. OF 134: Iran.
[13] FDR. Roosevelt, Franklin D. Papers as President, President's Secretary's File. Box 40, Iran Diplomatic Correspondence.

would later be crucial for developing trade relations and securing oil concessions from Iran. It is no wonder that he was so popular with the Iranian government and people – Louis Dreyfus was culturally sensitive, a talented diplomat, and fully dedicated to maintaining positive relations between the United States and Iran.

However hard Dreyfus worked to uphold American prestige, the necessity for an American military presence in Iran during the war often proved damaging to Iranian popular perceptions of the United States and Americans. Even early on in the war, many Americans faced some hostility from the Iranian government and the Iranian people, as a result of U.S. impingement on Iranian sovereignty. In particular, towards the beginning of the war, Iranians were sometimes hostile to Americans because they believed they were collaborating with the British (this perception was most likely encouraged by the presence of the U.S. Military Mission to Iran, which assisted British troops in Iran even before the United States formally entered the war). In a letter dated September 4, 1941, American and British journalists, attempting to cover the joint British-Russian invasion of Iran, complained that they were "meeting with considerable difficulty in despatching [sic] their messages through the Iranian telegraph and wireless office… We have numerous instances of the childishly obvious methods adopted by the high officials in the Iranian telegraph and wireless to hold back our messages."

As was discussed in chapter one, the United States believed that its reputation suffered damage because many Middle Eastern countries associated its policies with that of Great Britain. The United States therefore attempted to separate itself from Great Britain in the eyes of those countries, so that it would be

looked upon more favorably in the international scene. It appears that early on in the war, the presence of American troops in Iran under the auspices of the British Command proved to be a source of friction between Iran and the United States. In a December 1943 report outlining the formation of a general American policy towards Iran, Brigadier General Patrick Hurley wrote to Roosevelt that

> Many Iranian officials believe that American troops are in Iran on the invitation and for the purpose of serving as an instrumentality of Britain. For a year or more we have had under negotiation with Iran a treaty wherein Iran would recognize the presence of American troops as an American operation. The ineffective presentation of the treaty has not been helpful to American prestige with the Iranians… since our troops entered Iran on the invitation of the British, without advance notice to the Government of Iran, it was natural for the Iranians to look upon us as a British instrumentality.[14]

Great Britain – not the United States – had invaded Iran and ousted its ruler. Because of that fact, and a number of other reasons besides, Iranian relations with Great Britain were particularly sour. The fact that the United States would be lending its troops to assist Great Britain's efforts in Iran was doing more damage to American prestige there than if the United States were to simply take over the entire shipping operation and claim it as its own. Then, at least, while the presence of American troops in Iran would still cause some friction between the two countries, Iran would at least be less upset than if the United States was blatantly collaborating with the British.

However, encouraging Iran to recognize the presence of the Persian Gulf Service Command as an American – and not British – operation would not fully protect American prestige. Throughout its tenure in Iran, the PGSC came under

[14] FDR. Roosevelt, Franklin D. Papers as President, President's Secretary's File. Box 40, Iran Diplomatic Correspondence.

occasional scrutiny for the poor behavior of its troops, and for the damage its troops was making on US-Iranian relations. In a letter to the Secretary of State, Louis Dreyfus complained that the PGSC was "not an army at all. It is a potpourri of civilians in uniform, hastily assembled to do a special job in Iran. As a unit it is sadly lacking in cohesion, morale, military discipline, training and knowledge of military tradition." He strongly believed that the American position in Iran could be "adversely affected by poor conduct on the part of our forces," and therefore worried that the short-sightedness of the military mission (in focusing purely upon its military goals) could cause serious damage to American prestige in Iran, and to the United State's long-term diplomatic goals in the region.[15]

III. Tensions Between the War and State Departments

Over the course of the war, the United States maintained multiple missions in Iran. These included the Persian Gulf Service Command, a consulting mission to the Iranian Army led by General Clarence Ridley, and a consulting mission to the Iranian Gendarmerie led by Colonel H. Norman Schwarzkopf, all under the War Department. Additionally, the State Department maintained a legation in Tehran, and sent a financial advisory mission to the Iranian government led by Arthur Millspaugh. Commenting on the sudden growth in American involvement in Iran during the war, James Bill notes that "the internal conflict that marked the American missions in Iran had an important impact on policy. Since each mission had slightly different goals, the leaders of each sought to

[15] FRUS, 1943. *The Near East and Africa*, Volume IV: 500.

emphasize their goals over those of other U.S. organizations."[16] For example, the primary goal of Major General Donald Connolly, the head of the Persian Gulf Service Command, was the successful shipment of American Lend-Lease aid to Soviet Russia through the Persian Corridor. Connolly was representative of the entire War Department, whose attitude was that long-term American diplomatic interests took a backseat to the short-term military aims of the war. In a May 1942 memorandum, W.M. Adams, the chief of the Military Attaché Section, ordered that all military attachés "inform this office in detail of any non-military duties performed by Military Attachés… It is requested that this letter be shown to the Chief of Mission, as the War Department objects strongly to the use of Military representatives abroad in any capacity other than a Military one under present conditions."[17] The War Department was clearly concerned that its personnel should focus only upon the Department's military aims, and that the State Department not take advantage of these men to further the development or implementation of any other American policies. Dreyfus – and the State Department – on the other hand, believed that not only were long-term diplomatic policies important even in wartime, but that the War Department should take care to implement policies that would not damage American prestige or frustrate its diplomatic goals. Unfortunately, in Iran these tensions were augmented due to a general lack of coordination and poor communication among the various missions as they pursued their individual goals in the region.

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[16] Bill, 45-46.
[17] NARA. American Embassy, Tehran, Iran 1942. Record Group 84, MLR UD Entry 2737, Box 45. Memorandum for all Military Attachés from W.M. Adams May 17, 1942.

These coordination problems were not unique to Iran – in fact, it is likely that the poor communication among American institutions in Iran was amplified by similar communication problems in Cairo, the headquarters of U.S. Army Forces in the Middle East and the epicenter of the Allies' supply efforts in the region. In February 1942, director of the State Department's Division of Near Eastern Affairs Wallace Murray complained that the American legation in Cairo had begun to work closely with the Middle East Supply Center to deal with supply problems. He claimed that

> this Division [Department of State Division of Near Eastern Affairs] is of course primarily concerned with political matters and we do not consider ourselves competent, nor do we have the time, to assume primary responsibility for all of the work involved in the Near East supply problem, which, though it has important political aspects, nevertheless appears to be predominantly economic in character.[18]

It is seems here that the different American governmental institutions in the Middle East were faced with the proverbial predicament in which the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing. Coordination and communication among different Departments in Cairo had become such a problem that the legation felt it was interceding in an operation which was not directly linked with its own mission.

In Iran, this lack of coordination often translated into antagonism between the different departments. One of the reasons this occurred was because the policy tensions were often aggravated by personal rivalries, particularly among the important personalities leading the various American missions. James Bill,

[18] NARA. Record Group 59, Central Decimal Files; 1940-1944, File #111.23; Department of State Division of Near Eastern Affairs. From Wallace Murray to "Dr Feis", dated February 25, 1942.

applying a universal truism that a country can only demonstrate strength if it presents a united front to its allies and rivals, claims that "the immediate introduction of intense rivalry among Americans in Iran weakened the authority and credibility of US policy."[19] The most clear example of this is the case where the three major military missions to Iran – those led by Connolly, Ridley, and General John Greely (Ridley's predecessor) – encouraged Dreyfus' removal from his post. As James Bill describes it, "both Gen. John Greely and Gen. Clarence Ridley clashed with Minister Dreyfus over the question of authority and responsibility… [Ridley] wanted military issues to take precedence over political considerations and sought to strengthen the place and role of the Iranian military while ignoring the political context."[20] The result of Dreyfus' removal was the general weakening of America's diplomatic clout in Iran – none of his predecessors were nearly as popular or as successful with the Iranians as Dreyfus had been (four more Ambassadors served in Iran over the next six years, and none managed to achieve Dreyfus' level of popularity).

IV. The Connolly-Dreyfus Rivalry

While rivalries among American leaders in Iran seemed to be common across the board, none was as potent or manifested itself as often as the rivalry between Minister Louis Dreyfus and Major General Donald Connolly. Each of these two men took his work and his mission very seriously, and believed that his work had to be considered top-priority. These beliefs were supported

[19] Bill, 23.
[20] Bill, 22.

respectively by the State and War Departments, and often resulted in barely-veiled hostility between the two officials.

There is a series of letters that date back to the summer of 1943, documented in *Foreign Relations of the United States*, that present this dynamic between Connolly and Dreyfus. The thoughts and subtleties expressed in those letters demonstrate not only the extent of the Connolly-Dreyfus rivalry, but also illuminate many subtleties in the greater policy conflicts that the rivalry represented.

In a letter addressed to the United States Secretary of State in late June 1943, Dreyfus criticized the conduct of the American forces of the Persian Gulf Service Command that were stationed there, as well as the ineffective leadership of the PGSC in controlling its rowdy troops. Dreyfus specifically mentioned that he had directed these criticisms to PGSC General Donald Connolly, and expressed the hope that General Connolly would work to address the situation. Enclosed with this letter was another letter by Dreyfus, this time addressed directly to General Connolly. This letter addressed the complaints that the Iranian Foreign Office had been levying against the legation, and painstakingly outlined the state of American-Iranian relations, and the necessity of maintaining the United States' good reputation among Iranian citizens. The letter closed with the wish that the General would "take the matter into [his] own hands."[21]

What exactly was the nature of American soldiers' inappropriate conduct? The answer lies only a few letters earlier, where Dreyfus, in a letter addressed to

[21] FRUS, 1943. *The Near East and Africa*: Volume IV, 499-503.

the Secretary of State, outlined thirteen different incidents, including fatal accidents by American drivers, one hit-and-run incident, a few incidents of molestation of women, property damage, and public drunkenness. This was a particularly contentious problem, given the fact that "throughout the war, the American troops in Iran enjoyed de facto extraterritorial rights and were immune from prosecution under Iranian law."[22] Iranian leaders saw this status as a serious infringement of Iran's sovereignty, and incidents such as these simply added fuel to the fire of Iranian resentment against the United States.

There is much that can be learned from the language of the letter itself. One passage in the letter to the State Department which stands out most strongly is Dreyfus' criticism of the PGSC's "ineffective leadership" which, he claimed, was "concerned almost entirely with the overriding problem of getting supplies to Russia." Dreyfus made mention of an anonymous "high ranking" officer who, shocked at the poor discipline of the PGSC, laid "blame squarely on the shoulders of the general staff."[23] Considering the enclosed letter, which assumes complete ignorance of US-Iranian diplomatic relations on General Connolly's part, as well as Dreyfus' request that "drastic measures be taken" should there be no improvement, it is entirely possible that Dreyfus was hinting that General Connolly was that "ineffective leader." The two men had very different, and occasionally conflicting, objectives: Dreyfus recognized the importance of maintaining long-term, strong diplomatic ties with Iran, while Connolly wanted to ensure the timely and speedy delivery of war materiel to the Soviet Union at

[22] Bill, 47.
[23] FRUS, 1943. *The Near East and Africa*: Volume IV, 500.

all costs. As statesman Dean Acheson would later document, "[Connolly's] low regard for civilians caused him to treat Dreyfus disdainfully. In turn, Connolly's arrogance embittered Dreyfus and led to a feud between the Legation and PGSC that made the State Department's role more difficult."[24] These letters document this very dynamic: with a veiled sense of antagonism towards the general, Dreyfus was appealing to the State Department to serve as mediator and overseer.

A separate, yet equally interesting, dynamic is presented in the enclosed letter from Dreyfus to General Connolly. In the nearly two and-a-half page letter, Dreyfus outlined the importance of American interests in Iran, as he saw it. American interests, he believed, were not only in the strategic geographic location of Iran, but were also "based on a deep-seated and traditional American desire to help less fortunate nations," as well as to use Iran as a testing ground for the Atlantic Charter.[25] Yet, despite the fact that Dreyfus clearly held Iranian welfare in high regard, he also claimed that "Iranian good will is the very keystone of American endeavor in Iran."[26] While the first half of the letter explained the importance of the American mission in helping the Iranians during their time of need, the second half of the letter outlined not why the servicemen's ill conduct has harmed the Iranian people, but how their behavior has begun to jeopardize Iranian good-will towards Americans. The United States had begun the decade with a positive reputation in Iranian society, and it was beginning to

[24] State Department, 891.00/1-2844, memorandum by Dean Acheson. Quoted in Bill, page 22.
[25] FRUS, 1943. *The Near East and Africa:* Volume IV, 501.
[26] Ibid, 502.

look as though that reputation was about to drastically decline. As the head of the legation, Dreyfus could not afford to let that happen.

Dreyfus' well-intentioned claims cannot be taken quite at face value – the American mission in Iran was not quite as altruistic as he claimed. At the time, United States policy recognized the importance of good relations to long-term US interests. In an early 1943 memorandum, Secretary of State Cordell Hull admitted that "it is to our interest that no great power be established on the Persian Gulf opposite the important American petroleum development in Saudi Arabia."[27] The ability to maintain this sort of a monopoly would, of course, be dependent upon strong, positive relations between the United States and oil-rich Middle Eastern nations. Additionally, at this point in the war, American officials were beginning to not only see the benefit of maintaining strong relations with Iran in order to secure new oil concessions for American oil companies, but also the necessity of maintaining a strong and favorable presence in the region in order to curb Soviet influence once the war had reached a conclusion. Whereas Iranian opinion of American soldiers was not particularly crucial to the PGSC mission, Dreyfus saw the American reputation as absolutely crucial to his diplomatic mission.

Dreyfus therefore made use of frank, strong language to impress upon Connolly the importance of controlling his soldiers' behavior. Dreyfus skillfully claimed the political high-ground by claiming that Connolly would cooperate "once the American position is made clear to you" – as though until the receipt of

[27] "Memo randum by John D. Jernegan of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs: American Policy in Iran," Washington, D.C., January 23, 1943. Printed in Bill, p.19.

the letter, the position had not been clear to the General at all. By doing so, Dreyfus twisted the situation: it was as though General Connolly were only privy to *part* of the American objectives in Iran (namely, military-strategic), and Dreyfus was deigning to inform him of another, and potentially greater, objective in the region.

While this series of letters is certainly fascinating in its own right, it is the friction that they highlight that is particularly illuminating. The rivalry between Dreyfus and Connolly was a small part of the larger issue: the tensions that existed among policymakers in Washington as a result of the conflicting demands of the war effort and long-term political considerations. As has just been illustrated, these tensions often caused a great deal of contradiction and discord among the policies themselves. The Persian Gulf Service Command was engaged in the crucial task of supplying aid to Soviet Russia, and yet their presence was jeopardizing American-Iranian relations.

V. Diplomacy in the War Department

Throughout this chapter, I have described how the War Department primarily focused on its goals of winning the war quickly and efficiently at minimal human and financial cost, while making any diplomatic considerations secondary in importance. This may create the impression that the War Department pursued its military aims to the complete exclusion of the United States' diplomatic goals abroad. This assertion, however, would be unfair and inaccurate. Although it was certainly not considered to be of primary importance, the War Department did

recognize the importance of ensuring that the United States was in a strong position to become a global power after the cessation of hostilities, and did pursue certain practices to conform with that goal. This was achieved in a number of ways: First, the broad military strategies of the War Department were overseen and guided by the military's commander-in-chief – the President of the United States (who, of course, also had the long-term diplomatic interests of the United States in mind when shaping military strategy). Additionally, the War Department engaged in some minimal cultural training for many of its soldiers traveling abroad, usually in the form of training pamphlets.

In 1943, the United States War Department issued a pamphlet for soldiers serving in Iraq during WWII that illustrated the attitudes that the military expected its soldiers to have going into the service. It served as a basic guide to the Iraqi climate, the people, Arabic, and Islam. It also provided an important list of "dos and don'ts" for the American solider, such as not to offer alcohol to Muslims, to not remove a Muslim woman's veil, and to not refuse food or drink when it was offered to them. While not specifically about Iran, this guide was representative of the general overarching policy of the military to the Middle East, especially in its emphasis on the importance of getting along with the local population. It was not surprising that the United States needed to drill into its soldiers the importance of conducting themselves with diplomacy while on their tour of duty. This was a mass-conscript army, and many of these men had never left their home states, let alone traveled to countries abroad. The pamphlet

stressed to soldiers the importance of their individual behavior to the larger war effort:

> You will enter Iraq both as a soldier and as an individual, because on our side a man can be both a soldier and an individual. That is our strength – if we are smart enough to use it. It can be our weakness if we aren't. As a soldier your duties are laid out for you. As an individual, it is what you do on your own that counts – and it may count for a lot more than you think. American success or failure in Iraq may well depend on whether the Iraqis… like American soldiers or not… The best way you can do this is by getting along with the Iraqis… And the best way to get along with any people is to understand them.[28]

Here, the War Department is articulating its awareness that popular opinion of the United States abroad would perhaps depend as much upon the individual behavior of American soldiers as on American policies.

However, many of these soldiers were illiterate, and many more had so little experience encountering other cultures that a pamphlet would likely have had little impact on them. Therefore, in addition to these pamphlets, classes were also available for certain troops, including for the Persian Gulf Service Command. These classes and pamphlets were intended to allow soldiers to be pseudo-diplomats in their dealings abroad. In a response to one of Dreyfus' complaints about the inappropriate behavior of PGSC troops in Iran, Connolly wrote, "At present we are holding school for all troops on the subject of behavior, Iranian customs and traditions and proper conduct of the individual toward the Iranian people."[29] It was hoped that with the proper training, American troops would not damage American prestige abroad, and would therefore not create further challenges for American

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[28] Special Services Division, Army Service Forces, United States Army. *A Short Guide to Iraq*. (Washington, D.C.: War and Navy Departments, 1943), 1.

[29] FRUS, 1943. *The Near East and Africa*: Volume IV, 504-505.

diplomats. By giving its soldiers a very basic training in diplomacy, the War Department was doing its part to minimize the negative effects of its military efforts on the United States' long-term diplomatic objectives for the region.

The frictions between the United States' diplomatic and military policies in Iran were not limited to the halls and offices of the Pentagon or the Department of State Building. They had real repercussions in Iran, and affected the relationships between American personnel in different departments, between various American offices throughout the Middle East, and between Americans in Iran and everyday Iranians. A study of these relationships reveal greater policy conflicts on a global scale.

Conclusion

World War II marked a period of immense change in American-Iranian relations. Just as the United States was beginning to emerge from a period of isolationist foreign policy, and as it was beginning to develop long-term economic and political policies towards Iran and the Middle East as a whole, it became embroiled in a global conflagration. The military demands of the war required that the United States impose upon its own foreign policy goals, and use Iran as the staging grounds for a massive transportation campaign in order to aid the Soviet Union in its fight against Germany. During the years 1941-1945, then, while both the State Department and the War Department each touted a policy that was in the interest of the United States, those two policies were often detrimental to one another. By using Iran as a route to ship material to the Soviet Union, the United States had to take over Iranian railroads, ports, and highways, and would have to encroach upon Iranian sovereignty – an act that put friendly American-Iranian relations at risk. On the other hand, whenever the United States gave the maintenance of friendly relations too much priority, and did not focus enough upon its military objectives in Iran, its transportation efforts would falter and the Soviet Union would suffer as a result. As these military and foreign policy agendas were implemented, then, it became clear that it was nearly impossible for both policies to be pursued simultaneously and harmoniously.

It is truly fascinating to see how the United States was only just beginning to develop its foreign policies towards Iran in the midst of a disastrous global conflict.

From the very beginning, the United States faced tremendous odds as it sought to foster friendly relations with Iran – odds like the military necessity of monopolizing Iran's road and railroads, and the threat of competition from Communist Russia. While American dreams of a strong friendship with Iran were finally shattered in the wake of the 1953 CIA-instigated *coup d'état* of Mohammad Mossadeq's government, during World War II, the potential outcome of American efforts were not so clear.

The case of American-Iranian relations during World War II is a lesson in the complexities of foreign policy-making. In any foreign policy situation, a nation's policy makers are often troubled by the need to balance conflicting interests and considerations. In the popular American imagination, foreign policy often boils down into simple, easily-digestible terms: The Monroe Doctrine, the Containment Policy, the Bush Doctrine. However, the way in which nations interact on the global stage is never that straightforward. Multiple thorny, competing issues always play into and complicate the development of any foreign policy or agenda. At the end of the day, what the American public sees is only the façade of what is otherwise a building of incredibly convoluted architecture built on the interactions among economic interests, political agendas, military considerations, and even diplomatic niceties. For example, a study of the United States' interactions with Iran during World War II cannot be complete, as we have seen, without an understanding of the Soviet Union's military situation, Great Britain's imperial interests in India, the United States' isolationist history, the history of British and Russian infiltrations into Iran, the

personal relationships built by American minister Louis Dreyfus with key members of the Iranian Majlis… and the list goes on.

Admittedly, during World War II, few in the American public cared about or were even aware of American efforts in Iran. Members of the Persian Gulf Service Command, fully aware of their anonymity, often ruefully referred to themselves as the FBI – the Forgotten Bastards of Iran.[1] Yet the efforts of a few government officials in Washington and Tehran set the course for events that did eventually capture the attention, fear, and ire of the American public. Events like the fall of Mohammad Mossadeq's government, the 1979 Iran hostage crisis, and the recent disputations with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad regarding Iran's nuclear program have all captured national media attention – and are all, in some form or another, the fruits of the early American diplomatic encounters with Iran during the 1940s. The problems that the war posed for the State Department's efforts to strengthen American-Iranian relations were not simply stumbling blocks – they bred resentments, hostilities, and lost opportunities. These problems became deeply embedded in the United States' relationship with Iran, and continue to haunt American-Iranian relations to this day.

It is difficult to exorcize the ghosts of the past – previous diplomatic interactions are, after all, embedded into the architecture of contemporary international relations. Nations cannot ignore their past policies and actions. The trick is how to overcome the past, and how to rise above it. The tenth-century poet Abul Ala al Ma'arri once wrote that "history is a poem in which the words change,

[1] Bernard Herbert Ragsdale. 1942-1945. *A Railroader Goes to War: The Personal WWII Diary of PFC Herbert Bernard Ragsdale.* http://www.ww2diary.com/1942.html. (accessed 7 April 2009).

but the rhythm recurs." History has shown, however, that relationships between nations can change – that rifts can grow between fast friends, and that friends can be made of mortal enemies. The question is whether the United States and Iran *will* overcome their past, and can change the rhythm of their relationship. We can certainly hope that with good intentions and prudent diplomatic decision-making, the United States and Iran will eventually come to terms with their shared past.

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