

Document 1: National Security Council Assessment of the Situation in Iran

Instructions: The National Security Council advises the U.S. President about foreign policy. Below is an excerpt prepared in the final days of the Truman Administration. Read the document, highlight or underline important sections, and answer the questions that follow. You should prepare to summarize your findings to your class.

Date: November 20, 1952

TOP SECRET

SECURITY INFORMATION

STATEMENT OF POLICY

Proposed by the

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

on

THE PRESENT SITUATION IN IRAN

1. It is of critical importance to the United States that Iran remain an independent and sovereign nation, not dominated by the USSR. Because of its key strategic position, its petroleum resources, its vulnerability to intervention or armed attack by the USSR, and its vulnerability to political subversion, Iran must be regarded as a continuing objective of Soviet expansion. The loss of Iran by default or by Soviet intervention would:

- a. Be a major threat to the security of the entire Middle East, including Pakistan and India.
- b. Permit communist denial to the free world of access to Iranian oil and seriously threaten the loss of other Middle Eastern oil.
- c. Increase the Soviet Union's capability to threaten important United States-United Kingdom lines of communication.
- d. Damage United States prestige in nearby countries and with the exception of Turkey and possibly Pakistan, seriously weaken, if not destroy, their will to resist Communist pressures.
- e. Set off a series of military, political and economic developments, the consequences of which would seriously endanger the security interests of the United States.

2. Present trends in Iran are unfavorable to the maintenance of control by a non-communist regime for an extended period of time. In wresting the political initiative from the shah, the landlords, and other traditional holders of power, the National Front politicians now in power have at least temporarily eliminated every alternative to their own rule except the Communist Tudeh Party. However, the ability of the National Front to maintain control of the situation indefinitely is uncertain. The political upheaval which brought the nationalists to power has heightened popular desire for promised economic and social betterment and has increased social unrest. At the same time, nationalist failure to restore the oil industry to operation has led to near-exhaustion of the government's financial reserves and to deficit financing to meet current expenses, and is likely to produce a progressive deterioration of the economy at large.

3. ...It is clear that the United Kingdom no longer possesses the capability unilaterally to assure stability in the area. If present trends continue unchecked, Iran could be effectively lost to the free world in advance of an actual Communist takeover of the Iranian government. Failure to arrest present trends in Iran involves a serious risk to the national security of the United States.

4. For the reasons outlined above, the major United States policy objective with respect to Iran is to prevent the country from coming under communist control. The United States should, therefore, be prepared to pursue the policies which would be most effective in accomplishing this objective. In the light of the present situation the United States should adopt and pursue the following policies:

- a. Continue to assist in every practicable way to effect an early and equitable liquidation of the oil controversy.
- b. Be prepared to take the necessary measure to help Iran to start up her oil industry and to secure markets for her oil so that Iran may benefit from substantial oil revenues.
- c. Be prepared to provide prompt United States budgetary aid to Iran if, ending restoration of her oil industry and oil markets, such aid is necessary to halt a serious deterioration of the financial and political situation in Iran....
- d. Recognize the strength of Iranian nationalist feeling; try to direct it into constructive channels and be ready to exploit an opportunity to do so, bearing in mind the desirability of strengthening in Iran the ability to resist communist pressure.
- e. Continue present programs of military, economic and technical assistance to the extent they will help to restore stability and increase internal security, and be prepared to increase such assistance to support Iranian resistance to communist pressure.
- f. Encourage the adoption by the Iranian government of necessary financial, judicial and administrative and other reforms.
- g. Continue special political measures designed to assist in achieving the above purposes.
- h. Plan now for the eventual inclusion of Iran in any regional defense arrangement which may be developed in the Middle East if such inclusion should later prove feasible....

Questions:

1. When was the document written? Who was president of the United States at this time?

2. What is the primary concern of the United States regarding Iran?

3. What does the document conclude about the United Kingdom?

4. What steps are proposed to meet the U.S. goals in Iran?

Document 2: CIA Plan to Overthrow Mossadegh

Instructions: The text below is an excerpt from the CIA plan (known as TPAJAX) to overthrow Mohammed Mossadegh. (Note: SIS stands for Britain's Secret Intelligence Service.) Read the document, highlight or underline important sections, and answer the questions that follow. You should prepare to summarize your findings to your class. The document was still classified when it was published in *The New York Times* in 2000.

Initial Operational Plan for TPAJAX as Cabled from Nicosia to Headquarters on 1 June 1953 Summary of Preliminary Plan prepared by SIS and CIA Representatives in Cyprus

I. Preliminary Action

A. Interim Financing of Opposition

1. CIA will supply \$35,000 to Zahedi.
2. SIS will supply \$25,000 to Zahedi.
3. SIS indigenous channels Iran will be used to supply above funds to Zahedi.
4. CIA will attempt subsidize key military leaders if this is necessary.

B. Acquisition shah cooperation

1. Stage 1: Convince the shah that UK and US have joint aim and remove pathological fear of British intrigues against him.
 - a. Ambassador Henderson call on the shah to assure him of US-UK common aid and British supporting him not Mossadegh.
 - b. Henderson to say to the shah that special US representative will soon be introduced to him for presentation joint US-UK plan.
2. Stage 2: Special US representative will visit the shah and present following:
 - a. Presentation to the shah
 - (1) Both governments consider oil question secondary.
 - (2) Major issue is to maintain independence Iran and keep from the Soviet orbit. To do this Mossadegh must be removed.
 - (3) Present dynasty best bulwark national sovereignty.
 - (4) While Mossadegh in power no aid for Iran from United States.
 - (5) Mossadegh must go.
 - (6) US-UK financial aid will be forthcoming to successor government.
 - (7) Acceptable oil settlement will be offered but successor government will not be rushed into it.
 - b. Demands on the shah
 - (1) You must take leadership in overthrow Mossadegh.
 - (2) If not, you bear responsibility for collapse of country.
 - (3) If not, shah's dynasty will fall and US-UK backing of you will cease.
 - (4) Who do you want to head successor government? (Try and maneuver shah into naming Zahedi.)
 - (5) Warning not to discuss approach.

(6) Plan of operation with Zahedi will be discussed with you.

II. Arrangement with Zahedi

A. After agreement with shah per above, inform Zahedi he chosen to head successor government with US-UK support.

B. Agree on specific plan for action and timetable for action. There are two ways to put Zahedi in office.

1. Quasi-legally, whereby the shah names Zahedi Prime Minister by royal firman [decree].
2. Military coup.

Quasi-legal method to be tried first. If successful at least part of machinery for military coup will be brought into action. If it fails, military coup will follow in matter of hours.

III. Relations with Majlis

Important for quasi-legal effort. To prepare for such effort deputies must be purchased.

A. Basic aim is to secure 41 votes against Mossadegh and assure quorum for quasi-legal move by being able to depend on 53 deputies in Majlis. (SIS consider 20 deputies now not controlled, must be purchased.)

B. Approach to deputies to be done by SIS indigenous agent group. CIA will backstop where necessary by pressures on Majlis deputies and will provide part of the funds.

IV. Relations with Religious Leaders

Religious leaders should:

A. Spread word of their disapproval of Mossadegh.

B. As required, stage political demonstrations under religious cover.

C. Reinforce backbone of the shah.

D. Make strong assurances over radio and in mosques after coup that new government faithful Moslem principles.

Possibly as quid pro quo prominent cleric Borujerdi would be offered ministry without portfolio or consider implementing neglected article constitution providing body five mullas (religious leaders) to pass on orthodoxy of legislation.

E. [Redacted] should be encouraged to threaten direct action against pro-Mossadegh deputies.

V. Relations with Bazaar

Bazaar contacts to be used to spread anti-government rumors and possibly close bazaar as anti-government expression.

VI. Tudeh

Zahedi must expect violent reaction from Tudeh and be prepared to meet with superior violence.

A. Arrest at least 100 Party and Front Group leaders.

B. Seal off South Tehran to prevent influx Tudeh demonstrations.

C. Via black leaflets direct Tudeh members not to take any action.

VII. Press and Propaganda Program

A. Prior coup intensify anti-Mossadegh propaganda.

B. Zahedi should quickly appoint effective chief of government press and propaganda who will:

1. Brief all foreign correspondents.
2. Release advance prepared US and UK official statements.
3. Make maximum use Radio Tehran.

VIII. Relations with Tribes

- A. Coup will provoke no action from Bahktiari, Lurs, Kurds, Baluchi, Zolfaghair, Mamassani, Boer Amadi, and Khamseh tribal groups.
- B. Major problem is neutralization of Qashqa'i tribal leaders.

IX. Mechanics of Quasi-Legal Overthrow

A. At this moment the view with most favor is the so-called [redacted] whereby mass demonstrators seek religious refuge in Majlis grounds. Elements available to religious leaders would be joined by those supplied by bazaar merchants, up to 4,000 supplied by SIS controlled group and additional elements supplied through CIA.

B. Would be widely publicized that this refuge movement on basis two grounds popular dissatisfaction with Mossadegh government as follows:

1. Ground one that Mossadegh government basically anti-religious as most clearly demonstrated ties between Mossadegh and Tudeh; and Mossadegh and USSR. Just prior to movement CIA would give widest publicity to all fabricated documents proving secret agreement between Mossadegh and Tudeh.
2. Ground two that Mossadegh is leading the country into complete economic collapse through his unsympathetic dictatorship.

Just prior to movement CIA would give widest publicity to the evidence of illegally issued paper money. CIA might have capability to print masses excellent imitation currency which would be over-printed by this message.

C. Religious refuge to take place at the dawn of the coup day. Immediately followed by effort have Majlis pass a motion to censure the government. This is to be followed by the dismissal of Mossadegh and the appointment of Zahedi as successor, If successful, the coup would be completed by early afternoon. Falling success, the coup would be mounted later that evening.

Questions:

1. When was the document written? Who was president of the United States at this time?
2. What is the United States proposing to do in Iran?
3. What specific steps does the United States propose taking? List at least five.

Document 3: CIA Report of Intercept of Radio Tehran Broadcast of August 19, 1953

Instructions: The text below is a declassified excerpt from a 1998 CIA history of the 1953 coup. Read the document, highlight or underline important sections, and answer the questions that follow.

CIA Report

“The broadcast in the afternoon of 19 August was confused and chaotic, but there was no doubt that pro-Shah forces had captured and were controlling Radio Tehran.

“The first indication came when the announcer said, ‘The people of Tehran have risen today and occupied all the government offices, and I am able to talk to you all through the help of the armed forces. The government of Mossadegh is a government of rebellion and has fallen.’

“Seven minutes later, amid much confusion and shouting on the air, a Col. Ali Pahlavon said, ‘Oh people of the cities, be wide awake. The government of Mossadegh has been defeated. My dear compatriots, listen! I am one of the soldiers and one of the devotees of this country. Oh officers, a number of traitors...wants to sell out the country to the foreigners.

“‘My dear compatriots, today the Iranian royalists have defeated the demagogue government.... The Iranian nation, officers, army, and the police have taken the situation in their hands.

“‘Premier Zahedi will assume his post. There is no place for anxiety. Keep tranquil.’

“The broadcast stopped. After seven minutes it continued with a woman shouting, ‘Oh people of Iran, let the Iranian nation prove that the foreigners cannot capture this country! Iranians love the King. Oh tribes of Iran, Mossadegh is ruling over your country without your knowledge, sending your country to the government of the hammer and sickle.’

“A major from the Iranian army said that he was an infantry officer ‘...retired by Mossadegh, the traitor. We proved to the world that the Iranian army is the protector of this country and is under the command of the Shah.’ Much confusion followed, after which Radio Tehran played the national anthem and then went off the air.”

Questions:

1. How many different voices are described as speaking on Radio Tehran?
2. Do any of the speakers make similar points? Explain.
3. Why do you think it was important that pro-shah forces had captured and were controlling Radio Tehran?

Document 4: *New York Times* Article on the Return of the Shah to Iran

Instructions: The text below is a U.S. newspaper account of the 1953 coup. Read the document, highlight or underline important sections, and answer the questions that follow.

Shah Is Flying Home

ROME, Aug. 19—The Shah of Iran, on confirmation of the news that Royalists in his country had overthrown Premier Mohammed Mossadegh, decided to fly back to Teheran tomorrow. His aides immediately called a British airline to charter a plane to take him back to his home, whence he fled on Sunday.

Queen Soraya probably will not accompany him but will remain in Rome, at least for some days.

News of the uprising reached the Shah while he was lunching in his hotel with Queen Soraya and two aides. He went pale and his hands shook so violently that he hardly was able to read when newspaper men showed him the first reports, “Can it be true?” he asked.

The Queen was far more calm. “How exciting,” she exclaimed, placing her hand on the Shah’s arm to steady him.

Earlier in the day the Shah had said he had left his country only because he wished to avoid bloodshed. “Of course, I hope to go back,” he said, in answer to a question. “Everyone lives on hope.”

Now that his enemies had been overthrown, his chief concern was to show the legality of the events that had taken place in Teheran.

“This is not an insurrection,” he said. “Now we have a legal Government. General (Fazollah) Zahedi is Premier. I appointed him.”

“I am very glad that all this has happened in my absence,” he continued. “It shows how the people stand. Ninety-nine per cent of the population is for me. I knew it all the time. Everyone who is not a Communist is favorable to my stand.”

Holds Court in Lounge

All thought of food had been abandoned by this time. The Shah, his Queen and his two aides left the table and moved to the hotel lounge. There, surrounded by newspaper men and tourists, he sat in an armchair waiting for more news. He repeated more than once: “This is not an insurrection. This is my Government coming into power. It is the legal Government.”

Alluding to the dispute with Britain over nationalization of properties owned by the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, the Shah said: “Our differences with the British remain. But any nation willing to recognize our supreme interests and our sovereignty, and willing also to have decent relations with us based on mutual respect, would have no difficulty in getting on with our people.

“My main hope is that we will always be able to defend our independence and sovereignty. It is a cause of grief to me that I did not play an important part in my people’s and my army’s struggle for freedom and, on the contrary, was away and safe. But if I left my country, it was solely because of my anxiety to avoid bloodshed. I hope the new Government will be able to serve my nation and to raise their standard of living to a level more nearly approximating that of advanced modern nations.”

About this time, the Shah began to become greatly worried by reports that the Teheran radio station had stopped broadcasting. He evidently feared that Dr. Mossadegh’s partisans had somehow succeeded in gaining the upper hand. He excused himself hastily and hurried to his fourth-floor apartment, saying, “I’d like to hear all this from B. B. C. (British Broadcast Corporation). Then I’ll feel more confident about it.”

In the evening, while floods of congratulatory telegrams from friends and well-wishers began to stream into his hotel, the Shah and Queen Soraya left to have dinner at a restaurant.

Questions:

1. What is the most important idea of the article?

2. The shah is quoted seven times in the article. What point is most often made in the quotations?

3. The article mentions the oil dispute with Britain. What does the shah say about the dispute?

Document 5: *New York Times* Article on the Fallout of the Coup

Instructions: The text below is a U.S. newspaper's contemporary analysis of the 1953 coup. Read the document, highlight or underline important sections, and answer the questions that follow.

The New York Times, August 23, 1953 What Next?

Because of Iran's role in international politics, the change in regime last week is likely to have far-reaching repercussions. Immediately, of course, it is still a question how long the Zahedi regime can hold power. But with the army behind him and Dr. Mossadegh in custody, General Zahedi seems to be in a strong position.

Whether his Government will move toward an early oil settlement with Britain is uncertain. Thursday in a broadcast to Iran's foreign diplomatic missions, the new Premier said the Mossadegh regime had offended friendly foreign nations, and promised to "compensate for the past." Even before that, Anglo-Iranian stocks rose sharply on the London market. But General Zahedi and many of his supporters supported Dr. Mossadegh's oil nationalization. Thus the prospect is that negotiations, if any, will be difficult.

Nevertheless in the general cold war picture, the turn of events in Iran shapes up as a setback for Russia and an opportunity for the West. That state of affairs was mirrored last

week in the varying reactions of the Communist and free worlds.

The Russians were plainly chagrined. For weeks the Soviet press has been giving major attention to "good-neighborliness" between Russia and Iran. Dr. Mossadegh has been painted as a model statesman. His downfall brought immediate charges of subversive activities by U.S. agents on behalf of the Shah. A front-page article in *Pravda* [a leading Soviet newspaper] said: "The weapon of subversive activity was directed against Iran which did not wish to become the submissive slave of the American monopolies."

Western officials withheld public comment—and action—pending a clarification of the sudden developments. But privately they were elated. The change, they pointed out, brought to power in Iran an openly anti-Communist Government free of obligations to Tudeh. They said the new regime, beginning with a clean diplomatic slate, could turn again to the West and reverse Dr. Mossadegh's drift into the Russian embrace. Their general feeling was that the change provided the West with a new chance to build friendship with Iran.

Questions:

1. Does this article offer specific conclusions about the results of the coup? Explain.
2. Does the article have a point of view? What evidence is there to support your answer?
3. Why do you think the article quotes from the Soviet newspaper *Pravda*?

Document 6: *New York Times* Article on the Trial of Mohammed Mossadegh

Instructions: The text below is a U.S. newspaper’s contemporary account of the 1953 trial of Mohammed Mossadegh. Read the document, highlight or underline important sections, and answer the questions that follow.

December 22, 1953—In a verdict that required more than an hour to read, the court found Dr. Mossadegh guilty of having ordered the arrest of Brig. Gen. Nematollah Nasiri, commander of the Shah’s Imperial Guard, when he sought to deliver the Shah’s dismissal order last August. It also declared that the former Premier had illegally imprisoned several government officials following General Nasiri’s arrest and had disarmed the Imperial Guard.

Dr. Mossadegh, who also was primarily responsible for nationalization of Iran’s oil industry was found guilty of having ordered telegrams sent to Iranian diplomatic missions abroad instructing them to have nothing to do with the Shah and Queen Soraya, who had fled the country when the dismissal order backfired.

The bill of indictment against the former Premier was sustained by the court. It convicted him of illegally dissolving a rump Majlis after organizing a rigged referendum to obtain popular support in his contest with that lower chamber of Parliament. Dr. Mossadegh also was found guilty of having issued orders to raze statues of the present Shah and the late Riza Shah, as well as having begun preparations to form a regency council to assume the Shah’s functions.

Shah in Plea to Court

When the judges returned to the courtroom at 9:25 o’clock this evening Maj. Gen. Nasrollah Moghbeli, the court president, read a letter addressed to the court by the Shah in which the monarch praised “the services rendered by Dr. Mossadegh during his first year as Premier in connection with nationalization of the oil industry which is desired by the whole nation and is confirmed and supported by the monarchy itself.” The Shah said he bore the former Premier no personal animus for deroga-

tory actions and remarks Dr. Mossadegh had directed against him.

It was widely believed the court had refused to accede to the prosecutor’s demand that Dr. Mossadegh be sentenced to death or at least imprisoned for life as a result of the Shah’s intervention. Since the former Premier is more than 60 years of age, it was not thought likely the death penalty would be carried out. However, most persons had expected the defendant would be exiled or imprisoned for life.

When Dr. Mossadegh heard the sentence, he lifted his head and said in a calm voice heavy with sarcasm: “The verdict of this court has increased my historical glories. I am extremely grateful you convicted me. Truly tonight the Iranian nation understood the meaning of constitutionalism.”

Throughout the reading of the judge’s decision the defendant had assumed his habitual slumped posture, leaning heavily on a small school desk used as the defendant’s bar. He wore a shapeless gray overcoat and his face had the quizzical expression that have become Mossadegh trademarks.

Questions:

1. Of what crimes was Mossadegh found guilty?
2. How is the shah portrayed in this article?
3. How is Mossadegh portrayed?