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## ИСТОРИЯ МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫХ ОТНОШЕНИЙ

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### US Leverage Tools in Iran in 1950s — 1960s

**Gohar M. Iskandaryan**  

Institute of Oriental Studies, National Academy of Sciences, Yerevan, the Republic of Armenia

 [iskandaryan@sci.am](mailto:iskandaryan@sci.am)

**Abstract.** The study presents an analysis of American influence in Iran after the World War II. The author describes how American foreign policy concepts worked in Iran, and opened a window into the country for American oil industries. The importance and relevance of the article lie in the fact that the players have not changed significantly, nor have the rules of the game and the actions they evoke changed much. Although the foreign policy toolkit of the US has been modernized, very often old methods are still practiced in the region, thus the study and analysis of those are very valuable today. The author tries to identify the problems of Iran in the second half of the 20th century, to study them in parallel with American foreign policy concepts, to present and analyze how American concepts paved the way for the expansionist policy of the United States. The key finding of the research shows that every American foreign policy concept was basically implemented only in case of the continuity of the power of the same party. Thus, Republican D. Eisenhower promoted the concept of supporting American oil tycoons. After him, Democrat J.F. Kennedy did not continue this approach in full, but only retained some elements. J.F. Kennedy believed that if the Iranian government was headed by a skilled prime minister, an adherent of Western values, who could properly manage the Iranian economy, then Iran would become a regional ally for the United States rather than a dependent country. After J.F. Kennedy, L. Johnson continued the foreign policy approach regarding Iran by promoting the country's reformation through the White revolution. However, as history proved, the White Revolution failed to solve all the socioeconomic problems of Iran in the short term. Instead, the monarchy faced new and already fatal problems. The sources for this paper were the archives of the US presidents, the archives of the US State Department, the memoirs of a number of politicians, the correspondence between the US presidents and the Shah, as well as the Iranian press of that time. The author has applied the historical-comparative method, using the principles of content analysis.

**Key words:** Iran, US, Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, Harry Truman, Dwight Eisenhower, John Kennedy, Middle East, oil industry

**Conflicts of interest.** The author declared no conflicts of interest.

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## Инструментарий влияния США в Иране в 1950—1960-е гг.

Г.М. Искандарян  

Институт востоковедения Национальной Академии наук, Ереван, Республика Армения

iskandaryan@sci.am

**Аннотация.** Исследование посвящено анализу американского влияния в Иране после Второй мировой войны. Автор характеризует особенности реализации американских концепций в Иране, рассматривая то, как США содействовали проникновению в эту страну своих нефтяных корпораций, что не было возможно на более ранних этапах. Актуальность статьи обусловлена тем, что до настоящего времени акторы существенно не изменились, как и правила игры и мотивируемые ими действия. Несмотря на то, что инструментарий США был модернизирован, очень часто в регионе используются старые методы, изучение и анализ которых сегодня очень важны. Преследуемая автором цель заключается в оценке шагов, предпринятых Соединенными Штатами для усиления своего влияния в Иране после Второй мировой войны. Автор выявляет проблемы Ирана во второй половине XX в., изучая их параллельно с американскими концепциями, а также анализирует, как внешнеполитические концепции открывали путь для экспансионистской политики США. Каждая следующая администрация, приходя к власти, стремилась разработать собственную внешнеполитическую стратегию, которая отличалась бы от курса предыдущей администрации, особенно если она представляла позицию противоположной партии. Так, республиканец Д. Эйзенхауэр продвигал концепцию поддержки американских нефтяных консорциумов, открыв им дверь на Ближний Восток. После него демократ Дж. Кеннеди не стремился продолжать политику предшественника, хотя сохранил некоторые ее элементы. Дж. Кеннеди полагал, что если бы иранское правительство возглавил умелый премьер-министр, близкий к западной системе ценностей и способный правильно управлять экономикой Ирана, то для США в регионе Иран стал бы партнером, а не подопечным государством. После Дж. Кеннеди Л. Джонсон фактически продолжил политику в отношении Ирана, заключающуюся в содействии реформированию страны посредством «Белой революции». Однако, как показала история, «Белая революция» не решила в краткосрочной перспективе всех социально-экономических проблем Ирана, а перед монархией встали новые проблемы, ставшие впоследствии роковыми. Источниками работы послужили архивы президентов США, архив Госдепартамента США, мемуары ряда политиков, переписка президентов США и шаха Ирана, а также иранская пресса того времени. Методологической основой исследования послужил историко-сравнительный метод с использованием элементов контент-анализа.

**Ключевые слова:** Иран, США, Мохаммед Реза Пехлеви, Гарри Трумэн, Дуайт Эйзенхауэр, Джон Кеннеди, Ближний Восток, нефтяная промышленность

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### Introduction

The United States conducts its foreign policy on the basis of concepts that reflect aspirations, endeavors, and goals both on the American continent and beyond. Each concept in the history of the United States was based on opportunities and interests at a given timeframe. After implementing one concept, they gradually

moved on to developing and implementing the next. In doing so, new problems arose, the overcoming of which contributed to the development of the state.

The first foreign policy concept was the Monroe Doctrine. The doctrine warned European countries to stop pursuing their interests in the Americas, since the Western

Hemisphere was now Washington's zone of influence. Thus, in December 1823, the United States laid claim to being a powerful regional power. In fact, this concept was the benchmark for the country until the beginning of the 20th century.

In 1941, President F.D. Roosevelt outlined his foreign policy approaches and proposed four basic human freedoms: freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear,<sup>1</sup> and these ideas quickly gained traction in the world. On January 6, 1941, he presented the vision to the Congress, claiming that the American ideals of individual liberties should be extended throughout the world. This ideology was very influential during World War II because it included a universal value system. In conjunction with the "economic leap," this allowed the United States to expand beyond the American continent and become a global player.

During WWII, the United States supported the USSR through the Lend Lease program. Thereby, for the first time the US left its bounds, and carried out actions on the Eurasian continent. Although Lend Lease was granted to the countries of the anti-fascist union without preconditions, and thus they did not try to influence the economies of the countries receiving assistance. It is also noteworthy that the Lend Lease assistance program for the USSR was implemented, inter alia through the territory of Iran.

Strikingly, during and after WWII, US influence in the Middle East increased to such an extent that Britain voiced concerns regarding that. London had already realized losing influence in Saudi Arabia, but was also deeply worried about the situation with Iran and Iraq. In this regard Winston Churchill's letter addressed on March 4, 1944, to F.D. Roosevelt is remarkable: "Thank you very much for your assurances about no sheep's eyes at our oilfields

<sup>1</sup> FDR and the Four Freedoms Speech // FDR Library. URL: <https://www.fdrlibrary.org/four-freedoms/> (accessed: 09.01.2022).

in Iran and Iraq. Let me reciprocate by giving you fullest assurance that we have no thought of trying to horn in upon your interests or property in Saudi Arabia."<sup>2</sup>

In his speech before Congress on April 16, 1945, US President H. Truman summarizes his vision of foreign policy. According to him, after WWII, the United States became a world power and would assume the leading responsibility for ensuring peace and protection of American ideals.<sup>3</sup> This set a new vector, and up to now American politicians are still trying to pursue this course.

After the end of the war, in parallel with the Marshall Plan, the newly elected US President H. Truman introduced a doctrine that pledged American financial support to Greece, Turkey, and, to a lesser extent, Iran. Gradually, the tools developed and applied many years ago in Latin America began to be used in the Near and Middle East as well: conspiracies, coup d'état, the establishment of a regime preferred by the United States. Clear evidence of this was the overthrow of the government of Mohammad Mosaddegh by a coup d'état carried out with the direct participation of the United States. This led to a significant strengthening of the Shah's power. According to the author, the military coup d'état of August 19, 1953 in Iran had a huge negative impact on relations with the United States. At a later stage, US efforts brought the government of Ali Amini to power in Iran in 1961. His mission was to carry out a large-scale and Washington-approved program called the "White Revolution." This program was to prove adherence to Western values, protect American interests, and try to reduce the influence of the Soviet Union in the region.

<sup>2</sup> The British Prime Minister (Churchill) to President Roosevelt. London, March 4, 1944 // Office of the Historian. URL: [history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1944v03/d53/](https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1944v03/d53/) (accessed: 09.01.2022).

<sup>3</sup> April 16, 1945: First Speech to Congress // Miller Center. URL: <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/april-16-1945-first-speech-congress/> (accessed: 09.01.2022).

In the 1950s, the United States often used foreign aid diplomacy, which produced real results in the short term. In June 1950, the Congress passed a bill to “aid” the underdeveloped countries. According to the resolution of the Congress, Washington DC distributed 337 million USD in the years 1950/51—1952/53. The U.S. decided to aid Iran, Afghanistan, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia under the “4th article of the Truman Doctrine,” whereas Turkey received American assistance according to the “Marshall Plan” (Samylovsky, 1955, p. 66). This was practically the first use of American soft power. Thus, the United States tried to leave its territory and become a regional actor in Eurasia, showing opposition to the USSR’s Middle East policy and trying to keep it at a distance from the resource centers of the Middle East.

It is indicative that in the post-war period Washington mainly provided aid not to WWII ally countries, but to those states that needed to be strengthened to prevent possible advances by the Soviet Union. Aid provided to Iran was many times less in comparison with Turkey and Greece (Goode, 1989, p. 33).

#### **D. Eisenhower: Alliances against Communism and Economic “Aid”**

In 1953, the newly elected US President D. Eisenhower (1953—1961) tried to implement a proactive policy in the Middle East. During his presidency, the American establishment clearly understood that it could no longer maintain its influence through aid and appropriations alone. Britain’s gradually weakening position in Iran was bound to be filled by other powers. At the same time, the Tudeh communist party in Iran had a decent number of followers. The United States decided to intensify its actions in Iran. After the coup, the party leadership had been smashed; some had been arrested, others were on the run (Zibakalam, 1996—97, p. 831).

Having made a sharp turn and abandoned the policy of the previous administration,

D. Eisenhower decided to promote the interests of the American oil owners and took part in the anti-constitutional British intervention to overthrow the Prime Minister of Iran.

Such a shift of the US policy course can be explained by the following factors. During the 1952 presidential race, the Eisenhower’s team spent 100 million USD, and, according to an announcement by a former radio host Frank Edwards, half of this amount was donated by the oil owners (O’Connor, 1958, p. 280). The United States strengthened the position of the Shah of Iran by removing the country’s Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh who was the real opposing power. Afterwards, the United States drew Iran into the anti-Soviet bloc, known as the Baghdad Pact.

The pact program had been developed since February 1953. President Eisenhower argued that the region needed a “system of alliances” sponsored by the United States, against “enemies who plot to destroy us” (Saikal, 1991, p. 444). It turned out that Mosaddegh would have been a major impediment in both cases: both when acquiring Iranian oil, and when creating such a pact. The American administration considered it wrong to deploy its troops in the areas bordering the USSR. Instead, they believed that the Soviet Union should be surrounded by a chain of US allies. However, even in the foreign policy report of the National Security Council, published on October 30, 1953, the authors cast doubts on the possibility of including Iran<sup>4</sup> in the pact, whereas Turkey and Pakistan were considered the main players in the alliance. In return for being included in the pact, the Shah of Iran expected to receive not only large-scale aid, but also guarantees for maintaining his power. The United States increased its share of aid to Iran in accordance with Article 4 of the Truman Doctrine. Iran

<sup>4</sup> A Report to the National Security Council by Executive Secretary on Basic National Security Policy // Intelligence Resource Program. October 30, 1953. URL: <https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsc-hst/nsc-162-2.pdf> (accessed: 09.01.2022).

eliminated its budget deficit through economic or non-refundable aid (Mamedova, 1997, p. 22).

In general, after World War II, the supply of American weapons has been one of the major influence tools in the US strategy toolkit. This results in a policy of long-term influence, since weapons supply also implies the constant presence of military advisers, the supply of spare parts for weapons, renewal, and rearmament. It is undeniable that in the 1950s and 1960s, American military advisers were endowed with great power in Iran. For example, in 1943 the United States established the Military Mission at the Iranian Gendarmerie (GENMISH), followed by a bilateral agreement with Iran on the Headquarters of the American Army (ARMISH) in 1947 (Ricks, 1979, p. 169). Additionally, the CIA and Mossad helped to establish the Organization of National Security and Information (SAVAK) in 1957. This organization tracked down and suppressed opposition to the Shah, including members of the Tudeh party and nationalists (Taheri, 1988, p. 44).

In his address to Congress on January 5, 1957 (later called the Eisenhower Doctrine), President D. Eisenhower called for proactive foreign policy in the Middle East. He also requested authorization to use U.S. troops “to secure and protect the territorial integrity and political independence of such nations.”<sup>5</sup> Eisenhower mentioned the need to counter “increased danger from International Communism” in the Middle East. Specifically, he asked for authorization to begin new programs of economic and military cooperation with friendly nations in the region to invest vast financial resources, support with military and financial advice, supply with American arms and ammunition, and even sometimes resolve deep financial crises in these countries, involving the latter in anti-Soviet military blocs. He also made the US position clear: “An

attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.”<sup>6</sup>

This had been already evidenced by the operation AJAX in 1953, when the United States actually intervened in the internal affairs of Iran and overthrew its prime minister by military coup (Roosevelt, 1979, p. 18; Lenczowski, 1990, p. 38). Later, the U.S. dragged Iran into the Baghdad Pact, although Iran tried to remain neutral and not interfere in the games of the big powers.

The American public expressed concerns on their taxes being spent on support of the military bloc in the Middle East. To relieve this tension, President D. Eisenhower in his May 1957 message to the American people noted that the danger from communism in Iran was real, and it was represented by Mohammad Mosaddegh. He continued: “Under the courageous leadership of Shah, the people of Iran met that danger. In their effort to restore economic stability, they received indispensable help from us. Iran remains free. And its freedom continues to prove of vital importance to our own freedom.”<sup>7</sup>

However, the financial costs of the Iranian authorities, as well as the Shah’s court, increased to such an extent that bothered not only the people, but also the U.S. administration. Each time, closing the economic gap in Iran became a problem for the American authorities. It was only possible with the

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<sup>6</sup> The State of the Union Address Delivered before a Joint Session of the Congress // The American Presidency Project. January 23, 1980. URL: <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/the-state-the-union-address-delivered-before-joint-session-the-congress/> (accessed: 09.01.2022).

<sup>7</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower: 1957: Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President, January 1 to December 31, 1957 // The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States. URL: <http://name.umdl.umich.edu/4728417.1957.001> (accessed: 09.01.2022). See also: (Pahlavi M. R., 1980, pp. 91—92).

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<sup>5</sup> Eisenhower Doctrine // History. URL: <https://www.history.com/topics/cold-war/eisenhower-doctrine/> (accessed: 09.01.2022).

permission of the US Congress, and this was not always an easy quest.

Eisenhower's 1959 speech to the Iranian Majlis is also noteworthy. The US President transparently emphasized the Soviet threat and drew the attention of the people of Iran to the importance of the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) and, more generally, of American power. "In the meantime, we cannot abandon our mutual effort to build barriers, such as the peaceful barrier of our Central Treaty Organization, against the persistent dangers of aggression and subversion. This organization, CENTO, has no ulterior or concealed purpose; it exists only to provide security. Such efforts erect a shield of freedom for our honor and our lives. With such a shield we preserve the cherished values of our societies. To be sure, the people of Iran need no reminder of these simple facts. Only yesterday you celebrated the anniversary of the day on which justice triumphed over force in Azerbaijan (the northern province of Iran. — *Author's note*). The full weight of world public opinion, as represented in the United Nations, supported you in those difficult times. It will always support the rights of any people threatened by external aggression."<sup>8</sup>

Aiming to strengthen its geopolitical positions, the U.S. not only conveyed the Middle Eastern countries into a military bloc, but later, in 1959, signed bilateral military treaties, thus making Iran, Turkey and Pakistan completely dependent on the United States. However, it is important to state that these countries had a choice, but they chose this path, confident that it would increase their power. Washington opted for separate military treaties in 1959, given the fact that Iraq withdrew as a key player from the Baghdad Pact, while Britain continued its membership there. This compelled

the United States to conclude separate treaties with the member countries of the pact to strengthen its position (Saikal, 1980, p. 57; Bill, 1988, p. 119).

This tough and uncompromising policy was conditioned not only by the new policy approach and strategy of the United States. It was also the most typical method of uncompromising political expression for the Republican Party. In general, the main toolkit of the United States in 1950—1960 was as follows: bring the country to bankruptcy, provide loans and rule. Since the early 1960s, the regulation of capital flows abroad has been actively used by the U.S. as a political tool. The high level of American investments made the Iranian government to listen more closely to US political priorities. The American capital entered Iran not only as investments, but also loans. This was the way the US administration received additional leverage on many Third World countries, including Iran (Braterski, 2008, pp. 10—15).

### **J. F. Kennedy: "Revolutionary" Reforms**

In 1961, John F. Kennedy was elected President of the United States (1961—1963). He did his best to promote the interests of the United States in the region, but using a different toolkit. Kennedy's approach was different: "We must formulate, with both imagination and restraint, a new approach to the Middle East — not pressing our case so hard that the Arabs feel their neutrality and nationalism are threatened but accepting those forces and seeking to help channel them along constructive lines."<sup>9</sup>

On May 5, 1961, the Shah appointed Ali Amini as Prime Minister (Willcocks, 2015, p. 47). He had been a long-time player in the political arena, serving as Minister of economy in the government of Mohammad Mosaddegh.

<sup>8</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower. Address to the Members of the Parliament of Iran // The American Presidency Project. December 14, 1959. URL: <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-the-members-the-parliament-iran/> (accessed: 09.01.2022).

<sup>9</sup> Remarks of Senator John F. Kennedy in the Senate, Washington, D.C., June 14, 1960 // John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum. URL: <https://www.jfklibrary.org/archives/other-resources/john-f-kennedy-speeches/united-states-senate-u-2-incident-19600614/> (accessed: 09.01.2022).

After the overthrow of the latter, Amini served as Minister of Finances in the government of Fazlollah Zahedi. For this reason, representatives of the Popular Front, formed by Mosaddegh, were hostile to both Amini and Zahedi (Milani, 2008, p. 63). He was appointed Iranian ambassador to the United States in 1956, and during that time he managed to befriend (then) Senator John F. Kennedy. Prime Minister Amini “brought with him a 15-point plan, much of which mirrored what the new Kennedy administration hoped for” (Willcocks, 2015, p. 47). At the same time, the zeal with which the US government defended the power of Amini gives clues on who instigated the White Revolution. Moreover, the fact that the Shah of Iran agreed to implement such a large-scale program, going into a clear clash of interests with the clergy and rich landowners, indicates his determination to both raise relations with the United States to a new level and strengthen his own position.

Most American officials believed that unless the Shah initiated reforms, he would eventually be overthrown (Summitt, 2004, p. 564). Of course, despite the fact that the goal of the Shah was to solve the problems of Iranian society through the “White Revolution,” in the future this reform program created serious problems for the Pahlavi dynasty, setting against him both wealthy landowners and the clergy, who did not want to give up their possessions. In addition, the peasants did not have the necessary tools, mechanisms, chemicals, and knowledge to cultivate the land and make a profit. This caused discontent among the peasantry.

Bren, the Plenipotentiary Minister of the United States and the chief officer overseeing the implementation of the Truman Doctrine’s article 4 in Iran, said the following about the development of Iranian villages: “During the entire period of our stay in Iran, the Middle East, Southwest Asia, we tried to teach Iranian peasants how to cultivate the land, meet their needs and improve the villages.”<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Kayhan. April 17, 1961. (In Persian).

In parallel, landowners who opposed to the Shah did not allow the peasants to use their irrigation networks to put spokes in that whole mechanism. Thus, the Shah, while trying to carry out the reform, ran into a larger problem. It subsequently intensified and became the basis for the Islamic Revolution. The inadequate execution of the “White Revolution” program, largely supported by the United States, is a clear indicator that its authors did not take into account the Iranian mentality and realities.

At first, both in Iran and in the West, Ali Amini was depicted as a political leader taking revolutionary steps to implement the “White Revolution.” However, as the Iranian publication *Diplomat* writes: “It is completely inappropriate to call the current government revolutionary. And not only because Dr. Amini belongs to the class of nobles and aristocrats<sup>11</sup> and, naturally, cannot have a revolutionary adventurous spirit, but also because the prerequisites and the very form of him coming to power, the conditions, circumstances, and time of his reign were not like revolutionary movements in other countries of the world.”<sup>12</sup> At the same time, A. Saikal believes that the Kennedy administration considered Amini more capable of changing Iran at American discretion than the Shah could do (Saikal, 1991, p. 447).

The Shah of Iran supported the programs of Amini, a protégé of the United States, because inter alia he hoped to get more from the White House. In relation to this, the Shah’s sister Ashraf Pahlavi writes in her memoirs that her brother was forced to appoint Amini as Prime Minister (Pahlavi A., 1980, p. 172). The Shah himself admitted in an interview with an American correspondent that the Kennedy administration had forced him to appoint Amini to the post of Prime Minister (Abrahamian, 1982, pp. 422—423). In fact, he was against the

<sup>11</sup> Ali Amini was the grandson of Mozaffar ad-Din Shah Qajar of Persia on the maternal side and the grandson of the Grand Vizier of Persia Mirza Ali Khan Amin-al-Dowleh on the side of his father.

<sup>12</sup> *Diplomat*. June 7, 1961. (In Persian).

candidacy of Amini since the latter used to have close ties with both Qavam os-Saltaneh and Mosaddegh.

In June 1961, the Iranian pro-government press tirelessly presented the great positive impact of the “White Revolution.” This way it was trying to reduce popular dissatisfaction with the Shah’s system of government. For example, *the Ettelaat* newspaper reported that the Shah, accompanied by the Prime Minister Amini and the Minister of Agriculture, Dr. Arsenjani would go on Thursday morning to the Mughan steppe to hand over state lands ownership documents to the peasants.<sup>13</sup> In this way they demonstrated to the U.S. authorities that the social programs approved by the Americans were being carried out.

Public diplomacy is an important tool for promoting foreign policy. The United States Information Agency (USIA), which operated since 1953, was the foreign policy propaganda body. In Iran, the agency’s main goal was to secure popular support for the policies of the Shah (Wainwright, 2022, p. 223). The US desire to engage with the Iranians on a cultural level had been a key aspect of US foreign policy in the country (Wainwright, 2022, p. 224).

Amini, having the full support of the United States, tried to rule on his own, tried to expand the powers of the prime minister. The Shah definitely wasn’t supportive of this. Some American researchers rightly point out that following Mohammad Mosaddegh, Amini also tried to reduce the power of the Shah, and again failed. The last similar attempt was made by Iranian Prime Minister Ali Mansour, after whose assassination the Shah of Iran appointed prime ministers exclusively from the loyal ones. Lacking much domestic support, Amini used the U.S. unconditional funding trump-card. The State Department and other U.S. agencies began to urgently consider Prime Minister Amini’s requests for 40 million USD urgent assistance to Iran.<sup>14</sup> Related to this, Farmanfarmanian, the

deputy head of the Economic Planning Organization, stated that the existence of the government was completely conditioned with American assistance and that 40 million USD should be issued as aid, and a loan.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, Amini pursued a pronounced anti-Soviet policy, thus trying to get new bonuses from the US President. The Soviet ambassador to Iran, N.M. Pegov, leaving Iran in protest, told the United Press correspondent: “I am surprised and amazed at the policy that Amini is pursuing on the issue of Iran’s relations with the East and the West. I never expected Iran to continue pursuing a unilateral policy. I made every effort to improve relations between our two countries, but Iran did not reciprocate our goodwill.”<sup>16</sup>

Undoubtedly, Tehran’s actions served one purpose: to emphasize Iran’s loyalty to the United States, to receive financial and military assistance, security guarantees both in the event of a possible attack from the USSR, and to preserve the Shah’s monarchy. Recent years were not positive for monarchies in the Middle East. Monarchies were overthrown in 1953 in Egypt, in 1958 in Iraq. In 1961, the military hanged the prime minister in Turkey. However, all the efforts of Amini failed, and J.F. Kennedy did not support Iran to the extent the Shah had hoped. Moreover, the White House stated that “If an effective government program is implemented, oil revenues, exceeding 300 million USD annually, will be able to streamline the economic situation in the country within two years.”<sup>17</sup>

Thus, the Kennedy government made it clear that it was up to Iranians to solve their own economic problems. Washington cut its military aid to Iran, from 85 billion USD in 1960, to 44.7 billion USD in 1962 (Pollack, 2004, p. 84). Unable to remedy the country’s dire economic situation, Amini resigned in July 1962. By pursuing the policy of the “White

<sup>13</sup> *Ettelaat*. June 13, 1961. (In Persian).

<sup>14</sup> *Kayhan*. June 7, 1961. (In Persian).

<sup>15</sup> *Kayhan*. June 6, 1961. (In Persian).

<sup>16</sup> *Kayhan*. June 13, 1961. (In Persian).

<sup>17</sup> *Kayhan*. June 6, 1961. (In Persian).



Revolution,” the Shah hoped to win the sympathy of the broad masses, thereby strengthening his position for further cooperation with Washington. The Shah tried at all costs to prove to the United States that only he is the true master of the country and there is no need to bet on other politicians.

Apparently J.F. Kennedy paid less attention to Central Treaty Organization activities. That was another cause of concern in Iran. After the 9th CENTO session in Turkey, the Iranian press noted that “Informed sources say that although America does not want to reduce the importance of this organization, at the same time it does not want to take on big obligations to CENTO, and such an approach of the United States has caused deep concerns, especially in Iran and Pakistan, since their defense policies depend entirely on CENTO.”<sup>18</sup>

The Iranian media often published materials expressing the concerns and dissatisfaction of the Iranian leadership, but this was done through unofficial channels. The main topic of complaints was insufficient financial subsidy. “Since Kennedy came to power, of the three Asian countries that are members of the pact, only Iran has not received cash support from America. Given the enormous responsibility that Iran has assumed under the CENTO pact, and the credibility that it has earned as a member of this pact, Iran should have been in the first row to receive assistance.”<sup>19</sup>

Despite Iran’s key role in J.F. Kennedy’s Middle East policy, the President believed that he needed a stronger and more influential regional partner, a country to become the promoter of American interests, as well as to fight against the communist movements spreading in the region. To put this program into practice, J.F. Kennedy refused to follow D. Eisenhower’s course of action, which had provided Iran with grant aid, covered Iran’s budget deficit, supplied arms, ammunition, and

provided consultations at the first request of Iran. “Taking bold decisions and the assumption of great responsibilities will be required if Iran’s operating budget is to be successfully drawn up without dependence on foreign subsidies,”<sup>20</sup> J.F. Kennedy noted in his letter to the Shah. It was clear to Kennedy that Iran was in dire need of social reforms, and only this way Iran could break through stagnation and climb to a new level of development.

The “White Revolution” was an attempt to reduce social inequality. By granting freedom to women, the Iranian authorities were subsequently able to utilize their potential, almost never used before. The “White Revolution” gave impetus to education. It favored the development of new scientific and technical fields. Humanitarian studies were more developed in Iran before, while after the “White Revolution” the state and the society began paying more attention especially to the natural sciences.

Paradoxically, the educational policy of the Iranian authorities turned into serious political problems. The newly educated population did not have enough opportunities to realize their knowledge. The tradition of re-appointing former officials continued in the political arena. If a young person was appointed to a position, he certainly had family relations with higher level officials. Thus, by educating the people and forming a new class, but not providing opportunities for self-realization, the Iranian elite strengthened the base for the struggle against itself (Sergeev & Sarukhanyan, 2012, pp. 143—144). Farah Diba, the wife of the last Shah, also spoke about the neglect of political reforms: “We forgot about political reforms, we thought that we could wait with them. We made a serious mistake” (Von Eggert, 2010, p. 158).

The Shah sought major economic and social change through his “White Revolution,”

<sup>18</sup> Kayhan. April 27, 1961. (In Persian).

<sup>19</sup> Setare Tehran. April 26, 1961. (In Persian).

<sup>20</sup> 11. Letter from President Kennedy to the Shah of Iran. Washington, August 1, 1962 // Office of the Historian. URL: <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v18/d11/> (accessed: 09.01.2022).

but at the same time he tried to maintain the political repressions. The fundamental reason for the revolution, which intelligence and other observers should have understood at the time, was that the Shah's project was risky (Jervis, 2010, p. 30). The challenge of liberalizing the repressive regime "was so serious that it required much more attention and analysis" (Jervis, 2010, p. 67).

However, as a rule, when referring to the foreign policy of the United States and Iran, experts sometimes forget to provide information about the opinion of the population on this issue. Even though the "White Revolution" led to a growing number of educated citizens in Iran, the country was nonetheless dominated by the masses that relied on the word of the clergy. And very often the Shah showed his favor towards the loyal ones when appointing clerical leaders to the main mosques,

However, during the reign of Mohammad Mosaddegh and after the fall of his power there was an awakening in the ranks of the educated population of Iran. They began to fight in the name of the interests of their country. Discharged and anti-government individuals, as well as communist-minded supporters of the pro-Soviet vector, contributed to this awakening. The evening newspaper *Bamshad* published a rather eloquent article on Iran's foreign policy that clearly outlined the attitude of the Iranian opposition to the US policy: "Iran has no foreign policy and we, surrendering to our unknown fate, are walking in the wake of the policies of certain large states. Even the new prime minister (meaning Ali Amini. — *Author's note*) in his statements at press conferences talked so much about American aid, about connections with America, about American advisers... about the American fourth point (Truman), about American loans, that people unfamiliar with geography thought that there is only one country in the world — America, and we are obliged to maintain and expand friendly relations with it... rely on its assistance."<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Bamshad. June 14, 1961. (In Persian).

It is indicative that the Iranian ruling elite in the 1960s saw a significant change, which also manifested itself in the preference for learning foreign languages, which is a proxy indicator of the change in Iran's foreign policy vector — from Europe to America.

In his work "The Political Elite of Iran" M. Zonis cites statistical data making it obvious how French is giving way to English in the 1960s. This was the achievement of Washington, not London (Table 1).

*Table 1*  
**Percentage of the Iranian elite (disaggregated by age) considering English or French their second language after Persian**

| Language | Age            |       |       |              |
|----------|----------------|-------|-------|--------------|
|          | 39 and younger | 40—49 | 50—59 | 60 and older |
| English  | 61.1           | 42.1  | 29.7  | 29.3         |
| French   | 38.9           | 57.9  | 70.3  | 70.7         |

*Source:* (Zonis, 1976, p. 178).

### **L. Johnson: Military Technology and Investment to Increase Iran's Dependence**

The growth of American influence remained stable even after Kennedy's assassination. His successor, Lyndon Johnson (1963—1969), did not fundamentally change the policy towards Iran. He still attached great importance to the implementation of the "White Revolution." This is clearly expressed in Lyndon Johnson's letter to the Shah: "In freeing the energies of Iran's peasantry and laborers, as well as the women, you have taken a difficult and courageous step. You have proven your faith and confidence in the Iranian people and your resistance to alien pressures. You will be misunderstood, and you will be maligned. That is the price of historical movement — the price of progress. But you will also be admired and loved by your people."<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> 1. Letter from President Johnson to the Shah of Iran. Washington, January 2, 1964 // Office of the Historian. URL: <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v22/d1/> (accessed: 09.01.2022).

In fact, we can state that Lyndon Johnson miscalculated. The “White Revolution” did not gain the public support that the United States and the Shah had hoped for. According to the author, one of the reasons for these failures was the following approach of Tehran: often being unable to solve the main problems, the Iranian authorities tried to preserve at least the formal aspect of its implementation.

In response to Lyndon Johnson, Mohammed Reza Pahlavi wrote a letter that basically reveals the true intentions of the Shah: “Since your visit, Mr. President, much has happened in Iran. A comprehensive program of far-reaching social, political, and economic reforms, of which you were then given a brief account, has now been fully implemented.”<sup>23</sup> The ultimate goal of Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi was to turn Iran into one of the most militarily powerful countries in the region in a short time. For this purpose, he constantly presented to the US presidents the tense situation in the region, the incessant threats of the Soviet Union and, within this framework asked to provide Iran with modern weapons: “Last year, the Pentagon prepared a Five-Year Plan for Iran which was accepted with some reservations and for want of a more satisfactory alternative. This Plan has already proved inadequate for the requirements of the changing situation in this area... We have no military stockpiles of any kind and no reserves... The responsibilities of the Iranian Air Force, moreover, have never been equal to even the minimum of the Army requirements... If our armed forces are to function effectively and to perform their allotted duties, and if Iran, a staunch and steadfast ally of the United States, is to play her full part in the changing political climate of the Middle East, then obviously, Mr. President, these shortages have to be

<sup>23</sup> 2. Letter from the Shah of Iran to President Johnson. Tehran, January 7, 1964 // Office of the Historian. URL: <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v22/d2/> (accessed: 09.01.2022).

met”<sup>24</sup>. “If the United States is not in a position to meet our clear and urgent military needs in addition to the Five Year Plan, in order to be able to fulfil our duties, I thought that we might advisedly arrange for the purchase of our additional needs, under favorable conditions, from the United States of America or from elsewhere.”<sup>25</sup>

It is noteworthy that Iran continuously hosted numerous groups of US military, economic, and financial advisors. In the 1960s, the number of military advisors alone reached 4,500. An American reporter and political commentator Walter Lippman noted: “Iran is overly dependent on us and is overly confident that its fate is being decided in Washington. In many places in Iran, there are an excessive number of Americans.”<sup>26</sup> Kenneth Pollack, expert on the Middle East politics and military affairs, assesses that “Mohammed Reza Shah needed America, but by the end of the 1960s, America needed him more” (Pollack, 2004, p. 99).

In essence, the relationship between Iran and the United States in the 1950s and 1960s can be generally characterized as the superpower’s support to a weak developing country (Table 2). This manifested itself in the provision of various assistance, interference in domestic affairs, close cooperation between the CIA and SAVAK (Gasirowski, 1993, p. 471). However, in the 1970s, thanks to large oil revenues, this support diminished, and Iran became the number one military procurement customer and trading partner of the United States.

Since the late 1940s, Iran had abandoned its policy of neutrality during World War II and pursued an overtly pro-Western policy, including joining US-founded military organizations, appointing pro-Western prime ministers. Tehran also utilized the media to present this foreign policy course to society as the ultimate truth. “The Iranian governments

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> New York Herald Tribune. December 15, 1959.

that came to power after 1320 (1941) observed neutrality and political balance. However, they brought matters to the point that the ambassadors of some countries considered themselves entitled to interfere in the internal affairs of Iran. Governments were forced to both make overtures to their northern neighbors and flirt with their southern neighbors. The result of such neutrality was that we were considered two-faced, we were not trusted.”<sup>27</sup>

Table 2

## US Loans and Grants to Iran, 1946—1960

| Kind of aid  | 1946—1948 | 1949—1952 | 1953—1957 | 1958  | 1959  | 1960  |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------|-------|-------|
| Total amounts of economic and military aid, including: | 25.8      | 33.1      | 500.7     | 124.9 | 137.8 | 127.3 |
| Loans  | 25.8      | —         | 116.2     | 40.0  | 37.7  | —     |
| Grants   | —         | 33.1      | 384.5     | 84.9  | 100.1 | 127.3 |

Source: (Zonis, 1976, p. 108).

In conclusion, the Iranian policy of the United States had several objectives, which they openly declared in the 1960s and 1970s: “To support an independent, self-reliant Iran; to maintain our close ties with Iran, especially with the Shah; to assure Iranian vigilance against Soviet long-term aims; to maintain our communications and intelligence facilities and overflight privileges in Iran; to influence Iran to promote stability in the Middle East; to maintain western access to Iranian oil, protect and promote American investment in Iran, and obtain for the U.S. the largest possible share of the growing Iranian market.”<sup>28</sup>

The cited document shows that Washington, while supporting the independence

of Iran, at the same time promoted Iran’s dependence on the United States in every way possible. The United States invested heavily in Iran’s strategic facilities, thus ensuring its presence almost everywhere. Until the mid-1970s, the Shah did his best to please presidents for American military technology. Exploiting the Shah’s regional ambitions, Washington controlled him and did not even try to find a replacement for him. Meanwhile, Tehran and Moscow tried to find ways of cooperation. Fearing a rapprochement between the two countries, the United States exploited the fears of the Shah and the Iranian elite towards the USSR that tried to annex the northern provinces of Iran after the WWII. The US was able to establish a major military presence in Iran and gather essential intelligence against the USSR.

### Conclusion

In the 1950s and 1960s, the United States wanted a strong Iran in the region. Such a partner, with its economic and social capabilities, would have been able to counter the influence of the USSR in the Middle East. At the same time, Washington wanted Tehran to be in the need for the economic and military power of the United States and not be able to pursue an independent policy in region. The latter was not part of the American plans.

Exploiting the Shah’s fears about a possible repetition of the expansion of the USSR in the northern part of the country, as well as playing on the regional ambitions of the Pahlavi dynasty, the United States provided Iran with the necessary assistance in various areas, at the same time entrusting Tehran with such duties that stemmed exclusively from American interests. However, despite the advantages for the US to keep Iran dependent by replenishing the state budget with financial subsidies, the White House expressed dissatisfaction with the misuse of funds by the Iranian authorities and considered that to be the cause of the difficult socio-economic situation in Iran.

In the 1950s, the United States made efforts not only against the expansion of Soviet

<sup>27</sup> Ettelaat. June 15, 1961. (In Persian).

<sup>28</sup> 2. Memorandum from the Executive Secretary of the Department of State (Read) to the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger). Washington, January 30, 1969 // Office of the Historian. URL: <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve04/d2/> (accessed: 09.01.2022).

influence in the Middle East. Washington also exploited problems in the Western camp and contributed to their aggravation, thereby weakening the European allies and opening up opportunities for the United States to expel them from the Middle East and seize the largest oil fields in the region, sometimes even on monopoly rights. At first, the United States did not have a share in the Iranian oil field since this industry was wholly owned by the British government. After the overthrow of Mosaddegh, Washington contributed to the weakening of Anglo-Iranian Oil Company's (AIOC) position in Iran. Later, according to the agreement, five American oil companies received 8% of AIOC shares each. Thus, 40% of Iran's oil industry ended up in the hands of the United States (Avery, 1965, pp. 453—454).

As a result of further skillful US policy in 1968, Britain announced the final withdrawal of its troops from the Middle East, finalized in 1971 (Vaez-Zadeh & Javadi, 2019).

Thus, the US government used a few instruments from its foreign policy toolkit, including both a military coup and a figurehead prime minister, in order to implement the American plans in Iran.

The United States, after the bid for world domination in 1823, gradually expanded the

scope of the interests and became more involved in actual problems on the Eurasian continent. Later on, Washington instigated various problems for the countries of this continent, trying to weaken, dilute, and then financially support, thereby making these countries dependent. This strategy negated even the opportunity to think about influencing any country on the American continent. Furthermore, by weakening the historically strong positions of London and Paris over the years, the United States took the lead. In an attempt to take advantage of the newly opened opportunities, the regional countries tried to compete for protection of the US interests. Iran was able to secure American support, indicating the growing influence of the USSR in the region. Tehran often used this tactic to become a more important partner for Washington in competition with its main rival in the region, Ankara. As a result of the deepening strategic relationship with the Pentagon, the leadership of the Iranian army was trained both in the US and in many countries of the Western world. In the 1970s, Iran was able to purchase such military weapons from the United States that even some NATO member countries did not have. In the 1970s, Iran became one of the two strongholds in the region for the United States.

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**About the author:** Iskandaryan Gohar Manvelovna — PhD (History), Associate Professor, Head, Department of Iranian Studies, Institute of Oriental Studies, National Academy of Sciences, Republic of Armenia; ORCID: 0000-0001-9580-1318; e-mail: iskandaryan@sci.am