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University of Brothers' Mentouri Constantine 1
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U.S.-Iran Relations 1977-1981:
The Implications of the Iran Hostage Crisis.

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Submitted by:

Hamza MELLAK

Supervised by:

Dr. Samih AZOUI

Board of Examiners :

President: Prof. Nacif Labed. University of Mentouri. Constantine 1.

Examiner: Dr. Mohamed Senoussi. University of M'sila.

Examiner :Dr. Elaggoune Abdelahak. University of Guelma.

Examiner :Dr.Fatima Hamadouche. University of Mentouri. Constantine 1.

Supervisor :Dr. Samih Azoui. Ecole Normale Supérieure Assia
Djebbar. Constantine 3.

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Dedication

To my father and to the memory of my mother

Acknowledgement

I am immensely grateful to my supervisor Dr. Samih AZOUI for his sincere commitment, endless patience, helpful recommendations and advice and for his motivation and support throughout the writing of this thesis.

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Abstract

The impact of the Iran hostage crisis on US-Iran relations is still being felt. It poisoned them and prevented any prospects of rapprochement between the two countries. President Carter inherited a sick partnership with Iran, which hindered him from pursuing any healthy policies that could match his idealistic agenda. Despite the fact that Carter promised a shift in his policy towards Iran but he finally settled on supporting the Shah's regime that was already in trouble. The fall of the Shah constituted a setback for the US that had to deal with a hostile revolutionary regime. The US tried to re-establish relations with Iran but the Iran hostage crisis dealt a severe blow to US efforts. It also hurt Carter's project of gaining re-election. Re-election was Carter's *raison d'être* then. The present thesis argues that Carter's obsession with re-election prolonged the hostage crisis and caused his undoing. He tried to end the hostage issue using different strategies but the clerics refused to release the hostages. The strategies that Carter fashioned failed to convince the Iranian leaders to set the hostages free and he ordered a military rescue mission that its abortion complicated matters more. Carter believed that a peaceful solution to the crisis could be reached. He bided his time. Carter strived to minimize the impact of the hostage issue on his re-election project but the clerics' intransigence worsened the situation and contributed to Carter's loss in the elections. He secured the release of the hostages and left the White House.

Resumé

L'impact de la crise Iranienne des otages sur les relations américano-iraniennes se fait encore sentir. Elle les a empoisonnés et a empêché toute perspective de rapprochement entre les deux pays. Le président Carter a hérité d'un partenariat malsain avec l'Iran, qui l'a empêché de poursuivre toute politique saine qui pourrait correspondre à son programme idéaliste. Malgré le fait que Carter a promis un changement dans sa politique envers l'Iran, il a finalement décidé de soutenir le régime du Shah qui était déjà en difficulté. La chute du Shah a constitué un revers pour les États-Unis qui ont dû faire face à un régime révolutionnaire hostile. Les États-Unis ont tenté de rétablir des relations avec l'Iran, mais la crise Iranienne des otages a porté un coup sévère aux efforts américains. Cela a également nui au projet de Carter de se faire réélire. La réélection était alors la raison d'être de Carter. La présente thèse soutient que l'obsession de Carter pour la réélection a prolongé la crise des otages qui a causé sa défaite. Il a tenté de mettre fin à la question des otages en utilisant différentes stratégies, mais les religieux ont refusé de les libérer. Les stratégies élaborées par Carter n'ont pas réussi à convaincre les dirigeants iraniens de libérer les otages et il a ordonné une mission de sauvetage militaire que son avortement compliquait davantage. Carter pensait qu'une solution pacifique à la crise pouvait être trouvée. Il a attendu son heure. Carter s'est efforcée de minimiser l'impact de la question des otages sur son projet de réélection, mais l'intransigeance des religieux a aggravé la situation et a contribué à la défaite de Carter aux élections. Il a obtenu la libération des otages et a quitté la Maison Blanche.

ملخص

لا يزال تأثير أزمة الرهائن الإيرانية على العلاقات بين الولايات المتحدة وإيران محسوسًا. لقد سممتها وحالت دون أي احتمالات للتقارب بين البلدين. ورث الرئيس كارتر شراكة مريضة مع إيران أعاقته عن اتباع أي سياسات صحية يمكن أن تتناسب مع أجندته المثالية. على الرغم من حقيقة أن كارتر وعد بتغيير في سياسته تجاه إيران، إلا أنه استقر أخيرًا على دعم نظام الشاه الذي كان بالفعل في ورطة. شكل سقوط الشاه نكسة للولايات المتحدة التي كان عليها أن تتعامل مع نظام ثوري معاد. حاولت الولايات المتحدة إعادة العلاقات مع إيران، لكن أزمة الرهائن الإيرانية وجهت ضربة قاسية لجهود الولايات المتحدة. كما أضر بمشروع كارتر لإعادة انتخابه. كانت إعادة الانتخاب أكبر اهتمامات الرئيس كارتر في ذلك الوقت. تقول الأطروحة الحالية أن هوس كارتر بإعادة الانتخاب أدى إلى إطالة أزمة الرهائن وساهم في خسارته للانتخابات الرئاسية. حاول كارتر إنهاء قضية الرهائن باستراتيجيات مختلفة لكن رجال الدين رفضوا إطلاق سراحهم. فشلت الاستراتيجيات التي صاغها كارتر في إقناع القادة الإيرانيين بإطلاق سراح الرهائن وأمر بمهمة إنقاذ عسكرية إلا أن أجهزها عقد الأمور أكثر. اعتقد كارتر أنه يمكن التوصل إلى حل سلمي للأزمة و أخذ كامل وقته. سعى كارتر لتقليل تأثير قضية الرهائن على مشروع إعادة انتخابه، لكن تعنت رجال الدين أدى إلى تفاقم الوضع وساهم في خسارة كارتر في الانتخابات. قام بتأمين الإفراج عن الرهائن وغادر البيت الأبيض.

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

SOA	Supplemental Oil Agreement
SIS	Secret Intelligence Services
ARAMCO	Saudi Arabian Oil Company
AIOC	Anglo-Iranian Oil Company
OPEC	Organization of Oil Exporting Countries
b.p.d	Barrel Per Day
SOFA	Status of Forces Agreement
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
AWACS	Airborne Warning and Control Systems
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
FLAG	Family Liaison and Action Group

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General Introduction

The arrival of Jimmy Carter changed the nature of a longstanding US-Iranian diplomatic partnership. First, he took a passive attitude towards the crumbling Shah's throne. Then, Carter tried to re-establish relations with the new regime in Iran after the removal of the Shah. Unfortunately, his efforts to engage with Iran did not succeed. Meanwhile, US diplomats in Tehran were taken hostage. The Iran hostage crisis was the rock at which the US-Iran partnership crashed. Rapprochement became a chimera since then. It is impossible to understand US-Iran relations in the past, present and future without having a look at what happened during the Carter administration for its fate was sealed then.

The Iran hostage crisis brought unwanted consequences upon Carter's administration. It ruined Carter's calculations regarding his re-election project that was considered his *raison d'être* then. The impact of the hostage crisis affected Carter at the domestic front and internationally. It negatively influenced his policies and led the Americans to charge him with inconsistency and thus his re-election chances would be doomed as well. Internationally, he had to cope with a crisis that was susceptible to the influence of many other events and actors either in Iran or in the Middle East in general. This thesis delves into Carter's policy towards Iran with a particular emphasis on the impact of the hostage crisis on Carter's administration.

The scale of the impact of the hostage crisis on Carter's administration remained questionable. Most of the studies dealing with Jimmy Carter overlooked the hostage crisis

and paid it scant attention in comparison with his other foreign policy issues. Carter's policy towards Iran and the strategy he laid out for dealing with the hostage situation that was based on short-term calculations related to his re-election project and its ramifications for his political life had had considerable impact on the future of his administration. Iran became Carter's *bête noire* and this study tries to explain the shortcomings of the policies he pursued towards it.

Based on what has been already mentioned, there is a primary question that this dissertation seeks to answer: what was the impact of Carter's policies towards Iran and the following Iran hostage crisis on Carter's administration?

To answer this question, a set of other secondary questions need to be addressed:

- To what extent was US-Iran partnership short-sighted?
- Was Carter's policy towards Iran responsible for the fall of the Shah?
- Did Carter's re-election obsession contribute to his fashioning of featureless policies in dealing with the hostage issue?
- What was the impact of the hostage crisis on Carter's re-election project despite the fact that he had tried to turn the crisis to his own advantage?

These questions are necessary for understanding what happened to US-Iran relations during the Carter presidency. It can be said that the fall of the Shah, the failure to re-establish relations with Iran and the Iran hostage crisis are symptomatic of Carter's ignorance of the importance of Iran to his country during the Cold War. Iran would considerably contribute to his loss in the presidential elections.

The major aim of this research is to examine US-Iran relations during the Carter administration with a particular focus on the Iran hostage crisis and its implications. It seeks to prove that the impact of the hostage crisis, that was a product of Carter's policies towards

Iran, and his handling of it contributed to a good measure to his electoral defeat in the presidential elections.

This thesis tries to meet other secondary aims. It attempts to hold Carter accountable for the fall of the Shah and the consequent hostage crisis and later the total and permanent loss of Iran. It argues that the policies Carter formulated for solving the hostage issue were inefficient because he lacked a clear vision about Iran. He was ignorant about the importance of Iran to his own country. Also, the Persian character and the Shi'i doctrine were alien to him. This work tries to identify the shortcomings in the approaches that Carter had followed while trying to defuse the hostage situation. It presents an analysis of Carter's strategies for dealing with the hostage crisis in addition to the precipitants of his decisions and their ramifications.

Among the books dealing with the subject, some sources study Carter's policies towards Iran and more particularly the Iran hostage crisis. In *US Foreign Policy and the Iranian Revolution the Cold War Dynamics of Engagement and Strategic Alliance*, Christian Emery argues that engagement efforts that were pursued by Carter were mainly motivated by Cold War calculations. Ofira Seliktar, the author of *Failing the Crystal Ball Test: the Carter Administration and the Fundamentalist Revolution in Iran*, contends that the New Leftists and moralpolitikers within the Carter's administration formulated Carter's policy towards Iran. There are also a good number of books written on the history of US-Iran relations but without paying due attention to the Carter administration and particularly the hostage crisis that had been underestimated either in Cold War annals or US-Iran relations' literature. Among the authoritative documents published on US-Iran relations, we find James Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion: The Tragedy of American Iranian Relations*; Barry Rubin, *Paved with Good Intentions: the American Experience and Iran*; Pollack, Kenneth M. *The Persian Puzzle, the Conflict between Iran and America*, but they did mention US-

Iran relations during the Carter administration and the Iran hostage crisis only in passing without offering it serious consideration.

There are a few interesting books that dealt with the Iran hostage crisis. David Farber in his book, *Taken Hostage and America's First Encounter with Radical Islam*, claims that the US was blinded by Cold War considerations to the fact that it was engaged in a fight with radical Islam. He wanted to alert the reader to America's new enemy, which is political Islam rather than the Soviet Union and the hostage crisis best illustrated his assertion. In *US Foreign Policy and the Iran Hostage Crisis*, David Patrick Houghton explains that analogical reasoning drove US policy makers' decisions during the hostage crisis. He dragged up every analogy for every decision taken then but the validity of his evidence remains questionable as most reviewers believed. Russell Leigh Moses in his book: *Freeing the Hostages: Re-examining US-Iranian Negotiations and Soviet Policy, 1979-1981*, analyses negotiations instead of the decisions taken then by the Carter administration and the consequences of the crisis.

Given the nature of the subject matter, it is approached from a historical perspective. This could help in the reconstruction of events, which might offer new possible interpretation(s). This does not necessitate only the narration of past events but questions and analyses them and finally attempts (hopefully) to give a credible and unbiased reading. This invites for the use of a descriptive-analytical approach. It must be noted that topics of this sort lead us to plunge into US foreign policy. It gives a clear idea about how US foreign policy was formulated and implemented. It allows to appraise decisions to pinpoint to what extent were policymakers responsible for the direction of events.

This research studies US-Iran relations during the Carter presidency 1977-1981. It examines closely the Iran hostage crisis that lasted from November 1979 to January 1981.

This work relies on a different set of primary sources. The most important document is *Foreign Relations of the United States, Iran: Hostage Crisis, November 1979- September 1980, Volume XI Part 1* that was released in November 2020. It includes the most important correspondences, memoranda, National Security Council meetings minutes, summaries of meetings and Special Coordinating Committee meetings that were all about the hostage issue. It is the most authoritative document released yet for it gives interesting information and details and offers a closer look at how Carter had conducted his foreign policy and the different actors who influenced it, especially during the hostage crisis. This document also helps in filling some of the gaps that had been left unfilled for years despite the large number of memoirs published by high officials who were involved in the hostage crisis then. Also, other primary sources released by FRUS were examined in the hopes of finding the essence of US-Iran relations and understanding some ambiguities, among them: *Foreign Relations of the United States 1951-1954: Iran: 1951-1954*, 2017; *Foreign Relations of the United States 1952-1954: Iran: 1951-1954*, Volume X, 1989, and United States Federal Government. *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Jimmy Carter: 1980-1981*. Vol. 1.

This thesis was built on information taken from other primary sources, especially memoirs. Memoirs are generally considered self-glorifying and thus not enough trustworthy academically. However, some of them can be reliable. They have been of immense help in the writing of this work, and of them from both sides the Iranian and the American: Brzezinski, Zbigniew. *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Advisor, 1977-1981*; Carter, Jimmy. *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President*; Gary Sick, *All Fall Down: America's Fateful Encounter with Iran*; Pahlavi, Mohamed Reza. *Answer to History*; Vance, Cyrus. *Hard Choices: Critical Years in America's Foreign Policy*; William H. Sullivan. *Mission to Iran*; Bani-Sadr, Abol Hassan. *My Turn to Speak: Iran, the*

Revolution and Secret Deals with the US; Carter, Jimmy. *White House Diary*; Carter, Rosalynn. *First Lady from Plains*; Hamilton, Jordan. *Crisis: The Last Year of the Carter Presidency*; Harris, David. *The Crisis: The President, the Prophet, and the Shah- 1979 and the Coming of Militant Islam*; Powell, Jody. *The other Side of the Story*; Sick, Gary. *All Fall Down: America's Tragic Encounter with Iran*.

There are also a number of memoirs written by some of the hostages themselves but they show only how their experiences were when they were held as captives by the Iranians. They are considered of value also. In addition, a memoir written by a hostage taker Ebtekar, Massoumeh, later turned into a minister, *Takeover in Tehran: the Inside Story of the 1979 US Embassy Capture* was used. Ebtekar provides the standpoint of the hostage takers. She explains well the motives, mood, and behaviour of the hostage takers. These memoirs were helpful because they conveyed the point of views of many on the Iranian side and contributed to giving enough attention to the Iranian side. In addition, many televised interviews, press articles, written interviews, documentaries, letters and speeches had been consulted.

The thesis opens with a chapter that studies US-Iran relations from the end of the Second World War to the election of Gerald Ford as US president to argue that US-Iran bilateral relationship had been confined to instantaneous gains, which would prevent the development of a healthy partnership later. It examines the different approaches adopted by US presidents towards Iran with particular focus on US notable concessions that fed the shah's growing ambitions and finally led to his independence from the US. These policies were injurious to US-Iran bilateral relations in the long run. This chapter seeks to prove that the US did not press the shah for reform because it was entrapped in the Cold War logic, which dictated that Iran had to be kept in the US orbit at whatever price. In other words, it means that the policies followed by US presidents from Truman to Ford save President Kennedy were not healthy but myopic since their aims were confined to instantaneous gains

that required meeting the shah's desires generously at the expense of a sustainable partnership.

The second chapter probes into Jimmy Carter policy towards Iran. The aim of this chapter is to bring to the fore Carter's naiveté with regard to Iran's importance to his country, seemingly sacrificing it at the altar of moralism. Carter's passive stance toward the shah before and during the revolution is to be explained to show that Carter had to be held answerable for the deterioration of relations despite the fact that he strived to engage the new revolutionary regime but to no avail. The failure of engaging Iran was construed as a weakness by the Iranians and the Americans. Carter's failure would set the ground for the takeover of the US embassy in Tehran later.

Chapter three investigates Carter's policy towards the hostage crisis during the first six months from November 1979 to April 1980. The objective of this chapter is to confirm that Carter's obsession with reelection blinded him to other ways of finding a solution to the crisis. Carter was worried about the timing of the crisis in electoral terms. He thought only about how to turn it into an electorally advantageous business. He hoped to find easy avenues to defusing the crisis at the expense of trying to understand the Iranians first and then opt for a fruitful course of action. Carter's emphasis on the efficiency of the military solution also played a role in prolonging the crisis and hurting his chances in the upcoming presidential elections. The failure of the rescue mission dealt his reelection project a severe blow. The shortcomings of his policy during the first six months are to be analysed.

Chapter four argues that Carter's mishandling of the crisis had contributed to his loss in the presidential elections. Carter had finally succeeded in coming up with a strategy that revolved around understanding the Iranians culturally first in order to be able to deal with them and that excluded the military action second. He also considered taking advantage of

the crisis to use it to his benefit electorally. The strategy Carter adopted worked well but the damage was already done. The Americans felt that Carter had to be replaced because they felt that their country's reputation had to be restored. He lost the elections because all odds were stacked against him and the hostage crisis worsened matters for him more.

CHAPTER ONE

US-Iran Relations from President Truman to President Nixon: A Short-sighted Partnership

Introduction

The present chapter examines US-Iran relations from the end of the Second World War to the end of Gerald Ford presidency. It sheds light on the context in which this partnership was born in addition to the main turning points or decisions that cemented it. The Soviet invasion of Iran represented the main event that declared officially the arrival of the US to Tehran and paved the way for the development of this fledgling relationship later. In addition, the Anglo-American sponsored coup of 1953 in Iran is explained in detail in the hope of identifying the main actors, actions and repercussions of such an undertaking for both Washington and the Shah. The coup was of paramount importance in the understanding of the history of US-Iran ties and the history of modern Iran in general. It was seen differently by the Iranians who took it as a symbol of US interference in Iranian internal affairs and recalled it frequently to blame America for the failure of democracy in Iran. US actions that were met by discontent left a bad impression in Iranian minds that contributed to the shaping of a bad US image are to be discussed in this chapter.

This chapter also studies US presidents' policies towards Iran. It argues that their policies towards Iran were limited to short-term goals. It means that they chose to go along with the Shah's demands in order to please him regardless of the future of his throne. Only John Kennedy made an exception because he opted to force the Shah to make reforms. President Lyndon Johnson set the ground for a short-sighted partnership, in compliance with

the exigencies of the Cold War, that would be followed by his successors. President Nixon gave him the right to buy whatever weapons from the US and appointed him the gendarme of the Gulf. The Shah became independent and impervious to US pressure. This chapter is an attempt to construct a short history of US-Iran ties with a particular emphasis on the flaws that were detrimental to the Shah politically at the domestic front and to his supposedly then patron the US.

1-1 Iran: A Cold War Battlefield and the Arrival of a New Partner

Shortly Iran found itself unwillingly entangled in the Second World War. The invasion of Russia by Germany in 1941 had completely redrawn the shape of the geostrategic map of the world. As a result, Iran became involved in the raging war, mainly geographically, due to its strategic position that stemmed from its proximity to the Soviet Union, and its huge natural resources. The Allied had sent two ultimatums to the monarch in July before deciding to invade Iran on the 25th of August 1941 after the Shah seemingly refused to acquiesce to their demands to have German nationals dismissed from Iran (Eshragui 324). They claimed that the presence of Germans in Iran constituted a threat to their interests and feared a German invasion of Russia through Iran (Blake 13). Reza Shah was fascinated by Germany and hoped to benefit from its experience and technology to build a strong modern state. It was estimated that more than one thousand German experts were present in Tehran alone then (Bill 18). In fact, the Germans were considered to be of benefit to Iran economically as they contributed to the implementation of the Shah's long-term project of modernization that he had embarked upon earlier.

Reza Shah was a modernizing king of military background who founded modern Iran and helped his country to survive thanks to his political skills. He was a colonel in the Cossack brigade, who succeeded in overthrowing the Qajar monarchy and establishing his

own dynasty that he named “Pahlavi”. He declared himself the monarch of Persia in 1925. He sought to utilize Germany as a third force to counterbalance the two traditionally influential powers in Iran: Britain and Russia that James Bill, Iran authority, called them “predatory creatures” (5). The United States would be used later in a partnership that would last for more than three decades. The policy of inviting third forces in Iranian history had proved vital in the preservation of Iranian independence as Barry Rubin, Iran historian, argued (29). It also helped in sowing a sense of vulnerability amongst Iranians that would motivate them later to pursue an independent course. The Shah’s reluctance to publicly side with the Allies during the Second World War claiming neutrality and to respond favourably to their demands cost him his political life. As a result, the Shah was forced to abdicate by the strong powers and his son Mohamed Reza Shah acceded to the throne in September 1941(Keddie and Richard 105). The deposed Shah died later in his South African exile in 1944.

The Allies’ splitting of Iran during the Second World War made Iranian officials obsessed with the issues of self-defence and political independence. During the war, the Allies divided Iran into three parts: the South under British domination, the North under Soviet control and the capital Tehran was declared a neutral zone (Abrahamian a History of Modern Iran 98). This episode manifested Iran’s vulnerability at that time that would later haunt the young monarch for life. He aligned with the US later in the hope of strengthening his country so that it would not be harassed in a similar fashion in the future. It is evident that this experience and that of how his father’s fate was decided by the superpowers had considerably influenced Iran and the young king and moulded his political behaviour (Rubin 18). The Shah’s fierce pursuit of political independence through the acquisition of weapons and the enormous suspicions that he held of the superior or powerful “*other*” who might

decide the destiny of his throne at any time were built on his painful experiences at an earlier stage of his life.

The Soviet Union was a valuable partner for the Allies in their war against the Axis powers. The Allies supported the Soviets by carrying supplies through Iran as the latter lacked access to warm water ports, creating what came to be called “the Persian Corridor”. The Allies took into consideration British interests in the South by protecting their oil wells there and securing their route to India from the Germans on one hand; On the other hand, they sought to protect Russia’s oil wells in Baku and to secure its Southern borders with Iran (Blake 6). Oil was one of the major reasons that invited the Allies to invade Iran. Disappointedly, Iran witnessed harsh economic conditions during the Allies presence on the Iranian soil that even a famine broke out. Furthermore, Iran’s political independence was undermined despite the pledges that were made by the three invading superpowers.

The Shah endeavoured during the invasion time to obtain a deal that would guarantee Iran’s independence and territorial integrity in the period after the end of the Second World War that he finally succeeded in obtaining with the help of the US in January 1942. The US secured the Tripartite Treaty after much negotiating with Britain and the Soviet Union who did not make efforts to hide their imperialist designs in Iran (Rubin 19). Interestingly, it formally made Iran part of the Allies’ camp (Afkhami 87). The Tripartite Treaty stipulated that the Allies’ had to promise to withdraw their forces from the Iranian soil six months after the end of hostilities. With the Japanese surrender, the Allies were supposed to pull their troops out of Iran before March 5, 1946 in compliance with the provisions of the Tripartite Treaty. To their chagrin, The Soviets showed no willingness to have their troops evacuated. Stalin invoked the 1921 friendship treaty that permitted Iran to deploy its troops in the South of Iran should third party forces invade Iran so as to have their borders secured (Hess 130). To add insult to injury, they fomented secessionist tendencies in Iran amongst the Azeris and

the Kurds' communities. The Azeri and the Kurdish minorities had long-held unmet demands against the central government that most of them were economic and political (Blake 35). The Soviets were driven by their longstanding fear of "encirclement" by rival capitalist powers that Khrushchev criticized in 1958 (Ball 67). This motive would thrive for the rest of the Cold War. Of utmost importance was the fact that the Soviets sought to gain a foothold in Iran, or to prevent its alignment with the United. It was part of their strategy after the Second World War to control the newly independent states by "ideology" and assistance (Ball 2). Besides, the Iranian troops were prevented from quelling these secessionist movements. As a result, Iran lodged a complaint against Russia before the newly created international body, the United Nations, one of the first cases to be treated by the UN then. Washington had encouraged Tehran to pursue such a course of action and offered it full support (Cottam 69). The US gave more importance to the conflict since a communist republic was declared by the Azeris (Bill 34).

The occupying superpowers jockeyed for oil concessions during the war that were firmly resisted by Iranian politicians. Oil was more of a curse than a blessing to Iran as its modern history bore out. It became an important substance since the First World War and crucial for the calculations of the Second World War. Interestingly, it caused Iran great troubles either at that time or for times to come. Nevertheless, Iran was not immune to the superpowers' pressures to obtain oil concessions. American companies struggled to gain oil concessions from the Iranian government during the war (Blake 12). The Soviets also were interested in securing an oil concession in the North of Iran. In 1944, they sent a high-ranking official to Tehran to investigate the matter with his Iranian counterparts (Bill 28). Mohamed Mossadeq, a deputy, in order to end this race over his country's oil wealth proposed a bill forbidding the state from granting any oil concession until the departure of foreign troops stationed in Iran. The Majlis ratified it in December 1944 (Bill 29). Iran was being bullied

by the three superpowers including Britain that looked suspiciously at any potential competitors since it monopolized the oil industry in Iran.

After the US had thrown its weight behind Iran by encouraging them to take their issue to the UN, it was the turn of the Iranians to act by themselves to expel the Soviets and maintain their territorial integrity. The containment of the Soviet Union was to begin in Iran. In February 1946, Ahmed Qavam, an aristocrat of seventy years old, assumed the premiership in Iran in 1946. He occupied several political positions before including that of prime minister in 1921. Prime Minister Ahmed Qavam was praised for the resolution of this controversial conflict that was considered by some historians as the first round of the Cold War. In retrospect, oil triggered this Cold War battle. Prime Minister Qavam went to Moscow in the same month to meet with Soviet leaders there in the hope of reaching a compromise (Rubin 33). He met Joseph Stalin and witnessed the passing of the deadline for troops' withdrawal while he was in Russia. In return, The Soviets gave him an offer, he already knew of their interests in an oil concession in the North, of a joint oil company to be run on 51 - 49 percent basis (Hess 136). Therefore, the Soviet leaders would withdraw their troops and give up their support for the Azeris and the Kurds. The oil concession was subject to Majlis approval. In exchange, Qavam pledged that the elections would subsequently take place seven months after the withdrawal (Bill 57). It means that he assured them of the election of a subservient Majlis that would ratify the treaty.

Qavam ended the 1946 crisis skilfully. The communist threat and Soviet expansion were the main fears of the Shah (Pollack 48). Surprisingly, to show his supposedly good intentions, Qavam allowed the Tudeh activities to continue without harassing them. He even included three Tudeh ministers in his cabinet in July 1946, to be dismissed later in October 1946, a month before he invaded Azerbaijan (Blake 40-41). Prime Minister Qavam was forced to reconsider the appointment of the Tudeh ministers because his toleration of

Tudeh's activity was not unanimously welcomed in Iran then. He used the legislative elections that did not take place yet as a pretext to restore order and to take over Azerbaijan again (Blake 54). The Soviets kept on pressuring Qavam to accelerate the electoral process. The Majlis that convened in October 1947 refused the concession with an overwhelming majority (Fawcett 384). The Soviets threatened to retaliate but they did not do so because they ostensibly were busy in other parts of the world. The US played an important role in having Soviet troops pulled out of Iran. The fight over political and economic privileges in Iran best represented the Cold War at that time (Bill 31). It can be said that US containment of the Soviet Union worked well in Iran.

The US started to cement its relationship with Iran that would later become its reliable ally in a geostrategically important region, the Persian Gulf. The US had supported Iran politically, especially in the United Nations during the 1946 Soviet crisis. Not only this incident was responsible for Iran's tilt to the US, the Shah was seeking a protector — a counterbalancing third power. Washington was reluctant at first to gain influence in the region because it was preoccupied with Western Europe and Japan. The Persian Gulf was historically under the domination of Britain, at least from the late eighteenth century (Holden 721). After the Second World War, Washington contemplated seriously the idea of establishing a foothold in the Persian Gulf region because of the declining power of the British Empire that would officially materialize later in 1971. In the same vein, it has been argued that oil was the main motive behind the US search for influence in the Middle East (Naseem Khan 197). The Azerbaijan crisis marked the beginning of a long story of partnership between the US and Iran that would reach its zenith after 1953 and last for more than three decades. Christen Blake argued, "Archival documents reveal that between 1941 and 1953, the US did not have well-defined interests in Iran. Rather, Iran served as a buffer for US oil interests in Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf" (194).

The Cold War pushed Washington to commit to defending pro-Western regimes in the Middle East, including Iran. During the Cold War, the American policy had four important objectives to attain in the Middle East: to maintain the steady flow of oil, to guarantee the security of Israel, to limit the expansion of the Soviet Union and its communist ideology and to defend its allies in the region (Halabi 2). The Soviet Union constituted the centrepiece of the containment strategy. President Harry Truman declared his doctrine in March 1947 that allocated large funds to Turkey and Greece to enable them to eliminate the communist threat to their regimes in his quest to have the interests of his country in the Middle East protected. Iran's huge oil reserves, its good diplomatic relations with Israel and its staunch stance against the Soviets and communism endeared it to Washington. It would recommend domestic reforms as the best weapon against Soviet intimidation or leftist-led uprisings (Rubin 36). Dean Acheson, undersecretary of state, said, "Iran would never be able to defend itself against a determined attack by the USSR, and, therefore, that task should be left to American deterrence" (qtd in Pollack 49). The US saw Iran as a weak and shaky regime as opposed to its counterparts Greece and Turkey (Rubin 37). The US gave small amounts of military and economic aid to Iran.

The Shah felt the need to handle his internal affairs with a mailed fist. For years after the war, the young Shah still felt vulnerable and unable to act with courage politically until the opportunity presented itself with the assassination attempt on him in February 1949 that he barely survived. He capitalized on it to acquire more constitutional and political privileges like, among others, the important prerogative that of the right to unilaterally dissolve the Majlis (Goode 22). Unsurprisingly, The Shah dissolved the Majlis, banned the activities of Tudeh Party (The Masses Party), the political party of the communists, and cracked down on its members (Ansari 125). The Shah never ceased expressing his suspicions of Soviet machinations. He looked with a wary eye on any politician who tended to enjoy a support

base among the populace. James Goode in his book, *the United States and Iran 1946-4951: the Diplomacy of Neglect* argued that the Shah subsequently followed a policy of building up his power and not accepting the nomination of any prime minister of independent tendencies (19). A lesson he learned from his father was not to trust any political heavyweight in Iran. He worked diligently over the years to have most powers concentrated in his own hands and to eliminate all his potential rivals.

1-2: The 1953 Coup d'état: Shah's Legitimacy in Question

The story of the Iranian oil nationalization crisis, which began in 1951 when Prime Minister Mohamed Mossadeq nationalized the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC), culminated in the overthrow of Mossadeq. It coincided with the emergence of the movements of anti-colonialism and nationalism in the fifties, which led to the spread of calls for nationalization among Third World countries (Bill 51). Doctor Mossadeq, who had founded the National front in 1949: a coalition of several parties and different political actors, led the movement that called for controlling their oil wealth instead of the British. Iranians' sensitivity to the British and the Russians was clear then. The Nationalization bill that was a far possibility at that time soon found a receptive audience that would adopt it, mainly due to the Iranians' growing sense of nationalism that arrived at its zenith in 1947 to resurface strongly again in 1951 (Goode Iran and the US 1946-1951 46). The decline of British influence in the world encouraged the political elite to proceed with its plan, convinced of the fairness of their cause and their ability to stand up to any strong power.

Reza Shah waged a losing battle against the British in 1932 to cancel the D'Arcy concession. It enraged the British who had resorted to gunboat diplomacy to force him to sign a new agreement in 1933 (Bayandor 12). It stipulated increasing the royalties from four to six shillings per ton, reducing the concession space and extending the concession for

another thirty years (Goode Iran 46). In 1949, the nationalists, who were spurred by their parliamentary majority and driven by dire economic circumstances, expected a dramatic reversal in the terms of the concession (Pollack 53). They reached an agreement in October 1950 that was christened the Supplemental Oil Agreement (SOA). Kenneth Pollack, Iran authority, explained that:

All they were willing to offer was an increase in the minimum annual royalty to £4 million, a further reduction in the area in which AIOC could drill, and a promise to train more Iranians for administrative positions....Iran had made £16 million that year, so the increase in the minimum royalty was irrelevant; the reduced AIOC concession area would still contain all of Iran's proven oil fields; and the company had repeatedly flagrantly disregarded its previous promises to train and promote Iranians. (54)

The Shah eventually succumbed to their pressure and asked his Prime Minister to submit the bill to the Majlis for ratification. Prime Minister Razmara took out the agreement from the Majlis that was studying it because he sensed that Iran had to look for a fair deal similar to that of Venezuela with the oil foreign companies in 1948 and the prospective deal with ARAMCO that was officially signed one month later (Bayandor 28). The fifty-fifty profit split deal that was reached between Saudi Arabia and the US had killed the deal definitively according to the British Foreign Office (qtd in Abrahamian the Coup 91). US companies had already supported the AIOC because they were afraid their contracts might face the same predicament elsewhere (Rubin 75). In other words, they feared the spread of nationalist sentiments, which might provoke such conflicts over oil in Third World countries.

The Shah felt the need to secure the ratification of the bill because he was well aware of the economic and political ramifications awaiting Iran. The Shah replaced his former Prime Minister, who was reluctant to support the Supplemental Oil Agreement for fear of hurting public sentiments, with a General, Ali Razmara. Razmara vehemently defended it in the Majlis arguing that Iran lacked the technological capabilities to run such an industry

(Abrahamian the Coup 91). Razmara had had a fifty-fifty profit split offer in his pocket but he was biding his time before making it public in order to let the emotional nationalist fervour of the Iranians subside. Unfortunately, he was assassinated on March 7, 1951 (Goode Iran 90). Richard Cottam, Iran historian, argued that Razmara was aware that he could not simultaneously accept a new offer and survive politically (91).

Two weeks after Razmara's assassination, the Majlis had ratified the nationalization bill. During the discussion of the bill in the Majlis, Mossadeq did not reject his nomination for the premiership but conditioned it on the ratification of the nationalization bill (Kinzer 82). His mainly-used rallying themes were to expel all the vestiges of imperialism from Iran, to nationalize the AIOC and to limit the Shah's powers. The Shah finally signed the bill two days later, officially taking control of the AIOC from the British. The CIA estimated that the elevation of Mossadeq to the premiership constituted a radical departure in Iran's political development (FRUS Iran 1951-1954 130). The British expressed their anger at this agreement threatening Iran of military retaliation to restore control over the AIOC if it were taken one-sidedly (qtd in Bayandor 34). By contrast, the Americans showed understanding for the Iranian decision to nationalize their oil with the caveat that fair compensation be paid to the British, embarking on such initiative in order not to antagonize Iran for fear of driving it into Soviet arms and waiting to act at the opportune moment (FRUS Iran 1952-1954 51). Washington favoured the settlement of the crisis through diplomatic means because they viewed the problem through Cold War lenses, which required a wise strategy on their part.

The British regarded the nationalization of the AIOC as a humiliating blow to their own prestige in the Middle East that might set an example for other countries to follow if it worked. The British already considered the option of a military strike. Operation Buccaneer" was planned to siege the island of Abadan and force the Iranians to let the Tankers head for Iran and recover the oil industry. This mission was supposed to be undertaken by the royal

navy, air force and the army (qtd in Gasiorowski and Byrne 133). McGhee reported to the US embassy in Washington that, “the US saw grave dangers in, and could not contemplate support for, any military action by Britain” (FRUS Iran 1952-1954 56). President Truman did not support a military strike against Iran for fear of a Soviet invasion that could be justified by the 1921 friendship treaty (Bayandor 33). In return, the US supported Mossadeq, offering US mediation in the dispute hoping for a diplomatic solution to the crisis. Washington’s attitude reflected the increasing importance of Iran, especially during the Cold War.

In October 1951, a new Conservative government was installed in Britain under the leadership of Winston Churchill. In his electoral campaign, Churchill castigated Attlee’s government for its soft attitude towards Iran (Kinzer 132). President Truman was known for his attitude that advocated that the crisis had to be settled only through diplomatic means because any use of gunboat diplomacy as that supported by Churchill would inevitably drive the Iranians into Soviet arms. The victory of Eisenhower in the American elections would change the political scene completely. Barry Rubin, an expert on Iran, stated in his book; *Paved with Good Intentions*, the difference between Eisenhower and Truman as follows:

while Truman and Acheson felt social change was inevitable— and thus should be encouraged in a manner consistent with American interests— Eisenhower and Dulles tended to see reform movements as disruptive and as likely to be captured by local Communists. The Iran experience marked the transition from a United States foreign policy based on the first perception to one based on the second. (57)

President Truman was determined to reach a settlement of the crisis. He gave a final offer to Mossadeq that was supported by Churchill in February 1953 and committed Iran to pay just compensation to AIOC in addition to loans from the US that could be repaid with oil (Ruehsen 472). Mossadeq rejected it out of hand. It marked the last diplomatic attempt to end this dispute amicably. More importantly, Mossadeq supposedly expected another

advantageous deal under the incoming president Eisenhower. Mossadeq's hands were tied since he became a slave to the mood of the Iranians then. Eisenhower was convinced of the futility of negotiating with Mossadeq as long as all the diplomatic solutions were exhausted (Bayandor 73).

After the legislative elections in July 1952, Mossadeq submitted the list of his cabinet members. To the surprise of the Shah, Mossadeq named also the minister of war. It was the prerogative of the Shah to appoint to this post (Kinzer 135). The army was the sole guarantor of his dynasty's stay in power. In a dispatch from US embassy in Tehran to the State Department, it was argued, "At present, the army is the main source of power for the Shah. If he should win control of the army, Mosadeq might not be so firm in his opposition but probably he will always fear and distrust military might" (FRUS Iran 1951 1954 207). Doctor Mohammed Mossadeq was exploiting the popular support granted to him to acquire new powers. Consequently, he tendered his resignation and the Shah appointed Ahmed Qavam in his place (Abrahamian the Coup 168). A popular uprising calling for the return of Mossadeq followed. He was reinstated after four consecutive days of protest that left several people dead (Kinzer 139-140). His allies, who rallied people to his support, organized the demonstrations succeeding in weakening the Shah politically. Ayatollah Kashani, who was threatened by Qavam before, rushed to support Mossadeq in his demand for extraordinary powers from the Majlis for six months. Mossadeq acquisition of those powers would later turn his allies against him, especially with the increasing impact of the worsening economic situation (Bill 66). This event also demonstrated the emergence of a new political force that was "the mob" as noted by George Middleton, the British Chargé d'Affaire in Tehran (qtd in Kinzer 142). Dean Acheson, US Secretary of State, had concluded that Mossadeq "emerged in a stronger position vis-à-vis the Shah, the Majlis, and the public than at any other time since the nationalization of oil in April 1951" (FRUS Iran 1952-1954 415). On

the contrary, Ali Ansari argued, “there is little hope in forsaking the support of key social groups and relying increasingly on the Tehran mob, Mossadeq had fatally weakened his own position and essentially invited the possibility of a successful coup”(136).

The National Front coalition began to fall apart. Additionally, Ayatollah Kashani broke with Mossadeq over cabinet appointments and the extension of the extraordinary powers (Rahnema 260). The religious class withdrew its support from him as he strived to marginalize them politically. The defection of Kashani deprived Mossadeq of the support of a large segment of the population that would prove decisive in the fall of Mossadeq (Cottam 91). In Shi’a doctrine, people tend to follow the instructions of their Imams mindlessly. Moreover, Toiler’s Baqai and Nationalist Hussein Makki defection had visibly weakened Mossadeq. They were acting against him because they felt being marginalized (Rahnema 30). The loss of his former National Front allies pushed him to rely on the support of the Tudeh party. The communists found a political vacuum that they could fill. Robert Zaehner estimated that the defection was caused by Britain and it did not happen spontaneously (Darioush 238). The Americans were aware of the effective influence of Kashani, hoping to recruit him even through granting him money because of his increasing influence not as a spiritual leader but as a schemer who is capable of obtaining the funds to call out mobs from the bazaar section of Tehran (Gasiorowski 268). It displayed the efforts that were made by the Anglo-Americans and his domestic adversaries to have Mossadeq dismissed at whatever cost. However, the role played by the domestic opposition was underestimated in most 1953 Iranian coup’s literature. The Shah felt his throne threatened by his Prime Minister Mossadeq. He had learned from his father’s ascension to power never to let any powerful figure appear on the domestic political scene as a precautionary measure against future coups d’état. Therefore, he chose to leave Iran, claiming medical reasons but apparently he hoped that his people would turn on Mossadiq and call for his immediate return, staging a soft coup.

In response, Kashani gathered a large crowd that demanded the cancellation of the Shah trip abroad and the removal of Mossadeq. This incident can be considered as a “mini-coup” against Mossadeq (Kinzer 49). After February 28, Dulles sent to Eisenhower “The Iranian situation has been slowly disintegrating” and “A communist takeover is becoming more and more of a possibility” (FRUS Iran 1951-1954 469). This statement was symptomatic of Mossadeq’s frequent invocation of the Tudeh threat in order to push the Americans to lend him support. Unsurprisingly, this policy would eventually backfire on him.

The absence of oil revenues hurt the economy further and affected directly the Iranians’ lives and, therefore, Mossadeq’s reputation as well. The sharp decline of oil revenues from 660.000 Barrel per day (b.p.d) in 1950, 340000 B.Pd. in 1951 to 20000 b.p.d. in 1953 had strained the economy leading the government of Mossadeq to take austerity measures (Pollack 61). Mossadeq started considering the option of an “oil-less economy” in the hope of creating an economy that did not rely much on oil (Bayandor 174). The deteriorating economic situation had lessened popular approval for his policies that weakened him more during the sensitive months of 1953. He strove to enhance his public image but he did not succeed because the AIOC dispute had become both political and economic. In April, the American consul at Tabriz in a message sent to his embassy had stated:

It was apparent the Prime Minister’s hold over Azerbaijan had “weakened visibly” during the previous two months. The Consul noted an increasing amount of publicly expressed opposition to Mossadeq indicating a decline in his personal prestige, and that the attempt of the Prime Minister to undermine the Throne had resulted in increasing the Shah’s prestige “to the detriment of Mossadeq. (FRUS Iran 1951-1954 614)

It became clear to the US and Britain that Mossadeq would not be removed by peaceful means. Prime Minister Mossadeq had sensed that his adversaries in Iran were trying to oust him illegally by giving him a vote of no confidence at the Majlis (Rahnema 285). The entry of Kermit Roosevelt, head of CIA Near East division, to Iran alarmed Mossadeq

who felt that a conspiracy was being prepared to overthrow him; Consequently, the first step that Mossadeq took then was to call for a referendum on dissolving the Majlis in order to avert such a course of action (Bayandor 165). Unsurprisingly, the crushing majority of voters favoured the dissolution of the Majlis. Mossadeq's dissolution of the Majlis this way affected badly his credentials as a democratic prime minister. It also offered his adversaries a pretext to dismiss him should the moment arise, which question the conventional wisdom that held the Anglo-American forces exclusively responsible for the overthrow of Mossadeq. His faults and miscalculations drove him to political bankruptcy.

The US was already engaged in subversive activities in Iran that were directed against the Tudeh party and the communists under a program that was called: BEDAMN. Its agents, Jalali Ahmed and Farokh Kayvani, were later instructed with working to undermine Mossadeq and his National Front. BEDAMN was a propaganda and political action program with a fund of one million per year (Gasiorowski 268). The SIS used the Rashidian Brothers who were charged with leading their intelligence network after the break of Iranian relations with Britain in September 1952 (Bayandor 67). The station started attacking Mossadeq through grey propaganda (Wilber New York Times). The propagandist activities, as mentioned in Wilber report, were meant to outrage the clerics and to convince the Iranians of Mossadeq's abuse of power and the danger of Tudeh's rise to power. Richard Cottam estimated that four fifths of the existing newspapers were under their influence and manipulation (Kinzer 6). They endeavoured to undermine Mossadeq to have the flow of oil resumed and the communist threat eliminated.

The Americans toyed with the idea of recruiting the British to help them in their plan to remove Mossadeq. Secret Intelligent Service (SIS) met Kermit Roosevelt in Britain to find out his position vis-à-vis the coup to overthrow Mossadeq (Kinzer 151). The advent of Eisenhower led the Americans to give a favourable response to the British. After the election

of Eisenhower, Christopher Montague Woodhouse, a SIS senior agent, came to Washington to meet top CIA agents and State Department officials: He illustrated that, “Not wishing to be accused of trying to use the Americans to pull British chestnuts out of the fire, I decided to emphasize the Communist threat to Iran rather than the need to recover control of the oil industry” (Kinzer 3).

General Zahedi met Kermit Roosevelt whose mission was to convince Zahedi to assume the premiership, replacing Mossadeq (Ruehson 478). He had a long fruitless session with the Shah who did not want to risk his throne. The Shah was informed, “the Shah should realize that failure to act could lead only to a Communist Iran or to a second Korea. Roosevelt concluded by saying that his government was not prepared to accept these possibilities and that some other plan might be carried through” (Wilber New York Times). In the same report, it had been noted that Roosevelt even warned the Shah about having his throne overthrown by Mossadeq. According to Wilber, the author of the authoritative CIA document on the coup, Roosevelt insisted, “should the Shah fail to go along with the US representatives or fail to produce the required documents, Zahedi would be informed that the US would be ready to go ahead without the Shah’s active cooperation” (New York Times). They even solicited the help of his sister who told the Shah to meet General Norman Schwarzkopf who was coming to Iran on a similar mission. When he met the Shah on 26 July 1953, Schwarzkopf asked him to sign two farmans, one replacing Mossadeq with Zahedi as prime minister and the other exhorting the army to support the new prime minister (Rahnema 77). He was also to guarantee to the Shah the collaboration between Britain and the US in this mission (Wilber New York Times). The Shah eventually accepted to sign the Farman and left for Karmanshah Island. General Nassiri delivered the Farman to Mossadeq on the night of 15 August 1953. Mossadeq claimed the Farmans were a forgery and arrested

Nassiri. The Shah fled to Baghdad and issued a statement telling the Iranians that he dismissed Mossadeq because he flouted the constitution (Kinzer 177).

Kermit Roosevelt never gave up on his mission to overthrow Mossadeq. He exploited the domestic situation to his favour by leading fake Tudeh rallies in support of the Shah: they looted shops and governmental headquarters, in addition to desecrating mosques (Wilber New York Times). It was carried out by hired mobs under the leadership of Jalali and Keyvani in the name of Tudeh. Most religious leaders received threatening hate letters from alleged Tudeh activists as a part of the plan to make people feel the communist danger and to rebel against Mossadeq as mentioned in Wilber's report. The pro-Mossadeq mobs clashed with the police and the army who displayed openly their sympathy for the Shah (Wilber New York Times). Roosevelt sent Ambassador Henderson to Mossadeq to complain about the way American nationals were harassed, and threatened to pull out all Americans from Iran (Ruehson 479). Mossadeq called the chief of police and ordered him to ban demonstrations. On the morning of the August 19, pro-Shah hired mobs with the cooperation of the army and the police dominated Tehran. Subsequently, Fazlollah Zahedi declared himself the lawful prime minister. Mossadeq was eventually overthrown. The mission of rooting out Mossadeq finally paid off. Popular discontent with Mossadeq contributed to the success of the Anglo-American mission.

The Shah focused on consolidating his rule after the bitter experience of the 1953 coup. He appointed General Fazlollah Zahedi as a prime minister following the fall of Mussadiq. Iran was living through harsh economic conditions and a growing budget deficit due to the lack of sufficient oil revenues. General Zahedi had three issues to attend to: the first was that of remedying the economic situation, the second related to putting an end to Tudeh activities and the last one was that of the oil industry (Blake 95). The US offered Zahedi economic assistance in order to reiterate their commitment to the stability of Iran

(Rubin 87). Zahedi later turned to the economic dilemma to settle. He agreed to the creation of a consortium that would be in charge of the oil industry in Iran: 40 per cent to the AIOC; 40 per cent to five American oil companies and the rest divided between two French and Dutch oil companies (Kinzer 195-196). What interested the Shah was the flow of oil money back into the Iranian economy in the hope of improving the living conditions of his people and resuming his development plans.

The US kept on implementing its containment strategy in order to ensure that its allies were protected and its interests maintained throughout the world. They were not ready to lose the intensifying Cold War race in favour of their adversary: the Soviet Union. Washington devised a strategy during the fifties that of encouraging its allies to form military alliances in different areas of the world, *inter alia*, the Middle East. Small states were urged to make bilateral military agreements with each other. As a result, the Baghdad Pact, which was declared officially in February 1955, came into existence (Rubin 97). It was the fruit of a long-time work done by its signatories: Iraq, Pakistan, Turkey and Iran that joined them later in April 1955. Apparently, the Shah was motivated to join the Pact by his desire to receive more military assistance from the US. "The flow of American military grants and advisors helped expand and reorganize the Iranian army. This was both to strengthen the shah's government against internal opposition and to provide a first line of resistance to the Soviet Union in case of the outbreak of a local or a global war" (Katouzian 256). The Shah's adherence to the Baghdad Pact aroused the anger of the USSR and Egypt (Keddie and Richard 139). The Soviets were historically obsessed with the idea of being encircled by foreign powers, because they perceived it as a cordon sanitaire being put around them. The shah also learned the lesson of the 1953 coup when pro-monarchy forces fought the radical nationalists and the leftists to save his throne (Sanjian 232). Engaging his country in alliances and pacts would guarantee for him the stability of his throne and the protection of Iran from

the Soviets. President Djamal Abdel Nacer was against the pact since its very inception (Bill 196). Besides, two parties were created in order to broaden the base of support of this regime and to open the political space for Iranians. The Shah instead of lessening the external and internal threats to his regime chose to increase hostility to his throne in a calculated move that was intended to please his American patrons with whom he was engaged in a “*cliency relationship*” as Mark. J. Gasiorowski preferred to describe the bilateral partnership in his book *US Foreign Policy and the Shah Building a Client State in Iran*, because they guaranteed him the longevity of his dynasty.

On the domestic scene, the Shah was stressed over the increasing domestic unrest and the menace it posed to the stability of his regime. He established his independent intelligence apparatus that was called SAVAK (The Secret Intelligence Organization of Iran) in 1957 (Ansari 171). It was founded with the help of Mossad, the Israeli intelligence agency, and the CIA. It served mainly to maintain order in Iran and to be the Shah’s omnipresent man to prevent the rise of any threat that might threaten the Peacock Throne. The establishment of this institution, which would acquire notoriety during the subsequent years, reflected the critical situation that Iran witnessed then and the shah’s determination to be in control of Iran’s internal scene.

President Eisenhower, sensing the danger that could affect his allies proclaimed his doctrine in 1957 that pledged US help for some pro-Western Middle Eastern countries threatened by international communism. Eisenhower demanded that the Congress provide him with 200 million dollars in foreign aid to help countries in the region economically and militarily and Djamel Abd Nasser felt targeted by this scheme (Tyler 59). It was proclaimed as a reaction to the crises that began to emerge following the humiliating defeat of the old imperial powers in the Suez in 1956. The rise of the strong leader Djamel Abd Nasser, President of Egypt alarmed the US because he was perceived to be following the dictates of

the Soviet Union: other pro-Soviet Arab states were targeted by this doctrine also (Khalidi 26). It comforted US allies in the region and signalled American commitment to the protection of pro-Western regimes in the Middle East.

In 1959, the soviets approached the Shah to sign a non-aggression treaty. The Shah welcomed it at first because he thought the notorious provisions of the 1921 Russo-Iranian treaty would be dropped down as part of the deal. He hoped also for the improvement of the bilateral relations with the Soviet Union in order to reduce their hostility to Iran and, hence, stop relying much on the US and to be able to turn to other external threats and forge independent policies (Alvandi *Flirting with Neutrality* 419). Initially, the Shah wanted to send signals to the US that he would turn elsewhere for weapons and aid as his Foreign Minister Hekmet warned the British ambassador then (qtd in Alvandi *Flirting with Neutrality* 425). The Shah was eager to act independently to whitewash his image that of America's puppet. He also engaged in an intimidating game with the Americans to get the upper hand in their relationship, which would work out later but at his expense. The fall of the Iraqi monarchy in July 1958 frightened the Shah and propelled him to revise the way he conducted his policies and to allay his fears about the Soviets. In 1958, General Qarani planned to plot a coup d'état against the Shah. He even approached some officials at the American embassy who did not inform the Shah. The Qarani affair showed how the opposition to the Shah increased at those turbulent times and manifested American presumably unclear stance towards Iran (Gasiorowski *The Qarani Affair* 625). It seemed that the Shah used it as a ploy to pressure the US to offer him more concessions because he thought that only concessions could guarantee him an independent foreign policy in the near future.

The Soviets erred when they presented their offer of signing a non-aggression treaty by not including the abandonment of the 1921 treaty as part of it and conditioned its signing on Iran's withdrawal from the Baghdad Pact. President Eisenhower upon learning of the

negotiations sent a letter to the Shah in which he demonstrated to him the dangers that might arise following the signing of this treaty (qtd in Alvandi *Flirting with Neutrality* 428-430). In return, the Shah agreed to sign a bilateral agreement with the US that agreed to come to his help in case of foreign aggression. Kristen Blake considered this crisis as “the second flare up of the cold war tensions in Iran since 1946” (146). Roham Alvandi, Iran historian argued that this episode was more of a matter of assertion of independence for the Shah than an act of blackmail as most Iran scholars interpreted it (*Flirting with Neutrality* 419-440). Arguably, the Shah hoped to achieve the two goals together because they are symbiotic. The USSR would retaliate by launching a propaganda campaign against the Shah.

1-3 John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson: The Failure of U.S. Pressure for Reform

With disappointment, the Shah received the news of the victory of the Democratic candidate John Fitzgerald Kennedy over his Republican rival and his long-time friend Richard Nixon in the presidential elections. He supported Richard Nixon in the presidential election because he feared being forced to reform by the Democrats (Bill 137). Kennedy made it known that his strategy for third world countries rested on encouraging political and economic reforms (Bill 131). It was said that the Shah had partly financed Nixon’s campaign. The New Frontiersmen’s foreign policy agenda was not to the liking of the Shah because “it stressed economic development, social change, and political reform over conventional military assistance” (Pollack 81). The Kennedy administration saw reform as the best guarantee of stability for the Shah’s regime that could keep the communist threat away. It was bent on encouraging reform to preserve the stability of pro-Western regimes (Nemchnok 343). In the same context, James Good, a historian, argued that Kennedy had

predicted change in the Third World and wanted to act to save what could be saved by encouraging reform instead of dispensing military aid (Reforming Iran 13).

President Kennedy assumed office when the anti-colonial struggle was fashionable in the Third World. He dedicated his efforts to supporting these anti-imperialist movements in order to lure them into his orbit and deprive the Soviets of new allies due to the importance of the number of new friends each camp won then. In his inaugural address, Kennedy stated, “those who make reform impossible will make revolutionary change inevitable.” The Shah felt that he was concerned with Kennedy’s message (Pollack 81). Kennedy did not want to repeat Eisenhower’s mistakes by supporting dictatorial regimes that were later lost to the communist camp like Iraq (1958) and Cuba (1959) (Warne 6). Kennedy justified the pressures that he had put on those regimes to reform by warning them that they would face the prospects of being overthrown by the communists in their own respective countries. The shah was upset about the US “Liberals” tendency to push others to adopt Western democracy (qtd in Popp 218). Roland Popp argued, “The Kennedy administration internal meddling in the internal affairs of Iran also strengthened US identification of the US with the Shah’s oppressive regime in the eyes of the Iranian people, laying the foundation for the strong anti-Americanism expressed during the Iranian revolution of 1978/9” (218).

Reza Shah Pahlavi was open to good relations with the Soviet Union also especially after the failure of the Soviet attempts to persuade Iran to sign a non- aggression pact in 1959. The Shah worked diligently to keep amicable relations with the USSR and devote much of his historic suspicions to Arab nationalists who tended to constitute a threat to the stability of his regime and his hegemonic designs in the region. He was known for not enjoying good relations with any Arab state (Rubin 108). Interestingly enough, the Shah embarked on this diplomatic move in order to show his political independence from the US (Alvandi The Shah’s Détente 424). In 1962, he promised the Soviet leaders that he would

not allow foreign missiles to be based in Iran. His rapprochement with the USSR was of political and economic benefits to Tehran but never at the expense of his excellent partnership with the United States. His strategy of winning concessions from the US by approaching the Soviet Union prevented the development of any healthy relationship between the two states. He was confident that the domestic political scene was tightly under control and that he needed to obtain more concessions to serve his country's interests. The US was ready to meet his demands since he proved to be a reliable ally but it could not curb his ambitions that it frequently warned him against them.

At the outset, Iran, and the Middle East in general, were not of interest to Kennedy who was deeply involved in Berlin, Cuba and Vietnam (Popp 202). To Latin American countries, he destined a programme for them that was called "The Alliance for Progress." It consisted in persuading them of the benefit of reform from above as the best measure against unnecessary revolutions (Latham 69). The same ideas were suggested to be applied to Iran. Iran became of some interest to Kennedy only when he heard of Nikita conversation in April 1961 about Iran with Walter Lippmann in which he declared that Iran would fall because of misery and widespread corruption (Bill 132). Consequently, he started to put pressure on the Shah as soon as there appeared some tensions in his country then.

Iran witnessed economic difficulties at the beginning of the sixties that destabilized the Shah's regime. Teachers rose against the government to demand the lift of pay freeze and to express their dissatisfaction with the austerity measures (Pollack 82). Soon, other employees joined the demonstrations; even pupils took part in them. Following the increasing outrage in the wake of the murder of a teacher by the police forces, the Shah removed Prime Minister Shariff Imami and dissolved the Majlis (Katouzian 215). To deflect pressure from him, the Shah appointed Ali Amini, a competent technocrat who was much to

the liking of the Americans, as a prime minister (Rubin 106). It was interpreted in Iran as a flagrant US interference in their own internal affairs, which further hurt the Shah's image.

Prime Minister Ali Amini brought about a reformist agenda that would culminate later in the revolution of the Shah and the People, commonly known as the White Revolution. Ali Amini served as Iran ambassador to the US from 1956-1958. There, he forged good ties with American officials and particularly Richard Nixon and the Kennedy family (Collier 461). Ali Ansari argued that the Americans imposed Ali Amini as a prime minister on the Shah (173). Ali Amini's independence and ambitions reminded the Shah of powerful personalities like Mussadiq and Qavam. He rushed to have his services terminated fourteen months later, which shocked the Americans who had lost a valuable official on whom they counted to conduct internal reforms in Iran. On the other hand, Prime Minister Ali Amini did not go along with the Shah's inclination to increase military expenditures (Summit 567). Amini's term coincided with economic hardships in Iran that would lead to his removal later. "Though Amini had successfully curbed inflation, his harsh economic measures led to a drop in business confidence, investment rates, and a large increase in unemployment" (qtd in Collier 467). When the "worst of times" passed, Amini went with them. The Shah eliminated Amini because he did not want the US to dictate to him anymore. By removing Amini, he walked steadfastly toward political independence from the US.

Task Force on Iran was called by Kennedy in order to investigate the Iranian situation and to give recommendations. It was formed just after the teacher's strike and the instability that followed. James Goode divided Task Force members into two groups. First, the conservatives who were Cold Warriors who believed that reform might destabilize the domestic fronts of their allies. Hence, they told Kennedy to approach the subject of reform with prudence and refrain from meddling in Iran's internal affairs. Second, the traditionalists who claimed that the stability of the regime could be jeopardized by the mere attempt to

force the Shah to reform and they were in favour of maintaining the status quo (Reforming Iran 16-17). These contradictory views within the Kennedy administration hindered policymakers' efforts in formulating a clear policy towards Iran.

In order to appease the Kennedy administration, after the removal of Amini, and to show his willingness to comply with its dictates, the Shah declared his white revolution in January 1963 and submitted the bill to the people for vote in a referendum in March 1963. It revolved around land reform, profit sharing for industry workers, sales of state factories, votes for women and the foundation of the literacy corps (Ansari 198). It was meant as a social and economic reform. It was argued that, "What was missing from this vision was a political corollary emphasizing democratic representation and liberalization, resulting in the alienation of large sections of the population" (Popp 218). It eradicated the power of property owners who had constituted the largest proportion of the Shah's support base. The main share of the White Revolution was devoted to taking lands from the rich landlords to give it to peasants (Summit 569). It means that he intended to shift his support base to the peasantry and the middle class in general. Subsequently, the Shah would face the economic consequences of his policy especially on the agricultural sector that was damaged by the small farms. Also, it gave the Iranians new expectations that would not be met, which would cause disappointment (Pollack 58). The White Revolution drove the clergy and landlords to withdraw their full allegiance to the Shah (Rubin 265). The Shah started digging his own grave especially with the increasing repressive activities of his powerful secret security apparatus, the SAVAK.

The White Revolution provided the opportunity to Khomeini to mark his "political début" in the words of Richard Cottam, Iran authority. In March 1963, governmental forces attacked the Fayzieh Seminary in Qom after news reached Tehran that Imam Khomeini was delivering hateful sermons against the Shah. Khomeini increased his involvement in politics

particularly after the demise of Ayatollah Burudjerdi. Ayatollah Khomeini was freed by Burudjerdi's death that gave him the chance to engage in politics (Moin 62). The attack on Fayzieh School resulted in the deaths of many seminary students. In a sermon during the anniversary of the death of Hussein, he ferociously attacked the Shah in an unprecedented move during the Pahlavi era, ostensibly as a reaction against what happened in March and the security forces' continuous harassment of the clerics. He said:

Gentlemen, you must note that what has happened makes our future bleak and our responsibility heavy and difficult to bear. What is happening is a calculated plot against Iranian independence and the Islamic nation, and it is threatening the foundation of Islam ... One should not treat this incident like the quarrel over the [local government] bill. In that instance we were, at least superficially, against the government. That defeat was also a defeat for the government ... now we face the Shah himself, who is poised between life and death. He himself has said that his retreat over this issue would cause the destruction of his regime. So not only will he refuse to retreat, he will confront any opposition with force and savagery ... Nevertheless, we are duty-bound to resist him because what now threatens the people is of such enormity that it cannot be ignored or faced with indifference. (qtd in Moin 70)

Kennedy became more tolerant of the Shah's repressive tactics against his domestic adversaries (Collier 468). Khomeini capitalized on the 1963 attack to criticize the Shah's "unislamic" reforms (Moin 79). They were somehow inimical to the interests of the religious class like the nationalization of religious properties that were an important source of revenues to them and the enfranchisement of women. Upon his arrest on 5 June, two days after he had delivered the sermon, violent demonstrations broke out and the Shah ordered to shoot the demonstrators. He acted upon the counsel of his closest advisor Assadollah Alam whom he was going to miss strongly his wisdom later on during the Islamic revolution (Ansari 201). Eventually, he arranged for the release of Khomeini a few months later. This episode represented the second turning point in Iran's contemporary history after that of the Iranian 1953 coup d'état which was to decide the fate of the Pahlavi dynasty. It paved the way for the Shah to act mercilessly and to rule his country with an iron grip i.e. to enjoy

absolute powers. As a result, the religious class would prepare itself to rise up against the regime in the future. In addition, Iranians' grievances began to accumulate, which would boil the domestic front further.

The Shah hoped that Lyndon Johnson would initiate a break with his predecessor's policies. Kennedy's reign was prematurely ended when he was unexpectedly assassinated in November 1963. The assassination of John Kennedy freed the Shah from much pressure. The Shah enjoyed a good personal relationship with Lyndon Johnson whom he had met twice before when Johnson visited Tehran as vice president. Lyndon Johnson was always being sent away from the US due to his controversial attitudes in the US (Bill 139). The Shah hosted him heartily during his visits to Iran (Pollack 93). The personal relationship that the Shah had forged with Johnson contributed to the formulation of US policy toward Iran (Bill 154). President Johnson opted for a stable Iran and did not want to disturb the stability of the regime there as he had enough problems of his own country to look after. President Johnson's focus was on his domestic agenda and on his involvement in Vietnam in the realm of foreign policy (Johns 64). Iran was not a priority but the war in Vietnam made it clear that he had to retain Iran at whatever price possible. Therefore, Johnson never faltered in his support for the Shah for fear of losing Iran to the Soviet Union or dealing with another Iranian head of state by selling weapons to it no matter how detrimental this policy was economically (Offiler 71).

The first crisis that erupted during Johnson's presidency was the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) that was known in Iran as "the capitulation agreement". It created polemic all around Iran because it reminded them of the previous capitulations and their country's weakness and vulnerability. Iranians came to resent it because of its extraterritoriality and saw it as degrading (Pollack 94). After twelve days of its ratification, the Parliament voted for a loan of 200 million dollars financed by private American banks

for the purchase of weapons. It was perceived by the Iranians that their country had traded their pride for a loan. Iranians angrily expressed their hatred for the agreement. It was an incident that worsened US image amongst the Iranians. Khomeini attacked it scathingly saying:

If some American's servant, some American's cook, assassinates your *marja'* in the middle of the bazaar, or runs over him, the Iranian police do not have the right to apprehend him! Iranian courts do not have the right to judge him! The dossier must be sent to America, so that our masters there can decide what is to be done! (qtd in Moin 99)

It represented to Khomeini “surrender of Iranian and Islamic dignity that characterized what the Shah's supporters called “westernization”” (Cottam 137). He was eventually sent to his exile. Furthermore, this experience led the Iranians to hold him in a high esteem. It was the real beginning of the career of the most politicized cleric, who would later succeed in overthrowing the Peacock Throne. Surprisingly, the SOFA encouraged the Shah to move away from the US in order to improve his image in Iran (qtd in Johns 71).

After the SOFA, the Iranian domestic situation did not seem stable. In 1965, the Iranian Prime Minister, Ali Mansour was shot by the son of an ironworker at the mosque. Public discontent reached some worrying levels that endangered the stability of the regime (Bill 161). Moreover, investigations on the assassination led to the finding of armed religious groups (Pollack 98). These groups' bent was on the overthrow of the regime. The Shah was also the victim of an assassination attempt in the same year by one of his imperial guards. Despite the increasing oil revenues and the resultant improved standard of living, the Shah still lacked legitimacy in the eyes of his people, especially after the 1953 coup d'état that restored him to power. The stigma of illegitimacy can be traced back to the ascension of his father Colonel Reza Shah to the throne with the assistance of Britain after overthrowing the Qajar dynasty. He resorted to strengthening his repressive apparatus SAVAK that succeeded in quelling the 1963 riots that most Iranians feared its pervading presence.

The Shah clung tenaciously to his dream of becoming the regional hegemon or the gendarme of the Persian Gulf. There were early signs that a power vacuum would emerge in the region due the changing global political landscape and the decline of the old imperial powers. He kept asking for more weapons from the US that somehow responded positively, especially during the Johnson administration, though he was frequently cautioned against it. President Johnson accommodated the Shah by selling Tehran weapons and thus Iran became no longer an aid recipient or a mere client but a partner (McGlinchey 231). In 1964, Iran signed an agreement with the US in which it agreed to provide Iran with a loan to acquire weapons. In addition, the Shah succeeded in securing more other loans in 1966 and 1968. Armin Meyer, US ambassador to Iran in the late sixties, had argued, “Our whole relationship with the Shah, I think, depended on the military side of things. If we had left it to the Shah, during my days, the sky would have been the limit. He wanted everything...I was always trying to talk him out of equipment” (qtd in Copper 51). The Shah’s obsession with arms and his regional ambitions would blind him to his domestic scene, which would cause him a great deal of trouble despite prior US warnings for him. Ben Offiler argued, “The Johnson administration’s policy of sidelining questions of development, using military credit as a means of maintaining close relations with Tehran and seeking to placate the Shah’s personality on a number of issues showed remarkable continuity from the Kennedy years” (70).

Washington was determined to maintain the Shah’s regime at whatever cost despite his growing independent course in foreign policy matters because the Cold War logic dictated so. His independent course in foreign policy transpired with the economic agreement with the USSR in 1966 that was based on providing the latter with gas in return for the construction of steel plant in Iran. This move, among others, demonstrated “the shah’s appreciation of the limitations of US support and protection” that flowed from his realism

(Ansari 224). The US turned a blind eye at this rapprochement with the USSR in order to probably set the ground for his image inside Iran to be improved. He cited US reluctance to help Pakistan in its war with India in 1965 to request more weaponry from the US even implying that Iran could act as a proxy in case the US abstain from defending an ally in the region (Afkhami 298). The hostility of his Arab neighbours in the region was always raised as an important reason for his arming policies in order to be able to defend his throne and Western interests by getting prepared for all eventualities. The US reluctance to support Pakistan in the war led him to conclude, “The US could not be counted on to come to the Shah’s support in a pinch” (Pollack 97). He was more motivated than ever then to build his arsenal to defend his country because he was suspicious of all the superpowers. He wanted to build a strong independent Iran and he regarded arms as an indispensable ingredient of his project.

The Shah was concerned with the Arab-Israeli conflict because he was planning to assume a larger international role. During the 1967 war between the Arabs and Israel, the Shah took a neutral attitude and proved to be an ally of value when he allowed Western planes to fly over Iranian sky to the West. Tehran was a major supplier of oil to Israel at that time (Bialer 30). Egypt broke off its diplomatic relations with Iran in 1960 because of Iran’s cordial relations with Israel (qtd in Guerrero 118). Therefore, the Shah, throughout his long reign, was eager to see their rivals weakened to gain enough room of manoeuvre in the turbulent region of the Middle East to exert more influence. Again, the Shah courted Israel, which was influential in the US, because he sought the help of its lobby to get a good American media portrayal (Alpher 11). However, this was at the expense of his reputation in his own country, which was compounded by the growing anti-American sentiments that were generated recently by the SOFA and the Arab-Israeli war. Kennedy tried to persuade the Shah at the beginning of his term to make reforms but Johnson chose the reverse by

meeting his demands and arming him. Johnson policies would be followed by his successors. It can be said that he laid the ground for the establishment of a sick relationship that would not last for long. On the contrary, his foreign policy engagements required him to stick to the Cold War rules. What was remarkable also during the sixties was the fact that Iran began to gain an upper hand in its partnership with the US (Pollack 95).

1-4: Presidents Nixon and Ford: Iran's March to Hegemony

The election of Richard Nixon, who was an old friend of the Shah, would pave the way for the Shah to cement his relations with the US and, thus, secure its help in achieving his regional designs in the Persian Gulf region. The Republican President Richard Nixon knew the Shah from the fifties when he came to Iran on a mission after the 1953 coup d'état as Eisenhower's vice president (Bill 116). Nixon said of the Shah after their first meeting: "I sensed an inner strength in him, and I felt that in the years ahead he would become a strong leader" (qtd in Alvandi Nixon, Kissinger and the Shah 347-8). His personal relationship with the Shah persisted since then. The Shah resumed his friendship with Nixon during his 1967 visit to Tehran (Rubin 130). The Shah's ambassador to the US, and his former son-in-law, Ardeshir Zahedi kept both of them in touch and planned for the Shah to meet Nixon in 1967 when he stopped in Iran during his tour of the Middle East: Nixon recalled being treated well by the Shah when he was in hold of no political position (Afkhani 302). It was during that meeting that Nixon decided not to force traditional pro-Western regimes to conform to Western standards of democracy and human rights (Copper 29). Subsequently, this personal relationship would define the relationship between the two countries.

President Nixon's policies finally met the Shah's demands because he was preoccupied with the Cold War and more particularly his involvement in Vietnam. In his first years, Nixon pursued his predecessor's policies towards Iran unchangingly that of balancing between Tehran and Riyadh regionally (Alvandi Nixon and Kissinger 338). He

continued to seek to have leverage over the Shah by selling arms to Tehran. Nixon's deep involvement and his eagerness to honour his pledge of withdrawing with honour from Vietnam led him to declare his doctrine in 1969 at a stopover in Guam. It was about arming his allies in Asia to protect Western interests in the region instead of having it done by the Americans themselves. This doctrine was called "Vietnamization" when applied to Vietnam, replacing American soldiers with indigenous ones (Little 164). The change that the Shah had welcomed heartily in the hope of making his dream of restoring Persian supremacy by turning Iran into a regional force a reality.

Britain's proclamation of its withdrawal East of Suez had alarmed the Americans who rushed to convince them to go back on their decision and pleased the Shah who would be better served by the ensuing vacuum in the region. Harold Wilson, Britain's Prime Minister, confirmed the decision of officially withdrawing in January 1968 by saying to the House of Commons, "We shall...not be maintaining military bases outside Europe and the Mediterranean" (qtd in Longinotti 318). It was a decision that would be severely harmful to Britain's status in world politics. Moreover, the Shah was expecting the withdrawal for a long time in order to arrogate to himself the responsibility of patrolling the region and of assuming the position of the gendarme of the Gulf. America's involvement in Vietnam and public disgust with the very idea of an overseas commitment convinced it to turn to the Shah who was asking for assuming this abandoned position and task him with filling the void instead of Britain that had left. Roham Alvandi argued that, "The Shah convinced Nixon to break with Johnson policy of balancing Iran and Saudi Arabia as the "twin pillars" of the Persian Gulf and instead embrace Iran's primacy in the wake of British Withdrawal from East of Suez" (Nixon, Kissinger 371). The increasing oil revenues enabled him to apply for such a role. America's thought then, according to Kissinger, was to ask the Shah to prevent either the USSR or any other radical force from filling the vacuum that would form in the

region since his petro-dollars would finance his arms sales (qtd in Rubin 130). Further, in late 1971 following the British withdrawal, the Shah seized three islands that were situated at the mouth of the Hormuz strait (Bill 198). This period witnessed the consolidation of US-Iran relations after the departure of the British when the Shah made of Iran a regional power.

The Shah was sensitive to the rise of Iraq and its close relationship with Russia that culminated in the signing of a treaty of friendship in April 1972. He frequently expressed his fear of a rising General called Saddam Hussein (Copper 77). Despite his improving relations with Moscow, the Shah continued to suspect Soviet policies in the region out of fear for the security of his throne. Not the Soviets per se that he dreaded most but the pro-Soviet radical Arab states. This theme was used on different occasions to demand concessions from Washington and to ask them to arm his forces so that he could put up with his Iraqi neighbours. In 1969, Iraq declared that Shatt al Arab was entirely its own (Rubin 128). The 1937 treaty affirmed joint management, the very fact denied by Iraq. The Shah threatened Iraq several times. He would later resort to the Kurds whom he repressed harshly. The Kurds were dispersed and never gave up their aspirations of secession and creating a state of their own. Subsequently, the Shah would use them as soldiers in a proxy war against Iraq to pursue his strategic objectives. He financed the Kurds in cooperation with the US and Israel in order to exhaust Iran militarily and financially so that his powerful enemy would not pose a danger to his country and Israel (Bill 205). Eventually, the Shah would abandon the Kurds in 1975 for the sake of a treaty regarding the Persian Gulf with Iraq that was mediated by Algeria. He was blamed for this unwise move but he rather acted pragmatically.

Upon Nixon's visit to Iran in May 1972, he granted the Shah the privilege to purchase whatever weapon he liked short of atomic weapons. It was reported that Nixon looked straight at the Shah and said, 'Protect me,' and 'don't look at détente as something that weakens you but as a way for the United States to gain influence'(qtd in Afkhami 305). The

1972 “blank check” marked a sharp departure from the Twitchell Doctrine that was abandoned by Nixon. It was named after General Hamilton Twitchell, the head of US military mission in Iran in the sixties. He devised a plan through which military sales to Iran were tied to the state of the economy: Twitchell was also aware that supplying the Shah with weapons would pave the way for him to pursue independent policies (Copper 23). The Shah devoted a larger share of his petrodollars to purchase weapons without taking into considerations the consequences of his action. The bill of arms sales went up from 524 million dollars in 1973, 3.91 billion dollars in 1974, to reach the astronomical figure of 2.6 billion dollar in 1978 and to fall again in 1976 to 1.3 billion dollars because of the decline of oil revenues (Pryor 57).

The Shah's appetite for arms was insatiable. He had to use some other methods to secure enough oil revenues to finance his escalating arms bill. The Shah continued his hawkish policy at the OPEC vigorously. The October 1973 war and the Arab oil embargo that followed it (November 1973- March 1974) provided the oil-producing countries with the ammunition to hurt the Western economies and to buttress their position in the world. The Shah was the leading hawkish member in OPEC with other countries like Algeria, Nigeria, and Venezuela. Prices skyrocketed from 4 dollars to 11.65 per barrel dollars in a short period: it witnessed fourfold increase between 1970 and 1973 (Garavini 480). Refusing to listen to their calls of restraint on oil prices due the disastrous economic consequences on world economy, the Shah started to lecture the West by saying:

will have to realize that the era of their terrific progress and even more terrific income and wealth based on cheap oil is finished ... Eventually, they will have to tighten their belts; eventually all those children of well-to-do families who have plenty to eat at every meal, who have their cars,, and who act almost as terrorists and throw bombs here and there, they will have to rethink all these aspects of the advanced industrial world. And they will have to work harder... Your young boys and young girls who receive so much money from their fathers will have also to think that they must earn their living somehow. (qtd in Pollack 107)

He did not take part in the oil embargo against the US. Rather, he continued to provide Israel and the US with oil, which contributed to the maintenance of his credentials in their eyes as a reliable ally. Ironically, his role within the OPEC would undermine him in the eyes of Western countries.

The burgeoning oil revenues fragilized his system rather than strengthened it because of the increasing defence expenditures, in addition to the skyrocketing inflation rate in Iran. The concentration of powers in his own hands led the Shah to use the carrot to reward those who could support the regime and occupy suitable positions and the stick to punish those who tended to rebel and express their disapproval at his policies (Keddie 259). The massive infusion of petrodollars into the economy was used to implement his development plans and to buy off social peace. It was also much larger than the absorptive capacity of the Iranian economy. Consequently, it eventually led to the overheating of the economy. Most importantly, it also increased Iranians' expectations, especially of getting involved politically.

Conclusion:

Iran found itself unwillingly entangled in the Second World War. Reza Shah was a modernizing king of military background who founded modern Iran and helped his country to survive thanks to his political skills. The Allies' splitting of Iran during the Second World War made Iranian officials obsessed with the issues of self-defence and political independence. The Soviet Union was a valuable partner for the Allies in their war against the Axis powers. The Shah endeavoured during the invasion time to obtain a deal that would guarantee Iran's independence and territorial integrity in the period after the end of the Second World War that he finally succeeded in obtaining with the help of the US in January

1942. The containment of the Soviet Union was to begin in Iran. The communist threat and Soviet expansion were the main fears of the Shah. The US started to cement its relationship with Iran that would later become its reliable ally in a geostrategically important region, the Persian Gulf. Washington was committed to defending pro-Western regimes in the Middle East, including Iran. On the domestic front, the Shah felt the need to rule with a mailed fist.

The story of the Iranian oil nationalization crisis, which began in 1951 when Prime Minister Mohamed Mossadeq nationalized the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC), culminated in the overthrow of Mossadeq. Reza Shah waged a losing battle against the British in 1932 to cancel the D'Arcy concession. Instead, they offered another Supplemental Oil Agreement. The Shah eventually succumbed to their pressure and asked his Prime Minister to submit the bill to the Majlis for ratification. The Shah felt the need to secure the ratification of the bill because he was well aware of the economic and political ramifications awaiting Iran. Two weeks after Prime Minister Razmara's assassination, The Majlis had ratified the nationalization bill. The British regarded the nationalization of the AIOC as a humiliating blow to their own prestige in the Middle East that might set an example for other countries to follow if it worked. In October 1951, a new Conservative government was installed in Britain under the leadership of Winston Churchill. The National Front Coalition that supported Mossadeq began to fall apart. The absence of oil revenues hurt the economy further and affected directly the Iranians' lives and, therefore, Mossadeq's reputation as well. It became crystal-clear that Mossadeq would not be removed by peaceful means. The US was already engaged in subversive activities in Iran that were directed against the Tudeh party and the communists under a program that was called BEDAMN. The Americans toyed with the idea of recruiting the British to help them in the execution of their plan to remove Mossadeq. Kermit Roosevelt never gave up on his mission to overthrow Mossadeq. After toppling Mossadeq, the Shah focused on consolidating his rule after the bitter experience of

the 1953 coup. The US kept on implementing its containment strategy in order to ensure that its allies were protected and its interests maintained throughout the world. On the domestic scene, the Shah was stressed over the increasing domestic unrest and the menace it posed to the stability of his regime. President Eisenhower, sensing the danger that could affect his allies proclaimed his doctrine in 1957 that pledged US help for some Pro-Western Middle Eastern countries threatened by international communism. In 1959, the soviets approached the Shah to sign a non-aggression treaty. The Shah welcomed it at first because he thought the notorious provisions of the 1921 Russo-Iranian treaty would be dropped as part of the deal. The Soviets erred when they presented their offer by not including the annulments of the 1921 treaty as part of it and conditioned its signing on Iran's withdrawal from the Baghdad Pact and the signing of a non-aggression treaty.

With disappointment, the Shah received the news of the victory of the Democratic candidate John Fitzgerald Kennedy over his Republican rival and his long-time friend Richard Nixon in the presidential elections. President Kennedy assumed office when the anti-colonial struggle was fashionable in the Third World. Reza Shah Pahlavi was open to good relations with the Soviet Union also especially after the failure of the Soviet attempts to persuade Iran to sign a non- aggression pact in 1959. At the outset, Iran was not a priority for Kennedy who was deeply preoccupied with Berlin, Cuba and Vietnam. Iran witnessed economic difficulties at the beginning of the sixties that destabilized the Shah's regime. Prime Minister Ali Amini brought about a reformist agenda that would culminate later in the revolution of the Shah and the People, commonly known as the White Revolution. In order to appease the Kennedy administration and to show his willingness to comply with its dictates, the Shah declared his white revolution in January 1963 and submitted the bill to the people for vote in a referendum in March 1963. The White Revolution provided the opportunity to Khomeini to mark his "political debut" By attacking it. Kennedy's reign was

prematurely ended when he was unexpectedly assassinated in November 1963, which freed the Shah from much pressure for reform. The first crisis that erupted during Johnson's presidency was the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA). After the SOFA, the Iranian domestic situation went from bad to worse. The Shah clung tenaciously to his dream of becoming the regional hegemon or the gendarme of the Persian Gulf. Washington was determined to maintain the Shah's regime at whatever cost despite his growing independent course in foreign policy matters. The Shah was concerned with the Arab-Israeli conflict because he was planning to assume a larger international role.

The election of Richard Nixon, who was an old friend of the Shah, would pave the way for the Shah to improve his relations with the US and thus secure its help in achieving his regional designs in the Persian Gulf region. President Nixon's policies served Iran because he was preoccupied with the Cold War and more particularly his involvement in Vietnam. Britain's proclamation of its withdrawal East of Suez had alarmed the Americans who rushed to convince them to go back on their decision and pleased the Shah who would be better served by the ensuing vacuum in the region. The Shah was sensitive to the rise of Iraq and its close relationship with Russia that culminated in the signing of a treaty of friendship in April 1972. Upon Nixon's visit to Iran in May 1972, he granted the Shah the privilege to purchase whatever weapon he liked short of atomic weapons. The Shah's eagerness to buy arms was unstoppable. He had to use some other methods to secure enough oil revenues to finance his escalating arms bill. The burgeoning oil revenues fragilized his system rather than strengthened it because of the increasing defence expenditures, in addition to the skyrocketing inflation rate in Iran.

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CHAPTER TWO

Jimmy Carter and Revolutionary Iran: A Passive Stance

Introduction

This chapter explores Carter's policy towards Iran. It tries to identify the policy shifts that Carter had proclaimed with regard to Iran since his advent to the White House. Carter's Iran policy cannot be understood without referring to the general headlines of his political agenda. Therefore, the intersection of Carter's principles and his policy towards Iran are to be highlighted in order to figure out how his ideas and ideals affected US's Iran policy.

Carter's policy disturbed the Shah who was already in trouble. The main opposition forces, both Islamists and communists, during that period were examined because they played a larger role in the coming seismic political events. Despite their intellectual differences, they fought along each other and in cooperation with other centrifugal forces to overthrow the Shah. The opposition's role was not to end by the triumph of the revolution in Iran but it somehow triggered the Iran hostage crisis. For the sake of objectivity and to offer a balanced study, a part of this chapter is devoted to the study of the two main opposition groups.

The present study argues that Carter's naiveté with respect to Iran's importance to his own country led him to embrace policies, which were detrimental to US-Iran relations and particularly to the stability of the shah's throne. Shortly after the onset of the revolution in Iran, Carter adopted vague and sterile attitudes towards the Shah. It means that he did not

make enough efforts to save the Shah given Iran's importance during the Cold War. The fall of the Shah constituted a setback for the US. The failure of Carter's efforts to re-establish relations with Iran and its consequences is to be investigated in this chapter also.

2-1 - Carter's Policies and Iran

The Shah was to be acquainted soon with an eighth American president in his long reign. So far, the results of the American presidential elections were not certainly clear but, to his disappointment, a Democratic presidential hopeful seemed to be the probable winner given the themes he advanced in his campaign that brilliantly stroke a responsive chord with the electorate. Carter presented himself as an "outsider" (Glad 1). Being an outsider, the Democratic candidate Jimmy Carter, gave him an advantage over his rivals. Daniel Seargent, a historian, argued, "Carter could run as an outsider who would restore integrity, not as a seasoned Cold Warrior" (232). The Shah's aversion to the Democrats was widely known since his bitter experience with President John Kennedy because the latter had tried to force him to reform in the hope of saving an ally's regime during the height of the Cold War then. In this connection, the Shah whispered in the ears of his confidant and Court Minister Assadollah Alam in July 1976, "Carter would end up winning the presidency and if that was going to be the case who knows what sort of calamity he may unleash on the world. He is no more than an ignorant peasant boy" (qtd in Luca 179). It seemed obvious that the Shah was suspicious of Carter because he was well aware that the political developments occurring in his domestic front did not dovetail with the interests of the latter. Moreover, he was afraid that Carter would pressure him to reform. The Shah followed closely the American domestic political theatre. Americans were disenchanted with the policies followed by Carter's predecessors like Vietnam and Watergate, which rendered his candidacy and his subsequent victory in the elections inevitable (Smith 77). He expected Carter and his administration to react to the demands of his populace hastily and

enthusiastically, disregarding any international fallout due to their inexperience in foreign policy matters.

Jimmy Carter waged his campaign on two themes: human rights and control of arms sales. He wanted to mark a break with Cold War policies previously adopted by his predecessors (Sale 77). Importantly, Carter entertained the idea of starting a post-Cold War agenda premised on human rights policy before the actual end of the Cold War (Brinkley 522). In other words, he planned to set forth a new foreign policy of his own, reflective of the true ideals and the spirit of the United States. “Carter believed that the real strength of the US rested in its ideals, promised to return to the values of the Founding Fathers, and made morality one of the central organizing tenets of his campaign” (Schmitz and Walker 119). The themes he campaigned for might sound spectacularly utopian and inapplicable given the time in which they were evoked while the Cold War was still smouldering, but Carter clung to them and to his relief they bore fruit by his victory in the elections. Carter assumed office during the Cold War hoping to resurrect détente (Thornton 5). Détente had not been unanimously endorsed in the US because no clear strategy for dealing with the Soviet Union was formulated yet .

Jimmy Carter was determined to translate his campaign promises into formal policies. He demonstrated his willingness to restore morality into American foreign policy. Morality had been overlooked for long by US policy makers, mostly evoking security reasons related to the Cold War. He declared in his inaugural address, “Our commitment to human rights must be absolute”. In the same vein, he stated also, “Because we are free we can never be indifferent to the fate of freedom elsewhere. Our moral sense dictates a clear-cut preference for those societies which share with us an abiding respect for individual rights” (Public Papers of US Presidents 2-3). He meant that the time of associating with whoever shared with them an opposition to anti-communism was over. He sought to

introduce a new era when the United States would not draw allies to its orbit just because they were anti-communists. Anti-communism would not be the sole criterion for the US to build strong diplomatic relations with other countries. He delivered also an implicit message with respect to right-wing dictatorships that Washington would no longer tolerate their abuses just because they had an enemy in common or they were considered geostrategic assets like Iran. “His policy of human rights sought to create a post-Cold War foreign policy that changed the fundamental nature of American relationship with the Third World while still protecting essential American interests” (Schmidt and Walker 113). Carter’s idealistic policies soon to lose momentum and pave the way for realism to be restored.

Arms sales represented an important issue of ethical dimensions to be dealt with by the Carter administration. He always expressed his worries about the notoriety earned by the United States for providing weapons to authoritarian regimes and their likes. Iran was one of the countries Carter was implicitly alluding to all along. In the second presidential debate, he harshly criticized his predecessors Presidents Nixon and Ford for “turning the US into the “arms merchant” of the world”. He also referred to Iran, “Iran is going to get eighty F14s before we even met our Air Force orders...This is a ridiculous situation and it ought to be changed” (qtd in Luca 178). The Shah had already imported larger quantities of exorbitant weapons using oil revenues, which exhausted his coffers and hindered the modernization projects of his country. “Carter believed that human rights considerations should weigh heavily in decisions regarding arms sales and that the US should show greater restraint regarding weapons sales” (Pollack 121). Of the worst repercussions of this costly adventure was the spread of social inequalities within the Iranian society due to the uneven distribution of wealth. It was for the same reasons that President John Kennedy had opted before to force the Shah to reform and to change his mind regarding arms’ acquisition. Carter would work later to set limits for US arms sales and bring them back to normal.

In essence, the two themes Carter advocated in his campaign were a part of a two-pronged strategy: to appeal to the voters since the outcome proved productive and to attract as many Third World countries as possible into his camp and to strengthen those already allied with the United States. The latter was part of a strategy embedded in the containment doctrine. It can be considered ambivalent and unclear at the time, but cannot be understood outside the Cold War context. The lessons of Vietnam and other scandals in the shape of Watergate scandal and CIA illegal activities propelled the Americans to seek moralism back into their foreign policy. However, the extent to which Carter's moralistic discourse could influence the larger bureaucracy remained vague. Carter soon felt disappointed by the fact that an "outsider" would find it easy for him to act (Glad an Outsider in the White House 279). In addition, the Third World became largely a Cold War battlefield in which ideas were utilised in pursuance of geostrategic interests. The US wanted to deprive the Soviet Union of any new foothold as possible. The importance of Third World countries during this period increased and each camp sought to enlist as many pawns as possible. Carter wanted to protect pro-Western states by pushing them to make reforms as the best remedy against any potential communist subversion. This phase of the Cold War witnessed the dissemination of proxy wars like those of the Horn of Africa (Thornton 134-141).

The Shah was worried about the moralistic discourse and the disturbing signals coming from Washington. In mid-seventies, the Shah embarked on a program of liberalization in order to improve his worsening reputation in the West after all of his excuses had become unacceptable. In 1976 with the arrival of Carter, he found himself forced to present "concrete results" to kindly approach the new president in Washington (Guerrero 36). He tried to be the first to initiate reforms voluntarily (Bakhash 13). Unsurprisingly, it is erroneous to think of liberalization only in terms of placating the US since there were many other reasons that required the resort to it even if they were of less importance. Of equal

significance also was the Shah's malady that pushed him to think of smoothing the way for his son's succession, that he knew was near (Fatemi 57). Liberalization consisted mainly in offering the Iranians the chance to become involved in politics by opening the political space. He felt that he needed to act in order to avoid any pressure coming from Carter for reform: the Shah rushed to soften his political discourse, release some political prisoners and lift the repressive measures of his security apparatus (Pollack 121). "He recognized that the repressive policy of the past five years had been counterproductive" (Bill 219). In February 1977, he released 357 political prisoners (Parviz 96). The opposition capitalized on the opportunity and increased its activities against the regime since they went unpunished. The opposition was first waged in peaceful ways by the secularists. The coincidence of these reforms with the advent of Carter convinced the Iranians who believed that the latter was behind it.

The Shah had to wait until Vance's visit to Iran in May 1977 to know the thrust of Carter's policy toward Iran. The idea that the Shah formed about Carter persisted since the latter did not bother to answer his congratulatory message upon his inauguration immediately (Sale 76). The delay in the appointment of a new ambassador to Iran, a post left vacant since December 1976, complicated matters more. In addition, the Iranians and the US press portrayal of the Shah as a tyrant disturbed him (Vance 317). During the visit, Vance noted in his memoirs that he discussed many subjects with the Shah and expressed his growing fears about the Soviet Union and the possibility of their taking over the oil wells in Iran in case an oil shortage occurred (318). It seems that the Shah's constant evocation of the communist threat was related to his obsession with it and the Soviet Union that most observers had deemed exaggerated. This visit calmed his anxieties about the Carter administration policies towards Iran. Secretary of State Vance said that the Shah rejoiced at the sight of an invitation to visit Washington next November. He added also that he assured

him that Carter had agreed on the continuation of arms sales to Iran even though the resurgent Congress might obstruct them. Vance promised the Shah the sale of 160 F-16 planes and 10 AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System) (318). It demonstrated that US policies regarding arms sales towards the shah remained unchanged. Upon this premise, one observer of US-Iran arms sales commented that Vance was “the motor within the administration favouring a permissive arms sales with Iran” (McGlinchey 259).

Vance praised the Shah’s early fruits of liberalization and encouraged him to proceed with the reforms (Bill 227). Regarding human rights, the Shah said that he did not object to this policy as long as it did not target his regime particularly (Vance 319). After the visit, word spread that Vance ordered the Shah “to liberalize or be removed” (Bill 228). It cannot be ignored that the shah was well aware of the political developments occurring in the US that were responsible for the formulation of Carter’s foreign policy agenda. Another goal of this visit was “the reduction of US “profile” in Iran” (Thornton 248). Carter’s idealism was destined to face this test during the very few first months of his tenure. Seemingly, the Shah was not satisfied with the outcome of the visit because not enough assurances were offered. It disappointed the Shah and appeared to the public as a political setback. On the contrary, Vance told the shah “to reform or be removed like Mossadeq” (Pollack 122).

The White House issued PD-13 in May 1977 that was about the countries eligible for the new conventional arms transfer policy. It made arms sales an exceptional tool of foreign policy that was designed only to further US national interests. The directive named NATO countries in addition to Japan and Australia as the only ones with the right to buy whatever weaponry they choose. It aimed also to prevent the US from being the first arms supplier to introduce new weapons into the region as justified in the same presidential directive. The Shah was upset because Iran was dispossessed of the privilege, which was granted to him by Nixon in 1972, despite the valuable services Iran had offered the US as a longstanding

geostrategic partner. The Shah's attachment to arms sales sprung from his obsession with weapons and most importantly the fact that the army was the sole protector of his throne. Arms sales seemed to get back to normal. The Shah's regime was badly affected by the measure that signalled to the Iranians that Carter was distancing himself from it.

In July of the same year and contrary to all expectations and specially the very spirit of PD-13 that forbade the introduction of new weapons into the region, Carter submitted to Congress the AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System) proposed sale bill. AWACS was a kind of Boeing aircraft jet that was meant to be used for both defensive and offensive purposes. The House of International Relations Committee had rejected it because they were afraid that the safety of its technology could not be guaranteed in Iran (Carter 435). Congress then was filled with fresh Congressmen with lofty ambitions (Schmidli 214). They defied the authority of the executive over arms sales. This period was characterized by Congressional activism to restore their lost powers under the pretext of the lessons of Vietnam (Synder 374-375). Détente also contributed to the lifting of urgency. In this context, US ambassador in Iran William Sullivan accused human rights groups inside the US of obstructing the ratification of the sale (Mission to Iran 114). President Carter was forced to withdraw it for fear of having it rejected. It outraged the Shah who threatened to buy the very item elsewhere (qtd in Bayandor 137). He probably considered it an offence. Answering him, Carter wrote in his diary that he did not bother if he bought it from the US or elsewhere (White House Diary 435).

The AWACS sale bill was resubmitted in September to Congress that ratified it and agreed to the sale of only five instead of seven. It insisted on stripping them of the most sensitive technology that the Shah had bitterly accepted. Ofira Seliktar, a political scientist, argued, "The AWACS episode was costly in terms of the larger issue of the Shah's legitimacy" (61). Nevertheless, this issue gave the Iranians who were eager to capture signals

and misconstrue them the reason to take heart and rise up against the Shah. This matter weakened the Shah, given the Cold War calculations that started to change, because his position had become more susceptible to be undermined. In fact, the AWACS sale revealed the orientations of the Carter administration that would prevail until the end of his watch since he chose to sacrifice his moralistic principles at the altar of saving US-Iran partnership. “The AWACS sale to Iran is only one example of foreign policy developed on assumptions of American self-interest and containment, rather than the rhetorical values espoused by Carter during his presidency” (McGhlinchy and Murray 257).

Public discontent was a common feature of Iranian life. The Iranians were fed up with the increasing economic, social and political problems that they blamed their government’s unpopular policies for them (Gasiorowski 210). The opposition increased its activities since no punishments were given to any of them. The galloping inflation exhausted people’s budgets and prompted them to change their attitude vis-à-vis the regime. In addition, most projects were frozen. As a result, many people were laid off. The lower classes would be used later to fuel the forthcoming revolution.

The Shah’s liberalization paved the way for the spread of disturbances spearheaded by the opposition of its different strains, especially the intelligentsia, to protest against the repressive nature of the regime and seek more reforms. The liberalization offered some political space for those already excluded politically to assert themselves. In April and May 1977, he allowed, in unprecedented move, the representatives of Amnesty International and the International Commission of Jurists to come to Iran and inspect prisons. He also welcomed their recommendations regarding the reform of the judicial system (Parviz 96). In June, a group of 53 lawyers sent an open letter to the Shah demanding judicial reforms related to the authority of the executive over the judiciary (Milani 188). It was the first time in his long reign that he permitted the activity of such groups. It illustrated how the Shah

was ready to go so far in order to avoid any criticism from President Carter whose staff were urging him to modify his stance vis-a-vis the Shah. In the same month, a group of writers sent a letter to Prime Minister Amir Abbas Hoveyda asking for an end to censorship and to recognize their Writer's Associations that had been unjustly banned for years (Axworthy 98-99). They accused SAVAK of suppressing their activities. The opposition sensed that the Shah's regime was vulnerable. They believed that Carter's pressure forced him to initiate some reform. As a result, they intensified their activities. The Shah was no longer able to crack down because of the attention he paid to his international reputation first and the fear of the spread of protests at a time when he felt unarmed and particularly unable to purchase social peace second. The spread of the wave of protests would continue to increase further in the following months. The Shah was still controlled by his fear of losing the support of the US. It was said that liberalization was a palliative rather than a solution since "it was developed to buy the regime more time while satisfying the new Democratic administration in Washington" (Bill 226). The impact of liberalization on the expansion of the oppositional activities was significantly important. R.K. Ramazani, Iran scholar, argued that Washington and Tehran's strategic considerations took their attention from the developments occurring inside Iran, which contributed the victory of the revolution later (90).

The Shah replaced his Prime Minister Amir Abbas Hoveyda who occupied this office for nearly thirteen years with the Western educated technocrat Jamshid Amuzegar in July 1977. "In an address to the new cabinet, the Shah set the agenda for the government to improve housing conditions, lower inflation, put an end to the electricity shortages, and slow down the pace of economic expansion" (qtd in Milani 171). The Shah asked his new prime minister to implement a program to tackle the crisis of spiralling inflation that was a headache to the government. The problem of corruption that was mainly associated with the Shah's family was meant to be addressed by Amuzegar's government since it exposed the

Shah to much criticism by the opposition. Amuzegar resorted to the implementation of austerity measures, among them, reducing governmental spending and pay freeze (Milani 172). The retrenchment policy irreversibly increased people's discontent with the government. Some commentators said that Amuzegar was more of an economist than a politician. They meant that the disease afflicting the regime was political. "The economic failure contributed to widespread discontent and paved the way for future violence and ultimately revolution" (Parviz 67).

Amuzegar's tenure coincided with a rise in the number of demonstrations because of the measures that were meant to reduce the repressive force of the policies already pursued by the government. In July, a group of 64 lawyers accused the Shah of violating the constitution and demanded the return to the 1906 constitution. Parviz Daneshvar, a historian, noticed that during his term, "the opposition became more cohesive and bolder in their criticism of the Shah" (97). The granting of political room for the opposition during Amuzegar's premiership would cause endless problems for the Shah's regime in the days to come.

The Shah was still apprehensive of Carter's designs. He intended to meet with Carter to obtain a clear sight of the views of his administration or rather reassurances. The future of his throne was high on his mind and not any arms transaction (Ramazani 95). During the Shah's visit to Washington on the 15-16 of November, they discussed many subjects. A group of Iranian demonstrators came to the White House to protest against the Shah. The police was forced to throw tear gas to disperse the crowd. It was an embarrassment to the Shah because he, President Carter and others were unable to control their tears that streamed down their faces (Rubin 200). This incident was interpreted in Iran as Carter's declaration of withdrawal of support from the Shah (Cottam Human Rights in Iran 12). Carter said that he had raised the topic of human rights privately with the Shah and that he had already heard

about human rights violations in Iran. The Shah responded, “I must enforce the Iranian laws, which are designed to combat communism”. Carter added, “We discussed the subject for a few minutes more, but it soon became obvious that my expression of concern would not change the policies of the shah in meeting a threat which, I am sure, seemed very real to him”(434-437). This visit proved fruitful to the Shah since he received guarantees about US continued support for his regime that Vance did not previously give to him. He would soon start cracking down on his adversaries. Ironically, “By the end of 1977, the opposition had concluded that a new chapter that included relaxation of repression had begun in the Shah’s long reign” (Milani 190).

The anti-Shah’s activities proceeded with an increasingly rapid pace. The Shah kept alternating between punishment and concession (Milani 195). Apparently, he was looking to find the right formula to deal with such a worsening situation. Carter was to return by the eve of the New Year to Iran to visit the Shah in a stopover in his long tour. During this visit, Carter praised the Shah by saying: “Iran, whose destiny is so well-guided by the Shah, is an island of stability in one of the most troubled regions of the world. That is a great tribute to you, your Majesty, and to the great task that you are accomplishing in Iran, and to the respect, admiration, and love that your people bear you” (qtd in Afkhami 452). Richard Cottam, Iran historian, interpreted it as a demonstration of support for the Shah and declaration to the opposition that his administration did not intend to abandon him (Human Rights in Iran 12). Carter’s praise of the Shah led also to Iranians’ disenchantment with him. In addition, they gave up on any prospect of pressure for reform on the part of the US. They concluded that Carter was an American president like his predecessors and they felt that they had to act on their own to achieve their goals.

1- Iranian Domestic Opposition Forces :

The Shah worked diligently to eliminate all political forces, which might constitute a threat to his throne during his reign. The opposition enjoyed a period of freedom during the period between the Allied invasion and the overthrow of Mossadeq when the Shah's political experience was short. It had grown considerably in number and in the variety of political convictions too. The Shah strove to weaken the National Front that was powerful at the time. Mossadeq's policies harmed the reputation of the National Front and gave the Shah the opportunity to hurt it (Milani 74-75). He first co-opted the religious forces during the same period but stifled their activities after the 1963 uprising. The Islamists went through a long time of peace with the Shah. Ayatollah Houssein Bouroudjerdi led the bilateral coalition with the Shah by adopting the quietist approach until his death in 1963. The establishment of the security forces SAVAK in 1957 helped enormously the Shah in suppressing the opposition. The two political forces that survived despite all the difficulties and contributed significantly to the formation of the anti-Shah organized opposition were the Islamists and the leftists.

Some observers traced the roots of the religious opposition to the very emergence of Shi'ism that they considered as a revolutionary ideology by nature. The majority in Iran embraced Shi'ism. It was born as an oppositional strategy against the Caliphs in support of Ali, the grandson of the prophet who later claimed to be the rightful heir to him (Bill Power and Religion in Revolutionary Iran 24). It is agreed upon that militant religious opposition played its role effectively as judged by the fruits of their struggle. They succeeded in penetrating and manipulating the whole of Iranian society that was considered a prey to secularism because of the Shah's secularization and modernization policies. The clerics were known to enjoy a good rapport with the bazaar (the merchants). It can be said that the nature of the Iranian society created conditions favourable to the integration of religion into politics, which helped the clerics to acquire outstanding political status.

The communist movement that once constituted the sole organized party in Iran, some said even in the entire Middle East, cannot be disregarded. Their views with respect to religion can be seen as alien to their society. Their political achievements were apparently laudable since they fought gamely to attain their political goals and to limit the absolute powers of the Shah at a time when popular political awareness barely existed. This point illustrates how the communists contributed to teaching the Iranians political activism though the latter tended to disagree with much of their convictions and policies, *inter alia*, their predilection for putting the interests of the Soviet Union even ahead of their own and their country. Each of both militant oppositional groups are to be presented in this chapter with particular focus on their ideational and practical activities. They had a considerable base of support unlike the National Frontists who visibly disappeared then.

2-1: The Leftist Opposition

Iran was never immune to the developments that had occurred in its Northern neighbour the Soviet Union on all sides, especially politically and intellectually. In 1917, Iranian workers who had returned from Russia after the Bolshevik Revolution established a communist party (Dailami in Cronin 89). In 1921, it started operating officially under a new name “the Iranian Communist Party” advocating Marxism as its ideology. This fledgling party soon to be outlawed in 1931 during Reza Shah reign who ruled with an iron fist (Johanpour 152). It had to wait until 1937 when a group of communists tried to resurrect the party in a different shape, but, to their chagrin, they were caught and imprisoned (Katouzian in Cronin 166). Subsequently, the Shah outlawed their activities again. The invasion of Iran by the Allied and the dethronement of the Shah created conditions favourable to political participation. The same group, who were imprisoned in 1937, were released and they ultimately established the Tudeh party in 1941. It would play a crucial role in Iran in the

years to come trying to cope with the vagaries of politics. In fact, it would be an exaggeration to say that this party was destined to act in a political minefield.

During the Azerbaijani crisis of 1946, the communists played a role disadvantageous to their interests and those of Iran, especially its territorial integrity, by supporting the secessionist movements in Azerbaijan and Kurdistan that were backed by the Soviets. It was reminiscent of the Tudeh attitude in 1943 when it supported the granting of an oil concession to the Soviet Union similar to that of the British. “The party has always explained its relationship with the Soviets as that of internationalist duty between fraternal parties” (Behrooz 22). These controversial stances left a bad impression about the Communist parties amongst the populace and undermined their independence and credibility in their eyes. Moreover, the communists acted freely during the early years of the Shah’s term but he was biding his time until the opportunity presented itself in February 1949 when an attempt on his life was made. Consequently, the Tudeh party was outlawed but this decision was never strictly enforced since he opted to offer them some room of manoeuvre, apparently due to his inexperience (Johanpour 153). The opposition argued that the Shah “turned the assassination into a coup d’état” (Abrahamain the opposition 3). There is no doubt that the Shah tolerated them in the hope of creating a counterbalance to the clerics and prevent their rise. The Shah wanted to follow in his father’s footsteps by devising a dictatorial system of governance (Abrahamian the opposition 3). But it turned out that he lacked the character and times had changed.

During the 1953 oil crisis, the communists threw their lot behind Mossadeq with the clergy under the leadership of Ayatollah Kashani. The withdrawal of the Islamists weakened the Mossadeqist camp because their supporters outnumbered them all. Therefore, Mossadeq lost a considerable portion of supporters and was left only with the communists on his side. The anti-Mossadeqist political forces capitalized on the opportunity and urged people to act

against him and his allies for fear of a communist takeover. They portrayed them as atheists since religious feelings and Islamism had grown substantially during those years. “The fifties was the decade of great defeat for Iranian Marxists...the political parties which many of these activists expected to organize resistance and lead anti-coups movements proved unable to adapt to the new political environment” (Behrooz 33). The Sino-Soviet split caused severe cracks within the Tudeh party that was already affected by the death of Stalin and its ramifications. The series of internal splits would be a constant refrain of their history. Thereafter, their presence would not be felt and all other political organizations because the Shah repressed them (Behrooz 3).

During the sixties, the Shah continued ruling with a mailed fist. He cracked down on the opposition of its different shades. It grew desperate, as no space seemed left for it to act. In addition, there was a desire on the part of the politically engaged Iranians to have a voice, but to their dismay, only repression was offered in return. These conditions would lead to the birth of armed opposition to the Shah’s regime as an extension of the series of assassinations long before. The guerrilla movements were a product of the sixties particularly the events of 1963 (Zabih 10). It also coincided with Vietnam, the Chinese Cultural revolution and the rise of Che Guevara in Bolivia (Aladmolki 249). It would inaugurate an era when political activity was furnished with real weapons to relay their messages to the Shah. The Marxist ideas constituted the heart of militant activism.

In 1965, Mujahidin Khalq Organization was founded. It sprung from the members of the National Front who established the Liberation Movement in the sixties who were mostly of Islamist orientations (Abrahamian Iranian Mudjahidin 81). The Qom incident in 1963 prompted them to consider other means of political activity: they felt helpless. It represented its members who opposed the Shah and grew impatient with the political fight since it bore no fruit. They thought that armed struggle might draw attention to their cause and persuade

the Shah to lift his repressive measures and change his behaviour. It was the first organization to bring forth a new “revolutionary interpretation of Islam” (Abrahamian Iranian Mujahidin 1). It was just one example of dissent within guerrilla movements that witnessed the spread of this phenomenon within its ranks. The spread of these guerrilla organizations was indicative of the repressive measures that the opposition suffered at the hands of the Shah and the international developments happening at the top of the world communist movements.

Six years later, another organization came into existence that adopted militant activism as its doctrine: the Fedayeen Khalq. Its members came mainly from the Tudeh party who were Marxists. They defected from the Tudeh because they disapproved of its loyalty to the Soviets (Zabih 131). Some dissident Marxist elements from the National Front also joined it. They argued that “political struggle, without an armed struggle, could not defeat the comprador bourgeoisie state” (Abrahamian the Opposition 6). It was a Marxist-Leninist organization unlike the Mujahedin that was only Islamist. Of the Fedayeen most remembered acts was the Siahkal incident that occurred in February 1971 and marked the official beginning of militant activism in Iran (Bill 190). They attacked a gendarmerie post in Siahkal and killed several elements while trying to free their incarcerated comrades. This incident would signal the start of a fight that would last eight years. It inspired radicals of every different convictions to defy the Shah’s regime and follow their course of action (Abrahamian guerrilla movement 3). The Siahkel incident would have reverberations on their activities because most of these groups suffered irreparable human losses, not to neglect dissension also, that weakened them. The left was dealt a severe blow again but their remaining networks would continue to work underground or from abroad until the implementation of the Shah’s program of liberalization.

The leftist movements occupied the first lines of the opposition during the seventies (Behrooz 51). They capitalized on the permissive atmosphere created by the policy of

liberalization to increase their activities. They also became more open politically which enabled them to ally themselves later with the Islamists to seek more freedoms. Subsequently, they upped the ante and supported the Islamists to overthrow the Shah. This partnership did not end by the success of the revolution but lasted. They endorsed Khomeini's regime. Even at the zenith, the communists movements were not immune to dissent and suppression. Khomeini tolerated them not for love of their devotion to build a more fair system in Iran but to pass his agenda without obstacles (Johanpour 155). He knew of their weight and their usefulness in such circumstances.

2-2: The Islamist Opposition

The introduction of Shi'ism into Iran in 1501 by the Safavids changed completely the religious configuration (Arjomand 11-12). Shi'i clerics had engaged in an alliance with the kings from then on until the advent of the Qajar dynasty that did not hold the latter in high esteem. Under these circumstances, "the members of the Shi'ite hierocracy were forced to subsist on their own totally independent of the state" (Arjomand 13). As a result, they resorted to establishing a kind of affinity with the bazaar that would take charge of their expenses. Most importantly, the weakness of the Qajars also helped them to increase their influence (Arjomand 296). During the tobacco revolution in 1891-90, the ulema sided with the bazaar against the state when an Ayatollah issued a fatwa forbidding smoking because of a tobacco concession that was granted to a British investor (Rubin 264). It ended up in the cancellation of the British investment. This episode highlighted the immense power held by the ulema and cemented the bond they already formed with the bazaar. Their role was also strengthened during the constitutional revolution 1906 when they engaged with the intelligentsia in their struggle to obtain more political freedoms and to limit the absolute powers of the Shah (Katouzian 181).

Iran's history with curbing the political ambitions of the clergy was very long. The rise of Reza Khan to power in 1921 would change their status. They willingly supported his accession to the throne because they were afraid that "Kemalism" might find a foothold in their country and they even objected to the establishment of a republic (Afkhani 29-31). Subsequently, the Shah started his programs of modernization and secularization, which were not to the liking of the clerics. He minimized the influence of religion in every aspect of life during his reign. He stripped them of their traditional roles in education and justice (Keddie and Richard 103). Surprisingly, his successor would develop a good rapport with them during his early years of rule.

In fact, Mohamed Reza Shah at first compromised the clerics. They also embarked on silent partnership with him so that their activities would not be thwarted. On his part, he showed respect to the religious class despite all the misgivings he had harboured about them before and his inclination to emulate his father's style of governance. The good relationship developed between the two parties did not bode well for the Shah as the following years demonstrated since they extended their influence over a large proportion of the population. The changing social scene of Iran helped immensely by appealing to many marginalized classes.

The clerics did not wait for long to take part in politics. In 1953, the clerics sided with Mossadeq but deserted him later in favour of an "ulema-state coalition". According to Afkhani, "There may be no doubt that this development marked the highest point of politicization of the clergy's role in society since the constitutional revolution" (60). They were afraid of a communist takeover. In addition, they hoped to acquire some political weight by positioning well. The ulema and the government had no serious problems from 1953 to 1963 because of the "quietism" adopted by Ayatollah Burudjerdi (Floor 503). The sudden death of Ayatollah Hussein Burudjerdi in 1961 left a vacuum that was hard to fill.

He was against the ulema's involvement in politics. Rather he urged them to shun it. "During the sixties, under the leadership of Burudjerdi the clergy attempted to remain above the political fray; but in fact their tacit support went to the Shah" (Moin 56). His death paved the way for the emergence of Ayatollah Khomeini. He would be the first politicized cleric to change the political landscape because he castigated the Shah and his regime in public in an unprecedented act by an Ayatollah. He declared the religious class as an independent political force dissatisfied with the status quo. Ayatollah Khomeini was to be banished later in 1964 to Turkey, then to Iraq where he would spend many years in Najaf until his triumphal return in 1979.

Rouhollah Moussavi was born in 1902 to a religious family in Khomein, a village 76 kilometres far from Tehran. He studied in his hometown and Qom before reaching the highest of the clerical ranks: Ayatollah, in 1963. Of his famous ideas "the rule of jurisconsult" that he elaborately explained in his book, *Islamic Government*. The Islamic government that he envisioned was built upon the ground of his theory. Hamid Dabashi explained it,

"The Islamic government established by the prophet Mohamed (according to the Shi'is) continued by the Imams was not meant to be a transitional government. In the absence of the Twelfth Imam, who is now in occultation, the world is plunging deeply into corruption and despair. The Shi'is cannot know exactly when the Twelfth Imam is to appear. In the meantime, the responsibilities of leading Muslim nations cannot be entrusted to tyrannical and corrupt rulers like the Shah, who simply aggravate the situation because they are deeply corrupt themselves. At this point, Khomeini accumulates a series of Qur'anic passages and prophetic traditions that he interprets to mean that the (Shi'i) jurist are to assume power, because, by virtue of having access to the specifics of the sacred law, they know how to regulate the daily affairs of Muslims so as to assure their other-worldly salvation" (274)

It was reported in their religious sources that the Imam would reappear in the future and save the world from sin. In Shi'a doctrine, the leadership should be confined to the Imam's line. The core of Khomeini's ideas is built upon the view that the people are minors and need the guidance of a jurisconsult. Upon this premise, he usually attacked the Shah's system as

illegitimate. His sermons where he lived in Najaf were highly listened to by the Iranians who were eager to be saved from the dictatorial regime since they lost their faith in the political class.

Khomeini did not only monopolize the market of religious ideas. Both Ali Shariati and Jalal Al Ahmed's contributions were of importance also. Jalal Al Ahmed was mostly known for his book "Westoxication" in which he called for the return to the native Persian culture by preaching his people that there would be no technological advancement without their clinging to their native culture and their roots. Furthermore, Hamid Dabashi argued, "Al-e Ahmed ultimate concern, perhaps even more crucial than pushing Iranian politics towards the mainstream of common symbolic (Islamic) consciousness, was for Iran to have an independent cultural identity on a par with "the Western" nation-states (63). He urged Iranians to get rid of everything Western to restore their unique identity (Ansari 256). "He denounced everything that stemmed from the West" (Bayandor 17). Furthermore, Al-e Ahmed's discourse can be considered as anti-imperialistic and Third Worldist. He portrayed "Westoxication" as a disease that afflicted the nation and prevented it from any advancement. This term and his ideas were to be used by Khomeini later in order to appeal to the wider possible audience who appreciated these ideas.

Ali Shariati was born to a religious family but he did receive a secular education (Abedi 229). He obtained his doctorate degree in sociology from the Sorbonne University in France. He was considered the ideologue of the revolution because it was considered the product of the ideas he disseminated. He brought forth a new version of political Islam (Axworthy 66). He called for a different view of Islam other than that of clerics. He had a low opinion of them. Ervand Abrahamian in his article "*The Ideologue of the Revolution*" argued, "The logic of Shariati arguments clearly threatened the whole legitimacy of the clergy". He implicitly invoked religious patterns to castigate the Shah's regime. Mangol

Bayat claimed that “Shariati was essentially anti-clerical upholding as Islam that is reformed and reinterpreted to fit the needs of contemporary society, Khomeini aimed at restoring clerical hold over vital social institutions and firmly consolidating clerical power by assuming supreme clerical authority”(34).

Shari’ati was also known for his sermons that treated different topics in the hope of coming up with an updated version of Islam instead of remaining slaves to the outdated traditional one. He taught for a brief period at Housseinieh Ershad before he was put in jail by the Iranian authorities that were worried about the increasing following of him. Frantz Fanon, Algerian psychiatrist, who valued the anti-imperialistic struggle and encouraged the return to original cultures by the once dominated societies, influenced him (qtd in Bayandor 18). He was freed from prison at the intervention of the Algerian foreign secretary then, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, because of his former support of the Algerian revolution of independence (Rahnema 238). He died in 1977 after a heart attack. His sudden death was considered foul play by the Iranians. In addition, the death of the son of Khomeini Mustapha made matters worse for the Shah because the Iranians, loyal to their habit, suspected liquidation by SAVAK. Conspiracy theory was a common commodity in Middle Eastern societies, particularly Iran. It brought too much sympathy to Khomeini.

3-3 The Carter Administration Treatment of the Revolutionary Crisis in Iran

The international engagements of the Carter administration pushed Iran to a lower status. The Carter’s administration was deeply involved externally: in Camp David trying to mediate between Egypt and Israel, the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks with the Soviets, Panama Canal negotiations and their opening to China. The task of following Iran was assigned to lower level officials: Henry Precht at the State Department, Robert Murray in the Department of Defence and Gary Sick in the National Security Council (Rubin 208).

Washington was mistakenly assured that “Iran was not in a revolutionary crisis or even a pre-revolutionary situation” and that “those in the opposition, both violent and non-violent, do not have the capacity to be more troublesome” as a CIA report indicated in 1978” (qtd in Rubin 209). In the same connection, another Defence Department report said, “Iran is likely to remain stable under the Shah’s leadership over the next several years” (qtd in Cottam US and Iran 174). Furthermore, the general situation in Iran did not tell that a potential political force in Iran would be able to defy the Shah’s regime in the future due to the power that the Shah had accumulated during the previous decades over all aspects of life in Iran, supposedly with the assistance of the military. The weakness of the opposition also confirmed their views about the invincibility of the Pahlavi monarchy. It was only in October 1978 that Washington felt that it had to act because the monarchy was gravely in danger. Worse of it all was the fact the no reliable intelligence was available as the previous reports proved counterproductive.

The Shah’s regime was at a terribly weak state since his legitimacy had seemingly eroded over time. The editor of the widely-circulated government sponsored newspaper in Iran Ete’laat published an article on the seventh of January against Ayatollah Khomeini (Manashri 3). It could demonstrate the Shah’s sense of vulnerability and his apprehensions about the rising visibility of Khomeini. The slanderous article accused Khomeini of being of Indian origins and an agent of British imperialism, which enraged the clerics and seminary students alike. Significantly, it can be said that the Shah had miscalculated by awakening the dormant religious threat of which he was unaware of the consequences of such an act. He probably targeted the religious opposition by trying to undermine their leader Ayatollah Khomeini. The following days, they led demonstrations against the Shah seeking an apology in addition to calls for constitutional reforms (Milani 191). Consequently, the police cracked down on them in Qom and several deaths resulted. It would trigger later a series of

demonstrations every forty days commemorating the deaths and reminding the regime of their grievances. These demonstrations lasted until May 1978, spearheaded mainly by the religious opposition that took the helm this time. Surprisingly, they were acting under the supervision of Ayatollah Khomeini who was in his Iraqi exile then. The US did not bother to worry about Iran because they were confident the Shah would weather the storm effectively. “American diplomats, as Gary Sick, denounced were reluctant to “make the call.” No one wanted to be the first to raise the prospect that the shahs reign was imperilled” (qtd in Guerrero 80).

After May 1978, it was believed that the revolutionary crisis ended but it just turned out to be the lull that preceded the storm. Calm characterized the following months until August when a cinema in Abadan was set ablaze and more than 300 people perished. This incident enraged the public who suspected SAVAK of being behind this massacre. Islamists and monarchists exchanged accusations (Axworthy 108). Both of the Islamists and monarchists exchanged accusations. People who fell under the sway of Khomeini’s discourse that of attacking everything that seemed Western perpetrated the arson according to their confessions after the revolution (Buchan 103). The Shah dismissed Jamshid Amouzegar’s government and pledged early elections and political reforms since control of the situation seemed hard to obtain. He appointed Jafar Sharif-Emami as prime minister in a national reconciliation government. Prime Minister Jafer Sharif-Emami was very close to the clerics because he was a descendant of a clerical family (Guerrerro 96-97). He announced conciliatory measures like abolishing the imperial calendar and shutting down all casinos (Parviz 105). One of the main characteristics of the shah’s style of governance during the revolutionary crisis was his oscillation between the stick and the carrot in his application of his policy. The absence of any consistent policy on his part was attributed to his malady but a close examination of the 1953 coup showed us that he had been indecisive then. “This

marked the beginning of the period of concrete concessions designed to placate and defuse the opposition. However, instead of satisfying the opposition, these concessions were interpreted as signs of weakness and further emboldened it to escalate its demands” (Zabih 51).

In September, after the end of the fasting month Ramadan, the Shah declared martial law on the seventh of the same month but most demonstrators had not been informed of it (Parviz 106). As a result, the police opened fire on them when they demonstrated the next day in Jaleh Square and a massacre resulted. It became known in the annals of Iranian history as Black Friday. Statistics varied from one source to another regarding the true number of victims but the death toll was unanimously considered substantial. Black Friday gave the regime its coup de grace. Ervand Abrahamian, Iran historian, argued that, “Black Friday ended the possibility of gradual reform and left the country with two simple choices: a drastic revolution or a military counterrevolution” (Iran between two Revolutions 516). It also deprived the Shah of any credibility since his hands became stained with blood. In other words, the Iranians gave him a vote of no confidence. The spread of protests paralysed the Shah who had been indecisive all long. To reassure him of their continuous support and inquire about the developments in Iran, Carter called him from Camp David on 10 September (Vance 326). It illustrated the degree of attention that the disturbances in Iran started to draw, especially from the US.

The State Department wrote the first report on 24 October, which was about how the US ought to handle the Shah’s dilemma. The report asserted that the Shah had to act soon by adopting reforms that are more political. It advised Washington to approach the opposition and familiarize itself with its political designs. Sullivan objected to the last point that of contacting the opposition. He said, “Khomeini should be firmly quarantined. Our

destiny is to work with the Shah” (Sick 60). Ironically, he would be a fierce advocate of an opening to the opposition in the last phase of the revolutionary crisis.

US ambassador in Iran William Sullivan sent a cable to the US asking for recommendations on November 2 in which he said that the Shah had to choose between a coalition government and a military government (Sick 63). It expressed the gravity of the situation in Iran since this was the first warning cable of its kind to reach Washington. Brzezinski called the Shah offering him full US support while recommending the application of an iron fist policy evoking that “concessions alone are likely to produce a more explosive situation”. He wanted him to apply the iron fist before it would be too late (365). Sullivan was informed by Washington that if the Shah settled upon a military government, “we would strongly prefer a military government with the Shah to one without him” (Vance 329).

Brzezinski had been a staunch supporter of the idea of using force to help the Shah crack down because he was concerned with the image of the US and its attitude toward its allies at times of crisis. He knew also that only repression could save the Shah and that the US could not afford to lose him since no reliable alternative was available in the region. Saudi Arabia was not strong enough to take over Iran’s role. His clinging to this idea would lead to the long disagreement with Secretary of State Cyrus Vance who was always accused by the former of being lenient with communism (Vance 328). In return, Vance argued that the iron fist option was infeasible because of the high rate of army desertion in addition to its contradiction with the values that the Carter’s administration represented (331). The bureaucratic infighting would do great damage to the Carter’s administration as it tore it apart preventing the formulation of a coherent strategy vis-à-vis the Shah. The Special Coordinating Committee (SCC) meeting cable reaffirmed US support for the Shah. When the Shah asked Sullivan about the credibility of Brzezinski message, he declared that no instructions had been relayed to him (Answer to History 165). This episode exhibited the

bureaucratic infighting that gripped the Carter's administration and prevented the making of any well-studied decision that might have saved the Shah. Carter's idealistic dimension was translated into governmental sterility, which led its members to split ideologically. The disagreement was between the Moralpolitikers under Vance and the realpolitikers headed by Brzezinski as seen by Ofira Seliktar in her book *Failing the Crystal Ball Test*. In retrospect, Brzezinski's views offered the most feasible scheme that could have averted the fall of the Shah. Most importantly, this split also confused the Shah with the multiple different messages he was receiving from Washington at the same time (Seliktar 110-111). The absence of a unique governmental decision showed the extent to which the Carter's administration can be held accountable for the loss of Iran.

To stem the tide of the revolution, the Shah finally installed a military government under the leadership of General Gholam Reza Azhari on 6 November but, to his dismay, it did not put the situation back on track. The Azhari government oscillated between appeasement and punishment so that the Shah can look comfortably for a civilian prime minister (Milani 212). He wanted to put an end to the chaos and death that pervaded his country and try to remedy the economic situation that was gravely compounded by the increasing number of strikes in different sectors. It succeeded in curbing the spread of strikes (Bayandor 272). He arrested some former government officials like former chief of Savak Nematollah Nassiri and former Prime Minister Amir Abbas Hoveyda, who had been prime minister for thirteen years, to increase the credibility of his government (Menashri 58). The military government proved to be an erroneous choice since it worsened the situation because the demonstrators were demanding political reforms. To make matters worse, the Shah delivered a regrettable speech in which he confessed his past wrongdoing and asked for more time to correct his mistakes. Experts blamed him badly for this costly improvised move. It was deemed as a "sign of weakness" by the Iranians (Pollack 134). The prime

minister tried to save the Shah by opening up to the opposition but he failed since the Shah's absence of any particular consistent policy deprived him of any credibility. His political manoeuvres were devoid of any shrewdness. In addition, the army began to see internal splits that might undermine its unity and reduce its power in the days to come.

Ambassador Sullivan followed the situation closely. On 9 November, he sent an accurate diagnostic to his superiors asking them to consider the future of the Shah. The cable was entitled "Thinking the Unthinkable". It suggested that the US be prepared in case the military fall apart to see the Shah ousted from Iran (Sullivan 200-201). He said that stability in post-Shah Iran could be guaranteed only through an understanding between the religious institution and the younger army officers (202). He elucidated, "My assumption was that the religious leadership, including Khomeini, might accept such an arrangement because it would give them their essential objective, the elimination of the Shah". Sullivan mentioned also that Carter was not aware with the real situation in Iran (203).

The situation continued to deteriorate badly. The State Department even contemplated the possibility of adapting to an Iran without the Shah (Vance 329). The gravity of the situation in the last week of November led Michael Blumenthal, Secretary of Treasury, to suggest to enlist the services of George Ball, former Undersecretary of State, to provide them with an objective account about the situation in Iran and offer insights about how to deal with the situation (Bill 252). During Ball's investigation, President Carter was asked in a press conference about the Shah's chances of riding out the crisis. He answered, "I don't know. I hope so. This is something in the hands of the people of Iran . . . We primarily want an absence of violence and bloodshed and stability. We personally prefer that the Shah maintain a major role in the government, but that is a decision for the Iranian people to make"(qtd in Guerrero 159). It was interpreted as a severe blow dealt to the Shah's regime.

It sapped the Shah's morale and deprived him of any remaining desire to cling to his throne. Most importantly, Iranians tended to read it as a withdrawal of support from the Shah.

George Ball delivered his report to the Carter administration on December 13. He argued, "A government formed by the Shah would not be acceptable to the opposition" (Ganji 101). Ball concluded that the Shah was a spent force now and that he had to cede power in favour of a civilian government. He recommended the establishment of "a council of notables" with the condition that the Shah leads his country into democratic reforms and stays as leader of the army. In other words, he claimed that there would be no democratic transition without the Shah (Bayandor 299). It presented the administration with a clear picture of the situation in Iran. In addition, it informed the US of the bitter truth that the Shah was over and that the US had to start looking for an alternative. Brzezinski would later regret the decision to propose to the government to ask for the opinion of Ball on the matter because he was not on the same page with him. Barry Rubin thought, "Either President Carter rejected it on the spot at the December 13 meeting or Ambassador Sullivan's reservations killed the idea" (236).

With the apparent failure of the military government, the Shah started examining other avenues. In a meeting with the American ambassador in Iran William Sullivan on 13 December, he presented him with three choices: a national coalition; a surrender to the opposition and the creation of a regency council; or a military junta with an iron fist policy (Brzezinski 372-373). The Shah was dependent on American advice in the management of the crisis. The different views emanating from Washington confused the Shah who was already suffering the bad effects of the medicaments he was already taking as part of his cancer treatment. The situation continued to deteriorate as violence and strikes spread intensely and rapidly to the point of disrupting the flow of normal life. He met Sullivan again on 26 December and during the meeting, the Shah asked him whether he could be supported

to use the iron fist but Sullivan dismissed this decision out of hand (Brzezinski 375). It demonstrated the extent of the Shah's need to obtain US support to crack down but at this juncture it was too late since the opposition gathered its momentum and defined its objective that of the departure of the shah.

The Shah approached many former National Front members to assume the position of prime minister at this crucial moment. He preferred Doctor Gholam Sadeghi who finally turned down his offer (Buchan 129-131). He then talked to the former leader of the National Front Karim Sanjabi who chose to join the Khomeini camp instead as most of his party members did. The only remaining option was Shahpour Bakhtiar who was denounced by his former colleagues the moment he accepted the Shah's offer. He worked in the administration of Mohamed Mossadeq as a minister. He conditioned his acceptance on the Shah's departure on a long vacation until the situation would calm down (Parviz 114). He was appointed on 30 December. He was bent on restoring order and saving the Shah's regime. Later, he justified his decision that his government was better to a one that could be under the clergy or the communists (Guerrero 162). Sullivan assured the Shah the he and his family could stop by the US or go to Egypt to honor Sadat's invitation (Brzezinski 376).

On January 3, Sullivan sent a cable to Vance in which he suggested that the Shah's time was over and he had to leave as soon as possible. In the same message, he indicated that the Shah would leave only at Carter's behest (Ganji 106). He wanted to give a chance to Bakhtiar's government to survive the crisis.

In the meantime, Carter was well aware of the importance of the army in the Iranian equation. He sent General Robert Huyser to Iran to supervise the maintenance of the army integrity and cohesion. According to Sullivan, "His task (*Huyser*) was to meet with the senior officers of the Iranian military command in order to assure them of the continuity of American logistical support and to urge them to maintain the integrity of their forces in the

difficult period that would accompany the departure of the Shah and the investiture of the Bakhtiar government” (229). Carter was worried most that the fall of the army would plunge Iran into endless disorder. There was another reason, which was about Carter’s distrust of William Sullivan with whom he disagreed most of the time.

The Carter administration decided that the presence of a military man on the ground in Iran was required. The choice fell on General Robert Huyser who was the deputy of American command in Europe. Upon his arrival, he found the military divided because of the vague situation of the Shah. Some of its commands thought of joining the Khomeini camp. On January 10, Huyser was told by the government to try to persuade the military to support the Bakhtiar government (Vance 337). The extent of his mission could not be known at this stage but his efforts did not evaporate since the military was left intact. The fall of the military could have cost the US a lot because another hot spot would emerge in the Middle East, a historically troubled region.

President Carter met in Guadeloupe on 5 and 6 January Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, the President of France, German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt , and British Prime Minister James Callaghan. It was reported that during this meeting the decision to abandon the Shah was made. Carter himself stated that not all the attendants at the meeting were supportive of the Shah (Keeping Faith 445). Obviously, the main concern was the assumption of power in Iran by a pro-Soviet regime. They wanted to set the ground for the emergence of a pro-Western regime in collaboration with the army or the instalment of a religious system that would be certainly of anti-Soviet orientations. After Carter’s trip to Guadeloupe, Sullivan suggested that Washington open a channel of communication to Khomeini. They first agreed to contact him contingent on the Shah’s prior consent who did not object later. This was abolished since Carter and Brzezinski thought they would destabilize the Shah’s regime in an act that was akin to an informal abandon of him (Carter Keeping Faith 446, Brzezinski

Power and Principle 380). Instead, France was asked to approach Khomeini on behalf of the United States, which led to a disagreement between Carter and Sullivan (Guererro 172). The Carter's administration was deeply divided regarding their position vis-à-vis the Shah. Consequently, the US would suffer the consequences of the lack of a consistent strategy.

The Shah said to Sullivan on 12 January that he would leave Iran four days later. Sullivan believed that the US had to swallow the bitter pill that of the final departure of the Shah and exclude the possibility of his returning to Iran. He advised them to focus the efforts on supporting Bakhtiar (Vance 338). There was fear of a future confrontation between the military and Khomeini. In the meantime, the Shah was already offered residence in the US. On the contrary, he decided to go to Egypt the day of his departure after carrying a cask of soil with him in his formally announced convalescence trip. He hoped that staying close to Iran might be advantageous to him in case favourable developments ensued.

The Air force unit, which was called Homa Faran, at bases near Tehran declared their allegiance to Khomeini on February 9 (Milani 230). The Imperial Guard that was known for its loyalty to the monarchy arrived to stop the rebellion of the Homa faran. Other armed groups hostile to the monarchy supported them. The fight continued for some time until the military declared their neutrality. As a result, Bakhtiar resigned and the army fell. It was the end of monarchy in Iran. The Pahlavi dynasty ruled Iran for thirty-seven years.

2-4 Carter's Policies towards the Post-Revolutionary Regime

It is axiomatic that Chaos prevails for a long time after the occurrence of any revolution. The former ruling elite was to be replaced by a new one; As a result, a power vacuum would emerge since the new leaders would prove incapable of managing the affairs of the state. They would find themselves also isolated abroad because they did not have multiple productive ties with other nations. All the active parties of their different political hues would usually engage in a scramble for power as in Iran: leftists, moderates,

fundamentalists and several other armed groups who mingled politics with arms. The current authority was supposed to be in a weak condition, mainly due to the multiplicity of power centres and, most importantly, the existence of a parallel authority embodied in the person of the de facto leader Ayatollah Khomeini who was at first inclined to avoid the spotlight and to run the state from behind the scenes. Iran was thrown in the midst of endless disorder.

Khomeini soon after his arrival appointed Doctor Mehdi Bazargan who was a professor at the University of Tehran with religious inclinations, as his prime minister in the first post-revolutionary government. Bazargan found it difficult to rule despite the trust placed on his own person by Ayatollah Khomeini. He found himself being gradually weakened by all the rivalling parties who were keen on advancing their agendas at whatever cost. His main opponents were Khomeini's entourage who were determined to uphold their vision of creating an Islamic republic in Iran. In retrospect, given the fundamentalists' lack of the knowledge and the ability that qualify them to manage a state, they opted to hire him to gain time first until they would be ready and then have him fired. The US applauded implicitly the decision to appoint Bazargan because he was a moderate (Guererro 183). His Western education gave him an advantage in dealing with Western governments, especially the US. Barry Rubin argued that, "the assumption was that Khomeini would peacefully retire to Qom, the ardour could gradually cool and moderates, pragmatists and technocrats would emerge as dominant in Tehran" (American Relations with Iran 309). Significantly, the US was mistaken in expecting a healthy relationship to develop between the two countries based on its prediction that the clerics would retire to their natural haven: religious schools and mosques. To their chagrin, the clerics were biding their time, even feeding anti-Americanism to their followers to rally them around themselves at the opportune moment since the presence of a common enemy would unite the Iranians. The US did not seem to be fully cognizant of the dimensions of this phenomenon and the tactics of the emerging theocracy.

The US tried to engage with the post-revolutionary regime because of the rosy picture it had already painted about it when the moderates, under Bazargan, were at the helm. Iran and the US had had matters of mutual interest, which encouraged the latter to attempt to sway the former. Among the common issues: Iran would need spare parts from the US and they did have a common enemy, the Soviet Union. President Carter green-lighted the rapprochement efforts that were delegated to their embassy in Iran. On 12 February, after the collapse of the Bakhtiar government, President Carter declared in a press conference, “he hoped to work with the new rulers and noted Bazargan promise to ensure the safety of Americans in Iran” (qtd in Rubin *Paved with Good Intentions* 282). Vance said that Bazargan had told them that his government “wished to continue relations with the US”. He recalled also that at that moment, they were preoccupied with two issues: “preventing sensitive and military intelligence equipment from falling into unfriendly hands; and the safety of American citizens” (Vance 342). Bazargan pragmatism overwhelmed the revolutionary fervour dominant then. He knew that the US had accepted the revolution and the possibility of returning the Shah to his throne was inexistent. Interestingly, Bazargan would not have approached Iran had he had the okay of Khomeini (Vance 342). Vance stated also that Washington was prepared to repair relations at whatever price since the bilateral partnership was highly sought because the geopolitical context dictated the resort to such an option. He thought also that, “over time US and Iranian interest in a strong, stable, non-communist Iran should permit a cooperative, if far less intimate, relationship to emerge” (343). The theme of anti-communism was remarkably evoked to lure Iran to return to the orbit of the US. It illustrated the Cold War dimension of the Iranian crisis to the US that was eager to deprive the Soviet Union from an erstwhile ally.

Carter’s ordering of the revitalization of the bilateral relations was motivated by many reasons. The strategic value of Iran was of utmost importance, especially during the

Cold War. It was also primarily motivated by electoral reasons as Ofira Seliktar, a political scientist, explained:

There was a domestic imperative to show that American relations with Iran could prosper in a post-Pahlavi era. Early in 1979, Carter, already besieged by criticism of his leadership, came under attack for “losing” Iran and mishandling Nicaragua. Facing the prospect of defending his record in the forthcoming elections, Carter was eager to show that Iran and, for that matter, Nicaragua were not total losses. If the administration could normalize relations with the new rulers in Tehran, Carter would be in a better position to vindicate his foreign policy record (125)

This episode reflected the scale of the influence of electoral calculations on Carter’s thinking and decision-making. It seemed too much exaggerated that could be rightly portrayed that he acted as if he was in a continuing electoral campaign and never a sitting president. Domestic calculations influenced badly his foreign policy choices. It can be said that he was a hostage to his re-election project to the point of forgetting to act assertively and powerfully or, in other words, realistically i.e., he was a victim of his inconsistent political behaviour and oscillation between idealism and realism.

After the US made clear its intentions of initiating a cordial relationship with the post-revolutionary regime, its embassy became a pawn in the domestic politics chessboard of Iran. Iranians never ceased looking suspiciously at the US that was seen as trying to reverse the revolution at any moment. On February 14, leftist armed groups seized the embassy. The cause was very clear, they wanted to gain Iranians’ sympathy and use it to their advantage in their contest for power. These leftist factions were targeted by the new revolutionary regime because it wanted to eliminate them, even calling them US puppets. The leftists’ image in the minds of Iranians was tarnished by the clerics who portrayed them as enemies of God. They were also accused of being Soviet and American agents. The same day, US ambassador, William Sullivan, called on Ebrahim Yazdi, Minister of Foreign Affairs, who, with Khomeini’s consent, arrived and liberated the embassy (Rubin 281). Consequently, the security of the embassy was delegated to the revolutionary guards instead

of the leftists. The act of the Iranian government exhibited Iran's willingness to re-establish good ties with the US. On the other hand, it signalled to the US that its position was in jeopardy since it was employed in the political game in Iran. This episode manifested the political points that could be scored by such action by any political actor who dared to do so in Iran. Probably, it was a copy of the subsequent Iran hostage crisis. Sullivan had defined the aims of the embassy after the temporary takeover: he wanted to take all American residents in Iran back to the US, to try to make the embassy work again and to improve relations with the new regime in Iran (269).

The former Shah of Iran flew to Egypt first and then moved to Morocco where he could stay for a while. His preliminary refusal to head to the US was dictated by the desire to stay as closer as possible to be flown to Iran shortly in case a change occurred. King Hassan two of Morocco hosted him but for reasons related to the extremists' activities and their threats in his country and the prospective summit of the Muslim world, he informed the Shah that his hospitality was over and that he had to leave. The Shah's friends David Rockefeller and Henry Kissinger eventually found him a country that agreed to receive him, the Bahamas. He was always denied entry to the US. They did so in order to maintain the current momentum of US-Iran relations. It was the price, which the US had paid for keeping engagement a priority. Cyrus Vance recalled that it was "the most distasteful recommendation I ever had to make to the president" (344). The decision might affect their image in the world as a nation that turned its back on its needy former allies. However, it reflected their sincere efforts of engagement.

The US was certain that the Bazargan government would not last for long. Yet, they continued their efforts to re-establish relations with the post-revolutionary regime. Stansfield Turner, CIA director, in a memorandum written on March 30, said, "There is good possibility that the Bazargan government may not survive the combined pressures posed by

internal friction and a sustained external challenge for the left. Even if he is able to remain in office, there is little prospect that his government will be willing or able to develop effective cooperation with the US” (Arc of Crisis 286). The US remained sceptical of its efforts. They seemed to possess a long-term view of its relations with Iran but due to, supposedly, electoral reasons, they opted to take their chance. On April 12, Charlie Naas, the Chargé d’Affaire in Iran, met Ebrahim Yazdi, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and assured him that the US had no “ulterior motives and does not wish to embarrass the new government by pressing reconciliation” (Arc of Crisis 319).

Anti-Americanism was meant to feed the brains of Iranians who were prone to believe conspiracy theories. These increasingly xenophobic sentiments exposed the lives of US nationals there to danger. After Valentine’s Day takeover, the US set out a plan to evacuate as many citizens as possible. The Soviet Union capitalized on this current atmosphere and alimented these sentiments (Rubin 282). It wanted to have a superpower displaced from its borders. The mere neutralization of Iran was to be considered a victory for the Soviet Union. This phenomenon spread to affect the interests of the US in Iran and the safety of Americans also as Mark Gasiorowski argued,

The anti-Americanism was manifested in several harrowing attacks on US personnel in February 1979, including the brief seizure of US embassy compound in Tehran by radical leftist guerrilla, the near lynching of an official at the US consulate in Tabriz, and the abduction of 20 US technicians at one of Tacksman electronic surveillance sites in North eastern Iran, which monitored Soviet missile tests in Central Asia. (615)

The Islamic Revolutionary Tribunal sentenced to death everyone who was suspected of being a part of the ancien regime or even hostile to the new regime’s tenets (Ganji 146). These summary executions troubled the whole world and aroused the interest of human rights organizations. Iranian fundamentalists considered these trials necessary for the success of the revolution. They executed many Iranians from all different religious sects,

among them Bahais and Jews. The new leaders used to hate most the Jews, Christians and Bahais. After they executed the Jewish-Iranian businessman Habib Alghanian, charged with spying for Israel, The US senate passed a resolution that was sponsored by New York senator Jacob Javitz, a Jewish American, in May 1979 condemning these cruel acts (Bill 282). Jacob Javitz was known for his pro-Jewish attitudes and it was reported that he was a friend of the Shah's sister. As a corollary, Iran refused the nomination of a new US ambassador, Walter Cutler after the departure of William Sullivan in April (Seliktar 144). It was probably because of his long service in Iran and the ties he cultivated with the Shah's regime. A Chargé d'Affaire, Bruce Laingen, was sent instead. Charlie Naas replaced Sullivan temporarily as Head of Mission said, "The Javitz Resolution was the coup de grace to my efforts in Tehran" (qtd in Emery 629). The conflict was between the Democrats and the Republicans at the Senate. This resolution highlighted the size of anti-American sentiments in Iran and inflamed them because it was interpreted as US meddling in their internal affairs. Meanwhile, Khomeini was making good use of his time paving the way for the establishment of an Islamic republic that the referendum that was held in March had revealed.

The provisional government had troubles dealing with the growing ethnic rebellions in Iran. Many ethnicities: Arabs, Kurds, Baluchis, were voicing their demands that amounted to seeking autonomy or even secession in some cases. Given the United States long history with backing separatist movements and ethnic minorities in the region, the Iranian prime minister sought intelligence cooperation with them. The most notable case of US backing of separatist movements was that of Iraqi Kurds that the Shah was part of it in 1972. In May 1979, Bazargan asked US embassy officials to furnish them with information about ethnic uprisings. The Iranians suspected that the Iraqis were behind these movements in Iran. The cooperation continued since then until October when the US had informed Iran that Iraq was preparing an attack against them (Gasiorowski 613-623). In the same paper, it was

mentioned that Iranians did not take this warning seriously, because internal conflicts and political instability at the top prevented them from revisiting this caution. The US embarked on this partnership in order to cement its relations with Iran and back the barely surviving moderates. The seizure of the US embassy sealed the fate of this attempt to engage the post-revolutionary regime. It can be said that it failed also because it bet on the losing side because it was not enough familiar with revolutionary Islam or political Islam that Khomeini epitomized.

Conclusion

The Shah was to be acquainted soon with an eighth American president in his long reign. Jimmy Carter waged his campaign on two themes: human rights and control of arms sales. He was determined to translate his campaign promises into formal policies. Arms sales represented an important issue of ethical dimensions to be dealt with by the Carter administration. In essence, the two themes Carter advocated in his campaign were a part of a two-pronged strategy: to appeal to the voters since the outcome proved productive and to attract as many Third World countries as possible into his camp and to strengthen those already allied with the United States. The Shah was worried about the moralistic discourse and the disturbing signals coming from Washington. The Shah had to wait until Vance's visit to Iran in May 1977 to know the thrust of Carter's policy toward Iran. Vance praised the Shah's early fruits of liberalization and encouraged him to proceed with the reforms. The White House issued PD-13 in May 1977 that was about the countries eligible for the new conventional arms transfer policy that excluded Iran. In July of the same year and contrary to all expectations and specially the very spirit of PD-13 that forbade the introduction of new weapons into the region, Carter submitted to Congress the AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System) proposed sale bill. The AWACS sale bill was resubmitted in September to

Congress that ratified it and agreed to the sale of only five instead of seven. Public discontent became a common feature of Iranian life. The Shah's liberalization paved the way for the spread of disturbances spearheaded by the opposition of its different strains, especially the intelligentsia, to protest against the repressive nature of the regime and seek more reforms. The Shah replaced his Prime Minister Amir Abbas Hoveyda who occupied this office for nearly thirteen years with the Western educated technocrat Jamshid Amuzegar in July 1977. Amuzegar's tenure coincided with the rise of the number of demonstrations because of the measures that were taken to reduce the repressive force of the policies already pursued by the government. The Shah was still apprehensive of Carter's designs. The anti-Shah's activities proceeded with an increasingly rapid pace.

The Shah worked diligently to eliminate all political forces, which might constitute a threat to his throne during his reign. The communist movement that once constituted the sole organized party in Iran, some said even in the entire Middle East, cannot be disregarded. Iran was never immune to the developments that had occurred in its Northern neighbour the Soviet Union on all sides, especially politically and intellectually. During the Azerbaijani crisis of 1946, the communists played a role disadvantageous to their interests and those of Iran, especially its territorial integrity, by supporting the secessionist movements in Azerbaijan and Kurdistan that were backed by the Soviets. In the 1953 oil crisis, the communists threw their lot behind Mossadeq with the clergy under the leadership of Ayatollah Kashani. During the sixties, the Shah continued ruling with a mailed fist. In 1965, Mujahidin Khalq Organization was founded. Six years later, another organization came into existence that adopted militant activism as its doctrine: the Fedayeen Khalq. The leftist movements occupied the first lines of the opposition during the seventies.

Some observers traced the roots of the religious opposition to the very emergence of Shi'ism that they considered as a revolutionary ideology by nature. The introduction of

Shi'ism into Iran in 1501 by the Safavids changed completely the religious configuration. Iran's history with curbing the political ambitions of the clergy was very long. The rise of Reza Khan to power in 1921 would change their status. In fact, Mohamed Reza Shah at first compromised the clerics. The clerics did not wait for long to take part in politics. Khomeini did not only monopolize the market of religious ideas. Both Ali Shari'ati and Jalal Al Ahmed's contributions were of importance also. Shari'ati was also known for his sermons that treated different topics in the hope of coming up with an updated version of Islam instead of remaining slaves to the outdated traditional one. Jalal Al Ahmed was mostly known for his book "Westoxication" in which he called for the return to the native Persian culture by preaching his people that there would be no technological advancement without their clinging to their native culture and their roots.

The international engagements of the Carter administration pushed Iran to a lower status. The Shah's regime was at a terribly weak state since his legitimacy had seemingly eroded over time. After May 1978, it was believed that the revolutionary crisis ended but it just turned out to be the lull that preceded the storm. In September, after the end of the fasting month Ramadan, the Shah declared martial law on the seventh of the same month but most demonstrators had not been informed of it. The State Department wrote the first report on 24 October, which was about how the US ought to handle the Shah's dilemma. US ambassador in Iran William Sullivan sent a cable to the US asking for recommendations on November 2 in which he said that the Shah had to choose between a coalition government and a military government. Brzezinski had been a staunch supporter of the idea of using force to help the Shah crack down because he was concerned with the image of the US and its attitude toward its allies at times of crisis. To stem the tide of the revolution, the Shah finally installed a military government under the leadership of General Gholam Reza Azhari on 6 November but, to his dismay, it did not put the situation back on track. Ambassador

Sullivan followed the situation closely. The situation continued to deteriorate badly. With the apparent failure of the military government, the Shah started examining other avenues. The Shah approached many former National Front members to assume the position of prime minister at this crucial moment. On January 3, Sullivan sent a cable to Vance in which he suggested that the Shah's time was over and he had to leave as soon as possible. In the meantime, Carter was well aware of the importance of the army in the Iranian equation. The Carter administration decided that the presence of a military man on the ground in Iran was required. They sent General Robert Huyser to oversee the situation in Iran and maintain the integrity of the army. The Shah said to Sullivan on 12 January that he would leave Iran four days later. After that, Bakhtiar resigned and the army fell. It was the end of monarchy in Iran.

It is axiomatic that Chaos prevails for a long time after the occurrence of any revolution. Khomeini soon after his arrival appointed Doctor Mehdi Bazargan who was a professor at the University of Tehran with religious inclinations, as his prime minister in the first post-revolutionary government. The US tried to engage with the post-revolutionary regime because of the rosy picture it had already painted about it when the moderates, under Bazargan, were at the helm. Carter's ordering of the revitalization of the bilateral relations was motivated by many reasons. After the US made clear its intentions of initiating a cordial relationship with the post-revolutionary regime, its embassy became a pawn in the domestic politics chessboard of Iran. The former Shah of Iran flew to Egypt first and then moved to Morocco where he could stay for a while. The US was certain that the Bazargan government would not last for long. Anti-Americanism was meant to feed the brains of Iranians who were prone to believe conspiracy theories. The provisional government had troubles dealing with the growing ethnic rebellions in Iran. Carter's project of re-establishing diplomatic ties with Iran failed.

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CHAPTER THREE

Carter's Approach to the Hostage Crisis: November 1979- April 1980: A Featureless Policy

Introduction

This chapter investigates the strategies that Carter followed when dealing with the hostage crisis during the first six months. It argues that the approaches he pursued at first were flawed because his options were driven by how electorally advantageous they were instead of whether they were feasible or not. His re-election project became an obstacle to Carter's in fulfilling his political goals.

Carter attempted to find a diplomatic and economic solution to the hostage crisis but in vain. He approached many personalities to try to mediate the crisis. He imposed economic sanctions. Iranian deposits in US banks were frozen. Many other economic and diplomatic options were considered but the Iranians' intransigence halted the development of such initiatives. The attitudes of US public opinion continued to bother him. Then, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan affected the hostage crisis. The crisis became an issue that many other actors tried to influence, especially the USSR for Cold War purposes.

The present chapter scrutinizes the beginning of the crisis and tries to identify the circumstances and the actors that provoked the hostage crisis. It claims that the storming of the embassy was a spontaneous act committed by one group to upstage another for political

reasons. Khomeini took advantage of the situation and steered it to directions of his own choosing. It also examines the military rescue mission that Carter had ordered. The failure of the rescue mission pushed Carter to look for a more realistic solution to the hostage crisis in Iran.

3-1 The Occupation of the US Embassy in Tehran

The attitude of the Islamic fundamentalists was indicative of their obsession with the secularists in particular, afraid of their future designs for Iran. While the US was preoccupied trying to engage the new revolutionary regime in Iran to a degree that made the prospects of the success of this mission promising, the religious opposition was waiting in the wings to wreck the American initiative at the opportune moment. They thought the U.S. that wanted pro-Western officials to rule supported them. In fact, the US has the tendency to support secular, Western-educated politicians who would serve US interests as they did in post-revolutionary Iran and in Iraq 2003 (Emery 93). Besides, the clerics were suspicious of all other factions no matter what their beliefs. They were eager to remove the secular moderates from power. During a Special Coordination Committee (SCC) meeting, it was said, “There is an internal rivalry inside Iran between the religious authorities under Khomeini and the more moderate, secular elements represented by Prime Minister Bazargan and Foreign Minister Yazdi (FRUS Iran Hostage Crisis November 1979 September 1980 3). In the same meeting, they advised US officials not to say not anything that could undermine the Bazargan-Yazdi government or awaken anti-US feelings among the religious class (3) .The internal situation in Iran was not stable due to the chaos that followed the revolution. In this context, Barry Rubin, Iran historian, argued that the situation in Iran then was “confused and deeply confusing” (277). Only such an atmosphere could provide the clerics with a pretext to take power and set their plans into motion. The rivalry between the clerics and the moderate secularists was between two equals since the latter were fighting tooth and nail to

save the government believing that the clerics could not run a state internally, let alone manage its foreign policy apparatus because their world view was believed to be very narrow or rather parochial.

The last of meetings between American and Iranian high officials happened to take place in Algiers on November 2, 1979, at the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Algerian revolution, where National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski met with Iranian Prime Minister Mehdi Bazargan, Foreign Minister Ibrahim Yazdi and Defence Minister Mustapha Chamran. US ambassador in Algiers Ulric Haynes, Jr., set up the meeting (Moses 1). Brzezinski was eager to win Iran back at whatever price. The purpose of this meeting seemed to discuss engagement efforts. However, further discussion of internal issues was not to be excluded given the power struggle in Iran and Brzezinski's inclination to shore up the position of the moderates. Actually, it was clear that the US threw its weight behind the moderates at the expense of the clergy. It expected them to appear soon on the scene because they assumed that Khomeini would play a limited role (qtd in Seliktar 129). This move had disastrous consequences on US project of re-establishing relations with Iran. Furthermore, Brzezinski was a firm advocate of using force to restore the Shah to the throne during the heady days of the revolution. His determination and efforts did not stop here; he went to great lengths even after the revolution considering the military option repeatedly, especially during the Iran hostage crisis. Brzezinski strived to draw back Iran into the Western camp again because of its geopolitical importance and to avoid having the Carter's administration stigmatized for losing Iran that would haunt it later.

In a memo to Brzezinski, Sick wrote, "before Bazargan, Yazdi and Chamran left for Algiers, they presented a petition to Khomeini asking that the Council of Experts be disbanded on the grounds that they had exceeded their mandate. Khomeini refused. This might have been the final straw" (FRUS 84). Sick noted also in another memorandum, "We

have had a growing body of evidence for several months now that Bazargan and co. were increasingly aware of their inability to influence Khomeini. Consequently, they seem to have decided to initiate a close working relationship with us on the intelligence side". He added, "My guess is that they believe in the omnipotence of the CIA and want to get the Agency on their side in the event of clear break with Khomeini. They know that their jobs depend on Khomeini and they are looking for alliances and clandestine support from us as a safety net in case they are fired" (FRUS 6). The moderates worked to enlist the help of the United States to crush their opponents. Thus, they entangled the US in the Iranian imbroglio politically. It can be inferred that Khomeini attacks against the US held some truth since he felt his position was being threatened. Washington supported the pro-Western forces but, to its disappointment, its political manoeuvres though politically acceptable given the context in which they were framed would cost it dearly at the hands of the intransigent clerics in revenge. The hostage crisis would be an extension of a power struggle in Iran aiming to punish all other political actors on the scene in addition to the United States that was seen by the clerics as their number one enemy and the sponsor of their secular enemies.

The Islamists or the Khomeinists in particular believed that they were the true author of the revolution and thereby should protect it and minimize the damage that could be caused by the modernizing secularists whose style of running the affairs of state was thought to be no different from that of the disgraced monarch. They despised the leftists also because they constituted a danger to their project of creating an Islamic republic. Of importance also was the role played by the other factions during the revolution, which the clerics wanted to erase in the hope of excluding any other rivals. They capitalized on the Algiers meeting and the Shah's admission into the US to label Iranian officials and their like-minded Iranians as traitors and urgent calls to protect the revolution from subversion were issued. Ayatollah Khomeini who was the de facto leader of the state then exhorted Iranians in a sermon to

attack all Western interests, which could endanger the revolution. He said, “It is therefore up to the dear pupils, students and theological students to expand their attacks against the U.S. and Israel, so that they may force the U.S. to return the deposed and criminal Shah” (Chronology of the Iran Hostage Crisis 35). It was not strange to hear Khomeini’s attacks against the West in general and the US and Israel in particular because he appealed to an audience that was raised to relish such topics. It was enormously influenced by the religious discourse delivered in Mosques. Despite historians’ unanimity regarding Khomeini’s ignorance about any plans for the occupation of the embassy, his words could not exonerate him and he had to be held, to a good measure, answerable. The clerics were paving the way to monopolize power and to establish an Islamic state along the path drawn by the prophet thirteen centuries ago.

The Shah became a millstone around the US’s neck after his removal from power. He travelled from one country to another hoping to find a permanent host country that would treat him decently. It would be erroneous to overlook his hidden wish to be recalled to Iran at any time as a monarch by the military (Farber 109). The 1953 scenario was still stuck in his mind based on that wish; he chose to stay in the Middle East. After his departure, he stayed for a while in Egypt and then moved to Morocco when he would spend a good amount of time before King Hassan the Second asked him to leave. Some sources refer to the threat carried by the Islamists against Morocco. King Hassan the Second put the interests of his country first despite the long friendship that he had cultivated over the years with the Shah. To the Shah’s further disappointment, the US turned his request to seek asylum there down (Rubin 284). Engaging with the new revolutionary regime in Iran was the Carter administration first and foremost preoccupation regarding US Iran’s policy. The option of the Shah’s reception was considered as an ongoing threat that could torpedo their efforts of engagements at any time. State Department Head of Iran Desk, Henry Precht, warned in

March that the Shah's admission would be "a disaster for US-Iranian relations, and pose a severe security problem for US officials in Iran" (qtd in Ganji 147). There were plenty of reports warning of the possibility of taking such a step, especially on the part of US embassy in Tehran. President Carter once said, "(I) did not wish the Shah to be playing tennis while Americans in Tehran were being kidnapped or even killed" (qtd in Brzezinski 474). The extent to which US coldness towards the Shah's issue would last remained unknown at that time.

The cancer-racked Shah was in a grave medical condition in Mexico where he resided after spending three months in the Bahamas. The Bahamas was his next destination after leaving Morocco (Pahlavi 14-34). Carter was against his admittance to the US all along. A lobbying campaign by Nelson Rockefeller, Head of Manhattan Bank and Henry Kissinger, former Secretary of State, finally paid off when Carter green-lighted his reception because they convinced that no other kind of therapy existed elsewhere but in the US for his type of cancer (qtd in Emery 137). In retrospect, it was an unstudied political decision or rather rash decision. Others saw it as a gamble designed to achieve goals related to the next presidential elections (Kifner the Washington Post). It can be said that the US had to admit him not only for humanitarian reasons but also for both ethical and political reasons since turning their back on a sick ex-ally would portray the US negatively and undermine its credibility. The humanitarian aspect of the issue convinced Carter to admit the Shah into the US (Pollack 160). It seemed that Carter eventually based his choice on the previous considerations. The admission of the Shah, *inter alia*, triggered the Iran hostage crisis because ordinary Iranians thought the US was grooming the Shah to be reinstalled as a king again. The 1953 coup d'état was a reference to them: it reminded them of their embryonic democratic experience that was killed by the US. The clerics would spread such rumours that would strike a responsive chord with the populace that would be needed in further dates.

Post-revolutionary Iran witnessed the intensification of anti-American sentiments. The phenomenon of aggressive anti-Americanism was on the rise everywhere, especially in the Middle East from the beginning of the seventies (O'Connor 85). There were deep roots that shaped this phenomenon in its present form. In Iran, it was fed more particularly by the clerics who attacked everything Western in order to protect their native culture that they felt was being threatened. Moreover, it was used to create an outside enemy through which they could unite people against it for political purposes. Interestingly, it became later a survival strategy for the post-revolutionary regime. The clerics targeted first the minorities like the Kurds, the Azeri, the Jews and the Baha'is to rally people around themselves by discrediting them and portraying them as the fifth column intent on undermining the achievements of the revolution. The efficiency of the vilification campaign taken against these minorities proved short-lived; as a result, they resorted to demonize their distant enemy: The United States. They evoked US long partnership with the Shah for over three decades accusing the former of propping up a repressive regime and overlooking the atrocities the Shah had committed against the Iranian people. What mattered most was that the anti-American discourse was employed this time, to a lesser degree, to weaken the communists who were the first to endorse such ideas for fear of being stripped of this slogan that was at first a communist property. The conflict between the Islamists and the communists was to be fought by any means available. It was a struggle for dominance between two parties whose roles in the revolution were significant. Thereafter, the game changed and the scene was not meant to be shared but monopolized: a theocracy or a socialist state. The US dreaded both though at first but it feared the clerics less. Most importantly, anti-American feelings were weaponized by the clerics then and the Iran hostage crisis would manifest that later.

The US learned on Sunday 04th, 1979 of the occupation of its embassy in Tehran by a group of protestors whose number exceeded four hundred. They were members of a group

that identified itself as “Students Followers of the Line of the Imam”. They first intended to stage a sit-in that was meant to last for a few days not exceeding three according to the amount of food they brought with them (Farber 137). Apparently, it was intended to demand the return of the Shah to stand trial in Iran. Unfortunately, the event took a different course of action. Three students planned the storming of the embassy: Ibrahim Asgharadi, Mohsen Mirdamadi and Habibolah Bitaraf. The details about the prior planning of the seizure of the embassy are beyond the scope of this chapter. The group’s mentor Hojjatolislam Moussavi Khomeiniha who was close to Khomeini’s son Ahmed blessed the attack on the embassy (Bowden 13). He consulted him during the whole crisis from start to finish. Khomeiniha’s blessing empowered the students and encouraged them to play larger roles. This connection would prove later that a large network of actors were running the whole crisis behind the scenes, manipulating the takers who were turned themselves into pawns.

Khomeini’s prior knowledge of the attack could not be substantiated and the attitude that he had taken after the occupation of the embassy remained vague. Baqer Moin, the author of Khomeini’s best biography, explained that,

He was able to defuse the guerrilla movements temporarily by manipulating the hostage crisis. ...If he immediately backed the Islamic radicals in public and then the liberals managed to organize support groups against the excesses of the radicals, or the Americans presented Iran with a decisive ultimatum, he might have to face a humiliating climb down. ...Taken by surprise by the affair of the embassy, he needed to gather his thought and assess the potential advantages and disadvantages of any pronouncement by him for or against the move. (174)

Khomeini bided his time well before applauding the takeover of the embassy. He weighed the benefits of such an act on his domestic scene as it offered him the opportunity to crush his political opponents, to deflect his people’s attention from other matters related to their future political system and the economy in particular and unite them against an external enemy. It gave him also enough of manoeuvre room to occupy since the price tag this carried

was cheap internally and seemed not to be costly internationally. Worthy to mention also, international politics was low on Khomeini's agenda. After a couple of days, he gave his formal blessings to the takeover and this can be considered according to the term used by Sapehr Zabih, historian of the Iranian left, as "government sponsored terrorism" that its business flourished after the revolution (91). The US would find it difficult to handle such kind of terrorism that tended to be perceived as legitimate by the "*other*".

The US government expected the attack to be a repeat of the February attack when Iranian officials intervened to end it. To their distress, the attack this time was led by Islamist elements, not communist. When US Chargé d'Affaire Bruce laingen went to the foreign Ministry to ask Yazdi to intervene and terminate the seizure, Yazdi tried to end the occupation but he found himself powerless. Then, he offered stay to Bruce Laingen and his other two colleagues in the ministry building (FRUS 6). Yazdi had concluded then that his time was over because "the signal was clear the Imam approved" (Farber 141). The influence of the clerics and the Revolutionary Council had significantly paralysed his government. In the following two days, sensing its impotence the Bazargan government tendered its resignation that was accepted this time by Khomeini after it was refused several times before. He authorized the Revolutionary Council to assume power. The US government faced a different situation that was compounded more by Bazargan departure whose patience would have led to a different outcome. Consequently, the crisis would take longer than first expected even though one of their supposedly occupation goals that of overthrowing the moderate secular government of Bazargan was achieved. Hence, it seemed that the takeover was a spontaneous act by naïve students, which proved later advantageous to Khomeini who did not hesitate to endorse and exploit it. It would be an exaggeration if it were attributed to a particular series of reasons because it resulted from some ideas that clouded the Iranian political life after the revolution like political Islam and anti-Americanism. Khomeini's mind

could not produce such an idea as of initiating a takeover as a political tactic because his political knowledge and capabilities were limited.

As mentioned before, the immediate impression indicated that the seizure was designed to expel the Bazargan government first and to push the US to extradite the Shah second: these were the results of surface analysis that became part of what is called the conventional wisdom. The revisionists and Mohammed Ayatollah Tabaar, among them, in particular, argued that the competition between the leftists and the Islamists was extended to the embassy. The Islamists felt that they were to be upstaged by the communists once they take over the embassy first. The Leftists were viewed to be more threatening ideologically to the clerics than the US *per se* (Tabbar the Washington Post). Khomeini used the communists during the revolution and when building his theocracy in *mariage de convenance* by allowing them to act freely but then he changed his mind and started to limit their manoeuvre room by restricting their activities before he knocked them down later in 1983. Khomeini criticized them after the seizure of the embassy, “My ears did not hear that they supported (the seizure of the embassy). If they are not pro- American, why did not they support (this act)” (qtd in Tabaar the Washington Post). The Leftists felt that the clerics stole one of their cards that they would have benefitted from it enormously had they used it first. Overall, Khomeini deceived all his rivals and replaced “the crown” with “the turban” by acting pragmatically using every means possible.

The Iranian revolution marked the advent of political Islam or Islamism as a viable force not to be reckoned with in Iran and in the Middle East in general. It called for the adoption of a unique vision that would unite all Islamic countries together and prevent them from taking sides during the Cold War because it mainly aimed at the elimination of all other Western generated currents like communism or secularism. Mirsepassi-Ashtiani argued that, “The rise and popularity of Islamic politics in Iran became a reality by articulating an

alternative discourse to Western-centric projects of modernization, in a way that enabled Iran to accommodate modernity to own historical and cultural experiences and specificities” (78). The success of the Iranian revolution encouraged the propagation of political Islam and the hostage crisis set a precedent for other crises that would occur in the Middle East. It was a part of an evolutionary process that would develop later rapidly when it was supported by the United States in Afghanistan. The Iran hostage crisis was followed by the attack on the holy Mosque of Mecca and other attacks on several US embassies in the Islamic world like Pakistan, Libya, Kuwait and Afghanistan (The Iran Hostage Crisis a Chronology of Daily Developments 41). These attacks targeted American interests but the Iran hostage crisis was responsible for giving enough attention to this ideology because it affected directly the lives of American citizens and was overpublicized in the American media for long. In addition, it sent a negative image about Islam that disturbed many leaders of Islamic countries especially King Fahd of Saudi Arabia who complained to Carter about the impact of the crisis on “Islam’s international reputation” (FRUS 108). Washington reacted to this wave of Islamism by asking its citizens to pull out from the countries where anti-US sentiments tended to prevail.

During the Cold War, American officials started to worry about political Islam but it was not taken seriously especially by Presidents Carter and Reagan who viewed it as a “nuisance” (Gerges 60). The period of the seventieth and eighties witnessed the intensification of the Cold War, which propelled the US to ignore political Islam but subsequent governments would commit to its eradication. The Iran hostage crisis represented an important turning point that declared the arrival of a dangerous enemy to the US, which would threaten its interests in the oil-rich region. The fundamentalists’ animosity to the US supposedly flowed mainly from its association with dictators in the region like the Shah of

Iran or Gulf's kings. It had had also intellectual background that apparently stemmed from the backwardness of the Islamic world.

3-2 Carter's Policy vis-à-vis The Occupation of the Embassy (November 79- December 79)

Carter was almost obsessed with the idea of fashioning a re-election scheme since his victory in the presidential elections. He used to cling to his decisions no matter whether it was considered politically expedient by his advisors or not (qtd in Hargrove 20). His pursuance of political goals can be inspired by his desire to be re-elected no matter what costs his decisions and choices might incur. His foreign policy achievements confirmed that he was seeking media visibility, and, hence, re-election by other means. However, his international achievements were of enormous importance internationally. Nevertheless, they affected US public perception of him and wasted his precious time as some critics pointed out. In the middle of his term when the countdown for his campaign had begun, the Iran hostage crisis came as a shock to him. He considered many options in the hope of working out a solution to the crisis so as his credentials would not be tarnished and to score more political points by ending it soon. The available options ranged from diplomatic and economic to military. President Carter chose to bide his time until the situation transpired and then he would gradually escalate. He was against any radical action from the beginning because he was aware that the crisis did not concern only the US and Iran but it was a thorny issue complicated more by the timing i.e., the Cold War. Simply, the Iran hostage crisis, though underestimated in most Cold War annals, was a Cold War crisis *par excellence* because its resolution was mainly linked to many Cold War calculations.

During his first Special Coordinating Committee (SCC) meeting on 5 November, Carter approved the dispatch of two emissaries to Iran with high acceptability amongst the

Iranians. The emissaries Ramsey Clark and William Miller were known for their outspoken attacks against the Shah. Washington thought that this step “could provide a face-saving device for the religious authorities if they are looking for a way out of the situation” (FRUS 3). The purpose of this mission was “to secure the early release of all US citizens detained in Iran, and that the secondary objective was to meet with religious authorities in Iran and hear their views on ways to overcome the difficulty in our relationship” (FRUS 19). It demonstrated US willingness to engage with the new revolutionary regime in Iran. Engagement was always a priority to the Carter administration. Apparently, this crisis was thought of as an opportunity to patch up bilateral relations because the prospects of its taking a long time were not taken into consideration then. On their way to Tehran, after staying a couple of days in Turkey, word reached them that they would not be welcome in Iran. Miller later recalled, “It became increasingly clear that there would be no movement in Tehran until the new government had given itself legitimacy through adoption of a new constitution, later parliamentary elections, and eventually the formation of a government” (Saunders 77).

Retaliatory strikes were discussed during the second SCC meeting two days after the takeover. Should the hostages be murdered, this option would become effective immediately- that was the way American officials reasoned then. It was some kind of a last resort option. The SCC members defined it as:

Retaliation: If some or all of the hostages were killed. A number of economic responses were available, including seizure of Iranian assets, cut-off of trade, and cessation of supply of spare parts for the military. Militarily, we could :blockade Iran’s oil shipment; strike or seize a site such as the Bandar Abbas military base in the South, Kharg Island oil leading terminal, or the three islands which Iran occupies at the mouth of the Persian Gulf; we could attempt to destroy the F-14s or other military assets by air strike; we would consider renewing direct support to the Kurds; or we could potentially kidnap a leading Iranian figure as a counter-hostage. (FRUS 10)

Brzezinski argued, “The reaction would depend on the circumstances. If we did something like this right now, it would be extremely bad and the reaction around the world would be extremely critical” (FRUS 12). Brzezinski’s argument was unanimously adopted.

Economic sanctions were to be applied soon because Iran was about to withdraw its assets from US banks to avoid their blocking by the US. Carter pre-empted Bani-Sadr’s move and froze Iranian assets deposited in US banks. It was a controversial decision that disturbed many Middle Eastern countries putting their money in US banks (FRUS 204). It would shook the credibility of US banks and question their reliability. Moreover, the president declared an embargo on US import of Iranian crude oil. Carter declared, “The grave situation required “constraint” but that the US must “refuse to permit the use of terror, the seizure, and the holding of the hostages to impose political demands” (qtd in FRUS 52). These economic sanctions were part of Carter’s two-thronged approach that was based on, “On one track could be all those efforts designed to maximize communication with Iran about conditions and arrangements for release of hostages and even to open the door to negotiations ... On the other track would be efforts to increase the cost to Iran of holding the hostages” (Saunders 73). Though they succeeded to some extent in hurting Iran economically but Khomeini’s intransigence led him to ignore their impact. Some voices within the Carter administration warned about the adverse effects of such a step that would lead to the killing of the hostages. Carter was dealing with a delicate situation since his adversary was unpredictable.

President Carter sought the help of personalities, organizations and states in order to advance his diplomatic approach to the resolution of the crisis. Of the most responsive organizations was the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) that its contribution was welcomed (Saunders 78). The PLO had had troubled relationship with the US. It took the initiative this time to mediate the dispute because of the position they thought they had had

with the new revolutionary regime in Iran. The PLO tried to approach the US to enlist its help in the struggle against the Israeli government. According to a CIA estimate,

“Principal PLO leaders, however, moved quickly to gain what international and American goodwill they could from the situation. They presumably believe they gained a minor victory in the relaxation of Washington’s ban of contacts with them, but their primary goal appears to be the major improvement in their image if they can play a mediating role in obtaining the release of the hostages” (FRUS 61)

It is axiomatic that everything in politics has a quid pro quo. The PLO’s efforts ended up with securing the release of thirteen hostages between blacks and women. It asked the American authorities not to openly express gratitude for their role because of Anti-Americanism especially in Iran (FRUS 63). Khomeini apparently wanted to split US public opinion by releasing black hostages- he still held ideas about the blacks being marginalized in the US since the civil rights movement in the sixties, in a wrong move that reflected his political naiveté because he always fantasized about influencing US politics. His seemingly long-term goal of this hostage business was to cause the defeat of President Carter in the upcoming presidential elections.

In return for the release of the hostages, Iran wanted a statement on the part of the US regarding the time of the departure of the Shah. Brzezinski did not respond to it because he did not want to yield to the Iranians. The Shah informed the US on 8 November that, “he felt terrible about the situation that his presence in the US was creating in Iran and would leave the US today if possible” (FRUS 32). Later, the Shah became also a hostage to the Iran hostage crisis. Subsequently, Carter argued later repeatedly that the Shah had to leave as soon as possible. The US strived to stay immune to any attempt by the clerics to influence its decisions. Washington diversified its tools in dealing with this crisis from carrots to sticks but its failure to understand the very personality of the cleric in general and its line of

reasoning deprived it of a great advantage, which might have helped in dealing successfully with them. Surprisingly, Shi'ism was still an enigma to the Americans then.

Carter tried also to deter the Iranians militarily by ordering another military carrier to head for the Arabian Gulf in order to build a refuelling capability in Diego Garcia (FRUS 101). Before this move, he had ordered the stationing of AWACS in Egypt. He wanted to signal to the clerics that he would act militarily if the hostages were killed or even tried. On 23 November, he made clear his demands for Bani-Sadr insisting on a peaceful solution to the crisis and warning of his tough reaction in case the hostages were hurt (FRUS 139). The message was not answered because Bani Sadr was dismissed. The whole of Iran became in the grip of intransigent clerics. The crisis was becoming some kind of routine business for the Carter administration.

A CIA report, written on November 12, noted that, "Diplomatic action has almost no prospect of being successful in liberating the hostages in Tehran... no economic or other American pressure on the Iranian regime (including US military action) is likely to be any more successful in securing their safe release". It predicted also that, "With a continuation of the present conditions, the detention of the hostages could continue for some months" (FRUS 51). It was the only report that correctly diagnosed the situation in the midst of a good number of other reports. The dismissal of a large group of CIA officials by Carter upon his arrival weakened considerably the agency and deprived it of the expertise of many experienced agents.

On November 27, Brzezinski cautioned Carter that they would be entangled into a "litigational approach" that would turn the crisis into a lengthy headache (FRUS 159). He wanted immediate action to be taken in order not to have the credibility of his nation shaken. He was also worried about the negative impact of public opinion should this crisis drag on.

Despite the agreement between Vance and Brzezinski on the general policy to be followed at this earlier phase but Brzezinski was always in favour of punitive action unlike the dovish Vance who helped in keeping the crisis on a peaceful course. The views of Vance tended to prevail at this stage. Brzezinski would later eliminate him and argue for a military strike. By the end of the first month, Brzezinski suggested that Carter revisit some options, among them:

- Obtain a positive Security Council vote- while refusing to debate Iranian charges as long as our hostages are detained.
- We press for a World Court ruling.
- We go to our Allies to join us in a financial and economic embargo of Iran-hinting to them that lack of support will leave us no option but to act militarily, a contingency they much fear.
- We request economic sanctions from the UN under Chapter 7. (FRUS 184)

Carter commented, “Pursue them all as options”. Brzezinski drew a roadmap that would be followed by the Carter administration in the days to come.

Because of the failure of all other channels at this earlier period that was characterized by political chaos in Iran, Carter contemplated the resort to international organizations like the International Court of Justice (ICJ). The ICJ ruled in the middle of next December in favour of the US, calling on Iran to release the hostages and urging both states Iran and the US to act cautiously so as not to worsen matters (qtd in FRUS 66). Apparently, the aim of such an American move was to isolate Iran internationally. At the same time, it sought to exhaust all peaceful options. The United Nations Security Council was approached also and it called on Iran to release the hostages and abide by international law. Khomeini regarded these organizations as toys in the hands of the US. However,

Washington did not press for economic sanctions under Chapter Seven at that period out of fear of retaliation by the Iranians. They did not want to complicate the crisis more because with such resolution the solutions would become far-fetched. In addition, the availability of other channels left some hope standing and turned them away from any military thought. The military option was not completely jettisoned but orders for the start of preparation for it were given during the first SCC.

President Carter wanted Western countries to join in the economic crusade to press Iran to end the capture of the hostages. He sent Vance to several countries but they did not agree unless a United Nations resolution was issued. The British informed the US in an informal manner that they would not take sides, preferring not to be implicated in the crisis (FRUS 187). They used to export certain commodities to Iran so that they could risk endangering the economic relationship with Iran. It was seen as a simple problem that did not warrant too much attention because its resolution was linked to many factors within Iran and that Carter had exaggerated its importance, ostensibly for electoral reasons. Carter's excessive interest in the Middle East was a much-neglected factor that contributed to the complication of the crisis. This interest can be attributed to his upbringing in a religious family. The case of Columbia where Western hostages were taken hostage inside an embassy, among them Americans indeed validated this assumption. 1

The Carter administration reviewed not just tough military action. However, they considered also blockading Iran, mining harbours, occupying Iranian territory like the Kharg Island and other options of diplomatic-cum-military nature. Vance consistently opposed any military action arguing, "Steady action is more effective than flashy action" (FRUS 289). He insisted on the diplomatic approach that it would naturally take time, which might not be to the liking of others within the administration who were interested in US public opinion and its international posture abroad. On the contrary, Brzezinski argued forcefully in favour

of military action. He explained his position, “in the initial phase, we mixed peaceful steps with military actions. This gave us credibility. Now the impression exists that military action is out. We need to keep the military action and diplomacy in tandem” (FRUS 289). They considered also imposing economic sanctions on Iran either under the umbrella of the UN or unilaterally. Washington would ask the governments of Britain, France, Switzerland, and Japan to cooperate by ordering their banks to freeze Iranian assets deposited in their banks (FRUS 226). The financial sanctions sought by the Carter administration represented the continuation of the peaceful course that was laid out at first by Carter and Vance. Significantly, Carter was driven mostly by his desire “not to let the situation freeze up” (FRUS Iran ...221).

The crisis was not a two-party conflict. It was a multi-dimensional crisis that its resolution required the involvement of many other parties. It cannot be studied outside the Cold War context. Brzezinski went far in examining the implications of the crisis. He focused more particularly on US position vis-à-vis the Islamic World that was considered his area of expertise then. He was afraid of the change of the conflict from “Iran vs. international community into America vs. Islam”. Brzezinski was also concerned about the decrease of support for the US in the region among either its allies or non-allies (FRUS 200). His position was tenable because any move could affect US interests in the Muslim World, especially with the installation of a theocratic government in Iran. In addition, that period witnessed the intensification of religious fervour. Brzezinski was aware that even Western interests could be affected by any unwise step by the US. There were many examples like the naval blockade or the mining of harbours that were rejected out of hand because they would hurt the flow of oil to the West. Worse than that was the increasing hostility against the US by Middle Eastern public opinion. The region was of immense importance to the US given its huge oil reserves in addition to the contest with the USSR over swaying new

countries across the world. The religious discourse emanating from the clerics also poured oil on fire and polarized the situation. Brzezinski argued, “We need to look beyond the hostage crisis in shaping our broad strategy” (FRUS 201). In addition to the uncooperative attitude of the West, the US found itself on the verge of an unwanted battle with Islam in the region that would be exploited by the Soviets to worsen its position in the region and in Iran in particular.

Some reports indicated that Khomeini had to be removed in order to cultivate a productive relationship with Iran and secure the immediate release of the hostages. The risk of seeing Iran fall into the Soviet orbit in case of disorder was seriously examined. The Carter administration discussed some serious plans to overthrow Khomeini but Carter remained cautious because he did not want to take that risk and endanger the safety of the hostages and, hence, any future rapprochement. The most important of these schemes was that that was called “the Southern Strategy” (FRUS 199-200). It required cooperation with Bakhtiar who was backed by the Baath regime in Iraq to topple the Khomeini regime in Iran with the cooperation of a group of exiled elements. Brzezinski noted that Khomeini saw the US, “the embodiment of an anti-religious and corrupt West, which is all the more dangerous because its influence has been so positively felt in the changing Iranian lifestyle. He is determined to eradicate that influence at whatever costs and he hoped to do so by creating a far-reaching rift between the US and Islam” (FRUS 202). Therefore, Washington envisioned terminating his reign immaturely but in vain because the hostage crisis was their number one priority.

The first two months were crucial in formulating a strategy that would be valid for the rest of the crisis, as the constraints remained the same. Brzezinski defended his plans that reeked of hawkishness whereas Vance felt duty-bound to devise a peaceful plan and to stick to it. Vance was convinced that the crisis should not be inflated and that only the diplomatic option was key to protecting the geostrategic interests in the region. Brzezinski expressed

his worries about the usefulness of diplomacy because domestic support for Carter was dwindling. Importantly, the first two months highlighted the victory of Vance's thesis but at the same time Brzezinski succeeded in paving the way for the execution of the military plan since the administration's political posture was waning in the US. Carter became increasingly worried about the impact of the hostage crisis that might affect his chances badly in the upcoming presidential election.

3-3 The Afghan Crisis and Its Impact on the Hostage Crisis

Iran was a close partner of the US in the Middle East since the end of the Second World War but it was more than a nuisance to the USSR at the same time: it was like Cuba to the US. In other words, Iran was a foothold to Washington at the Soviet Union's doorstep. During the Cold War, the USSR was worried about America's project of encircling it. Thus, the USSR endeavoured to neutralize as many of those coterminous countries as possible. Iran was one of them that the Soviet Union wanted to either draw it into its sphere or at least neutralize it because it tasted how dangerous Iran became to its security since it had allowed two secret American listening posts to be installed near its borders. Iran and its powerful neighbour the Soviet Union had been exchanging suspicious looks at each other for ages.

The Iranian revolution of 1978 came as a relief to the Soviet Union because it eventually saw the end of American influence in Iran that used to cause a headache to it. However, the rise of radical Islam and Khomeini's project of exporting the revolution were seen as new fledgling threats to the USSR but they were less serious than the presence of its competitor the US in Iran. Moscow supported the new revolutionary regime as Alvin Z. Rubenstein argued, "Moscow regarded the Iranian situation as a "complex" but promising, and sought early to develop friendly relations with the new government" (601). Moscow believed that the Islamists were the lesser evil. In fact, the USSR threatened always to evoke

the 1921 treaty with Iran that permitted it to introduce its troops should Iran be invaded by a third party. This treaty was perceived as a liability by the regime that abolished it several times publically but in vain because it was a formal treaty registered at the United Nations. Apparently, Moscow tried to lure the new revolutionary regime into its sphere thinking that it needed protection from the American bully. To its distress, Khomeini adopted a neutralist attitude whose slogan was “Neither East, Nor West”. The Soviet Union had to keep an eye on the events in Iran in the hope not to let it align itself with the West again. The communist elements in Iran acted as protectors of Soviet interests there. They acted smartly and hard since they had succeeded in taking part in the political game then as allies of Khomeini. They were discredited because of the favours they used to offer to their Soviet mentors.

The occupation of the embassy was viewed favourably by the Soviet Union despite the fact that it was contrary to international law. The USSR strived to isolate the US at whatever cost and this crisis brought about an opportunity that it had to capitalize on. The developments occurring in Iran then were not in the Soviets’ favour because their communist pawns in Iran were being gradually excluded. Moscow had to take advantage of any crisis between the US and Iran and try to make it harder for both sides to come together and re-establish their old good bilateral relations. In the same context, the director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research argued, “The Soviets by their reluctance to speak out in behalf of established diplomatic principles, and by their support of the justice of the Iranian students cause, are positioning themselves to exploit the situation”(FRUS 52). The logic of the Cold War dictated that the Soviet Union concentrate only on keeping the American threat away and even relegating developing political and economic relations with Iran to a lower status. Khomeini did not trust any of the two superpowers: he often portrayed the Soviet Union as godless. The Cold War struggle of winning new countries each to its sphere of influence was still raging then but the USSR was overly satisfied with neutralizing Iran. On the other side,

the US hoped to create healthy relations with Iran but Khomeini was hostile to all infidels claiming that the pursuit of his goal that of establishing a politically independent Iran required the resort to such a policy. The extent to which his ideology and political performance were convenient remained academically controversial.

The Soviets were cautious not to take an utterly public hostile attitude towards the US regarding the hostage crisis. They were concerned with preventing US military intervention in Iran. The repercussions of such a step would bring back the memories of the 1946 crisis and how the Soviets were ignominiously driven out of Iran. It aimed to keep Iran a neutral sphere and to discard all those unnecessary options that might turn it again into a Cold War battlefield. On 3 December, the Soviets informed the Americans in an oral note “that they had made a demarche to the Iranians urging the release of the hostages and expressed the hope that the US would continue to act with restraint in this matter” (FRUS 229). The Soviets’ policy toward the hostage crisis remained contradictory. They needed to ensure that the anti-American and anti-imperialist discourse was still passionately used in Iran. This discourse could give legitimacy to the Soviets and save them from being portrayed along with the Americans as two sides of the same coin. It seemed that the Soviets were aware of the banality of the crisis but they wanted to exploit it to the hilt. Their position regarding the hostage situation was reflective of their desire to pour oil on fire in order to keep the “devil” away and deflect Iran’s attention from Afghanistan by keeping it locked into a conflict with the US. Moscow was getting deeply involved in Afghanistan.

On 5 December, Pravda, an official Soviet newspaper, published an article which claimed that, “While contrary to the Vienna Convention, the hostage situation had to be understood in the historical context of US actions toward Iran; that the US was preparing to use force; that Israel had offered its services for this and that the Pentagon would use bases in Egypt; and that Kennedy and Young supported the extradition of the Shah” (FRUS 228).

The article also transmitted a threat by Brezhnev against any meddling of other powers in the internal affairs of Iran. The content of this article explained the official views of the USSR with respect to any possible military intervention of the US in Iran to free the hostages. Washington that never jettisoned the military option perceived it as an aggressive statement. Furthermore, the Soviets flirted with the Iranians by supporting the occupation hoping to push them to prolong the crisis since it had taken different dimensions. The Bureau of Intelligence and Research said that the article declared the approval of the Soviet Foreign Ministry but was “an exercise in waffling” because it deleted the warning of Brezhnev about the possibility of US intervention in Iran” (qtd in FRUS 228). The Pravda article illustrated the true position of the Soviet Union, which was in favour of maintaining the status quo as long as it served their interests while asking the US not to escalate. The impact of this article on the Iranians was clear since they would supposedly feel empowered by the support of a superpower against the US. The Iranians were possibly aware of the plans of Moscow in the region and for Iran and Afghanistan in particular.

Vance expressed to Dobrynin, Soviet ambassador to the United Nations, his disapproval over the Pravda article. Dobrynin argued that, “It probably reflected anxiety in Moscow about reports of American preparation to take other measures”. He said also that, “Military action by the US would create a situation in which the question would be raised about possible Soviet involvement. The Soviet side would want very much for that question not to be raised” (FRUS 229). Vance construed the article as an attempt by the Soviets to undermine their efforts to defuse the crisis. The US was aware of the Soviets’ moves in Afghanistan. In the meantime, the Carter administration hoped to end the crisis as soon as possible. The coming presidential election in Iran scheduled for next month left them some hope.

The situation in Afghanistan was already beginning to spiral out of control. It all started in 1973 when the monarchy was abolished in a bloodless coup d'état and Mohamed Daoud Khan became the first President of the Republic of Afghanistan. Afghanistan had been "a traditionally nonaligned country" during the Cold War (Payind 107). It was a poor country that lived off economic assistance from both superpowers then and other countries. The good relations that it had been developed since the fifties with the Soviet Union proved counterproductive later. Of significance, the Shah was worried about the increasing communist influence in Afghanistan. The communist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan led another coup this time in 1978. Nur Mohamed Taraki assumed power but just for a short while before he was assassinated. The internal situation was very chaotic then. Hafidullah Amin succeeded him and he faced his predecessor's fate. Moscow sensed that Amin was driving his country into the arms of the US (Rasanayagam 89-90). Moscow intervened with its troops this time to execute the plan by killing Amin and having Babrak Karmal brought from Moscow to be appointed in his stead (Hughes 332-333). The new revolutionary regime in Iran was worried about the Soviet presence in Afghanistan because it confirmed its prior views of an expansionist Soviet Union. The Iranians despised the Afghan regime for ideological grounds: they viewed them as infidels as their Soviet mentors. Regarding the hostage crisis, the USSR found itself at a disadvantage this time but its plans for the region were more important than any other issue. The Soviet strategy revolved around exploiting opportunities to prevent any convergence between the US and Iran. The invasion of Afghanistan was a Cold War move related to its desire to keep its backyard and neighbourhood free of any foreign presence.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan pushed the Americans to put the military option on the back burner. Brzezinski argued that,

“Any action taken by us toward Iran had to be guided, to a much larger extent than heretofore, by its likely consequences for regional containment of Soviet ambitions. More specifically, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan made it more important to mobilize Islamic resistance against the Soviets- and that dictated avoiding anything, which might drive Islamic opposition to Soviet expansionism. In turn it was more important than before to avoid an Iranian military confrontation”. (485)

In the same vein, Warren Christopher supported the same view by explaining, “The Soviet invasion transformed the strategic environment in the region and provided a compelling set of reasons for seeking a negotiated settlement with Iran instead of pressing the situation toward possible conflict...Consequently, the military plans were shelved, and a new round of secret negotiations was begun that lasted until April 1980” (151). The US feared that its military intervention in Iran would transform Iran and the whole region into a battlefield and, therefore, the flow of oil would be disrupted. The destabilization of the region would cost the Western world dearly since its economies depended on Middle Eastern oil and only the Soviet Union would benefit from such a situation and might even induce Iran into its orbit. The hostage crisis became again a victim of Cold War calculations that tied the Carter administration’s hands. It can be said also that it delayed the resolution of the crisis, which deprived Carter of precious time that could be best invested elsewhere especially with the start of the campaign.

On the other hand, the Americans believed wrongly that the Soviet invasion would convince the Iranians to come to their senses and release the hostages. Vance thought, “The Afghan situation is the only thing that might change the attitude of the Iranian authorities. The Iranian government made two statements critical of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and they had indicated that this is supposed to be a signal for the congruence of their views with that of our own” (FRUS 349). To their disappointment, Khomeini was not interested in

foreign policy matters because he apparently prioritized house-cleaning first that the hostage crisis immensely helped in doing it. Khomeini clinged to his non-alignment policy, which made him impervious to criticism or pressure from both superpowers. To make matters worse, the Iranians supposedly supported the outbreak of a war between the two superpowers even though it would suffer from the mass arrival of Afghan refugees hoping they exhaust each other so that some space could be left for Khomeini to occupy: to export his ideology and dominate the region. The dream of becoming the regional hegemon was inherent in the Persian character that inherited it from its glorious past.

In reaction to the invasion, Carter imposed an embargo against grain export to the Soviet Union and high technology also. He also began a campaign to boycott the 1980 summer Olympics in Moscow. The most important was the position he stated in his State of the Union Address on January 23, 1980. He said, "Let our position be absolutely 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" (Public Papers of US Presidents Jimmy Carter 1980-81 197). He wanted to use military force to protect Western interests in the Persian Gulf. In addition, he hoped to fill the vacuum left by Afghanistan in the region that destabilized it turning it into Cold War field.

3-4: The Military Rescue Mission

Jimmy Carter was bound to behave idealistically as a president in accordance with the discourse that he delivered when campaigning. In politics, it is very hard to cling to principles since interests are ahead of everything. President Carter soon to find himself obliged to act in contravention to his ideals in order to advance his country's interests and to save his remaining political capital. The hostage rescue mission of Americans held in Iran

presents a case in point. After he exhausted all peaceful options, he resorted to the military solution to save his administration that was under attack by all Americans for its weakness and political inefficiency. Actually, Carter acted eventually militarily because not only he wanted to secure the release of the hostages but also to save his credentials as a competent president though he promised never to send Americans to die abroad.

President Carter was worried about the impact that the crisis might have had on his chances of being re-elected from the beginning because he was well aware of the damage that it might cause to him. In addition, his moralistic discourse that shunned force, war and dictatorship was of equal significance since it stroke a successful chord with the electorate then. The image of an ethical and peaceful president was eroding as Americans began to forget about the lessons of Vietnam or the Watergate scandal and focused on the safety of their citizens held hostage in Iran in addition to their economic difficulties. The Iran hostage crisis gave Carter the opportunity to shatter the image of a peaceful president and engage in power politics, especially after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan that hotly revived the Cold War.

The Carter administration was perturbed by the damage that the hostage crisis might cause. Some officials supported an immediate punitive action against Iran from its beginning. On November 8, Hamilton Jordan, Chief of Staff, sent a message to Carter telling him that, “ We must also be in the correct public posture to minimize the public and political damage to your presidency and our country’s image in the world if we have a bad result or to maximize the benefit of a good result if Americans are freed”. He reminded him also that, “The American people are frustrated at our country’s inability to do anything to free the prisoners and retaliate in a fashion that makes us feel better about ourselves” (FRUS 36). Ironically, Carter would later regret not acting forcefully then to save himself much trouble.

On December 4, Carter said that, “the domestic situation is okay, and he was nervous or impatient about US public support. He was concerned that our worldwide posture could begin to deteriorate” (FRUS 210). Carter was also worried about the domestic situation because the Americans were frustrated with his policies, especially the economic ones that they felt it because of the rising rates of inflation and unemployment. The Iran hostage crisis confused him terribly then to a point where he could not arrange his priorities. At first, the crisis was a blessing that was used to rally people around the president but later it was turned into curse that mortgaged his political future. It seemed that Carter felt that he had to figure out an end soon to gain some popularity and to re-establish himself back again to be ready for the upcoming battle with his party rival Ted Kennedy.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan changed the course that the US had designed for dealing with the hostage crisis by eliminating the military option shortly. The Carter administration was forced to return to negotiations again or rather to resume them. On 31 December, The Security Council adopted resolution 461 by 11-0 (Saunders 101). The Secretary General of the Security Council, Kurt Waldheim, would go to Tehran and try to negotiate the release of the hostages there before the Council was scheduled to meet on January 7 to adopt sanctions against Iran if the Secretary General efforts proved futile. On January 13, the Security Council approved economic sanctions against Iran but it was vetoed by the Soviet Union (Saunders 110). The Soviet Union continued its efforts to prevent any resolution of the hostage crisis for his own reasons, notably the geostrategic rivalry with the US. The White House issued a statement attacking the Soviet veto as “an act of political cynicism”. It added also, “The Soviet Union keep the Security Council from acting now on Iran – but they cannot block the determination of members of the international community that terrorism and lawlessness must be dealt with firmly” (FRUS 387). On the other hand, the Soviets claimed that the veto had been used as a reaction to the US that “had issued a

strong attack on the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan” (FRUS 388). This episode exhibited how the Soviet invasion in particular had complicated the resolution of the crisis. It also showed the wider dimension of the Iran hostage crisis during the Cold War that was hotly resumed the moment Afghanistan was invaded. The Soviet Union chose to prioritize his geopolitical plans over any humanitarian motive, which would have helped in the release of the hostages had he done so. Furthermore, the peaceful resolution of the crisis was becoming remote.

The US did not press for the application of sanctions against Iran in the hope of trying all the other channels. They thought that the next presidential elections in Iran in January 25 would offer a good opportunity for the resolution of the crisis since a moderate secular government seemed to be the probable winner. Candidate Ahmed Bani-Sadr secured the support of Ayatollah Khomeini who blessed him in public later. Thus, he was the potential first president of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Despite the fact that a moderate would be at the helm in Iran, the rivalry between the Islamists and the moderates was intensifying. After he won, the Americans chose to give him more time. Waldheim considered the option of forming an international commission whose task was to release the hostages and settle any misunderstanding between the two parties. He selected five members: Mohamed Bedjaoui: Algerian permanent representative to the United Nations, Andre Aguilar, Adib Daoudi, Louis-Edmund Pettiti and Harry Jayewardene (FRUS 473). After he obtained the okay of all the concerned parties, he ordered the commission to head for Iran on February 23 (Saunders 130). The commission reached Iran and started its mediating efforts but it was denied access to the hostages, which threatened to abort the mission. The revolutionaries made it difficult for them to see the hostages (FRUS 495). Apparently, they wanted the commission’s mission to fail. Meanwhile, the US resorted to the help of two French lawyers who acted in concert with the Panamanians to gain the release of the hostages in return for the Shah’s extradition.

The Shah had left Panama for Egypt in late March, 1980 and this channel became dead then. However, President Bani-Sadr was still eager to end the detention of the hostages because he believed that it caused immense damage to Iranian interests, especially internationally. Carter was aware of the pressure of time in addition to the start of party campaigning in the face of a strong Democratic candidate Robert Kennedy. Carter's patience was running out.

On March 18, in the SCC meeting Brzezinski said that, "We are beginning to look increasingly impotent. The polls indicate the US public is increasingly considering the administration's policy and failure". He was also worried about American public perception of the Carter administration. He declared, "We are increasingly perceived as ineffective and indecisive. The convening of the new Parliament, which will probably not occur until May, will probably make the situation worse; not better". He also suggested sending an ultimatum to the Iranians and the allies that the Americans intend to intervene should the situation drag on after 15 April. He warned also that their unilateral action would be destructive (FRUS 553). Carter said, "We need to increase pressure. Although the latest election returns are favouring Bani-Sadr, the American public are getting sick of the situation. Indeed, Carter said he was sick of it as well" (FRUS 558). Carter and Brzezinski were on the same page regarding the attitude of US public opinion vis-à-vis the crisis. Brzezinski and Defence Minister Harold Brown were of the most hawkish members of the administration whereas Vance and his State Department officials were against any use of force. In the same connection, Carter expounded, "we have been holding off criticizing the Iranians and taking direct action in order to create the most favourable circumstances for a settlement, but we verge now upon accepting the status quo. He said we could not sit still until May without placing greater pressure on Iran to take action to release the hostages" (FRUS 550).

The government moved to seriously implement the military option since no solution was in the offing then. On 22 March NSC meeting, Carter definitely decided to launch a

rescue mission. He wanted first to increase pressure on the Iranians and secure the support of the Allies by encouraging them to break relations with Iran to isolate it more internationally (FRUS 579-580). Brzezinski supported this move because he thought that “some momentum” had to be regained (FRUS 579). On the other hand, Vance opposed the military strike arguing that, “military actions are not a good idea because of the effect on the hostages and upon the solidarity as well as the Islamic world reaction. He also thought that a mining or interruption of trade would drive the Iranians into the arms of the Soviets” (FRUS 581). Carter also directed an interesting question to Vance, which revealed the essence of his thinking that was premised on a non-confrontationalist ideology. Carter asked Vance, “Whether he wanted the hostages out next December or to mine the harbours. The secretary (Vance) said he would rather find another way, one that did not threaten hurting the hostages or US interests” (FRUS 581). Also, Director of Central Intelligence, Stansfield Turner, raised his agency’s concerns about a Soviet takeover and claimed that a rescue mission was the only way to save Iran from an anticipated leftist takeover (FRUS 583).

In the meantime, Bani-Sadr informed the Americans that the hostages would be left to the authority of the new Iranian government but conditioned it on the convening of the next government and America’s commitment to not hurting Iran. Based on this message, Carter delayed the imposition of sanctions but his patience was almost lost then. Carter said, “It’s almost impossible to deal with a crazy man” (White House Diary 368). Carter used this remark many times. He even described Khomeini’s “statements and actions” as “irrational” (Keeping Faith 453). In this study, the Iranians had to be treated fairly by considering their political actors as normal actors driven by their private agendas to avoid any biased analysis. Bani-Sadr’s decision was relayed by the Swiss ambassador to Iran, Eric Lang, to the Americans but to his further chagrin nothing happened because Bani-Sadr was powerless and being prevailed on by the clerics whose prerogatives outweighed his own. Carter naively

informed the Americans that the hostages were to be released soon. After this episode Carter decided, “We are to the point where we must take forceful reactions” (FRUS 644). Carter was always committed to his idealistic agenda that shied away from violence. His religious upbringing and his childhood in racist Plains, Georgia helped him to despise blood shedding. US public opinion forced him to take such an action in order to save his reputation and his re-election campaign either. Carter also overvalued the hostage situation from the beginning because he supposedly sought to deflect his people’s attention from the economic conditions and rally them around him in the vain hope of making an achievement out of it had he freed the hostages then.

On April 7, Carter said, “We are no longer involved in a negotiation with the terrorists. The obstacle now is the government, with Khomeini as the ultimate authority of the Iranian government” (FRUS 645). Carter said also that, “The Iranian terrorists are making all kinds of crazy threats to kill the American hostages if they are invaded by Iraq-whom they identify as an American puppet”. He continued, “We could no longer afford to depend on diplomacy. I decided to act” (qtd in FRUS 677). Carter had finally categorized the Iranian regime as a terrorist one. He tried to avoid classing them so from the beginning of the occupation. This step constituted an important turning point in US relations with Iran for this label would be glued to Iran for the next decades.

On a SCC meeting held on April 15, Vance had expressed to Carter his refusal of the rescue mission. He even doubted his future in the administration, considering resignation. In this meeting, he argued that, “It is a serious mistake to go ahead with the rescue because (1) the Red Cross has accounted for all the hostages and all of them are OK; (2) our allies are beginning to move – on April 21 they will plan to adopt sanctions. We should not go forward. There will be loss of lives (5-15 hostages); risk to other Americans and maybe Europeans; and our allies will not understand this (FRUS 687). Carter responded to his argument by

saying, "I don't think our rescue option will itself improve as time passes. If we are left only with the military option, the element of surprise will diminish (FRUS 687). Most importantly, Carter was determined not to have any Iranian killed during the rescue mission.

The rescue mission was launched on 24 April before it was aborted on its way to free the hostages due to technical reasons. It resulted in the death of eight American service men on "Desert One" whose bodies were left behind in Iran (Farber 174). On the next day, Harold Brown held a press conference in which he gave details about the mission. The technical details of the mission are beyond the scope of this chapter. Political scientists and historians used the rescue mission to point to the bureaucratic infighting that characterized the Carter incumbency and cost it dearly in terms of political capital. It showed also how Brzezinski had eventually triumphed over his rival Cyrus Vance. It can be considered erroneous if to see the rescue mission only from this angle. Carter was in need of regaining his people's confidence. He was tired of being portrayed as a "soft" president at a tough time when the Soviet Union started to act aggressively in pursuit of its geopolitical interests in Southwest Asia. It was a mere reaction to a prevalent mood rather than a well formulated policy. This episode manifested also the limitedness of the notion of moral politics that Carter decided to divorce once the situation worsened to prolong his political age. On the bilateral relations' level, it strengthened Khomeini more and was tantamount to a death warrant to any rapprochement efforts then and for decades to come as well. Khomeini was offered new doses of support and confidence, which convinced him to act his own way further negligent of every sense in the hope of furthering his own domestic agenda and punishing Carter. The rescue mission succeeded only in prolonging the crisis because Carter did not benefit from it but confirmed people's prior image of him of a weak and indecisive president. Carter lacked any consistent policy because he was unable to formulate policies. He was immersed in details, which blinded him to the broader picture.

Conclusion

The attitude of the Islamic fundamentalists was indicative of their obsession with the secularists in particular, afraid of their future designs for Iran. The last of meetings between American and moderate Iranian high officials happened to take place in Algiers on November 2, 1979, at the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Algerian revolution. The moderates worked to enlist the help of the United States to crush their opponents. Thus, they entangled the US in the Iranian imbroglio politically. The Islamists or the Khomeinists in particular believed that they were the true author of the revolution and thereby should protect it and minimize the damage that could be caused by the modernizing secularists whose style of running the affairs of state was thought to be no different from that of the disgraced monarch. The Shah became a millstone around the US's neck after his removal. He travelled from one country to another hoping to find a permanent host country that would treat him decently. Carter finally decided to let him enter the US for humanitarian reasons. The admission of the Shah, *inter alia*, triggered the Iran hostage crisis because ordinary Iranians thought the US was grooming the Shah to be reinstalled as a king again. Post-revolutionary Iran witnessed the intensification of anti-American sentiments. What mattered most was that the anti-American discourse was employed this time, to a lesser degree, to weaken the communists who were the first to endorse such ideas for fear of being stripped of this slogan that was first a communist property. The US learned on Sunday 04th, 1979 of the occupation of its embassy in Tehran by a group of protestors whose number exceeded four hundred. Khomeini's prior knowledge of the attack could not be substantiated and the attitude that he had taken after the occupation of the embassy remained vague. The US government expected the attack to be a repeat of the February attack when Iranian officials intervened to end it. As mentioned before, the immediate impression indicated that

the seizure was designed to expel the Bazargan government first and to push the US to extradite the Shah second: these were the results of surface analysis that became part of what is called the conventional wisdom. The Iranian revolution marked the advent of political Islam or Islamism as a viable force not to be reckoned with in Iran and in the Middle East in general. The period of the seventieth and eighties witnessed the intensification of the Cold War, which propelled the US to ignore political Islam but subsequent governments would commit to its eradication.

Carter was almost obsessed with the idea of fashioning a re-election scheme since his victory in the presidential elections. It demonstrated US willingness to engage with the new revolutionary regime in Iran. Engagement was always a priority to the Carter administration. Retaliatory strikes were discussed during the second SCC meeting two days after the takeover. Economic sanctions were to be applied soon because Iran was about to withdraw its assets from US banks to avoid their blocking by the US. Carter pre-empted Bani-Sadr's move and froze Iranian assets deposited in US banks. President Carter sought the help of personalities, organizations and states in order to advance his diplomatic approach to the resolution of the crisis. In return for the release of the hostages, Iran wanted a statement on the part of the US regarding the time of the departure of the Shah. Carter had ordered the stationing of AWACS in Egypt. He wanted to signal to the clerics that he would act militarily if the hostages were killed or even tried. The dismissal of a large group of CIA officials by Carter upon his arrival weakened considerably the agency and deprived it of the expertise of many experienced agents. Brzezinski cautioned Carter that they would be entangled into a "litigational approach" that would turn the crisis into a lengthy headache (FRUS 159). Because of the failure of all other channels at this earlier stage that was characterized by political chaos in Iran, Carter contemplated the resort to international organizations like the International Court of Justice (ICJ). President Carter wanted Western

countries to join in an economic crusade to press Iran to end the capture of the hostages. The Carter administration reviewed not just tough military action. However, they considered also blockading Iran, mining harbours, occupying Iranian territory like the Kharg Island and other options of diplomatic-cum-military nature. The crisis was not a two-party conflict. It was a multi-dimensional crisis that its resolution required the involvement of many other parties. Some reports indicated that Khomeini had to be removed in order to forge a productive relationship with Iran and secure the immediate release of the hostages. The first two months were crucial in formulating a strategy that would be valid for the rest of the crisis, as the constraints remained the same.

Iran was a close partner of the US in the Middle East since the end of the Second World War but it was more than a nuisance to the USSR at the same time: it was like Cuba to the US. The Iranian revolution of 1978 came as a relief to the Soviet Union because it eventually saw the end of American influence in Iran that used to cause a headache to it. The occupation of the embassy was viewed favourably by the Soviet Union despite the fact that it was contrary to international law. The Soviets were cautious not to take an utterly public hostile attitude towards the US regarding the hostage crisis. The Soviets flirted with the Iranians by supporting the occupation hoping to push them to prolong the crisis since it had taken different dimensions. The situation in Afghanistan was already beginning to spiral out of control. It all started in 1973 when the monarchy was abolished in a bloodless coup d'état and Mohamed Daoud Khan became the first President of the Republic of Afghanistan. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan pushed the Americans to put the military option on the back burner. On the other hand, the Americans believed wrongly that the Soviet invasion would convince the Iranians to come to their senses and release the hostages. In reaction to the invasion, Carter imposed an embargo against grain export to the Soviet Union and high

technology also. He also began a campaign to boycott the 1980 summer Olympics in Moscow.

Jimmy Carter was bound to behave idealistically as a president in accordance with the discourse that he delivered when campaigning. President Carter was worried about the impact that the crisis might have had on his chances of being re-elected from the beginning because he was well aware of the damage that it might cause to him. He was also worried about the domestic situation because the Americans were frustrated with his policies, especially the economic ones that they felt it because of the rising rates of inflation and unemployment. The Iran hostage crisis confused him terribly then to a point where he could not rearrange his priorities. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan changed the course that the US had designed for dealing with the hostage crisis by eliminating the military option shortly. The US did not press for the application of sanctions against Iran in the hope of trying all the other channels. Carter and Brzezinski were on the same page regarding the attitude of US public opinion vis-à-vis the crisis. Brzezinski and Defence Minister Harold Brown were of the most hawkish members of the administration whereas Vance and his State Department officials were against any use of force. The government moved to seriously implement the military option since no solution was in the offing then. In the meantime, Bani-Sadr informed the Americans that the hostages would be left to the authority of the new Iranian government but conditioned it on the convening of the next government and America's commitment to not hurting Iran. After the failure of this step, Carter had finally categorized the Iranian regime as a terrorist one and ordered a rescue mission. He was determined not to have any Iranian killed during it. The rescue mission was to be launched on 24 April before it was aborted on its way to free the hostages due to technical reasons.

Notes

- 1- The Bogota siege took place in Columbia on 27 February 1980. The M-19 guerrilla occupied the embassy of the Dominican Republic and took 60 people hostages, among them 15 ambassadors. The American ambassador was taken hostage also. They were celebrating the Dominican Republic National Day. The hostages were released peaceably on April of the same year.

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CHAPTER FOUR

Carter's Hostage Crisis Policy Shift: The Triumph of Diplomacy

Introduction

The failure of the rescue mission led Carter to revisit his approach to solve the hostage situation. He believed that the logic of force became almost obsolete as a means of ending disputes. President Carter tried to find peaceful ways to defuse the crisis. He finally became aware that an understanding of the cultural differences between the Americans and the Iranians would facilitate his mission. The fact that he obtained a general picture about the character of the new rulers of Iran encouraged him to search for realistic and feasible ways out of the crisis.

The Iran hostage crisis was deemed a danger to his re-election project. This chapter argues that Carter's mismanagement of the crisis led to his electoral defeat later. Carter tried to use it to his own advantage by trading it for electoral gains but, to his chagrin, Americans and Democrats, in particular, were dissatisfied with both his leadership style and conduct of policy. He even set up an organization for the families of the hostages to keep his administration out of harm's way and the media exploitation of the crisis in particular. The negative impact of the crisis on his electoral failure was significant. Despite his loss in the presidential elections, Carter strived to secure the release of the hostages in an act that can be considered as a prelude to a long chapter of post presidential activities. In this chapter, Carter's policy shift to a more realistic course in his dealing with the hostage crisis is to be

highlighted since Carter had never been consistent politically or ideologically clinging to ad hoc choices.

4-1 Post- Rescue Mission US Policy vis-à-vis the Hostage Crisis:

Abandonment of the Logic of Force:

The rescue mission was a two-pronged strike that sought to end the crisis by extricating the hostages from Iran on one hand and to respond to US public opinion on the other. Consequently, its failure worsened the situation more and ruined the whole US scheme then by frustrating the American public and prolonging the crisis. In fact, the Carter administration had to take such a military course of action to keep its façade of power that was being built from the second half of its administration and to figure out an end to the crisis in order to devote a considerable amount of their time and energy to the upcoming presidential elections. The crisis exhibited how the Carter's administration was working to adapt to the changing circumstances by endorsing a realpolitik approach and marking a rupture with moralpolitik that no longer found a receptive audience amongst the Americans. Some critics pointed to this shift but others refuted this by arguing that Carter pursued a "strategy of adjustment to a declining US global power" in response to the new reality of "an increasingly interdependent world" (Skidmore 722). It seemed that Carter had become more experienced politically; thus, he utilized the logic of force to deal with each issue while trying to adapt to the changing world landscape in which US position looked in decline. Arguably, President Carter combined adjustment policy with Realism, sidelining Moralism, in order to fashion his own strategy for dealing with an interdependent world and a simmering Cold War for the sake of gaining re-election. He wanted to have his own style of governance in order to silence the criticizing voices of his opponents who kept charging him with impotence. Carter seemed to occupy the presidency at a transitional period to break

with past policies and to prepare the ground for a stronger president to rule. Carter was a victim of political timing that was not on his side first and that turned him into a one-man mission second.

Importantly, Carter's decision to invade Iran was reflective of his own decision-making style that pushed aside any geostrategic considerations in pursuit of his re-election drive. The Soviet Union looked worryingly at this adventure from the outset because it was aware that the Middle East region was a powder keg ready to explode at any moment should the US make a terrible miscalculation i.e., it was the presumed naiveté of the Carter administration that bothered the USSR most. On the other hand, Carter justified his military action in a Telegram to Sultan Qaboos of Oman by claiming that, "the rescue mission, if successful, would have reduced dramatically the tensions between the US and Iran". He added, it "would have allowed Iranians and other peoples' in the region to focus more clearly on the serious threat in the region created by the projection of Soviet power and influence." (FRUS 741). Carter did not take into account the ramifications of such an undertaking in case it created a terrible mess. He was worried about the capacity of the hostage crisis to overshadow the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. President Carter seemed to take important decisions at his whim: he was becoming a slave to poll's results.

Worthy to mention also, the conduct of policy in this fashion would have cost the United States dearly had the rescue mission succeeded or caused human losses to the Iranian side. Subsequently, he tried to remedy the situation by following a peaceful course since rational decisions are most required at the time. All the faults he had made had to be redressed for humanitarian reasons because the "free" release of the hostages on the part of Khomeini seemed a remote possibility then. Khomeini was not ready to pay the price until he would eradicate his adversaries first.

The resignation of Secretary of State Cyrus Vance illustrated the ideological and bureaucratic infighting prevalent in the Carter administration. Vance was of the view of pursuing negotiations, ruling out any use of force. The use of force had already proved fruitless and Brzezinski's plans worked only with the Soviet Union that he harboured animosity against, ostensibly because of his own Finnish origins as most observers believed. Brzezinski was an advocate of using force to contain the Soviet Union whereas Vance called for dialogue and leniency towards it. Babak Ganji, a political scientist, called Brzezinski's tactic "neo-containment". He said, "Neo-containment advocates argued that the Soviet Union had become much more assertive globally, particularly in the Third World. They called for ensuring US global primacy by matching the Soviet military build-up" (4). Vance was convinced of the importance of mitigating tensions in the building of a peaceful world. The resignation of Vance offered more room of manoeuvre to Brzezinski who would use it freely this time. Brzezinski could be held, to a good measure, responsible for the failure of the rescue mission because he was a strong advocate of it or rather its real engineer. He preached against negotiations at that point in the hope of seizing the opportunity to project American power in the region and to curb the ambitions of the Soviet Union in Southwest Asia.

To Brzezinski's distress, Edmund Muskie, the new Secretary of State, was not on the same page with him. He was convinced of the validity of Vance's approach vis-à-vis the crisis. Harold Saunders, Assistant Secretary of State for Near East and South Asian Affairs, said, "We quickly found out that Muskie was equally committed to a negotiated resolution of the problem.... Muskie spoke eloquently at a small dinner for the crisis team about the demonstration that diplomatic solutions can often achieve what military solutions cannot" (283). Eventually, the Carter administration had to lay out a new strategy that held in its essence "negotiations". The use of force was to be eliminated since this kind of operations

enjoyed no chance of feasibility because the lack of intelligence on one hand and the dispersal of the hostages after the rescue mission on the other rendered it nearly undoable. The domestic situation in Iran required that the US had to act wisely until things would settle down there. However, the Carter administration never fully excluded the military option. In a memo to Brzezinski, Gary Sick, member of the National Security Staff for the Middle East and North Africa, argued that, "From the perspective of our negotiating strategy, it is essential that we build on and reinforce the central message that the US is prepared to use extreme measures to get our people released. It is that underlying factor which lends credibility and urgency to all the other measures we are able to take" (FRUS 739). It showed that the US was concerned more about its reputation in the world and it was ready to activate the military option to save it. Furthermore, the subsequent victory of Ronald Reagan who was prone to violence in the presidential elections frightened the Iranians who feared American retribution. Carter turned out to be unable to use force again because of the impact of another probable military failure on the reputation of the US and on his own as well. Overall, the military option was a non-starter.

The US adopted a new strategy for dealing with crisis on May 8 that revolved around pressing the negotiating track instead of toying with any potential military solution. Significantly, the hostage issue in the United States "stayed in the news, with hopes for a negotiated end rising and waning (McAlister 214). Carter resumed his campaign after he paused it for a while, apparently to devote more time to the crisis but it was done for electoral purposes related to appealing to the electorate softly and emotionally. The only impediment was the situation in Iran that was characterized by chaos, political instability since the second round of the Majlis elections did not take place yet, and uncertainty that was expected to last longer, especially with the struggle for forming a majority within the Majlis. The American strategy took into account these details. It revolved around three important points:

The economic sanctions would be strictly enforced, and the Iranians would be given time to judge their effect; A broader foundation would be developed for renewed diplomatic activity, this time with redoubled effort to open channels to the religious leaders in Tehran; A period of quiet in public diplomacy would be deserved as the Iranians digested the results of the Parliamentary elections and set about forming their Parliament and their new government. (Saunders 284-285)

It was formulated “to keep lines open to Bani-Sadr and Ghotbzadeh without offering any further concessions, while encouraging the Europeans to persuade the clerics ... to find a resolution to the hostage issue. The SCC concurred with this recommendation, recognizing that the chances of successfully persuading the Iranian authorities to release the hostages are very slim” (FRUS 764).

The May Strategy took into account the position of the Soviets and the Leftist elements in Iran. The briefing that was prepared in the State Department for Edmund Muskie mentioned, “On a strategic level, the violent anti-Americanism generated by the hostage situation gives the Soviets and the Iranian left a unique opportunity to increase their strength and legitimacy by siding with Khomeini; diverts attention away from Soviet activities; constrain US freedom of action; and severely complicates US relations with regional states and our allies (FRUS 767). This point gave motivation to the State Department to justify its decision to stick with negotiations as the only safe way to resolve the crisis. It also pointed out the geostrategic dimension of the crisis and the impact of international events on its resolution. The hostage crisis was, as argued in chapter three, a Cold War crisis *par excellence*. On the other hand, a memo sent by the CIA to Muskie showed that US officials were realistic in their assertion that “the possibility of reaching a negotiated settlement remained minimal. Only Khomeini has the authority to negotiate behalf of Iran.... The US has little ability to influence key actors, however, especially if our reward for releasing the hostages is only the cessation of US power projection and pressures” (FRUS 773). It was for the first time since the capture of the embassy staff that the State Department had come up

with a sober assessment, which demonstrated a skilful understanding of the crisis and the Iranian condition.

The May Strategy was progressing but still hostage to internal Iranian developments. The conflict between the moderates, under Ahmed Bani-Sadr and Sadeq Qotbzadeh who did not win a majority in the Majlis and the clerics under Ayatollah Beheshti who controlled the government lasted until August 1980. The clerics would control the Majlis later. The US did approach many personalities and sought the help of many countries in mediation in the hope that if one day the opportunity arose they would find a ready channel. The United States yielded, knowing that no other solution but negotiations could solve the problem.

The Americans learned to bear into their minds the cultural differences that had been overlooked before. Carter finally realized that the Iranians' worldview and the way of their thinking needed to be understood in order to solve the crisis, which would bring him electorally down later. The tactic of learning their reasoning contributed immensely to bringing the crisis to a head. The State Department report indicated:

If we are to help create a break in the situation- recognizing the hard fact that the odds are against such a break so long as the internal situation remains inchoate and the clerics dominant- we need a strategy which takes into account of both the complexities of Iranian politics and the complexities of Iranian outlook... And the elements of threat must be both credible and conveyed in a way which does not challenge their pride which they simply posture, blunder and recall their history of martyrdom. (FRUS 743)

The understanding of the mentality of the hostage taker altered the Carter administration view of the crisis. They saw it from their adversary's lenses. Hence, they opted to cling to negotiations mainly in order not to upset the Iranians who might kill the hostages and turn the whole region into a major battlefield, which would hurt much Western interests. The "Oriental" remained always an enigma to the "Occidental". President Carter, *per se*, referred to Khomeini and his entourage once as "irrational" people (keeping faith 4). In addition, the

“Martyrdom Complex” would drive the Iranians to respond unreasonably to any American aggression. It was embedded in their religious beliefs. At this stage, any American miscalculation would turn the region into disaster. Thus, it can be said that Soviet fears were justified. It was also to the Soviets’ interest not to destabilize the region and to press the US to relegate the crisis to a lower priority.

The whole business of solving the crisis depended on the formation of the Majlis that seemed to be controlled by the clerics. The identity of the Majlis began to be known in July. The prime minister would be elected in August. Gary Sick had explained the tactic that the US followed then in a memo that he sent to Brzezinski in July,

The low profile policy which we have followed since late April has yielded some benefits. Despite the intense in-fighting within Iran’s leadership factions over the seating of Parliament and selection of prime minister, the hostage issue had not been the political football it was in the past. Khomeini has ceased referring to the hostages during his speeches and attacks on the US. A consensus appears to be building within Iranian political circles that the hostage issue has been milked for all it is worth and that it is increasingly a political (and economic) liability which must be resolved. Even Beheshti has been prepared to refer publicly to the possibility of settling the hostage crisis in accordance with the “humanitarian” tradition of Islam. (FRUS 856)

Furthermore, the climate in Iran “gradually changed. By the third week in June, reports from Tehran began to indicate that key Iranians sensed a change in Khomeini’s attitude. They felt he now wanted the hostage issue resolved. From his vantage point in the Foreign Ministry, Laingen also sensed “a gradual movement toward the day when the Majlis will come to grips with the hostage issue” (Saunders 287-288). The Iranians began to become lenient with respect to the hostage crisis. The Americans interpreted this softness as an indirect invitation for serious negotiations and that there was nothing to fear on the part of Iranians who felt that the crisis had outlived its usefulness. What delayed the release then was apparently Khomeini’s fear of Iranian public opinion’s violent reaction and his desire to use it during the remainder of time to his favour. The Majlis, according to CIA memo, was considered

powerless since the real power was in the hands of Khomeini (FRUS 773). Khomeini mistakenly contemplated using the hostages to hurt Carter's chances of re-election in the hope of spreading the impression that he could influence the result of the American presidential elections.

Brzezinski was obsessed with the Soviets and their leftist elements in Tehran. This preoccupation dissuaded him from launching another rescue operation. In the meantime, it prevented him from seeing the crisis in simpler terms. He complicated it to a degree that confused Washington's view. In fact, the crisis was interrelated with many other events if regarded as part of the larger picture, i.e. the Cold War and the Middle Eastern theatre. However, trying to limit the explosion area of the crisis might have been helpful politically in the resolution of the crisis had they adopted it. Brzezinski's fears blinded US policymakers to any reasonable way out of the crisis since his influence over the crisis was considerable. Also, his rivalry with Vance over the real maker of US foreign policy led him to fight any potential wise views in the hope of sidelining their competitor's ones that looked soft and not brave to him. Cold War calculations pushed him to ponder more the military and geostrategic dimensions of the hostage crisis at the expense of an easy and swift solution.

In July 1980, they adopted a new strategy. In fact, it was a refined version of the "May Strategy". In the July Strategy, they tended to focus more on using the hostages' families and their organization, "Family Liaison Action Group" (FLAG), in combination with Congressional initiatives with the Iranians to figure out an end to the hostage situation (FRUS 882). The May Strategy succeeded to an extent in creating new channels to the Iranians but political instability in Iran and the delay in the formation of the Majlis complicated the matter more and prolonged the crisis. It cannot be considered a failure since it assured the continuation of negotiations by different means and that was the important goal of every US initiative since the failure of the rescue mission. Edmund Muskie argued,

“the main purpose of the proposed strategy (July Strategy) would be to try to encourage the new government to take control of the hostage issue as it is put before the Iranian Parliament so as to assure to the extent possible that the Parliament’s decision on the issue do not preclude a reasonable settlement” (FRUS 883). To set this strategy into motion, they laid out two ways: “encouragement of private and congressional initiatives to test the potential for a people-to-people approach such as you discussed with hostage wives and families; a series of approaches through diplomatic and private channels to key Iranians to establish a negotiating channel with the most powerful elements in the new government” (FRUS 883). This strategy represented the de facto introduction of the following negotiations that would start next September. The US opted to prepare the ground for it since most accounts of US officials indicated Iran’s willingness to negotiate at the earliest time possible after they settled all remaining issues at their domestic front. Carter did not conceal his desire to have the crisis defused the soonest to score some political points that would help him in the campaign. He wanted also to disarm his rivals of the hostage weapon that Khomeini insisted on equipping them with it. Khomeini was thinking in simple political terms, i.e., he was not a shrewd politician or even a strategist. Any attempt to give credit to his political behaviour was futile since he was an ardent advocate of foul play i.e., the act of taking the hostages that he endorsed was not acceptable either humanely, diplomatically or politically: he should have played fair.

The implementation of the July Strategy was meant to be pursued in three steps:

We would continue immediately to encourage a new series of approaches to key Iranian officials...; Following relatively soon after we’ve some feedback from the above approaches, we’d launch approaches of our own by sending direct messages to key figures in Iran. These messages would... take advantage of the effort of intermediaries... to determine how a solution of the crisis might be shaped; As these approaches progress, our purpose would be to narrow the field and identify a target in Tehran for a negotiation effort and to identify the best channel for communication with that individual or group. (FRUS 885-887)

The strategy manifested that the US had come finally to understand the mentality of the Iranians. It also monitored closely the Iranian situation, which enabled her to reach an accurate diagnosis of the situation. The US assessment apparently envisioned the Iranians' willingness to release the hostages at any moment and, hence, it had to be prepared to enter into negotiations immediately. Of importance was that Carter changed his mind and highlighted the cultural differences' considerations between the two nations and this facilitated his mission to a larger degree. The fact that Khomeini would try to influence the outcome of the upcoming presidential elections, even in collaboration with the Republicans, was known in American political circles. This episode was called the "October Surprise" in US-Iranian relations' literature. Unfortunately, Carter could not do anything about it since all powers were concentrated in Khomeini's hands. The May-and-July Strategy would prove later instrumental in resolving the crisis through negotiations. Indeed, there were also some other contributing factors that persuaded the Iranians to come to terms with the US. In July, Ayatollah Khomeini's nephew, Reza Pasandideh, approached the US with a settlement offer but it did not succeed (FRUS 844). The offer indicated that Iran had possessed a roadmap of its own to solve the crisis based on their understanding of US strategy that was clear.

The new regime in Iran was not immune to subversive activities or even to uprooting. Khomeini capitalized on the hostage crisis to unite all Iranians around himself. The leftists were perceived to be a threat but they were not alone considered so: some clerics and military men also. A coup attempt against the revolutionary regime was orchestrated on 8 July. It was reported that the Iranian authorities learnt about it before. This attempt was executed by a group of military men to overthrow the regime in collaboration with Iraq. The role of Iraq that sponsored this coup would be to busy the Iranians with a fight near their borders. In the meantime, the coup would be implemented. Ayatollah Shari'at Madari would

help by legitimizing it religiously (FRUS 847). After it was foiled, President Bani-Sadr said, “Iran had forestalled a coup and accused the US, Israel and Iraq of being in league with the conspirators”. In the same vein, Khomeini also charged the US and the USSR of colluding to overthrow him in order to kill the revolution (FRUS 848). The coup attempt exposed the battle over the armed forces in revolutionary Iran (Bakhash 119). This coup attempt muddled more the waters between the US and Iran but it could not be said that it prolonged the crisis because it was already deadlocked. Khomeini would use it to his own benefit to persuade his people of the existence of American plots to overthrow his regime. Khomeini had survived politically thanks to the presence of foreign enemies whether real or imaginary, among them, the US in particular. The US sought to restore the Shah to power since he had left Iran. During the hostage crisis, US officials considered the option of toppling the revolutionary regime many times. The rescue mission was deemed an attack against Iran. It was no different from a coup d’état. Brzezinski was the minds behind the calls for restoring the status quo ante. Khomeini was bent on demonizing the US by attributing the ills of his country to it. Khomeini’s performance would bring fruit but its acceptability politically remained questionable.

Later on July 27, the Shah of Iran died. The death of the Shah was expected to ease tensions between Iran and the US; hence, the US mistakenly thought that the hostages would be released since the main motive behind the takeover no longer existed. Moreover, Admiral Turner, CIA director, considered using the Shah’s death “advantageously” to convince the world that the reason behind the detention of the hostages was “invalid” or to begin seriously negotiating (FRUS 840). To Washington disappointment, Khomeini clung to his tactic of using the hostages for purposes related to Iran’s public opinion and in the hope of influencing US presidential elections. In fact, the Shah’s death removed a hurdle that would complicate the resolution of the matter.

4-2: The Family Liaison Action Group (FLAG)

President Jimmy Carter was concerned with the potential damage that might be caused to his administration by the Americans in case the hostages' families succeed in drawing public opinion to their side against his administration. Apparently, he thought about minimizing the damage by appeasing or rather neutralizing them. Jimmy Carter did not want public frustration over the crisis to increase so he opted to set up an organization for the families of the hostages (FLAG) and manipulate it by engineering moves to be performed by them that would later redound to Carter's own advantage. He organized the hostages' families and dealt with them on an official basis. In other words, Carter wanted to use them for electoral purposes. The veracity of this assertion gave credit to Reagan's claim that he pronounced during the presidential campaign that Carter had used the hostages for electoral gains. This conclusion was reached based on Carter's lack of no other excuse to justify such a course of action. Carter's obsession with re-election did not blind him only to the ideals he first preached but to trade with any issue that he saw as electorally advantageous. Faults of this kind erased any trace of serious policy adopted by him and presented an image to his citizens that of a weak and indecisive president. Fortunately, this negative view of Carter would later change amongst Americans. Nevertheless, it would not influence any sober assessment by historians and political scientists of his presidency.

Carter tried to contain the anger of the hostages' families the moment the crisis had broken out. On November 9, Carter met officially with some representatives of the hostages' families. During the meeting, "Carter referred to the strong feelings, frustrations, and "deep anger" felt by all Americans, feeling that he shared, as a result of the hostage situation, and asked US citizens to "exercise restraint" and "refrain from any action that might increase the danger to the American hostages in Iran" (FRUS 9). At first, this initiative was taken at face value because its primary aim was to reassure the hostages' families and US public opinion

as well. It also meant to show Carter's attentiveness and care about the reputation of his country and the safety of his citizens abroad. His major goal was to save his country from being perceived as weak. Such meetings would be politicized later to mitigate pressure on the government on one side and to take advantage of it politically as it exhibited its usefulness initially on the other. Americans tended to rally round their presidents at times of crises. Thereafter, it became a tool of his campaign. Vance reported to the president on December 7 about his meeting with them on that same day,

Your appearance today... was appreciated... We found the families understanding of the difficult circumstance and supportive of our actions. They are very appreciative of the job that Dave Newsom, Hal Saunders and Hodding Carter did in answering their questions. Many of them remarked afterwards that your willingness to spend too much time with them in the afternoon convinced them of your determination to get our people out of Tehran. They particularly appreciated your expression of restraint. (FRUS 234)

Carter's job did not just revolve around reassuring the hostages' families but appeasing them so that they could not issue statements against his administration. Meanwhile, Carter did not dread public anger in particular but its impact on the upcoming elections, which seemed crucial in designating the new president.

At the beginning of the crisis, the hostages' families rushed to give interviews to the media expressing their fears for their family members' lives and urging their government to act immediately to secure their release. They were putting pressure on the government to act and arousing people's sympathy with their crisis. Carter pre-empted their moves by inviting them to the White House and dealing with them on an official basis. Their statements ranged from government attacking to supportive ones. Carter's pre-emptive step was designed to stem their anger by reassuring them and neutralizing them politically to silence all criticizing voices exploiting the crisis at that sensitive time then.

Due to the nature of the hostages' crisis that affected directly American individuals, the media exploited the hostages' families scourge. The media also used it to increase anti-Iranianism as a response to anti-Americanism in Iran that was displayed daily by Iranians. The coverage of the crisis turned public opinion against Iran and Islam in particular. In addition, it aroused interest in Islam amongst Americans who were to get acquainted with a new enemy other than the USSR. Moreover, Daniel Strieff, historian, mentioned, "By framing the crisis primarily as a human drama rather than a just diplomatic imbroglio, the families personalized the crisis for ordinary Americans" (702). The personalization of the crisis not only had harmful effects on Iran but also on Carter that this pressure drove him to make unstudied decisions, among them, launching a failed rescue mission. However, the media succeeded in giving exaggerated importance to the crisis that turned it later into number-one issue for Americans. The elevation of the crisis to such a status hurt Carter's chances of re-election later after it was at first a point that drew people to support unequivocally their president. Given these details, the crisis was not only a foreign policy crisis but also a significantly domestic one. Its impact was supposedly to affect both of the domestic and foreign policy arenas and, hence, Carter had to fight on two fronts. It was an exhausting task. Carter found himself on the horns of a dilemma that required the appeasement of two conflicting parties that were hard to satisfy. Ultimately, Carter turned out to be the sole victim in political terms.

The hostages' families reported to President Carter that they had set up an organization that would officially represent them on March, 22. Katherine Keough and Louisa Kennedy established it. It was founded because of some disagreeable declarations that were given by some of the hostages' families' members, which were not favourable to US interests. Luzette Graves, the daughter of one of the hostages, sent a letter to Ahmed Bani-Sadr, President of Iran, in which she criticized American "neo-colonialism". She also

admitted in her letter that, “We realize that the US government, among others, committed such offences in the past, and more particularly, in Iran throughout the ex-Shah’s regime.” It bothered the other families because they felt that she spoke on behalf of them (Lynton Washington Post). It outraged some of the hostages’ families who subsequently opted to establish an organization of their own in order to speak with one voice. Most of the establishing members of the FLAG were wives of hostage-held diplomats. Their diplomatic background eased their access to governmental offices and their collaboration with policymakers. They were offered “office space” in the State Department building (Strieff 704). Apparently, they wanted them to stay in touch with the administration and to stay attuned to the latest developments about the crisis. In order to avoid such sort of chaotic statements in the future and control the quality of declarations, the government encouraged them to act under the banner of this organization (FLAG).

FLAG members opposed Carter’s move to allow the Shah entry into the US for medical reasons in March. They sent a letter to Carter in which they said that they were “alarmed and outraged” when they heard of US plan to readmit the Shah. They threatened to “ object strongly and publicly” if the Shah was received again for whatever reason claiming, “because we know such action will ruin what chances may be left for getting our people out of Iran” (FRUS 584). Their activities represented the other face of the coin i.e., the decisions of the US government that wanted to distance itself from and evoke pressure in order to make them. Rather, they were acting as the irresponsible man of the government. They feared also the dissemination of declarations that would involuntarily serve the Iranians. President Carter feared the intensification of the feelings of frustration and disappointment among the public because it would further worsen his situation with regard to the electoral campaign. Meanwhile, US public opinion was sympathetic to the hostages’

families and their action under the umbrella of a “semi-official agency” did not affect any human attachment they developed for them.

The government considered utilising the hostages’ families as an unofficial channel to approach Iran in case it wanted to deal with real Americans rather than the regime *per se*. The Congress was used this way before by encouraging it to contact their Iranian counterparts in the hope of finding a formula that would help end the crisis. In compliance with Carter’s strategy to end the crisis, Mrs Kennedy went to Europe with other representatives of the hostages families. They demanded, “Allied unity and solidarity on the question of diplomatic hostages, and they’d the impression that the US has Allied support. However, the Allies must take action in their own”. Carter argued that he preferred not to take part in the whole plan. He added, “Anything that the hostage families did in a human way could be helpful”. Carter ruled out the possibility of a quick solution because the Majlis was not operational yet. He explained the role that he assigned to the FLAG amidst the efforts he was making by saying, “ There were four tracks which could go on simultaneously: (1) the UN;(2) Islamic religious leaders who could be in contact in Tehran;(3) the European Allies; and (4) the human side of the hostage families”(FRUS 776). He left the last part of his plan to the FLAG. However, the role that the FLAG was supposed to play did not mean that Carter was interested only in releasing the hostages but also that he was prepared to go to great lengths to plead emotionally to the Americans and, therefore, gain support for his campaign. The FLAG was operating then officially on behalf of the US with the condition that they had not to refer to it or to reveal the source that whispered to them to act.

On July 23, Catherine Keough met Carter to inform him of their continuous support. During their meeting, Carter explained, “If this turns into a partisan issue, it will detract from the overwhelming commitment of the American people”. Carter charged them with another mission also this time. He informed them, “Carter had seen Muskie and had told him to talk

to you (the visitors) on a confidential basis about a move which might be desirable in relation to the new Iranian Majlis". Carter reminded them, "Even Beheshti had referred to the need to deal with the US "people" rather than the government. If this could be evoked by private citizens, members of Congress, or even members of FLAG, it might dramatize the hostage problem to the Majlis" (FRUS 859). It seemed that Carter was complicit in dramatizing the crisis in collaboration with TV networks, FLAG initiatives like Yellow Ribbon campaign. By helping establish the FLAG, Carter showed that he was capable of acting pragmatically in pursuit of his political adventures. In September, FLAG members wrote a letter to the President of the Consultative Assembly of Iran, Hashemi Rafsanjani in which they asked him, "We are writing to you at this time, with the idea that there might be some way in which the hostages' families could participate personally and directly in the solution of the problem which now divides the Iranians and American people ... Our families are prepared to come to any location you and your colleagues deem suitable" (FRUS 937). To conclude, President Carter used the FLAG as part of his July Strategy to end the crisis and to equip himself with a voice that could be of benefit to his campaign. He used the FLAG to manipulate public opinion as well. It can be said that it played a role in deflecting people's attention from the crisis.

4-3 The Impact of the Crisis on Carter's Re-election Chances

Carter's re-election chances seemed slim even before the seizure of the American embassy in Tehran by the Iranians. As already said, the major factor that was not working to Carter's favour was the timing of his presidency. In addition, the economy was in bad condition: considerable rate of inflation, high interest rates and unemployment all combined paralysed the economy. The impact of the Iranian revolution on oil prices compounded the matters more. Carter found himself powerless and any solution from his part had to take time. It meant that the solutions adopted then would bring results only after a long while: the

situation was characterized by the absence of instantaneous remedies. The terrible state of the economy did not mean that the other political, social and cultural fronts were well during his presidency. Actually, he worked with an uncooperative Congress, which hindered his political advancement. Also, his preoccupation with foreign policy issues weakened him internally rather than strengthened him. In other words, he faced an endless number of political problems that any president was bound to have but he lacked an efficient strategy for dealing with them. Moreover, his beliefs were also put into question since the political landscape changed and they became disillusioned with his ideals. Burton I. Kaufmann in his seminal work, *The Presidency of James Earl Carter Jr.*, said,

His domestic and foreign policies were largely in ruin; the economy seemed incurable; the hostage crisis was dragging on with no end in sight; major differences had surfaced between the US and its allies over Iran and Afghanistan; a Congress controlled by his own party had rebuked him; not even Democratic loyalists were enthusiastic about his candidacy; and he had the lowest approval rating of any president ever-given. (179)

The embassy seizure seemed good news to Carter at first if considered in electoral terms in the short term. Generally, crises tended to motivate people to support unconditionally their presidents. Carter's approval ratings rose from 32 per cent to 58 per cent within a month from the beginning of the crisis: he won 28 percentage points just in December (see figure 1). Carter's weak position as proved already by the polls undermined him politically within the ranks of his own party. It would later create problems for him since many of his opponents would call for a replacement instead of endorsing a weak candidate who failed to convince potential American voters with any tangible achievements that had already directly affected their lives positively. Furthermore, Congressmen were disenchanted with his policies: in a poll that was conducted in August 1979, they rated Carter as below average (Glad 451). To add insult to injury, Americans also perceived him badly: they thought of him as an indecisive president who lacked a clear program (see figure 2).

Jimmy Carter's chances of being renominated by his own party were substantial but the road to it was tricky. The approval ratings were not on his side. Many of the insiders considered him as a liability. His image as a weak president supposedly encouraged Ted Kennedy to seek nomination within the Democratic Party. Carter's steps to seek renomination faced an obstacle that of his relations with the Democrats who were dissatisfied with his approval ratings and the way he handled things (Glad 565). Furthermore, the disapproval of the Democrats with Carter was another factor that encouraged Ted Kennedy to enter into the nomination contest. Robert Kennedy declared his candidacy three days before the capture of the American embassy in Tehran by the Iranians. He was armed with his family history in addition to his economic agenda that looked tempting then. Unfortunately, an accident, and other factors, that he had had long time ago in which he did not make efforts to save his female companion once his car drowned resurfaced and embarrassed him politically. It did Carter a favour in an indirect way. Despite all the obstacles, Carter was determined to secure the nomination card. On the other hand, the Republican Party seemed more organized and powerful then. Ronald Reagan was the probable Republican candidate who would confront Carter later during the presidential campaign.

After Ted Kennedy announced his candidacy and the storming of the embassy, Carter found himself committed to the resolution of the crisis instead of leading the campaign for renomination. As a result, he adopted the "Rose Garden Strategy". It stipulated that Carter stop campaigning and devote his precious time to the freeing of the American hostages instead (Eizenstat 131). It was named after the White House Garden. His family or others would lead the campaign on his behalf: his wife conducted most of it. Carter's decision to declare his Rose Garden Strategy was based on the view that of not wasting his time on campaigning and rather devote it to freeing US hostages held captive in Iran first. This was

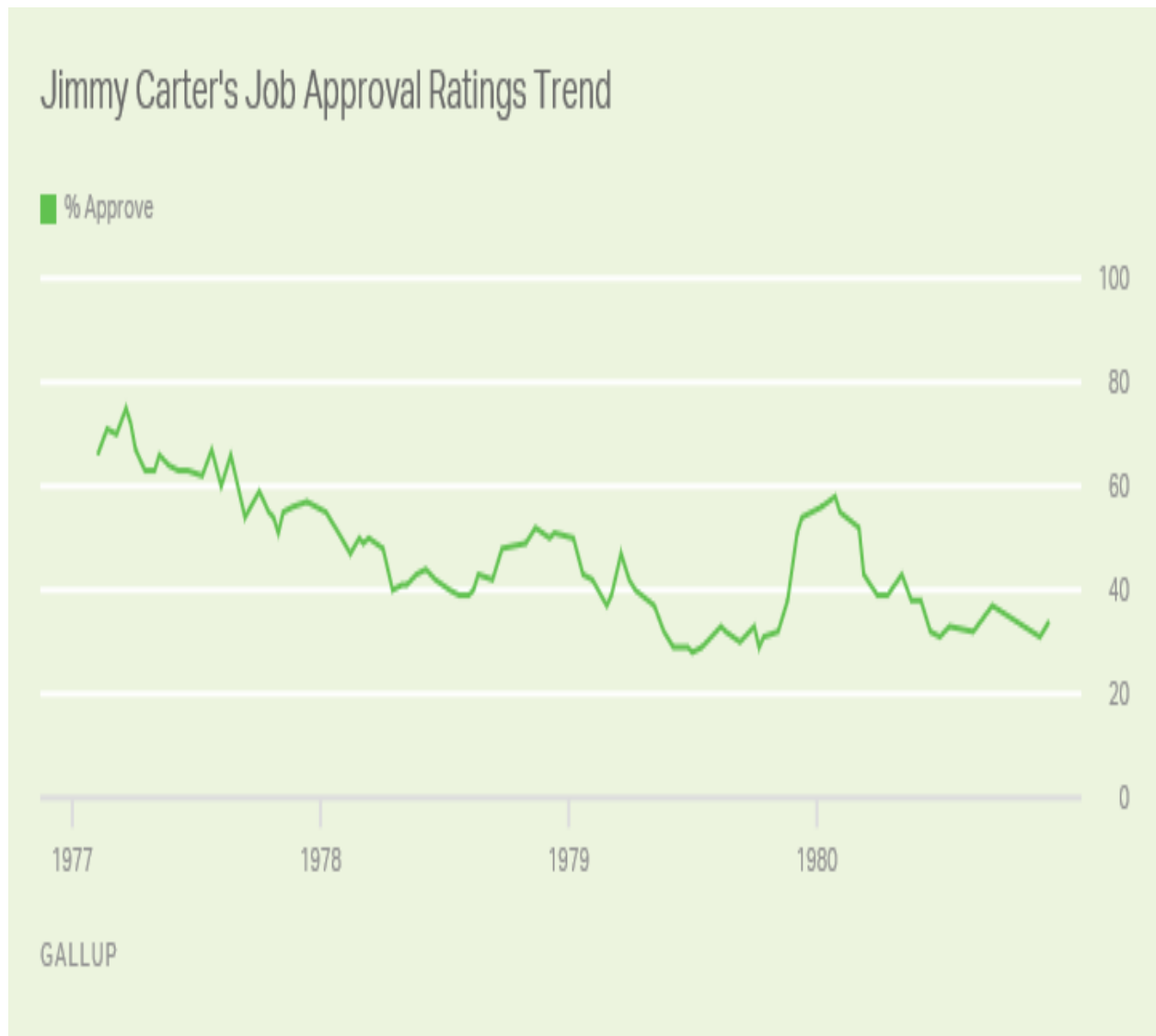


Figure1: Jimmy Carter's Job Approval Ratings Trend

Source: Gallup. "Presidential Approval Ratings – Gallup Historical Statistics and Trends".

<https://news.gallup.com/poll/116677/presidential-approval-ratings-gallup-historical-statistics-trends.aspx>.

QUESTION: "Here is a list of terms—shown as pairs of opposites—that have been used to describe Jimmy Carter. For each pair of opposites, would you select the term which you feel best describes Carter?"	
Description	Percentage Choosing
A man of high moral principles	78
A religious person	78
Takes moderate, middle-of-the-road positions	77
Displays good judgment in a crisis	74
A likable person	71
Puts country's interests ahead of politics	58
Sympathetic to problems of the poor	58
Says what he believes even if unpopular	57
A man you can believe in	50
Sides with the average citizen	49
Offers imaginative, innovative solutions to national problems	41
Decisive, sure of himself	39
You know where he stands on issues	38
Has strong leadership qualities	34
Has a well-defined program for moving the country ahead	31
A person of exceptional abilities	29

Figure2: Perceptions of Jimmy Carter, January 1980

Source: qtd in Ranney, Austen, ed. *The American Election of 1980*. US, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research Washington and London, 1981.

the superficial interpretation of the decision. Critics referred to his desire not to be put on the same "level" as his counterparts who were running for the presidency (Jones 61). It seemed a trick designed to outfox his rivals. It was also meant to appeal to the Americans who showed a good amount of sympathy for the hostages, largely thanks to the media coverage of the crisis that fuelled their emotions. Interestingly, in the wake of the crisis, Carter forbade also any discussion of the hostage situation out of fear that it would be construed as "a sign of disunity", which would harm the hostages (Jones 61). It was

unanimously agreed that politicians, members of Congress and Carter's running mates had not to criticize his handling of the crisis or even the Iranian side in the hope of saving the hostages' lives (Glad 462). They wanted also to present a unified position. Even the Republicans complied with this note and opted for silence (Glad 465).

On December 28, Carter did not participate in the Iowa debate with Robert Kennedy and Jerry Brown because of his "patriotic duty" as he claimed (Glad 463). The other candidates accused him of taking advantage of the crisis politically. Candidate Brown accused Carter of "ducking the debate and using Iran as his excuse. The hostages will get home any sooner by Jimmy Carter hiding in the White House" (Glad 465). Betty Glad, Carter's presidency historian, reached the conclusion that, "this call for unity and Carter's projecting himself as above "patriotic politics" made good sense in terms of his own political fortunes" (465). Carter strived to a good measure to use the hostages electorally. He learned to think and act in pragmatic terms to save his crumbling re-election project. Carter's strategy then was very limited because his focus was on eliminating his partisan rivals, ignoring the rising Republican candidate Ronald Reagan and his thriving agenda that started to gain public approval, particularly since July when he won his party nomination.

As figure 1 showed, Carter's approval ratings fell from 54 per cent in December, 54 per cent in February, to less than 41 per cent in March to reach 39 per cent in April 1980. It demonstrated a significant fall in the approval ratings that improved after the seizure of the hostages. The failure of his efforts to end the crisis in the shortest time possible hurt him politically. People doubted his leadership skills more (see figure 2). Carter became under immense pressure from his people who wanted their diplomats released soon and at the same time lost faith in the Carter administration that was perceived as impotent. His failure to end the crisis four months later propelled him to try other channels.

In April, Carter sensed that no feasible solution was in the offing so he opted to order a rescue mission. His deteriorating approval ratings that coincided with a crucial time electorally convinced him that the military solution was the only way out of the crisis. Unfortunately, the failure of the rescue mission weakened him more. It led to Khomeini's clinging to his decision not to release the hostages. The failure of the rescue mission complicated his position vis-à-vis the elections. His approval ratings dropped to less than 40 per cent (see figure 3) because of the failure of the rescue mission that apparently broke Carter's back then. Significantly, people started to lose interest in the crisis especially after the failure of the rescue mission. Apparently, they believed that the next president who had to act tough indeed could undoubtedly solve it.

With the change of Carter's strategy for dealing with the hostage situation that was premised on negotiations this time, public disapproval tended to increase more. The Iran hostage crisis was not the only factor that would cause Carter's undoing but a significantly contributing one. Therefore, it would be wiser not to exaggerate its impact. In April, Carter abandoned his Rose Garden Strategy and chose to lead the campaign himself later. His Rose Garden Strategy bore fruit since it deprived his competitor Jerry Brown of any visibility and thus his nomination chances turned nil (Polsby 46). In addition, it allowed Ted Kennedy to issue controversial statements and therefore put himself in a vulnerable position that cost him the nomination ticket (Glad 468). After the failure of the rescue mission in April, Carter's approval ratings fell from 39% in April to 32% in August. The absence of any resolution prospects of the crisis led people to be more dissatisfied with his policies. The approval ratings continued to fall until they reached 31% in November (see figure3).

Presidential Job Approval: Jimmy Carter

1979											
				May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
				35%	29%	29%	32%	32%	30%	40%	54%
1980											
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep		Nov	
57%	54%	41%	39%	40%	32%	33%	32%	37%		31%	

Figure 3: Presidential Job Approval: Jimmy Carter

Source: Newport, Frank and Carroll, Joseph. “*Reflections on Presidential Job Approval and Re-election Odds*”. Gallup, 10 June 2003, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/8608/reflections-presidential-job-approval-reelection-odds.aspx>.

Ronald Reagan was walking confidently and steadily toward the Oval Office. The timing was apparently on his side this time. American’s dissatisfaction with Carter’s policies or rather with the declining position of their country in the world had pushed them to embrace any powerful-looking candidate who would had to possess an aggressive leadership style, which Reagan did. Candidate Ronald Reagan succeeded in striking a responsive chord with his people. Carter’s dwindling position served Reagan as well. Of importance also was Reagan’s economic plan that was based on cutting taxes and that was to be done by redressing the federal budget by lowering government spending (Modigliani 400). The poor condition of the economy affected people’s lives. They hoped to see a good replacement to Carter who would endeavour to improve their lives instead. On foreign policy matters, Reagan attacked the Soviet Union. He was known for his hard-line posture against it. He

adopted the logic of force to protect US position and interests in the world. On the other side, Carter's policies changed since the second half of his administration but this did not change his image amongst Americans. It did not mean that his economic agenda or the reforms that he intended to do were not feasible but Americans probably seemed to look for change since they felt no longer drawn to him. It was more of a matter of faith rather: the continuing seizure of their nationals in Iran contributed to feeding their sense of impotence and weakness in front of a weak state, which they supposedly attributed to a weak president who might shake their country's credibility and reputation in a much changing world then (see figure 2).

President Jimmy Carter was in a terrible condition electorally then if compared to his predecessors and their approval ratings before the presidential elections. His approval ratings eighteen months before the presidential elections were 35 per cent whereas his Democratic predecessors enjoyed higher approval rates like Harry Truman 65 per cent and Dwight Eisenhower 68 per cent. Even Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford surpassed him; 50 per cent and 46 per cent. Six months before the elections, he had the lowest approval ratings than all of his predecessors (see figure 4). These percentages demonstrated that Carter was ruined politically. He was overwhelmed with crises that he failed to manage pragmatically and efficiently. Carter was a victim of an idealistic discourse that tied his hands and limited his options as well despite the apparent rupture with moralism that he had embarked on by the middle of his presidential term. Carter's failure to deal successfully with the Iran hostage crisis, and his other foreign policy achievements that were seen by most Americans as a waste of time presumably cost him dearly.

Despite the fact that the presidential elections were near, Carter failed to end the crisis due to many factors, *inter alia*, Khomeini's intransigence and his desire to influence the American presidential elections. Reagan was gaining more points in his march to the White

House at the expense of his major rival Jimmy Carter. Eventually, Ronald Reagan won the elections by getting 50.7 per cent of the votes whereas Jimmy Carter obtained 41 per cent and the independent candidate John B. Anderson achieved 6.6 per cent of the votes (Ranney 353). The Carter administration later referred to a plot that was hatched by the Republicans to convince the Iranians not to release the hostages before the elections to deprive Jimmy Carter of this advantage that might switch the outcome of the next presidential elections. This accusation became part of the “October Surprise” story that was first revealed by Gary Sick. After government investigations, it turned out to be a mere product of conspiracy theory. It remained an enigma since it could not be reconstructed again due to the absence of any concrete evidence. Jimmy Carter lost the presidency but he did not lose the hostages. They would be his major preoccupation in the days to come in order to finish his business and leave a good image of him that might allow historians to judge him well next.

4-4 The Resolution of the Crisis

Before September, Khomeini succeeded in building a solid foundation for his theocracy in Iran. He eliminated all his potential rivals, installed the Majlis that was dominated by conservative clerics and appointed a president to his own liking. All these indices pointed to Ayatollah Khomeini’s readiness to end the hostage crisis that seemingly outlived its usefulness, at least for him. He wanted to deal with more other challenges such as exporting the revolution and curbing the rise of his bullying neighbour Iraq that was vying with Iran for regional supremacy. The Americans were familiar with the Iranian situation but they were fearful of any unexpected move by the Iranians like trying the hostages or even killing them at that electorally sensitive time, which might lead to war. The outbreak of the war between Iran and the US would threaten the stability of the world especially economically since Iran is situated in a vitally important oil-rich region that controlled the

	18 months before election	12 months before election	10 months before election	8 months before election	6 months before election	2 months before election
	%	%	%	%	%	%
1940 (Roosevelt)	56	58	62	57	60	--
1948 (Truman)	65	54	--	36	--	--
1956 (Eisenhower)	68	78	75	69	73	--
1964 (Johnson)	64	58	76	75	74	--
1972 (Nixon)	50	49	52	54	58	--
1976 (Ford)	46	41	48	48	45	--
1980 (Carter)	35	40	54	39	32	37
1984 (Reagan)	45	53	55	54	54	56
1992 (Bush the elder)	75	55	41	41	37	38
1996 (Clinton)	51	53	53	55	55	60

Figure 4: Presidential Approval Leading to Presidential Elections (Based on Monthly Averages of Approval Ratings).

Source : Newport, Frank and Carroll, Joseph. “*Reflections on Presidential Job Approval and Re-election Odds*”. Gallup, 10 June 2003, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/8608/reflections-presidential-job-approval-reelection-odds.aspx>.

the flow of oil to the world. Of importance was the vague personality and behaviour of the clerics who governed Iran that the Americans remained very cautious about them. Based on these considerations, Carter was paralysed since he advocated maintaining the status quo instead of fomenting tensions. What worsened the situation more was his electoral rivals' exploitation of the crisis to undermine him.

President Carter modified his May strategy in August 1980 in favour of a more feasible and productive approach in July that recommended building ties with their Iranian counterparts through Congress or other civilian organizations (FRUS 883). This strategy bore fruit in part but not fully, because it was up to Khomeini's regime to choose the time of the hostages' release. On the other hand, it succeeded in providing the Iranian regime with a ready channel to contact the Americans though the Iranians did not choose it when serious negotiations started later. Interestingly, the impact of this approach in initiating negotiations between Iran and the US and in propelling Khomeini to think in humanitarian terms was immense. It is not reasonable to think of the immediate causes as the only triggers of this shift of Khomeini's behaviour but one had to dig deeper to find out about the intermediate and long-term causes that paved the way for the creation of conditions conducive to the resolution of the crisis.

President Carter was in dire need of good news from Iran regarding the hostage issue. His campaign did not go as he expected because American voters were dissatisfied with his policies, among them, his failure to deal efficiently with the hostage crisis that the media played a substantial role in convincing the people of the weakness and the deteriorating position of their country on the international scene. Carter tried to find other ways to end the crisis. In Iran, the dust started to settle down only when the Majlis was formed in August 1980 (Saunders 288). Khomeini tasked the Majlis earlier with figuring out an end to the hostages' issue and the formulation of a roadmap that included the announcement of the

Iranians' conditions for the release of the hostages. The first signs of the end of the crisis finally appeared but Carter still lacked the right to take the initiative despite the fact that the elections neared and he enjoyed no power over the hostage situation.

On 9 September 1980, German ambassador to Iran Gerhald Ritzel conveyed a message to the United States Secretary of State Edmund Muskie that a high-ranking Iranian official wanted to see a senior American official to talk about the hostages' issue. The message was that "Khomeini was very ill and they wanted to resolve the hostage crisis promptly" (Saunders 289). The name of the Iranian contact was Sadeq Tabatabai who was Khomeini's son brother-in law. He had been living in West Germany for long. He met with Under Secretary of State Warren Christopher. The US wanted first to confirm the identity of the Iranian contact. On 12 September, Tabatabai told the Americans that the same conditions he gave them would be mentioned again in a speech that would be delivered by Khomeini the next day and they subsequently confirmed it (Owen 301-302). The conditions were the return of the Shah's wealth, the abolition of American's claims, the lifting of the freeze on Iranian assets deposited in American banks and a promise not interfere in Iranian affairs. They met again later on 15 and 16 September when they discussed the conditions and some other issues but what characterized the meeting was Tabatabai's leniency that seemed alien to Iranian officials then (Owen 302). Carter pressed Warren Christopher who was charged with this mission to put an end to the crisis sooner because the date of the elections neared. They expected the negotiations to take short time at first but the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war on 22 September, just days after the onset of negotiations, delayed everything (Owen 306).

The Iran-Iraq war that broke out on 22 September 1980 while the negotiating process was still at its beginning wrecked US efforts at finding a solution. The Iranian negotiator was stuck in Berlin since Iranian airports were closed (Owen 306). America's most

important concern then turned out to be the safety of their citizens captured by Iran because the war was getting fiercer every day. The clerics did not believe that the US was aloof from this conflict. They pointed their fingers at it suspecting it of encouraging the Iraqis to attack. It seemed hard to believe because the Americans did not want to destabilize Iran due to the importance of oil supplies to world economy, the stability of the region and the safety of their citizens. On the other hand, the US saw it as an opportunity to convince the Iranians to release the hostages to preoccupy themselves with the ongoing war. Furthermore, the source of Iranian weapons would lead them to seek assistance from the US in matters of spare parts. It finally appeared that the US had nothing to do with the war except to see the eventual abandonment of an Iraqi hostile regime by their Soviet sponsors. Iraq was motivated by its fear of being the target of Khomeini's export of the revolution project that he threatened to carry out in countries headed by secular leaders. Actually, the war delayed the release of the hostages and deprived Carter of an important card that he might use in the campaign. It also exposed the US to blackmail by the Iranians who wanted to buy weapons and spare parts from the US. Another issue arose which would complicate matters and lead to the Iran gate scandal a few years later.

On 28 October when Prime Minister Ali Rajai, a former schoolteacher, arrived to New York to lodge his country's complaint against Iraq at the UN, he sensed that his country was isolated diplomatically and that no sympathy was offered to Iran by most states (Owen 306). Later, he met Algerian ambassadors to the US and the UN, Redha Malek and Mohamed Bedjaoui, who urged him to reconsider his country position vis-à-vis the hostage issue and to release the hostages because it left them with not much international support (Saunders 291). Consequently, they were charged with acting as intermediaries between his country and the US. The meeting changed a lot then. On his way back home, he stopped in Algiers to console the Algerian government for the heavy death toll incurred by the Asnam

earthquake. Algeria had been among the first countries that supported the Islamic revolution all along. Note that it did not enjoy cordial relations with the Shah's regime.

The Algerian diplomacy was approached before by the Carter administration to convince their Iranian counterparts to set the hostages free. They organized several visits to the hostages before. The Bishop of Algeria celebrated Christmas with the hostages. Upon the break of relations between Iran and the US in April, Algeria had been asked by Iran to represent its interests in the US. The revolutionary history of Algeria worked immensely to its advantage diplomatically. In 1975, Algeria mediated between Iran and Iraq to end the dispute over Shatt al-Arab waterway (Arvand Rud in Persian). During the seventies and after the death of President Houari Boumedien, under President Chadli Bendjedid, Algeria changed its conduct of policy internationally despite the fact that it had been non-aligned for long. It was also witnessing economic difficulties. In addition, the Occidental Sahara conflict led them to play a much wider role internationally in the hope of gaining new friends to its side. Others referred to its domestic instability so that they stemmed popular anger by being more visible and prominent on the international scene. It led many negotiations in Africa and the Arab world as Slim M Randa explained, "It was engaged in mediating between Somalia and Ethiopia, Tanzania and Burundi, and in the conflict between Mali and Burkina Fasso. In the Arab world, Algeria's mediation was decisive in the conflict between Iraq and Syria (1968), between the two Yemens (1972), between Syria and PLO (1976), between Egypt and Libya (1977), and between PLO and Jordan (1978)" (218). The credibility that the Algerian diplomacy earned then cannot be denied because of their revolutionary history and the talent of its diplomats as explained by most scholars.

On November 2, the Majlis validated Khomeini's conditions for the release of the hostages and agreed to release them should the US accept them (Hoffman, Jr. 252). On November 3, Redha Malek submitted to the US the conditions for the release of the hostages

and informed them that he was assigned by Iran to undertake a mediating mission between the US and Iran (Saunders 292). Jimmy Carter lost the elections to Ronald Reagan on November 4. The negotiations lasted until January 20, 1981. Jimmy Carter said, “The release of the American hostages had almost become an obsession with me... It was very likely that I had been defeated and would soon leave office as president because I had kept these hostages and their fate at the forefront of world’s attention, and had clung to a cautious and prudent policy in order to protect their lives during the preceding fourteen months” (Keeping Faith 594). The negotiations represented the real beginning of Carter’s post-presidential activities since this duty can be considered as not rewarding politically on his part but it can be of some benefit to his party history. The role of the Algerians was described, “throughout the negotiations, Algeria functioned as a devil’s advocate, taking each side’s position in turn, criticizing it, asking questions, raising issues that might concern or arouse defensiveness in the other side, and suggesting changes in wording” (Slim 221-222).

Conclusion:

The rescue mission was a two-pronged strike that sought to end the crisis by extricating the hostages from Iran on one hand and to respond to US public opinion on the other. Importantly, Carter’s decision to invade Iran was reflective of his own decision-making style that pushed aside any geostrategic considerations in pursuit of his re-election drive. Worthy to mention also, the conduct of policy in this fashion would have cost the United States dearly had the rescue mission succeeded or caused human losses to the Iranian side. The resignation of Secretary of State Cyrus Vance illustrated the ideological and bureaucratic infighting prevalent in the Carter administration. To Brzezinski’s distress, Edmund Muskie, the new Secretary of State, was not on the same page with him. He was

convinced of the validity of Vance's approach vis-à-vis the crisis. The US adopted a new strategy for dealing with crisis on May 8 that revolved around pressing the negotiating track instead of toying with any potential military solution. The May Strategy took into account the position of the Soviets and the Leftist elements in Iran. It was progressing but still hostage to internal Iranian developments. The Americans learned to bear into their minds the cultural differences that had been overlooked before. The whole business of solving the crisis depended on the formation of the Majlis that seemed to be controlled by the clerics. Brzezinski was obsessed with the Soviets and their leftist elements in Tehran. In July 1980, they adopted a new strategy. In fact, it was a refined version of the "May Strategy". The implementation of the July Strategy was meant to be pursued in three steps. The new regime in Iran was not immune to subversive activities or even to uprooting. Later on July 27, the Shah of Iran died. The death of the Shah was expected to ease tensions between Iran and the US; hence, the US mistakenly thought that the hostages would be released since the main motive behind the takeover no longer existed.

President Jimmy Carter was concerned with the potential damage that might be caused to his administration by the Americans should the hostages' families had had to draw public opinion to their side against his administration. Carter tried to contain the anger of the hostages' families the moment the crisis had broken out. At the beginning of the crisis, the hostages' families rushed to give interviews to the media expressing their fears for their family members' lives and urging their government to act immediately to secure their release. Due to the nature of the hostages' crisis that affected directly American individuals, the media exploited the hostages' families scourge. The hostages' families reported to President Carter that they had set up an organization that would officially represent them on March, 22. FLAG members opposed Carter's move to allow the Shah entry into the US for medical reasons in March. The government considered utilising the hostages' families as an

unofficial channel to approach Iran in case it wanted to deal with real Americans rather than the regime *per se*. On July 23, Catherine Keough met Carter to inform him of their continuous support.

Carter's re-election chances seemed slim even before the seizure of the American embassy in Tehran by the Iranians. The embassy seizure seemed good news to Carter at first if considered in electoral terms in the short term. Jimmy Carter's chances of being renominated by his own party were substantial but the road to it was tricky. After Ted Kennedy announced his candidacy and the storming of the embassy, Carter found himself committed to the resolution of the crisis instead of leading the campaign for renomination. Carter's decision to declare his "Rose Garden Strategy" was based on the view that of not wasting his time on campaigning and rather devote it to freeing US hostages held captive in Iran first. On December 28, Carter did not participate in the Iowa debate with Robert Kennedy and Jerry Brown because of his "patriotic duty" as he claimed (Glad 463). Carter's approval ratings fell from 54 per cent in December, 54 per cent in February, to less than 41 per cent in March to reach 39 per cent in April 1980. In April, Carter sensed that no feasible solution was in the offing so he opted to order a rescue mission. With the change of Carter's strategy for dealing with the hostage situation that was premised on negotiations this time, public disapproval tended to increase more. In the meantime, Ronald Reagan was walking confidently and steadily toward the Oval Office. President Jimmy Carter was in a terrible condition electorally then if compared to his predecessors and their approval ratings before the presidential elections. Despite the fact that the presidential elections were near, Carter failed to end the crisis due to many factors, *inter alia*, Khomeini's intransigence and his desire to influence the American presidential elections.

Before September, Khomeini succeeded in building a solid foundation for his theocracy in Iran. President Carter modified his May strategy in August 1980 in favour of a

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General Conclusion

US-Iran relations are poisoned since the capture of US embassy in Tehran by the new theocratic regime. They went through a long period of cooperation when the Shah ruled Iran. It ended with the triumph of the Islamic revolution that brought the Shah down. The fall of the Shah was the first blow that hurt the bilateral partnership between Iran and the US. Nevertheless, the hostage crisis is still considered as the fatal blow since it left a bad impression amongst Americans that would prevent them from re-establishing healthy relations with Iran. The image held by the Americans seems more tenable than that held by the Iranians about the latter. The Americans recall the embassy seizure, which was an irrational act done by the Iranians that prevented the reestablishment of bilateral relations between them. On the other side, the Iranians bring forth the Iranian 1953 coup and use it as an American move that killed their democratic experience. In fact, the Anglo-Americans intervened but the Iranians themselves played the largest role in overthrowing Mossadeq. The Iranians are trapped into their illusions that are fed by xenophobia and conspiracy theories. Memory reconciliation is required on the part of the Iranians if they want to see things properly.

US-Iran relations witnessed their bad times during the Carter administration. The fact that the worsening of relation can be attributed to Carter's mishandling of the situation remained relative. It means that it is not the aim of this thesis to absolve or condemn Jimmy Carter for the loss of Iran but to come up with a defensible and well-structured interpretation. Actually, Carter inherited a sick partnership with Iran that was reduced even to a personal relationship during the Nixon administration. Carter's position towards authoritarian regimes was dictated by American internal exigencies. Americans called for the restoration

of morality into their foreign policy. They demanded also a rupture with realpolitik that was utilized during the Cold War to justify their political orientations. Of the most notable application of this policy is their support of loyal tyrants everywhere, just for the sake of not losing them to the Soviet Union. Jimmy Carter embodied the values called for by the Americans. So, he was charged with a mission to moralize American foreign policy. Given his lack of experience in foreign policy matters, Carter pressured his allies to reform, negligent of the consequences of such actions.

Carter revised US-Iran relations and sent signals that he could abandon the Shah unless he changed his political behaviour, especially internally. The signals, retrospectively, though irresponsible on the part of Carter, encouraged the Iranians to revolt against the Shah. Later, the Shah was overthrown and the US lost an ally. Carter tried to save him but in vain. Carter's policies weakened the Shah internationally and even worse at the domestic front. On one hand, the Shah wanted to become an independent king but unfortunately he remained dependent not only on the US but on the mood of the Americans as well. On the other hand, Carter advanced his agenda forcibly without paying attention to the ramifications of his policies, which cost him dearly in terms of geopolitical interests. Carter would strive to draw Iran back into US orbit in order not to be charged with losing Iran. Engaging with Iran would not be an easy task.

Upon the loss of Iran, Carter soon became aware of its value to the US. The scenario of bringing back the Shah to power again was a non-starter. He was afraid of the prospect of the communists assuming power in Iran. Carter was relieved to know that the clerics would not side with the Soviets either. All American efforts then centered on preventing the communists' rise to power. Of utmost importance was their desire to engage with the revolutionary regime. Their engagement efforts included also intelligence cooperation in the shape of providing Iran with Iraq's plans of invading Iran in addition to the May coup

attempt. To the Carter's administration, the Javitz resolution put the whole project of re-establishing relations with Iran to square one. It seemed that the clerics' excessive fear about US attempts of overthrowing the revolutionary regime the first factor that stood in the way of engagement. Apparently, cultural differences appeared unbridgeable. Both the US and Iran failed to understand each other, particularly the Iranians who could not accept the *other* since it was portrayed as a danger to their existence. In addition, anti-Americanism was fed by the clerics so as the Iranians agree to give them absolute powers to act as they pleased: it was a good pretext to justify irrational decisions. Engagement failure was symptomatic of mutual cultural misunderstanding since no one tried to know the other well because they thought that their superficial knowledge was enough. In retrospect, antagonizing America turned out to be a fruitful tactic that would prolong the age of the infant revolutionary regime in Iran.

The capture of US embassy by Iranian students dealt a severe blow to engagement efforts and would later poison US-Iran relations for decades to come. The act of illegally seizing a foreign embassy in your own country is not acceptable diplomatically at all and necessitates the host government's intervention. In Iran, the theocratic government and its leaders endorsed the attack. They considered it an act to uphold the revolutionary values and to protect the Islamic revolution. President Carter exhorted the Iranians to set the hostages free. He considered many channels in the hope of pressuring Iran to release them. The clerics were adamant about their decision to continue holding the hostages because it was of benefit inside Iran. The crisis brought the Iranians together against the US and offered the revolutionary regime enough space to act with impunity against anything that was deemed dangerous to his existence of their different stripes. To Carter, it was a real headache that threatened his re-election project that was high on his mind in addition to American interests and citizens in Iran. The Middle East was changing geostrategically then. With the invasion

of Afghanistan, the US sought to protect its interests there and to curb the expansion of Soviet influence. It prevented the Carter administration from acting forcefully in Iran because the whole region was a powder keg. In other words, the US and Iran found themselves strange bedfellows in Afghanistan. Ironically, Carter feared that the invasion would overshadow the hostage crisis. Public opinion became embittered more because Afghanistan represented to them another foreign policy setback for the US. Carter had to walk on eggshells when talking about Iran at that time.

The failure of Carter to reach a peaceful solution led him to move to the military option. He waited for the formation of the Iranian Majlis and consequently the release of the hostages. His patience wore thin. He observed that the Iranians were wasting his time using the crisis for domestic purposes. US public opinion was turning against him. On an administrative level, Brzezinski won Carter's ears at the expense of Secretary of State Cyrus Vance who was a ferocious advocate of peaceful solution to the crisis. Brzezinski was arguing for a forceful foreign policy in an attempt to revive the Cold War in the hope of confronting the USSR and remedy US reputation in the world after the Vietnam debacle. Carter's administration was not stable and lacked ideological conformity as most pundits noted. Electorally speaking, the failure of the rescue mission had been disastrous to Jimmy Carter. Re-election was all that mattered to him.

After the rescue mission, Carter tried to understand the cultural identity of the Iranians. He believed that it would enrich the diplomatic approach that he chose. Once he knew their way of thinking, he would think of ways that appeal to him. He fashioned two strategies for dealing with the crisis one in May and the other in August. These strategies were based on multiplying the number of parties eligible for approaching Iran on behalf of the US. The success of these strategies was made easier by the fact that the US had finally to know the new Iranian regime closely. Carter hoped to find an end to this lingering crisis

before November but Khomeini chose to influence the American elections by punishing Carter. The Iraqi invasion of Iran delayed also the release. In fact, the crisis was not solved due to many reasons and could not be attributed to a single one because the crisis took international dimensions.

In September, light started to appear by the end of the tunnel, the US engaged in negotiations with Iran that felt that the seizure was no longer of benefit to them politically. The diplomatic isolation that Iran found itself in convinced it of the urging need to bring this crisis to a head. The outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war halted the negotiations. The loss of Carter in the presidential elections did not cause him to abandon the hostages. On the contrary, he insisted on having it done during his presidency.

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